



Christmas Tree suppliers see increased sales as local providers bare higher cost of demand

Brandon Martin
Staff writer

Even through tough economic times, John Ayers, owner of the Collinsville Farm Market, has helped keep the holiday tradition of Christmas Tree decorating alive.

The self-described “soft-heart” said his market has been selling trees for almost 20 years across two different locations, but he doesn’t expect to make any profit from the supply this year.

Typically, Ayers said he gets his supply from a tree farm in Ashe County, N.C. “The normal suppliers I went to informed me that they were in really short sup-

ply,” he said. “I had to really haggle with them to be able to still sell them this year. I went back and forward with the guy for about two weeks, because he only had about 10-15 tractor trailers of trees left, but he eventually let me buy some.”

Due to the short supply, Ayers said the prices were higher than in years past. He said prices increased anywhere from \$3 to \$10 per tree, based on the size.

However, Ayers said he didn’t pass that cost on to customers. Although he paid more for his supply, he is selling the trees at their normal prices of around

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Governor rolls out series of amendments for biennial budget

As legislators return to the General Assembly in January, they will be considering proposed amendments to the 2020-2022 biennial budget by Gov. Ralph Northam.

The budget presented by Northam is based on a revenue forecast which anticipates \$1.2 billion more in revenue than originally thought. To account for uncertainty in the future, Northam called for \$650 million to be placed in revenue reserves.

“Revenues are exceeding official forecasts, even during a pandemic,” Northam said. “This is in sharp contrast to other states. Other states have laid off workers, cut services, and even borrowed money to pay the bills—actions that will weaken their financial pictures for years to come. But in Virginia, our finances are solid, and the actions we have taken have kept our triple-A bond rating secure.”

A portion of the budget amendments are dedicated to combating the coronavirus and associated issues.

The budget includes \$240 million for public health pandemic response to include \$90 million to support Virginia’s vaccination deployment.

“Vaccines are now being deployed in Virginia,” Northam said. “While it will take months to vaccinate everyone, we can now start to look to the future with hope. We’re all tired, but this is not the time to let down your guard or be reckless.”

The budget invests over \$500 million to prevent reductions to school division funding due to COVID-19. In addition, it invests \$27

million in school counselors and includes \$80 million for a two percent bonus for teachers and support positions. The budget also restores over \$16 million to expand access to early childhood education.

“We also expect enrollment numbers to rebound once the pandemic has subsided and in-person learning becomes the norm again. While these enrollment declines normally would result in less state funding, that would devastate our public education system,” Northam said. “That is why this budget helps school divisions, students, and teachers. This budget accounts for the reduction in enrollment but also protects school divisions with funding to ensure they don’t suffer from any loss of funding under the enrollment formulas that drive the allocation of state dollars.”

To avoid a housing crisis, Northam said the next budget should include an additional \$25 million for the Virginia’s Housing Trust Fund in fiscal year (FY) 2022. This comes with another \$15.7 million in FY21 for the Rent and Mortgage Relief Program and \$1.5 million in FY2022 to fund additional housing attorneys at the Virginia State Bar.

For the Commonwealth’s non-pandemic related priorities, Northam included \$36 million in FY2022 for the G3 (Get a Skill, Get a Job, Give Back) Program to get free or low-cost job skills training in high-need fields through Virginia’s community college system.

“Even more importantly, it provides the financial aid nec-

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Trump wants to amend \$900 billion stimulus package

Brandon Martin
Staff writer

President Donald Trump declined to sign a \$900 billion stimulus package approved by Congress, saying it did not go far enough to help Americans and small businesses.

He asked Congress to rewrite the bill to send \$2,000 checks to Americans and provide more aid to small businesses, particularly restaurants which have suffered grievously during the pandemic, according to online reports.

Under the plan approved by Congress, each American would have received \$600.

Before the measure passed, U.S. Sen. Mark Warner, D-Alexandria, called the compromise bill “a Christmas Miracle.”

While the House of Representatives passed the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act in May to provide

almost \$3 trillion in new stimulus, Warner credited “bipartisanship” with finally coming to an agreement six months later on a bill that would provide a third of the original amount passed in the House.

Warner said the bill would provide \$908 billion in stimulus relief to the country.

“I think that a group of senators, bipartisan, said to heck with the politics and to heck with the partisan posturing, and let’s try to provide emergency-targeted relief for those Americans most in need,” Warner said, adding that he thought it was “a sign that Congress may be getting its act together. Our job is to pass bills and pass legislation that will help Americans in need. Anyone with good conscience, could not look at 17 million folks having COVID and 300,000 dead, literally the economy tanking right in front of our eyes and not say that we need to provide relief.”

After Congress approved the plan, Ninth District U.S. Rep. Morgan Griffith, R-Salem, said “As a supporter of more relief in response to the coronavirus pandemic, I consistently urged congressional leadership to keep any relief package separate from any omnibus appropriations bill to fund the Federal Government. Omnibuses tend to be bloated, filled with unrelated provisions, and cobbled together in backrooms with little time for Members of Congress to read them, much less understand their provisions. They are a terrible way to exercise Congress’ power of the purse.”

He added the omnibus spending bill for fiscal year 2021 “is the longest bill I’ve been asked to vote on in Congress. It was split into two parts running nearly 5,600 pages. The first totaled roughly 500 pages and included

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Health district receives both types of COVID-19 vaccine, first dose for some health personnel to being this week

Taylor Boyd
Staff Writer

Both types of the COVID-19 vaccine were received by officials in the West Piedmont Health District (WPHD) Tuesday, according to Nancy Bell, public information officer.

Sovah health care professionals received the first dose of the two-part Pfizer vaccine last week, according to previous reports.

Bell said Tier 1A workers in some areas of district could begin receiving the Moderna vaccine as early as this week. Both the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines will be used, she added.

While both the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines are more than 90 percent effective and build immunity to the COVID-19 virus, Bell said it is too early to tell which, if either, vaccine is better.

She said the biggest difference between the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines is “that immunity is present in the Pfizer vaccine within seven days of the first dose. For Moderna, immunity” begins about a week after both doses have been administered.

Neither vaccine will prevent the spread of COVID-19 and will only prevent the individual who has received the vaccine from getting the virus. “That is why ev-

eryone should take it. The vaccine builds immunity to COVID,” Bell said.

She said it is likely that widespread vaccination will take place by early summer, and “extra caution now is advised until we get to that point, so our friends and relatives are around for Thanksgiving and Christmas 2021.”

While some online sources indicate the vaccine will work on COVID-19 mutations, Bell said “it’s still too soon to know.”

Bell said the WPHD does not have a way to estimate how many new COVID-19 cases will arise

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Angel Tree toy drive helps 500 children

Brandon Martin
Staff writer

The Salvation Army in Martinsville held their annual toy distribution from their Angel Tree program on Dec. 21.

Unlike most years, the organization changed the process for receiving toys to a drive-thru format due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

The agency recently distributed toys to 500 children, according to Lt. Ashley Mumford, corps officer for the Salvation Army. “That’s about 200 families.”

She estimated the agency served 50 families per hour.

Many of the toys were received later than normal this year, partly because of the pandemic and limitations on shopping. Earlier in the month, the Salvation Army was still in need of approximately 150 toys to reach their goal.

A \$5,000 donation from Barry Nelson, owner of Autos By Nelson, helped fill that need. The donation was broken down into gift cards that provided about \$75 per child. Volunteers from Stone Memorial Baptist Church, the Martinsville-Henry County YMCA and the Rotary Club of Martinsville helped shop for the toys.

“We could not have done that without the support of this community,” Mumford said. “This community really showed out for these kids. We just want to



City of Martinsville representatives joined Salvation Army staff to cut the ribbon and kick off the 2020 Angel Tree toy distribution. From left to right: James Mill, Martinsville Police Chief Eddie Cassidy, Mayor Kathy Lawson, Lt. Ashley Mumford, Martinsville Sheriff Steve Draper, Carolyn Hudson and Lt. Bradly Mumford.

thank each and every organization, company and civic organization that plucked angels and filled those for us.”

“On behalf of Martinsville City Council, our City Manager Leon Towarnicki and the city staff, I thank the Salvation Army for what they do for our community,” Mayor Kathy Lawson said. “Reaching out and helping others is so meaningful this time of year.”

In addition to the toys from the Angel Tree, toys also were donated from Widows for Christ in Reidsville, N.C.

“We try to give every kid at least three toys. If a kid comes in and only has a couple of toys from the Angel Tree, we can supplement with what we have,” Mumford said. “Our toys just might not be exactly what the kid asked for.”

Members of the Martinsville Police Department and Martins-

ville Sheriff’s Office also were on hand to direct traffic and help distribute toys.

Families were assigned a number and once called, they proceeded around the Salvation Army building to receive their gifts.

Inmates worked inside of the building to help organize the boxes and gifts, while uniformed officers and other volunteers distributed the items to the families.

Martinsville Sheriff Steve Draper said seven inmates from the city helped with the toy distribution.

