

# HENRY COUNTY ENTERPRISE

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## Family seeks answers in 2013 deaths

**Debbie Hall**  
*dhall@theenterprise.net*

A Bassett family continues to hope for justice in the 2013 death of a loved one.

Polly Dodson vividly recalls the last time she saw her son, Ricky Eugene Dodson.

It was nearly eight-years ago on Thursday, Oct. 3, 2013. She was returning from an appointment and he was unloading groceries, Polly Dodson said. One of her daughters had recently been released from the hospital. She and her son had a brief conversation about his sister's health.

The last thing Ricky Dodson said to his mother was "tell her I love her," Polly Dodson said.

Ricky Dodson's remains were found in the Henry area of Franklin County on Dec. 5, 2013. Authorities have declined to provide information about the manner of death.

"It's listed as 'sealed' in his death certificate," said his sister, Frances Hylton. "It's hard knowing he laid in the woods for two months" before his remains were found.

Both Polly Dodson and Hylton speculate Ricky Dodson planned to spend the weekend with Vicky Harbour Purdy.

"It wasn't unusual for them to spend the weekend somewhere," Polly Dodson said.

Purdy's remains were found Oct. 6, 2013, inside a burned vehicle on Philpott Road, near the Franklin County/Henry County line. She suffered a gunshot wound to the head, according to authorities.

The two were last seen alive by family on Oct. 4, 2013. Both were 53 and of Bassett.

There have been no arrests in the case.

The two women recalled that before Ricky Dodson's remains were found, authorities seemed to believe he was responsible for Purdy's death.

"But even if he had done it, I think he would have called and told me he had done something wrong and wouldn't be around," Polly Dodson said. "He wouldn't want me to worry."

Two days after Purdy's remains were found, Polly Dodson said she and other family members rode to the area.

"There were police cars all up and down that road. We turned and went down another road – it was the road where they finally found Ricky's body. We saw a bunch of buzzards circling and flying around" out in the nearby woods, Polly Dodson said.

At the time, "I said they were migrating. I didn't think any more about it. Now, I wish we would have stopped and looked. I would have hated to find him," but Polly Dodson



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

**Information is sought in the 2013 deaths of Ricky Dodson (left) and Vicky Purdy. The two were last seen alive in October 2013.**

said she also hated the idea of her son being in the woods for two months.

"Ricky was always happy-go-lucky. If somebody made him mad, he'd let them know it, but he could come up with a joke off the top of his head," she said and recalled a family trip to the Pigeon Forge/Gatlinburg area of Tennessee.

"We were in a little restaurant across the road from where people were bungee jumping, and Ricky kept us laughing," she said. "When they got ready to leave, one couple stopped by our table and said they didn't mean to interrupt, but they had more fun listening to him than they did" attending a popular attraction. "Ricky would have made a good comedian."

She also wishes local authorities were investigating the case.

"Ricky hardly knew anybody in Franklin County. It wasn't someplace he hung out in," she said. "He knew people in Henry County."

Henry County Sheriff Lane Perry said because the bodies were found in Franklin County, authorities there are heading the investigation, with his office assisting.

Franklin County Sheriff's investigator Sandra Ingram and Lt. J.P. Nolen did not immediately return calls for comment.

With no arrests in the case and few updates, "I get more and more depressed as it goes on," Polly Dodson said. "It really has affected me. I can't seem to get away

See **Answers**, page 6



**The Commission on Local Government (CLG) is considering positions and arguments in Martinsville's proposal to revert to town status.**

## Commission considers reversion positions

**Brandon Martin**  
*Staff writer*

The City of Martinsville formally began the reversion proceedings by filing a notice of intent with the Commission on Local Government (CLG) on Sept. 15, 2020.

Henry County subsequently filed its response in December.

Following is an overview of some of the key positions and arguments being considered by the CLG.

### Services/Facilities

The city's notice on page 36 discusses the current government services offered by the city and the new proposals post-reversion.

As noted in the filing, "responsibility for governmental services within Martinsville would be al-

located between Martinsville and Henry County in the manner according to the traditional town-county relationship."

Currently, the two localities have individual school superintendents and administrative staff. They do not "operate jointly" and "do not otherwise contract jointly for the provision of public education."