“They’ve been helping all along, ever since the Salvation Army started preparing for this,” he said. “The inmates have been fantastic.”



Virginia to receive more than 100,000 fewer vaccines than expected

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) was informed late Thursday by Operation Warp Speed that, like other states, its estimated allocation of COVID-19 vaccine doses in the next few weeks will be fewer than initially planned.

The state now expects to receive 370,650 doses of vaccine in December 2020 from two manufacturers, Pfizer and Moderna – a decrease of 109,650 from the 480,000 doses previously anticipated. Health care personnel (HCP) and long-term care

facility (LTCF) residents remain the top priority groups. Eighteen Virginia hospitals received initial shipments of the Pfizer vaccine this week, and they began dispersing a total of 72,125 doses to front-line healthcare workers. An order for 146,400 doses

of the Moderna vaccine has already been placed. If the vaccine is approved by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA), it will begin arriving the week of December 21. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and Operation Warp

Speed provide regular estimates to states for vaccine distribution planning; these estimates remain subject to change. The VDH is working closely with the CDC to ensure a smooth and equitable vaccine deployment.

Legislators discuss against green energy, increased minimum wage and reduced sentences

Brandon Martin
Staff writer

With the sponsorship of Appalachian Power, the Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce held a legislative update with local representatives on Dec. 18 to discuss how the area is being represented in the General Assembly.

The event featured Virginia Dels. Les Adams, R-Chatham, Charles Poindexter, R-Glade Springs, and Danny Marshall, R-Danville.

Renewable energy

In the Labor and Commerce committee, Marshall said he fought against House Bill 77 that would seek to wean off energy creation through fossil fuel by 2045.

The practicality of the bill and the rise of electricity rates were among his chief concerns.

Marshall said that it would take “200 acres of solar” to power the Good-year Tire plant in Danville “for one shift,” based on figures he obtained from Appalachian Power.

Based on a 2019 fact sheet by Appalachian Power, only three of the company’s 21 generating facilities use fossil fuels to create electricity. While they don’t use solar, Appalachian Power creates energy through other sources, like natural gas and wind. Locally, there is a pumped storage generator

in Sandy Level and regular hydropower facilities in Roanoke and Radford.

Pumped storage facilities are built to push water from a lower reservoir uphill to an elevated reservoir during times of surplus electricity, according to the National Hydropower Association.

While pumping, electric energy is converted to potential energy and stored in the form of water at an upper elevation. This creates a “water battery.”

When electricity is needed, the stored water is released back through the turbines and converted back to electricity much like a conventional hydropower facility.

Unlike pumped storage hydropower generators that use gravity to store and release power, photovoltaic (solar) panels would need an external battery to accomplish the same task.

“You’re going to have to have battery technology or something to store that, and that technology is not there,” Marshall said. “On a sunny day like today, it works wonderfully, but what about when it rains? What do you do with all those boys? Do you send them home?”

Solar panels operate on cloudy days, according to the Solar Energy Industry Association. The organization’s website states “photovoltaic panels can use direct or indirect sunlight to generate power, though

they are most effective in direct sunlight.

“Solar panels will still work even when the light is reflected or partially blocked by clouds. Rain helps to keep your panels operating efficiently by washing away any dust or dirt. If you live in an area with a strong net metering policy, excess energy generated by your panels during sunny hours will offset energy that you use at night and other times when your system isn’t operating at full capacity.”

One emerging method of storing that energy is with lithium-ion batteries.

The Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy states that lithium-ion batteries are rechargeable “because their chemical reactions are reversible, allowing them to absorb power and discharge it later. Lithium-ion batteries can store a lot of energy, and they hold a charge for longer than other kinds of batteries.”

Even though lithium-ion batteries have a smaller capacity than other storage methods, EERE said their upside is “they can be installed nearly anywhere, have a small footprint, and are inexpensive and readily available—increasing their application by utilities.”

The legislators warned against regional impacts brought by more legislation on renewable energy.

Democrats are currently pushing for Vir-

ginia to enter the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) which is a mandatory market-based program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by capping emissions.

Poindexter called the initiative “a cap-and-tax scheme.

“The SCC (State Corporation Commission) estimate is each year for the next amount of unknown years, 10-15 but at least 10, your electricity rates will go up between \$4-12 a month each year,” he said. “Not just one time. That’s about \$22 billion coming out of our pockets just to cover this.”

Another aspect of renewable energy is where to put the equipment.

“If you go at what is going to power those electric vehicles, it would take approximately 2.3 million vehicles in the state of Virginia,” Marshall said. “It takes about 10 panels per vehicle to generate electricity for one vehicle per year. That’s approximately 15,000 acres of solar panels that we would have just to power the cars. That’s not including your house and the manufacturing plants.”

Poindexter said he introduced a bill regarding agricultural land used for the creation of renewable energy.

“They (Northern counties) want their renewable energy and we get to lose our land, productive agricultural land. It’s not

just a site,” he said. “The land is out of use and they will claim a lot of benefits in terms of local revenue but when you take that amount of land out, it is estimated to be 25 percent greater than the total land mass of Fairfax County.”

His bill would require the creation of a database to help track the amount of former agricultural land being used for renewable energy creation.

Minimum Wage

Marshall discussed the minimum wage increase that was passed earlier in the year.

“We worked hard to get that to be a regional approach,” Marshall said. “If you look at the income levels in our area, where we have a median household income in the mid-30s (30,000), that’s a heck of a lot different than in northern Virginia, where you have a household income of above \$100,000. So, a \$15 minimum wage is not a big deal up there, but for a lot of small businesses, it is.”

Marshall said he is hopeful the implementation will be postponed until July 2022. He said he would tie the economic impact from the coronavirus to his plea to the majority to delay the minimum wage hike.

“If you look at the amount of small businesses that have closed, this is just going to be another nail in the coffin,” Mar-

shall said.

Criminal Justice

Adams said one of the bills that emerged from the previous session dealt with the “truth-in-sentencing” law.

The proposed bill would allow some qualifying inmates to reduce their sentences by 15 days for every 30 days served. To qualify, an inmate must not have been convicted of certain violent offenses, followed prison rules, and participated in rehabilitation and education programs. The program is tiered to allow less time to be reduced if the inmate has not properly followed the rules. Currently, inmates can only reduce their time by 4.5 days for every 30 days served.

The abolishment of parole and adoption of the current sentence credit system has paid off, according to Adams, who voiced his opposition to the change.

“One of the highlights of Virginia public policy over the last generation has been that we have one of the lowest rates of crime,” Adams said. “I think we are in the top five in low crime rate for the country. We have the number one lowest rate of recidivism, so people are committing less crime when they finish their sentence.”

Trees

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\$40-85, based on tree size.

“I guess I’m kind of a soft heart,” Ayers said. “These are tough economic times and people still want that special part of the holiday where the family sits down and decorates the tree. I’m glad I can still provide that for some folks, even though I don’t expect

we will make a dime from selling the trees. It’s something that I really enjoy doing and it creates a lively spirit at the market around the holidays.”

Ayers said business was “about normal for the first couple of weeks” of selling trees this year. The pace hasn’t held through the

holiday season, but “unfortunately, that’s just a sign of the times,” he said.

The Collinsville Farmers Market is located at 3585 Virginia Ave and Ayers said its location has helped draw the attention of some travelers before they enter U.S. 220.

“Some will come and

look at the trees and decorations before they start checking out some of the other produce items we have like fruit, vegetables, nuts and preserves,” he said. “So, if nothing else, having the trees has helped grab the attention of people to our other items over the years and that’s still happening today.”

The season normally provides a boom in sales, according to Ayers.

“There is often an uptick between Thanksgiving and Christmas,” he said, attributing the lack of large gatherings as a reason for the lull this year.

“We often see a lot of churches having large gathering events during

the holidays because a lot of people come back home. They haven’t really been able to do that this year,” Ayers said. “I’d say with just that amount of business alone, sales have dropped close to 35 or 40 percent. What can you do though? It’s tough times and people are hurting.”

Tree suppliers haven’t been feeling as much of a financial strain. According to a survey of retailers done by Evercore ISI, the figures for tree sales are up 29 percent this year, as reported by CNBC.

According to the National Christmas Tree Association, there are approximately 25-

30 million traditional Christmas trees sold in the country each year. About 15,000 farms grow trees in the U.S., and the industry employs more than 100,000 full-time and part-time workers.

With fewer gatherings and more individual celebrations, the demand for trees has increased in some areas to meet the need.

Citing stress over the coronavirus, Doug Hundley, seasonal spokesman for the association said, “people have the time at home this year. They’re traveling less, of course, so they’re at home and they really want something to spark their mood.”