Based on numbers from the 2019-2020 school year, enrollment in city schools was 1,930 students. Per fiscal year (FY) 2018 data, the city schools had 167 total teachers for kindergarten through 12th grade. In FY2019, Martinsville contributed \$6,144,512 to its school board.

The city proposes that

See **Positions**, page 6



**Andy Bowersox, executive director of Energize Ministries, said the organization plans to build up to 15 campsites in the Reed Creek District to accommodate an increase in visitors.**

## BZA approves permit for campground used by church leaders

**Brandon Martin**  
*Staff writer*

The Henry County Board of Zoning Appeals recently approved a special use permit to make way for a campground facility that will be created on about 63 acres of land in the Reed Creek District.

The campground will accommodate up to 15 sites and the applicant intends to build an amphitheater using the natural lay of the land.

Andy Bowersox, executive director of Energize Ministries of Winston-Salem, N.C., submitted the application and presented additional details at the Feb. 24 meeting.

"For about six years now, we have been leasing this property to hold leadership retreats," Bowersox said. "Our ministry is about supporting primarily pastors and other clergy members. We are an encouragement, refreshment and recreation-based ministry to boost up community leadership."

Bowersox said the non-profit hosts 1- to 3- day retreats on a weekly basis.

"We provide individual retreats, marriage retreats, family retreats" and staff retreats for larger churches, Bowersox said.

As the ministry has grown, Bowersox said there was a need for additional places to house guests.

"We came up with the concept of putting some campsites in up there so that we could bring people up from time to time for 1,2 or 3 days," Bowersox said. "The amphitheater part is part of a longer-term vision for the additional 620 acres that adjoins this property. It's a place where we could host some community concerts and worship nights."

Bowersox said the amphitheater could eventually potentially be available to the public as a venue for events like weddings.

"It's almost a God-made amphitheater already," he said. "There would be very

See **BZA**, page 2

## Community service is enduring legacy

**Debbie Hall**  
*dhall@theenterprise.net*

Richard "Big Bird" Holcomb died on February 25, but his dedication to serving the community will be an enduring legacy.

Holcomb, 65, of Ridgeway, organized Big Bird's annual Toy Run to benefit Christmas Cheer years ago, according to Martinsville Sheriff Steve Draper, who worked closely with Holcomb, the Virginia State Police and local law enforcement agencies to help facilitate the ride for at least 20 years.

Holcomb "cared about people. He cared about young people. I guess

that's why Christmas Cheer was so near to his heart," Draper said.

When young people came to his shop, Big Birds Big Twins, Draper said Holcomb scoured his inventory for whatever motorcycle part needed. If a young person didn't have all the money needed to pay for the part, Holcomb "worked it out" so the customer took the part when they left.

Although Holcomb suffered with various health issues for years, he persisted. Holcomb attended the 2019 Toy Run even though he was physically unable to ride, Draper said, and recalled that Holcomb sat on

the tailgate of his pickup truck as participants started the ride from the Elks Club parking lot on Fairy

Street in Martinsville.

Holcomb also was there

See **Legacy**, page 6



PHOTO BY RAY REYNOLDS

**Richard "Big Bird" Holcomb and his wife, Paige Holcomb, participate in one of the annual Toy Runs to benefit Christmas Cheer.**

## 'Sole' mates turn shared hobby into startup storefront



**Hunter Shively (left) and Jeffrey Hairston, co-owners of Sole Zone, began their own high-end sneaker retail store in 2019 after a lifetime of collecting.**

**Brandon Martin**  
*Staff writer*

Some people collect vinyl records, others collect baseball cards. But Hunter Shively and Jeffrey Hairston collect high-end sneakers and thanks to their business, Sole Zone, residents of Martinsville-Henry County can start collecting too.

"We're kind of like a pawn shop for shoes but not really. It's more like trading cards," Shively said. "We buy, sell and trade. If you see a shoe in here, you can either trade towards that shoe or pay with cash. You can also do a combination of the two, or we might even end up paying you if you've got a really pricey pair."

Even though the two Henry County residents

have a passion for shoes, the sneaker connoisseurs didn't know each other until a chance meeting 2.5 hours away.