CROSSWORD

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			10	11							12		
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	48						49						
	50						51						

CLUES ACROSS

1. Twos under par

7. Expresses surprise

10. Shows exceedingly great size

12. At this place

13. One who prints from a plate

14. '95 U.S. Open golf champ Corey

15. Stupefy with alcohol

16. Breezed through

17. A major division of geological time

18. Humble request for help

19. Part of a deck

21. Albanian monetary unit

22. Atomic #22

27. Atomic #18

28. Catholic holiday service

33. Canadian province

34. Capital of Alberta

36. Large African antelope

37. Mexican tortilla sandwich

38. Pigmented eye membrane

39. Baby's food protector

40. Winglike structures

41. Sun-dried brick

44. Those dull in appearance

45. Basketlike baby's bed

48. Purpose or intent

49. Difficult to carry

50. Cry made by sheep

51. More than one spouse

CLUES DOWN

1. Incredible edibles

23. Nincompoops

2. About aviation

3. Small biting flies

4. Bulgarian monetary unit

5. Point midway between E and SE

6. Old CCCP or U____

7. Rubber tree genus

8. Waterless

9. Female chicken

10. Relating to the Hebrews

11. Dig up

12. Diacritic caron

14. Capital of Sicily

17. Shock therapy

18. Cyto____: surrounds the nucleus

20. Daughters of the Am. Revolution

24. Great battle of 333 BC

25. Salt Lake state

26. Woman (French)

29. A public promotion

30. Social insect

31. Knifed

32. Formal association of people

35. Toff

36. Snaps up

38. Annona diversifolia

40. Opera vocal solo

41. Largest continent

42. Day (Latin)

43. Sole

44. Hit lightly

45. Guy (slang)

46. Black tropical Am. cuckoo

47. Screen Writers Guild

Holiday Giving

Charles Williams (middle), of Williams Auction Co. presents a \$1,000 donation check to Joel Barnes (left), Treasurer and Richard Reynolds (right), President of the Horsepasture Volunteer Fire Department, to help with operating costs.

COVID-19 Sustainability Program created for local nonprofits

The Harvest Foundation and the United Way of Henry County and Martinsville are partnering with the Center for Nonprofit Excellence in Charlottesville, Virginia to offer a new program that improves the resiliency of local nonprofits.

The United Way and the Harvest Foundation “understand that the past year has been incredibly challenging for nonprofit organizations throughout our community,” a release stated. “Disruptions in service delivery, operations, and funding have undoubtedly affected each and every nonprofit in Martinsville and Henry County.”

To help, the agencies are supporting the COVID-19 Sustainability Program, which will provide unrestricted grant funding bundled with training for board and staff to help with the sustainability and flexibility of nonprofit organizations.

The program will solicit applications from local nonprofits which volunteers will review for participation in the program. Selected organizations will participate in two training modules provided by the Center for Nonprofit Excellence. The training will be delivered in a cohort-based

environment via Zoom with 6 to 8 local nonprofits participating in each cohort.

- The Program Scenario Planning module asks nonprofit staff and board members to: identify possible program scenarios; identify current response strategy to changes; and begin building a plan to operate in different environments.

- The Financial Modeling Scenario asks nonprofits to assess program funding, revenue variability, revenue probabilities and expense variability.

Participating nonprofits also will receive additional technical assistance as they work through these modules from the Center for Nonprofit Excellence. After completing the training modules, each organization will receive a one-year membership to the Center for Nonprofit Excellence and may participate in free training opportunities throughout the year.

In addition to training, unrestricted grants will be provided to each organization participating in the training program. To receive the full amount, organizations must complete both training modules. Grants will be disbursed at the rate of 50 percent of total award after the comple-

tion of each training module. Grant awards will be between \$5,000 and \$7,500, depending on the size of the organization.

Executive Director of the United Way Philip Wenkstern said, “We know this year has been incredibly difficult for our entire community. Non-profits, like countless businesses throughout the nation, have been seriously impacted by COVID-19.

“Over the summer we realized that we needed to figure out a way to not only disburse grant awards that were flexible to the needs of each organization, but also equip them with training that will improve their overall resiliency and sustainability as we all work together to address the countless challenges that have emerged over the last year,” Wenkstern said, adding “we are incredibly grateful for the support of the Harvest Foundation for their help in putting this plan together as well as their support for flexible grant awards to local organizations.”

Interested organizations can apply at <https://bit.ly/CovidSustainability>. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis, according to India Brown, Program Officer with The Harvest Foundation.

Driver Privilege Card to be offered in January

Beginning January 2, 2021, Virginians may apply for a driver privilege card at the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). Applications will be accepted by appointment only; appointments can be made at [dmvNOW.com/appt](https://dmvnow.com/appt).

This change in Virginia law, authorized by the Virginia General Assembly, creates a driving credential for individuals who are non-U.S. citizens and cannot meet Virginia’s legal presence requirements, making them ineligible to receive a standard or REAL ID-compliant driver’s license in Virginia.

Customers may be eligible to obtain a driver privilege card if they meet the following criteria:

- are a non-U.S. citizen who is a resident of Virginia
- have reported income from Virginia sources or are claimed as a dependent on a tax return filed in Virginia in the past 12 months
- do not have a driving privilege that is currently suspended or revoked in Virginia or any other state, to include

insurance-related infractions

“We are pleased to offer this new credential to give thousands of tax-paying Virginians the opportunity to drive legally on our roadways, something they previously have not been able to do,” said DMV Commissioner Richard D. Holcomb. “Like applicants for any driving credential, driver privilege card applicants must prepare for their visit by gathering necessary documents and studying for all required testing. A good place to start is the DMV webpage dedicated to this new credential, [dmvNOW.com/dpc](https://dmvnow.com/dpc).”

To obtain a driver privilege card in Virginia, the following documents must be provided:

- Two proofs of identity (e.g., foreign passport and Consular identification document issued by country of citizenship)
- Two proofs of Virginia residency (e.g., monthly mortgage statement and utility bill)
- Proof of Social Security number (if one has been issued) or the individual’s

taxpayer identification number (e.g., W-2 form or ITIN letter)

- Tax return documentation (e.g. Virginia Resident Form, Virginia Part-Year Resident Income Tax Return Form or Virginia Nonresident Income Tax Return Form, filed in the past 12 months)

All documents must be originals and are subject to verification, however; printouts of approved online residency documents may be accepted.

The steps to obtain a driver privilege card vary based on a customer’s licensed driving history. Applicants will be required to pass a vision screening. DMV encourages those eligible to make an appointment for the new year, study and prepare for applicable tests at [dmvNOW.com](https://dmvnow.com), and organize the documents necessary to obtain a driver privilege card. An interactive document guide, available on DMV’s website, helps to prepare customers for their visit.

For more information visit [dmvNOW.com/dpc](https://dmvnow.com/dpc).

Checkpoint Strikeforce Campaign revs up for season

The 19th annual Checkpoint Strikeforce campaign and enforcement effort is ramping up on Virginia’s roads this holiday travel season to help curb alcohol-related traffic fatalities, according to a release from Gov. Ralph Northam.

According to figures from the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), 253 individuals died in alcohol-impaired driving crashes on Virginia’s roadways through December 8, 2020, compared to 249 alcohol-related traffic fatalities recorded during the same period in 2019. During last year’s Thanksgiving to New Year’s holiday period, nearly one-third, or 32 percent, of all traffic deaths in Virginia involved drunk drivers.

“At every stage of this pandemic, Virginians have worked together to keep each other safe, and this holiday season is no different,” said Northam. “While your travel plans may look different this year it is important to keep your guard up, even if you are just making short trips near home. If you plan to drink, make sure you have a sober ride—Virginia has zero toler-

ance for impaired driving.”

In partnership with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s “Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over” national enforcement mobilization period from December 18, 2020 to January 1, 2021, state and local law enforcement agencies will be conducting more than 700 saturation patrols and nearly 100 sobriety checkpoints throughout Virginia.

“We all have a shared responsibility to prevent alcohol-related fatalities on our roads,” said Secretary of Transportation Shannon Valentine. “As we celebrate this holiday season, I urge Virginians to take care of each other by designating sober drivers and never allowing friends or family drive after drinking.”

“Although fewer vehicles have been on the road during the pandemic, our data shows no decrease in the devastation caused by selfish drivers who choose to get behind the wheel when impaired,” said DMV Commissioner Richard D. Holcomb, the Governor’s Highway Safety Representative. “Many of us will be spending the

holidays at home this year, but if you are going out and your celebration involves alcohol, please make a plan for a safe ride home before you start drinking.”

Complementing the high-visibility enforcement efforts, the campaign will be running a surround-sound ad campaign called “Act Like It.” The advertising campaign is geared toward men aged 21–35, the demographic that, according to research, is most likely to drive after drinking. Ads will reach them where they spend their time—on social media platforms, gaming sites, streaming music and TV, and more—with a reminder that drinking and driving is irresponsible. If you are old enough to drink, act like it. Get a safe ride home.

The 30-second spot is updated from the original version developed in 2018 to address the current COVID-19 pandemic. This year’s campaign also includes Spanish-language ads online and on streaming radio. To review alternative transportation options during the holidays and to see the latest ad, visit ActLikeIt.org.

Season gets warmer for those in need



Deliveries of the hundreds of coats collected during the 24th annual Coat Drive For Kids are underway, according to Debra Buchanan, Horsepasture District Supervisor. Recently, Buchanan (left) who spearheaded the project, helped deliver some coats to the Henry County Administration Building and Monica Hatchett (right), communications director of Henry County Public Schools. The coats will be distributed to children in need. Partners in the project include One Hour Martinizing, local churches, Matthew Wade Foundation, Kings Grant, Walmart, and local individuals.

Vaccine

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following Christmas and New Year’s holidays.

“The numbers in the district, in the state, and in the United States surged after Thanksgiving” she said, adding the post-holiday surge depends on if people choose to observe the state and federal recommendations on traveling, gathering, mask wearing, and social distancing.

Gov. Ralph Northam has expressed that he’s considered issuing an Executive Order with additional restrictions if COVID-19 case numbers continue to rise, Bell said.

“One of the cases where he would do this is if Virginia hospitals become filled to capacity or communities cannot function due to high numbers of sick persons in isolation,” she added.

With the rise in case numbers following Thanksgiving, COVID-19 has become the leading cause of death in the United States, beating out heart disease, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website. Heart disease is responsible for about 655,000 Americans annually, or about one in four deaths in the country.

“Heart disease is a chronic health condition brought on by obesity, sloth, or other chronic medical conditions. COVID is a sudden onset virus that affects different parts of the body, most often the lungs,” Bell said.

The CDC website said

heart disease can be prevented by maintaining a healthy weight, getting regular physical activity, not smoking, consuming healthy foods and drinks, controlling blood pressure, managing diabetes, and monitoring cholesterol.

Bell noted there is no medication to fight COVID-19, which spreads easily in situations where people gather or do not use masks.

“COVID prevention is more straightforward and based on three key pieces of advice: Distance yourself from others, wash your hands frequently, and always wear a mask when you will encounter other,” Bell said.

As of Monday, Dec. 21, data from the Virginia Department of Health suggested there are 2,393 cases, with 202 hospitalized and 48 deaths. In the City of Martinsville, 917 cases were reported, 88 hospitalized and 27 dead.

In Patrick County, there are 667 cases, with 71 hospitalized, and 28 dead from the COVID-19 virus.

The data also suggested there are 314,481 cases in Virginia, with 17,083 hospitalized, and 4,705 dead from the virus.

Information from the CDC suggested there are 17,790,376 cases in the United States and 316,844 dead from coronavirus.

For more tips on staying safe, visit www.vdh.virginia.gov or www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov.

Budget

from page 1

essary to help people get that training,” he said. “G3 will provide free community college for certain low- and middle-income Virginians who enroll at our two-year colleges in pathways that lead to a high-demand job. These pathways include the skilled trades, healthcare, technology, early childhood, and public safety. For those folks who have seen their jobs disappear during this pandemic, G3 could be a lifeline. That’s why I have prioritized this important investment.”

Northam also is calling for pay increases for public workers. The budget includes \$98 million for a one-time bonus for state employees (\$1,500), adjunct faculty (\$750), and state-supported local employees (1.5 percent). Another \$9.5 million would go to the Compensation Board to increase support for Virginia’s constitutional officers. The budget also includes \$100 million for the Virginia Retirement System (VRS) to reduce unfunded liabilities in the retirement plan for public school teachers, the state employee health insurance credit program, and benefits for first responders.

“This is sound fiscal policy that will keep VRS on a more solid footing—and importantly, it means our public servants can feel more secure about their future benefits,” Northam said.

Some proposals also addressed marijuana and the criminal justice sys-

tem.

First, Northam wants a line of credit to Virginia ABC to help pay for the establishment of the Commonwealth’s governance and oversight of the legal, adult-use cannabis industry.

“Reforming our marijuana laws is one way to ensure that Virginia is a more just state that works better for everyone,” Northam said. “It also will eventually bring in tax revenue that can be used to further make sure we are providing equitable access to opportunity. For example, just half of the potential annual revenue could pay for two years of quality Pre-K to every one of Virginia’s most vulnerable three- and four-year-olds -- children who deserve the best start in life.”

The budget includes \$5 million in FY2021 and \$20 million in FY2022 to pay for the cost of expungement reforms, including automatic expungement of misdemeanor marijuana convictions.

“As we consider ways to make our criminal justice system more fair and equitable, we must talk about improving our system of expunging past crimes from people’s records,” Northam said. “I have put \$20 million into this budget, so it will be ready when we conclude the important discussion of how best to conduct expungements. Like marijuana legalization, this is a priority that needs action in this session.”

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OPINION

When prophecy fails

In 1956, Leon Festinger, Henry Riecken, and Stanley Shachter wrote a book called “When Prophecy Fails.”

A work of non-fiction with the names changed, the book concerns a cult called “The Seekers” that had formed in the Chicago area. Led by a woman named Dorothy Martin, aka “Sister Thedra,” the cult believed that on Dec. 21, 1954, a flying saucer from a planet called Clarion would land in the midwest and rescue The Seekers shortly before a flood destroyed the Earth.

Festinger, Riecken, and Shachter were, for whatever reason, a little bit skeptical about the whole UFO/apocalypse thing. However, they recognized that The Seekers offered a unique opportunity: a first-hand chance to see what happens when a cult’s specific, time-sensitive prophecy fails to manifest. And so they infiltrated the cult and watched to see what would happen.

Before we get into exactly what happened, we must first recognize what constitutes a cult, bearing in mind that cults need not be religious in nature. Here are a few of the earmarks of a cult:

-Members of the cult have a

leader that is held in the highest regard. Whether alive or dead, everything the leader says, does, and believes is regarded as the highest truth, and the leader cannot be questioned. The leader also cannot be held accountable to any authorities.

-Any doubts or dissent about the cult are discouraged or even punished.

-The members of the cult believe that they are the only ones who have access to the truth.

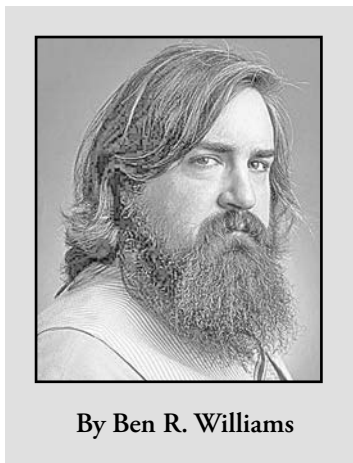
-The cult has an us-vs.-them mentality that often brings them into conflict with wider society.

-The cult believes that their noble ends justify whatever means are necessary to fulfill their goals. Members of the cult may say and do things they would have found unconscionable prior to joining the cult.

-Subservience to the leader may require members of the cult to cut ties with family and friends, especially those who question the cult.

Having established all of that, let’s look at what happened when the UFO from the planet Clarion failed to materialize way back in December of 1954.

According to “When Prophecy Fails,” The Seekers expected that at the stroke of midnight



By Ben R. Williams

on Dec. 21, 1954, they would be contacted by an alien from the planet Clarion who would escort them to the waiting flying saucer. By 12:10 a.m. on Dec. 21, the members were stunned that no such visitor had appeared. This was especially troubling given that the apocalypse was supposed to occur in just seven hours.

At 4 a.m., the group had been sitting in stunned silence for four hours. Dorothy Martin, leader of The Seekers, began to weep.

At 4:45 a.m., Dorothy Martin received a message via “automatic writing” (this means that she began writing a message on a piece of paper, a message allegedly sent to her through some telepathic means). Wouldn’t you know it, the message contained some great news! Apparently,

God had decided not to destroy the Earth, and it was all because The Seekers had believed so hard that they spared all of humanity from destruction.

Some members believed that the messages from Clarion had gotten garbled and the flying saucer would really show up on Christmas Eve. When that didn’t happen, they took the failure of the prophecy even harder than they did the first time. Many members ended up abandoning The Seekers and returning to their homes, while others remained convinced that their faith and sacrifice had saved the Earth from destruction.

Based on what they witnessed, Festinger and his colleagues developed the Cognitive Dissonance Theory. Essentially, cognitive dissonance is the psychological discomfort people feel when two things that they hold to be true contradict each other. In this case, The Seekers knew the flying saucer would land and fly them to a new planet on Dec. 21, 1954, but they also knew that that didn’t happen.

People don’t like experiencing cognitive dissonance, so they find ways to alleviate it. By convincing themselves that they had actually saved the planet by virtue of their faith, many members of The Seekers were able to ease that psychological discom-

fort. Others eased it by simply realizing that Dorothy Martin was full of it, cutting their losses, and going back home.

Obviously, “When Prophecy Fails” is just one single case study, and it’s not without its criticism. But I believe it still serves as a useful tool to predict what might happen if, hypothetically speaking, a more modern cult had a prophecy tied to specific date and the prophecy failed.

Some members of the cult, I expect, would either disavow the cult publicly or — more likely — quietly leave the cult and hope that no one remembers that they were once members.