"There is a shoe convention in Charlotte that's been around about five or six years. I would go to it every month. I

See **Sole**, page 7

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# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## Saturday, March 6

Patrick Henry Community College is holding a family day at the Fab Lab from 10 a.m. until noon. The hands-on activity will allow for family members to experiment with 3D Doodler Pens to draw sculptures and create 3D designs. The event is \$15 per person. To pre-register, visit [ph.augusoft.net](http://ph.augusoft.net) or call (276) 656-5461.

## Wednesday, March 10

Ameristaff is holding a job fair for a variety of positions open in Martinsville. There are immediate openings for survey and research agents, clerical positions, pick and pack associates, forklift operators and machine helpers. The fair lasts from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. For more information, call (276) 632-7088.

Piedmont Arts is inviting seniors to paint together from 10 a.m. until noon in the Piedmont Arts classroom. Sessions are self-guided and provide a space to socialize while creating artwork. Participants should bring their own supplies. The session is free to members and \$5 for non-members. Non-members pay at the door. Social distancing and masks are required at all in-person classes.

## Friday, March 12

Piedmont Arts is hosting an opening reception for the American Watercolor Society 153rd Annual Exhibition from 5:30-7:30 p.m. The exhibit Jane Iten Memorial Exhibition, and Water Ladies is free and open to the public. Complimentary wine and light refreshments will be served. Social distancing and masks required. Limited capacity. RSVP Required by March 9. RSVP at [PiedmontArts.org](http://PiedmontArts.org).

## Saturday, March 13

The Martinsville Mayhem will host a home game at 7 p.m. against the Carolina Cardinals at the Smith River Sports Complex. The Mayhem are a semi-professional football team that plays in the Coastal Spring Football League. For more information, call (276) 403-5940.

## 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.

# Martinsville student takes top honors in contest

A Martinsville High School student earned first place recently in an oratorical contest held by Eastman Performance Films.

Javeon Moorer, a tenth-grade student at MHS, earned first place with his speech on Booker T. Washington, the foremost black educator of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Moorer competed in the Southside Speaks Black History Oratorical Contest against three finalists from Bassett, Magna Vista, and Patrick County high schools.

The focus of the contest, held virtually, was to highlight African Americans from the Commonwealth of Virginia who have made significant contributions to history and to provide high schoolers with the opportunity to share their writing, public speaking, and leadership skills

Rachel Mills, a student at Patrick County High School, spoke about civil rights activist Barbara Johns. Claire Smith, a student at Bassett High School, spoke about the Martinsville Seven, a group of young black men executed in 1951 after being convicted of raping a white woman. Emily Williams, a student at Magna Vista High



Javeon Moorer

School, spoke about Henrietta Lacks, a black woman whose cancer cells are the source of one of the most important cell lines in medical research.

"We are very proud of Javeon and this great accomplishment," said MCPS Superintendent Dr. Zeb Talley. "He takes great pride in his endeavors. Javeon is a dedicated student and will

make a great impact in the education field."

"We're extremely proud of Mr. Moorer's first-place win!" said MHS Principal Aji Dixon. "He is an extremely articulate and talented young man with a great deal of potential, and we certainly appreciate Eastman for providing this opportunity to students in our community."

# HOROSCOPES

## ARIES - Mar 21/Apr 20

This week some of the puzzle pieces in your life may not fit correctly. That's okay, Aries. You will find a way to make things work even if they don't exactly line up.

## TAURUS - Apr 21/May 21

Your thoughts may be focused on the spiritual for much of the week, Taurus. This is an opportunity to get in touch with meaningful things in your life.

## GEMINI - May 22/Jun 21

Gemini, if things haven't been going as planned, perhaps it's time to reevaluate some of your choices. Have confidence that you will find a solution that works.

## CANCER - Jun 22/Jul 22

Cancer, your sensitivity is heightened this week, so you may need to think twice or even three times before you share your opinions. Cool down before becoming chatty.

## BZA

from page 1

minimal grading involved with it. We don't intend to put seating through there. We would finish it up with some gravel pathways and maybe some fire pits. There would be a stage, or a presentation area, at the bottom."

While future evening events are possible, according to Bowersox, it "will be primarily a day-time use" facility that wouldn't violate any noise ordinances.

Lee Clark, director of Henry County Planning, Zoning and Inspections, said the ordinance would alleviate any concerns adjoining property owners have about the amphitheater.

"The county has a noise ordinance already that is in effect all the time," regardless of "whether it's the applicant or somebody that wants to go out there and play music," Clark said, and added that the noise ordinance prohibits amplified sound after 10 p.m.