Others — the majority, I expect — would remain members of the cult, but move the goalposts just as The Seekers did. For example, they might say that their leader actually was correct and victorious, despite all evidence to the contrary, but clarify that the nature of their leader’s victory is being hidden from public view due to some need for secrecy.

Whether or not any of this sounds relevant to our present times is entirely up to you. But it might be worth keeping The Seekers in the back of your mind over the course of the next month or so.

Christmas Traditions

Morgan Griffith
9th District U.S. Rep.

Christmas is a time of tradition, for families, communities, and throughout our society. For those of us who celebrate, like me, we each have our favorite customs about this season, whether attending a family gathering or town parade or just hearing a favorite Christmas carol.

How those traditions become things we return to year after year make for interesting stories on their own.

One story caught my eye recently on the Merriam-Webster dictionary website about the phrase “’tis the season,” a phrase often said around this time of year originating in the Christmas carol “Deck the Halls.”*

As someone with Welsh ancestry, and as chairman of the Con-

gressional Friends of Wales Caucus, I was glad to learn that this beloved carol had notable Welsh roots. According to Merriam-Webster, the carol’s tune was apparently first recorded in a 1784 book entitled Musical and Poetical Relicks of the Welsh Bards. The book was written by Edward Jones, a harpist for the then-Prince of Wales, the future King George IV, and Jones dedicated his work to the Prince.

A century later, the Welsh tune became linked to a Welsh lyricist. In 1884, a book called The Song Book: Words and Tunes from the Best Poets and Musicians reported that the lyrics to “Deck the Halls” were a translation by Thomas Oliphant of lyrics written by John Jones, a poet who also went by the Welsh name Talhaiarn.

Those lyrics included “’tis the season,” but they also include the syllables “fa la la la la,” and the carol’s Welsh origins are important in understanding their inclusion.

Merriam-Webster quotes composer John Rutter as saying the song was originally intended for performance by a group of singers and a harpist, the harp being Wales’ national instrument. The singers would sing a verse, the harpist would improvise, the singers would move to the next verse, and so on. But harpists are not always available, nor do harps occupy such a prominent place in our culture as they do in that of Wales. As Rutter said, “That only worked in Wales where they had harpists on every street corner.” So “fa la la la la” would be sung to take the harp’s place.

Before reading this article, I had not been aware of the link between Wales and this Christmas carol so widely known and sung in our culture. One of the remarkable aspects of the Christmas season is how traditions from so many parts of the world have been blended into the celebrations in our country. You may participate in several without thinking much about it — for example, if you put up a Christmas tree in your house, a custom brought to our country by settlers from Germany.

The variety of these traditions for one holiday speaks to the universal message of the Christmas season and also to the melting pot of American culture. We should be thankful that we live in a country where we can celebrate,

or not celebrate, according to our beliefs.

This year, the coronavirus pandemic impedes our enjoyment of some of these customs. Community celebrations have been curtailed or cancelled, families are reconsidering whether to have as big a gathering as they might normally have, and the festivities that do take place have as a backdrop the pandemic that has inflicted so much suffering.

Most of us have some aspect of the season we treasure that will not take place as usual this year. I enjoy participating in Christmas parades in the different towns of the Ninth District. After riding through a town saying, “Merry Christmas” and seeing the bright eyes of children and hearing the warm wishes of the adults, I find it impossible to

finish a parade without simply feeling good about the world.

Christmas remains a time of hope, and the traditions we come back to each year are also the traditions we can look forward to. I invite you to share some of your own on my official Facebook page where this column is posted.

If you celebrate Christmas, however you do so this year, I hope that it will bring you comfort and joy, and I wish you a happy and healthy New Year.

If you have questions, concerns, or comments, contact my Abingdon office at 276-525-1405, Christiansburg office at 540-381-5671, or via email at www.morgangriffith.house.gov.

* <https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/why-we-say-tis-the-season>

Designate a driver if imbibing holiday cheer this season

It’s easy to lose track of those toddy refills when reveling in the holiday spirit, so Drive Smart Virginia is urging people to “Designate Before You Celebrate” this season.

Virginia Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Co. is a founding partner of DSV, which is urging motorists to plan for a safe ride home if there is even a possibility of consuming alcohol.

“With just a few drinks you could be too impaired to safely drive,” said David Tenenbaum, VFBMIC actuarial manager and DSV treasurer. “If you choose a designated driver before you’ve had too much to drink, you can have a good time and get home safely. Choosing a designated driver could be one of the most important decisions you make.”

According to 2019 DSV statistics, there were 7,591 alcohol-related crashes, in which 4,402 people were injured and 264 died in the commonwealth last year.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that U.S. adults drank too much and got behind the wheel about 112 million times in 2010. In 2016, 10,497 people died in alcohol-impaired driving crashes, accounting for 28% of all traffic-related deaths in the U.S., according to the CDC. These drivers had blood-alcohol concentrations of at least 0.08%—the legal limit. However, impairment due to alcohol use begins to occur at levels well below that limit.

In addition to designating a responsible driver, the CDC offers ad-

ditional tips to arrive home safely in case of overindulgence: Use ride-share services, prevent friends from driving if they’ve been drinking, insist all passengers wear a seat belt, and talk with a health professional if drinking becomes a problem.

“If you’re getting behind the wheel, avoid impairment, including alcohol, recreational and prescription drugs and fatigue,” said Alex Epstein, director of traffic safety at the National Safety Council. “Skip the indulgence, get some rest, stay a while or let someone else drive.”

DSV is a nonprofit organization founded on the principle that traffic fatalities and injuries are preventable. For more information visit DriveSmartVa.org.

Scholarship applications due May 3

Piedmont Arts is accepting applications for the Nicodemus Hufford Memorial Arts Scholarship and the Harold Knowlton Work Memorial Scholarship, which provide funds for students from Martinsville or Henry County to pursue a degree in the visual or performing arts at an accredited four-year institution. The Hufford Scholarship is available to graduating high school seniors from Martinsville or Henry County who plan to pursue a degree in the visual or performing arts. Hufford schol-

arships of up to \$1,000 are available. The Work Scholarship is available to rising college sophomores, juniors and seniors who graduated from a high school in Martinsville or Henry County and are currently pursuing a degree in the visual or performing arts at an accredited four-year institution. Work scholarships of up to \$2,500 are available. Applicants for both scholarships are required to attend a personal interview and audition with the Piedmont Arts Scholarship Committee. Appli-

cations are due at Piedmont Arts by Monday, May 3, 2021 at 5 p.m. Applications are available at the museum and PiedmontArts.org, under the Education tab. For questions, contact Education Coordinator Sarah Short at sshort@piedmontarts.org.

Piedmont Arts is a nonprofit art museum, located at 215 Starling Avenue, Martinsville. Museum hours are Tuesday – Friday from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. Admission is free. Learn more at www.PiedmontArts.org.

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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

Confederate statue removed from U.S. Capitol

Virginia's statue of Confederate general Robert E. Lee was removed from the United States Capitol. A representative from the governor's office was present for the removal along with U.S. Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Richmond, according to a release from Gov. Ralph Northam.

Each state is entitled to display two statues in the National Statuary Hall Collection, and for 111 years, the Confederate statue has stood along with America's first president George Washington as Virginia's contributions. The two statues were added in 1909, which was 44 years after the Confederacy rebelled against the United States and was defeated. The Lee statue had been one among 13 located in the Crypt of the Capitol, representing the 13 original colonies.

"We should all be proud of this important step forward for our Commonwealth and our country," said Northam. "The Confederacy is a symbol of Virginia's racist and divisive history, and it is past

time we tell our story with images of perseverance, diversity, and inclusion. I look forward to seeing a trailblazing young woman of color represent Virginia in the U.S. Capitol, where visitors will learn about Barbara Johns' contributions to America and be empowered to create positive change in their communities just like she did."

Earlier this year, Northam created the Commission for Historical Statues in the United States Capitol. At the request of the commission, the Virginia Museum of History and Culture in Richmond, Virginia will accept ownership of the statue.

The General Assembly must approve the replacement before a sculptor can be commissioned. If approved, Johns would complement the statue of Washington, and would be the only teenager represented in the collection. Governor Northam has introduced a budget that includes \$500,000 to replace the statue.



The removal of Virginia's statue of Confederate general Robert E. Lee from the United States Capitol. (By Jack Mayer, Office of Governor Northam.)

Don't race through the holiday season, VSP warns

Everyone wants to say goodbye to 2020 but racing to get there may increase your chances of not reaching the finish line. Throughout 2020, Virginia has seen a spike in fatal speed-related crashes according to data from the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles Highway Safety Office.

Year-to-date there have been more speed-related traffic deaths than in all of 2019. This year has been one of challenges and this holiday season will be like none in recent memory, but speeding, driving under the influence and not buckling up is no way to finish out 2020.

"Not only have speed-related traffic deaths increased this year, so have alcohol-related traffic deaths. Virginia is on pace to have more total fatal traffic crashes in 2020 than in 2019," said Col. Gary T. Settle, Superintendent of the Virginia State

Police (VSP). "And all of this while overall traffic crashes in Virginia this year are down significantly. This means each crash has been deadlier — deadlier because of speed, alcohol, distractions and individuals not wearing seatbelts."

The agency is urging every motorist on the road this holiday season to be responsible, obey the traffic laws, ditch distractions and wear a seatbelt. Whether heading to the grocery store, the post office or delivering gifts to family and friends, choose to do it safely and do it responsibly.

Every year during the holidays, there is an increase in drunk-driving related fatalities and crashes across the nation. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), in December 2018, there were 839 lives lost in drunk-driving crashes na-

tionwide. Of the 839 deaths, 285 occurred during the Christmas and New Year's holiday period.

"Remember, drinking and driving is never an option," Settle said.

Drivers and passengers have many alternatives to arrive home safely. If you plan to attend a party or celebrate with a small group of friends during the holidays, remember:

Plan ahead. Designate a sober driver or call a friend, call family, call a cab or use public transportation.

If you know someone has been drinking. Do not let them drive. Arrange another safe way home.

If you believe you see an impaired driver on the road, call police. Remain alert and don't hesitate to dial #77 to notify your nearest Virginia State Police Emergency Communications Center. Your actions could save someone's life.

Stimulus

from page 1

funding for the military and border security, including the border wall. I read this part and found its spending to be largely reasonable, so I voted for it," he said.

"The second part containing the remaining 5,000 pages, while reportedly including some provisions I support, also reportedly featured far too many items that have no place in a spending bill. Members of Congress had only a few hours to read and analyze this overstuffed monstrosity. As I have pledged to the constituents of the Ninth District, I will not vote for a bill I have not read in its entirety. I voted no."

According to Warner, two of the biggest debates were over the inclusion of another round of \$1,200 checks to all Americans and whether to include liability insurance for companies.

In a recent poll conducted by Data for Progress, approximately 75 percent of respondents said that they wanted a second round of stimulus checks as a priority in the next package, but Warner disagreed with their inclusion in favor of more unemployment insurance, a position only half of respondents supported.

Under the measure approved by Congress, married couples with an annual income of less than \$150,000 would receive \$1,200, with an additional \$600 for each child under 18. Single Americans will receive \$600, plus the additional \$600 for each child under 18. Those payments could start arriving as early as next week.

Warner said he viewed inclusion of individual stimulus checks as a political bargaining chip for Republicans.

"I think it is unfortunate that the trade-off of trying to allow Mr. Trump to send out one more" \$600 check will be "taking away unemployment benefits to people who may have been out of work for months. I don't think that is right," Warner said. "I don't think that is appropriate, but if it is part of this deal, I will go along because we've got to act, and I think this playbook has run out."

During a Dec. 13 interview, Trump also supported the idea of individual checks.

"Right now, I want to see checks going for more money than they're talking about going to people," Trump said.

"I see some odd-couple combinations of the far-left and the far-right,

who have never had any history of making any kind of deal," Warner said. "They are saying we should be spending unlimited amounts or sending \$1,200 checks out to every individual regardless of their income. I think that is a little bit disconnected from reality, and as we've seen, all of these decisions require trade-offs."

Still, Warner said the package has some positives for Americans.

The bill approved by Congress included 16 weeks of additional unemployment, with a \$300 a week bonus from the federal government. Warner said it also proposed \$10 billion for broadband, \$300 for small businesses, \$25 billion for rental assistance and \$160 billion for state and local government assistance.

State and local aid was tied to providing liability insurance for businesses, he said.

"At the end of the day, we couldn't finally bridge that gap," he said. "I do think there ought to be appropriate protections for small businesses, schools, and hospitals that did the right thing when they tried to practice appropriate procedures early on in COVID," he said. "I don't think we ought to give every business a kind of 'get out of jail free' card to say that we can act irresponsibly and not have to be liable for their actions."

But he said state and local aid could be found in more indirect portions of the bill.

"There are other areas in the legislation that will help state and local governments, like \$82 billion for education," Warner said. "In many cases, that is a proxy of state and local government funding."

Distribution of vaccines, broadband assistance and food distributions will be other avenues of providing funds to state governments.

"The bare minimum that we need to do is make sure that CARES money can be spent past the end of the year," Warner added. "Those funds would disappear if we had not provided that extension."

Another feature of the previous CARES Act were the funds given to businesses through the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). The program has received criticism for prioritizing larger corporations over small businesses.

According to figures on the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), about 600 large companies received the maximum amount allowed under

the program of \$10 million.

More than half of the \$522 billion went to big businesses, while 28 percent of the money was distributed in amounts less than \$150,000.

"I wish that in the first round, a business would have to show revenue loss. There were entities that took some of this money that didn't candidly need it. We've tightened up the requirements," Warner said. "Small businesses now have to be 300 employees or less rather than 500 employees or less. It's targeted to smaller businesses. They have to show at least a 30 percent revenue loss in one quarter compared to similar quarters in 2019. There are even more additional funds set aside for those very small businesses that are under 10 employees."

Warner said he is optimistic for a continued partnership between President-elect Joe Biden and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

"They had a prior relationship. I hope it remains strong," he said. "I think it'll be in the best interest of our country. There's a whole lot of us in both political parties that are tired of inaction when we see need across our country. It's not perfect, but it shows a return, I think, to the sensible center. I think it is a return to people who want to put the country ahead of the party, and I think it is a great holiday gift."

The number of bills passed the last time McConnell and Biden were both in office was significantly lower than previous administrations.

Between 2008 and 2016, a total of 1,585 bills were passed into law, according to statistics on congressional productivity provided by The Brookings Institute. That is almost 1,000 less than President George W. Bush and President Bill Clinton's administrations, and 2,000 fewer bills than under President Ronald Reagan.

Not only did productivity decrease over the Biden-McConnell era, Warner's own party lost seats in the House and Senate.

When President Barack Obama and Biden won the presidency, McConnell had been serving as the minority leader in the Senate for two years. Obama had a 57-seat majority in the Senate and a 257-seat majority in the House. By 2016, Republicans had gained control over both chambers, with Democrats losing 11 and 63 seats, respectively.

Adventists support inmate families

The Stuart Seventh-day Adventist Church has made it a tradition of helping families of inmates with Christmas food boxes delivered to their homes.

This year 51 boxes, filled with produce, canned foods, and dry foods were delivered to homes in Patrick and Henry counties. The names and addresses of the families were provided by the inmates.

At the homes, the question was asked if any additional help was needed. One family expressed urgent need for some finan-

cial help with their rent, which the church provided.

The goal of the food program is to keep a good, supportive relationship between the inmate and his/her family. As the food boxes are delivered on behalf of the inmate, this clearly takes place.

An additional project of the church is to give each inmate a small Christmas bag containing soap, toothpaste, and candy. This year, 150 bags were given to inmates at the Patrick County Jail.

Hearing to be held on certain SOL revisions

The Virginia Board of Education will hold a virtual public hearing on Tuesday, January 5, 2021 at 7 p.m. to solicit comments on the proposed World Language Standards of Learning. The World Language Standards of Learning identify the essential content, processes, and skills for language learning. The proposed revised standards are available on the Virginia Department of Education's World Language Standards of Learning website.

The virtual public hear-

ing will be livestreamed on the VDOE YouTube Channel. Members of the public who wish to speak must register at https://doe-virginia.gov/zoom.us/join/register/tZlqf-qoqT-krHNG3PaQuYyNf7fz-VO_CS8dv. Speaker remarks should be limited to three minutes.

For additional information about the proposed revisions, contact Dr. Lisa Harris, Specialist for World Language and International Education, at Lisa.Harris@doe.virginia.gov or (804) 225-3666.

Martinsville resident among those to serve in Northam's administration

Jean Odachowski, Regional Director of Family Preservation Services, Inc. was reappointed to serve on the Virginia Interagency Coordinat-

ing Council, according to a release from Gov. Ralph Northam, who announced the additional appointments to his administration on Friday.

Axton woman died in crash

The Virginia State Police responded to a two-vehicle crash at 3:03 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 17, on Virginia 57, one mile east of Virginia 619.

A 2000 Pontiac Grand Am was traveling west on Virginia 57 when it attempted to make a left turn.

A 2004 Chevrolet Cavalier allegedly attempted to pass the Pontiac as it was making the turn. The Cavalier allegedly struck the Pontiac on the driver's side of the vehicle.

The driver of the Pontiac, Billie B. Nuckles, 68, of Axton, died at the scene. She was wearing a seatbelt.

A 16-year-old female passenger was transported for treatment of minor injuries and a 16-year-old male passenger was transported for treatment of serious injuries.

The driver of the Cavalier, Jennifer T. Jefferson, 38, of Richmond, Va., was transported for treatment of serious injuries. She was not wearing a seatbelt.