Bowersox said the retreats attract between 400 and 500 guests a year to the area.

During his tenure as director, Clark said "I had no idea that people were staying up there on a somewhat regular basis now. That's a testament to how you all have been operating up until this point."

Depending on future funds, Bowersox said Energize Ministries hopes to purchase the additional 600-acres.

"We hoped that would have happened already, but we aren't quite there yet," he said. "Our ministry is non-profit, and we are supported by contributions from people that are inclined to give."

Bowersox explained that Energize Ministries isn't a church, but rather serves churches.

"The caliber of our guests is leaders," he said. "We are not an addiction ministry, a recovery ministry or

## LEO - Jul 23/Aug 23

Figure out how you can organize your day to get things done with more efficiency, Leo. This is a better option than getting frustrated by a lack of time in your schedule.

## VIRGO - Aug 24/Sept 22

You may realize that the conventional ways of doing things simply are not working anymore, Virgo. Start thinking creatively rather than analytically.

## LIBRA - Sept 23/Oct 23

Dreams and fantasies are more than wishful thinking, Libra. They can be the catalysts to actual goals and plans if you let them. Start making your lists.

## SCORPIO - Oct 24/Nov 22

Scorpio, you may be more attuned to your dreams this week. While they are not true predictions of what will happen, pay attention to any recurring themes.

## SAGITTARIUS - Nov 23/Dec 21

A drastic change may be coming but you don't know what that change will be just yet, Sagittarius. Keep your eyes peeled for opportunities that may be on the horizon.

## CAPRICORN - Dec 22/Jan 20

Playful emotions and daydreams are filling your days and nights, Capricorn. Why not let them come out in very real ways? Find ways to incorporate more fun into your life.

## AQUARIUS - Jan 21/Feb 18

If you have been taking someone for granted lately you can rectify that this week, Aquarius. Put this person first for a change and he or she may reciprocate in the future.

## PISCES - Feb 19/Mar 20

Always be truthful, Pisces. Just remember you cannot control how others may react to whatever it is you have to say.

a trafficking ministry. We support leadership" that provide "those services in this community and many others."

Before the board approved the special use permit, Clark outlined some additional conditions that must be met by the applicant.

"It has to meet the Virginia Department of Health guidelines for operating a campground," Clark said. "The applicant cannot substantially change the use or ownership unless it is the exact same use that is continuing. Examples of a change of use would be operating as a drug rehab facility, a boys and girls rehab home, and a commercial campground. I would consider each one of those a substantial change to the use that is being proposed today."

In other matters, the board:

\*Approved a special use permit from a continued case on a project by Axton Solar, LLC.

The project, through the developer Vesper Energy, would construct a 200 MW solar energy facility across 21 discontinuous privately-owned parcels in Henry County. It would also include 16 parcels in Pittsylvania County.

Trey Lopez, the assistant development manager, said a little over half of the project would be in Henry County. He added that 50 percent of the property taxes would also go to the county.

"Based on initial estimates over 35 years, we are looking at an average of \$200,000 per year going to the county in additional property tax revenue," Lopez said. "It'll bring in additional construction jobs with approximately 12- to 14- months of construction. There will be additional revenue from those individuals purchasing food, hotels and that sort of thing."

## CROSSWORD PUZZLE

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9	10		
11				12						13		
14								15			16	17
	18								19			20
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36	37	38		39			40		41			
42			43		44			45				
46								47		48		
49				50	51				52		53	54
	56					57		58				59
			60				61					
										63		

**CLUES ACROSS**  
1. One of Noah's sons  
5. Openings  
11. Rising from the dead  
14. Expressions for humorous effect  
15. North American country  
18. Flowed over  
19. Tags  
21. Long-lasting light bulb  
23. Off-Broadway theater  
24. Khoikhoi peoples  
28. Beloved movie pig  
29. South Dakota  
30. Tai language  
32. Get free of  
33. Afflict  
35. Transmits genetic information from DNA  
36. Commercials