A 6-year-old male passenger and an 8-year-old passenger were transported for treatment of minor injuries.

Charges are pending. The crash remains under investigation.

CROSSWORD ANSWERS												
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Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you and your family

From:

Henry County Enterprise
and The Enterprise Staff
Taylor Boyd
Debbie Hall
Brandon Martin
Liz Moonbury
Lynn Shouse

Contributors/
Columnists

Betty Dean
Sidney McClure
Ashlee Mullis
Ben Williams
Beverly Woody

Commission selects Barbara Rose Johns to represent Virginia in U.S. Capitol

The Commission on Historical Statues in the United States Capitol voted to recommend civil rights icon Barbara Rose Johns to represent Virginia in the National Statuary Hall Collection, replacing the existing statue of Confederate general Robert E. Lee.

Gov. Ralph Northam recently announced that his proposed budget includes nearly \$500,000 to replace the statue.

On April 23, 1951, sixteen-year-old Barbara Rose Johns led a student walkout at Robert Russa Moton High School in Farmville, protesting the overcrowded and inferior conditions of the all-Black school compared to those

of White students at nearby Farmville High School. Her actions garnered the support of NAACP lawyers Spottswood Robinson and Oliver Hill who took up her cause and filed a lawsuit that would later be one of five cases the United States Supreme Court reviewed in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* when it declared segregation unconstitutional. Historians consider Johns’ protest a pivotal moment that launched the desegregation movement in America.

“As a teenager, Barbara Johns bravely led a protest that defied segregation and challenged the barriers that she and her African American peers faced, ultimately dismantling

them,” said Northam. “I am proud that her statue will represent Virginia in the U.S. Capitol, where her idealism, courage, and conviction will continue to inspire Virginians, and Americans, to confront inequities and fight for meaningful change now and for generations to come.”

Earlier this year, Northam signed legislation that established the Commission for Historical Statues in the United States Capitol charged with deciding studying the removal and replacement of the Robert E. Lee statue. The eight-member commission, chaired by Sen. Louise Lucas, voted unanimously recommending the removal of the stat-

ue on July 24, 2020.

Working with the Department of Historic Resources, the commission collected nominations for the new statue and provided several opportunities for public comment at its virtual meetings. After considering all public comments and guidance from the commission members, the list was narrowed to five finalists including, Oliver Hill, Barbara Johns, John Mercer Langston, Pocahontas, and Maggie Walker.

Since 1909, America’s first president George Washington has stood along with Confederate general Robert E. Lee as Virginia’s contributions to the National Statuary



Hall Collection, where each state is entitled to two statues. If approved by the General Assembly, Johns would complement the Washington statue and

be the only teenager represented in the collection.

The commission will continue its work to select a sculptor and commission a statue of Barbara Johns.

Local nurse honored

The Virginia Nurses Foundation (VNF) honored Johnathan B. Phillips, M.S.N., M.S.Ed., R.N., N.P.D.-B.C., of Martinsville, Virginia, with the 2020 Year of the Nurse Award on Saturday, December 12, 2020.

Phillips was one of 20 Registered Nurses (RNs) recognized at the Annual VNF Gala from more than 70 nominations. Selection was based on the premise that the nurses selected enhanced the image of professional nursing and rose to the unprecedented challenges facing the profession with compassion and respect during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Nurses know the value of families, both in patient care and our own lives. I accept this award in recognition of the family members of all healthcare workers. They are exposed to whatever we bring home. They support our tears and laughter. They understand when we miss events and milestones. We simply answered a calling, but they assumed a very important role,” Phillips said.

“Finalists of this award truly embody the spirit of what it means to be a nurse leader. They are compassionate, driven, and determined to positively impact the nursing profession. They

see a need for improvement in their community and go above and beyond to deliver lasting results. Whether they are long into their nursing career or newly graduated, these individuals are creating innovative patient solutions that will shape the nursing practice for years to come,” said VNF President Terri Kennedy.

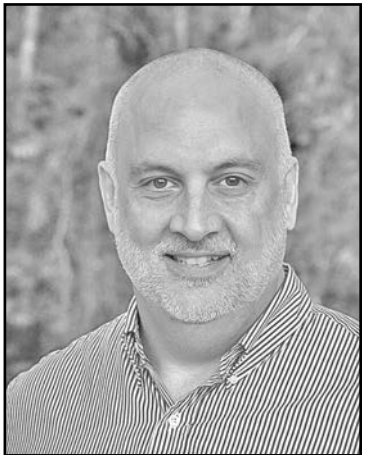
An RN for 29 years, Phillips is employed by Carilion Franklin Memorial Hospital in the Intensive Care Unit. He worked previously at Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital and Radford University. He holds a bachelor’s degree in nursing from Virginia Commonwealth University, a master’s degree in nursing from Old Dominion University, and a master’s de-

gree in education from Radford University. He maintains certification in Nursing Professional Development by the American Nurses Credentialing Center. Phillips lives in Martinsville with his wife, Kim, and children, John Ainsley and Claudia Grace. He serves as secretary of the Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society Board of Directors and is a compatriot of the Colonel George Waller Chapter, Sons of the American Revolution. He is a past president of the Martinsville Jaycees and the Patrick Henry Elementary School Parent Teacher Organization.

He is a former state vice president of the Virginia Jaycees and Clerk of Martinsville City Council. Appointed by the

Virginia Department of Health Commissioner, he previously served as chair of the Virginia Advanced Practice Nurse Scholarship Committee.

There are currently 95,658 RNs in Virginia.



Select Walgreens locations to offer no cost antigen testing

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) is partnering with Walgreens to provide Abbott BinaxNOW rapid antigen testing at se-

lected Walgreens locations across the Commonwealth from now through Wednesday, Dec. 30. Four Walgreens locations will operate

drive-thru COVID-19 testing at no cost. Testing locations may be expanded after the first of the year, pending the availability of additional

federal funding.

“We are pleased to announce this public-private partnership that will help ensure increased access to COVID-19 testing at no cost for some of our most vulnerable communities,” said VDH Public Health and Preparedness Deputy Commissioner Dr. Parham Jaberi. The testing locations selected represent communities that lack a fixed testing location or have higher rates of vulnerable populations.”

VDH encourages the use of these tests for individuals who are symptomatic, those who have been in close contact with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19, those at high risk of illness or complications and

essential employees such as educators, childcare providers and healthcare providers.

“Walgreens has a long history of stepping up to support our customers and communities in times of need, and we’re pleased to be working in collaboration with Virginia health officials on their efforts to expand access to COVID-19 testing,” said Paul Blankenship, Walgreens regional vice president in Virginia.

Walgreens pharmacy teams will oversee the patient’s self-administration of a COVID-19 test, where test results will be processed at the pharmacy and provided to patients within 24 hours.

COVID-19 testing will

be available by appointment to adults and children age 3 and older who meet screening criteria to receive a test. Appointments can be made by following the steps on [Walgreens.com/COVID19Testing](https://www.walgreens.com/COVID19Testing)

Initial Walgreens COVID-19 testing locations are listed below.

- Collinsville, 3590 Virginia Ave
- North Dinwiddie, 26036 Cox Rd
- Richmond, 4845 Laburnum Ave
- South Boston, 3220 Halifax Rd

For a list of additional testing options visit www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/covid-19-testing/covid-19-testing-sites/.

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1118 Memorial Blvd.,

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1105 Brookedale St.,

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5972 AL Philpott Hwy

OBITUARIES

Sharon Diane Hiatt Perdue

Sharon Diane Hiatt Perdue, 63, of Collinsville, Virginia passed away Wednesday, December 16, 2020 at her home. She was born November 21, 1957 in Martinsville, Virginia to Mary Collen Vaughan Hiatt and the late Edward Manuel Hiatt.

In addition to her father, she was preceded in death by brothers, Junior Lee Hiatt and Eddie Dean Hiatt.

In addition to her mother, she is survived by a daughter, Farrah Adkins; son, Kenneth



Robertson; sisters, Linda Bryan and Caren Sims; brothers, Donnie Hiatt and Robert Hiatt; and grandchildren, Deanna Adkins and Jada Adkins.

A memorial service was held on Saturday, December 19, 2020, at Wright Funeral Service Chapel with Pastor Kenny Harris officiating.

Wright Funeral Service & Crematory is serving the family. Online condolences may be made at www.wrightfuneralservice.net.

Rosie Dillard Hill

Rosie Dillard Hill, 70, of Martinsville, Virginia, passed away Monday, December 21, 2020, at Wake Forest Baptist Hospital. She was born June 13, 1950, in Axton Virginia to the late Bob and Ufallar Matthews Dillard. She was a member of High Ridge Missionary Baptist Church where she was on the Usher Board and several other committees. She was Troop Leader for #615 Girl Scout, and a member of Sizzling Divas (Red Hat Society).

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by a sister, Carrie Jamison; and brothers, Frank, Clifford and Joe Lewis Dillard.

Mrs. Hill is survived by her husband Gregory Hill; daughter, Kristal Hill; son,



Brian Hill; sisters Arnetta Foster and Bertha Yancey; brother, Bobby Dillard; grandchildren, Trazel Hill, Brian Hill, Jr., Kyia Hill, Ayden Coles, Saniya Coles, and Kywanda Madison; three greatgrandchildren and special friends, Connie and Carver Lewis and Patricia Via.

A graveside service will be held on Sunday, December 27, 2020, at Carver

Memorial Gardens, at 2 p.m. with the Rev. Keishawn Niblett officiating. Visitation will be Saturday, December 26, 2020, from 4 to 6 p.m. at Wright Funeral Service Chapel.

Wright Funeral Service & Crematory is serving the family. Online condolences may be made at www.wrightfuneralservices.net.

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

**Saturday,
Dec. 26 – Sunday,
Dec. 27**

The Martinsville-Henry County Heritage Center and Museum will be open special holiday hours, from 1-4 p.m. both days. The Museum will be closed to the public on New Year's Eve and New Year's Day.

**Wednesday,
December 30**

The community and visitors are invited to visit the Smith River

Sports Complex every Wednesday evening from 7 to 9 p.m. for adult pick up soccer. There is no fee to play. The event is presented by Dr. Chan M. Park Family Practice.

**Friday,
January 1**

Fairy Stone State Park, First Day Hike, a self-guided hike from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m., on any of the 17 miles of trails at Fairy Stone State Park. Grab a geocaching brochure from the office or use the official Geocaching.com app to locate the caches. Parking fees are waived for

the day. Participants will be mailed a First Day Hike bumper sticker after the event. Call (276) 930-2424; 967 Fairystone Lake Drive, Stuart.

ONGOING

MHC Coalition for Health and Wellness offers no contact application assistance for Virginia's free or low-cost Medicaid plans (Children's Medicaid/FAMIS, pregnancy Medicaid and Adult Health Care (birth to 64-years-old). Applications completed by phone (no contact). Call or text Ann Walker (276) 732-0509 to see if you qualify.

PET OF THE WEEK



Zena spent her life on a chain and is just now learning how to socialize with the world. Excuse her loud barking. She likes to protect her space but is a gentle girl when out and about. Due to her history, Zena needs a home with no children and no other animals. She really can love with a huge heart, but her past has given her bad behaviors that she needs help to overcome. For more information, contact the Martinsville-Henry County SPCA at (276) 638-7297.

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Pandemic widens racial gap in meeting VA families’ basic needs

As the number of coronavirus deaths surpasses 300,000 in the United States, new research shows families with children are suffering from the unprecedented turmoil and economic crisis set off by the pandemic. According to a new report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the pandemic has uncovered alarming trends in meeting basic needs. Lauren Snelling, research director for the group Voices for Virginia’s Children, said the report finds Virginia’s communities of color are especially struggling with food insecurity, mental health and unemployment. “For Virginia families, there’s about 13% that said they often did not have enough to eat - but for Black families, that rate is nearly double,” she said. “When we look at employment losses, 46% of Virginia families have lost some sort of employment income, but the rate is almost 60% for Black families.” The report also found 21% of all Americans reported feeling “down, depressed or hopeless” in recent weeks. In Virginia, that number is 19%, indicating a widespread need for access to mental-health care. Snelling said 16% of Virginians described themselves as having “little or no confidence” that they can make their next rent or mortgage payment. That’s near the national average of 18%. However, she noted that the Commonwealth, especially the Richmond area, is known for its high eviction rates. “We know that some localities in Virginia have some of the highest eviction rates in the nation,” she said, “and this is really due to redlining and other discriminatory practices, and systematic racism that led to a higher concentration of poverty and wealth gaps for many communities of color. So, it’s all interconnected.” With Congress still negotiating a stimulus deal, Leslie Boissiere, vice president for external affairs at the Casey Foundation, said policymakers need to prioritize the COVID-19 response to ensure children have what they need to survive and thrive. “We have to start with those programs that work and that have a proven track record,” she said, “and do the things that are required to provide for the basic needs of kids in this crisis.” The report recommended pushing for more federal support for programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

-Diane Bernard
Virginia News Connection

Virginia to partner on statewide system connecting health and social services

Virginia will allocate \$10 million in federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding to create Unite Virginia, a statewide technology platform designed to connect vulnerable Virginians to health and social services. Gov. Ralph Northam made the announcement Friday. He said that working with Unite Us, a technology company that builds coordinated care networks of health and social service providers, the Commonwealth will implement an integrated e-referral system that unites government agencies, health care providers, and community-based partners and supports Virginia’s continuing COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. “The ongoing and widespread impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic underscore the need to unite traditional health care settings and community organizations that address social determinants of health,” said Northam. “This is about connecting people with the supports they need to live healthy lives. Having this critical infrastructure in place will also position our Commonwealth to better respond to and recover from the twin public health and economic crises we face, and advance health equity by ensuring medical care and social services are appropriately delivered to Virginians, reducing barriers to care, and identifying gaps to better our target resources.” This initial funding allocation will cover startup and implementation costs to operate the e-referral system, which can integrate with widely used electronic medical record systems in place at hospitals, health systems, and medical practice groups across Virginia. Establishing those links will enable health care providers to refer patients to social service organizations that can provide other supports such as food, transportation assistance, housing, employment services, and more. In turn, participating organizations will be able to refer patients and clients to each other. This interconnected approach also increases the likelihood that vulnerable Virginians will access support services to manage their health conditions and the environmental factors that contribute to them. Data insights gleaned from the integrated technology platform will help state government, providers, and other partners identify critical needs and better focus efforts to serve these Virginians. “Developing this type of e-referral system has been a longstanding goal of our statewide Partnering for a Healthy Virginia initiative,” said State Health Commissioner M. Norman Oliver, MD, MA. “With this funding, we can take the necessary steps to continue our important work on promoting health equity and addressing the social factors that influence individual and community health. This work is more important now than ever because the economic harm and isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has been especially hard on vulnerable Virginians.” “Virginia’s hospital community is committed to the mission of addressing social determinants of health by ensuring that all Virginians have access to care and working to reduce health disparities,” said Sean T. Connaughton, President and CEO of the Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association. “To that end, our members have worked closely with the Virginia Department of Health on planning for the build-out of this system in the Commonwealth and its key features, such as a two-way communication mechanism between health care providers and community partners. We look forward to full implementation of this program.” Unite Us provides unifying infrastructure between health care providers and community-based organizations as the foundation for social care transformation at scale. With networks in more than 40 states, Unite Us is the statewide technology platform in North Carolina and the company is developing programs similar to what is planned in Virginia in communities in Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, and South Dakota. In Virginia, Unite Us already powers networks in the Hampton Roads and Shenandoah Valley regions. When fully established, this network will be an integral part of the Commonwealth’s broader public health framework. “We are ready to work alongside our partners in Virginia to provide both the technology and hyper-local community engagement that will give individuals comprehensive access to the care and services they need,” said Unite Us President Taylor Justice. “Thanks to the leadership of Governor Northam, Unite Us will help mitigate the current effects of the pandemic, build the infrastructure to strengthen connectivity between all care providers, and ultimately help build healthier, more equitable communities.”

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New tracking tool helps families as Virginia nursing-home deaths soar

Coronavirus vaccinations are finally being given in Virginia, as nursing-home deaths from the virus reached record highs and staff shortages continue to climb. The AARP Nursing Home COVID-19 Dashboard shows cracks in the long-term care system. David DeBiasi, advocacy director for AARP Virginia, said since the pandemic began, nursing homes account for 32% of all COVID-19 deaths in Virginia, but represent only about 3% of total cases. Even before the Thanksgiving surge in cases, he noted nursing-home deaths from mid-October to mid-November were almost one per 100 Virginia residents, the highest rate since the federal government began collecting information. “We need to advance a transformation and modernization of the nation’s long-term care system,” DeBiasi argued. “We’re trying to call attention to it through this dashboard that we just released. Our analysis shows that we’re in trouble.” As of mid-November, more than 100,000 nursing-home residents and staff nationwide have died from the virus; about 40% of all fatalities. DeBiasi noted the dashboard data is from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. It shows another alarming statistic: More than 15% of long-term care facilities in Virginia report not having adequate personal protective equipment (PPE), like gloves, gowns and masks. The new tool is part of a series of AARP reports on revamping the nation’s long-term care system. “We want to urge our state leaders to take action to save lives,” DeBiasi explained. “We know that federal policymakers have been slow to respond to the crisis. No state has done a good enough job. And hopefully, with this data, families will have the information that they need to make decisions, and policymakers can be held accountable.” As of Sunday, Congress is close to finalizing a deal on COVID relief aid, which is expected to include more funding for nursing home PPE and staffing.

-Diane Bernard
Virginia News Connection

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Charles Williams (right), of Williams Auction Co., LLC, presents a \$1,000 donation check to William Martin (left), President of the Horsepasture Volunteer Rescue Squad, to help with operational expenses.