39. Digits  
41. Expression of sympathy  
42. Bleats  
44. Swiss Nobel Peace Prize winner  
46. Vegetable  
47. Turf  
49. Disorganized in character  
52. Takes  
56. Rules over  
58. More fervid  
60. Sweet drink  
62. Cry loudly  
63. A friendly nation  
**CLUES DOWN**  
1. A title of respect in India  
2. His and \_\_\_\_  
3. Employee stock ownership plan  
4. A type of bond (abbr.)  
5. Acting as if you are

6. Affirmative  
7. Not caps  
8. Type of medication  
9. Monetary unit  
10. Private school in New York  
12. Small stream  
13. A person of wealth  
16. Exclude  
17. Someone who vouches for you  
20. Vegetable part  
22. Gov't lawyer  
25. Term to address a woman  
26. Swiss river  
27. About senator  
29. \_\_\_\_ Paulo, city  
31. Native American tribe  
34. "Titanic" actor  
36. Campaign for students' rights (abbr.)  
37. Capital of Senegal

38. Slang for military leader  
40. Football's big game  
43. Women who threw themselves on funeral pyres  
45. Equally  
48. Forest animal  
50. Heavy stoves  
51. Releasing hormone (abbr.)  
53. Song  
54. Type of pickle  
55. Offer in return for money  
57. Soviet Socialist Republic  
58. Burns wood (abbr.)  
59. Beloved singer  
61. Three-toed sloth

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# Performance agreements cap off major economic development deals for the county

**Brandon Martin**  
*Staff writer*

The Henry County Industrial Development Authority (IDA) approved three performance agreements at a Feb. 24 meeting.

The agreements between Crown Holdings, Laminate Technologies and Southwestern Virginia Gas Company provide monetary incentives to facilitate growth from the industries and are key to upcoming economic development projects in the area.

Crown Holdings will receive \$500,000 from the Commonwealth Development Opportunity Fund (COF) upon reaching \$75 million of investment into the county and the creation of 100 jobs. The company will receive another \$500,000 upon hitting its overall promise of an \$145 million investment and 126 jobs.

“All the incentive money comes to us as a county and we allocate it to the company based on the benchmarks in the agreements,” County Administrator Tim Hall said.

In addition to incentives from the COF, Crown Holdings will receive \$3 million from the Harvest Opportunity Fund (HOF) upon reaching the same initial benchmarks set forth with the COF. The funds are to be disbursed on or after Dec. 31, 2021. After the company hits the second COF benchmark, they will receive the remaining \$2 million from the HOF, to be disbursed on or after Dec. 31, 2022.

The “Harvest (Foundation) has provided \$5 million for this deal,” Hall said. “Again, they send it to us, and we send it to the company. Both of these agreements have pretty significant benchmarks.”

The company also will receive a \$3 million Virginia Investment Performance (VIP) grant from the Commonwealth.

“That is a direct relationship between the state and the company, so we have no play in that,” Hall said.

The county also agreed to a third incentive agreement with Crown Holdings, according to Hall, who added it was a first for the county.

“It captures all the incentives that I’ve just outlined” and “letters from utility providers saying where their utility is and how it needs to be brought to” Lot 4 of Commonwealth Crossing Business Centre (CCBC), Hall said.

While not agreed upon at the meeting, Hall said the county will eventually enter into a land conveyance agreement with Crown Holdings once the approximate 58 acres of land on Lot 4 is officially surveyed.

Hall said the relocation of operations by Crown is “the largest single initial capital investment in the county’s history.”

“This company makes cans, and they make a

lot of cans,” Hall said. “This property will have two lines” operating 24 hours per day, seven days per week and 365 days per year.

“Each line will produce 2,800 cans a minute. Therefore, two lines (will be) 5,600 cans a minute. This will allow Crown to catch up with its share of the marketplace. It is now importing millions of cans from Saudi Arabia to fulfill its demand,” Hall said, and added the county was first made aware of the deal on Nov. 12, 2020.

“We were told on Dec. 22 that they were coming,” he added. “That’s six weeks. We’ve never had a project that went that quickly of this magnitude.”

During that period, Hall said the county received four visits from company representatives.

“The big one that we had, we held at CCAT (Commonwealth Centre for Advanced Training) which is a huge draw for this company,” Hall said. “They can train while they are building so it was a huge difference maker for us.”

Hall said 19 different state and local entities were present for the meeting at CCAT.

“Some of those were local contractors who were called in and not told who they were talking to but they took questions on how quickly things could be built,” Hall said, adding that representatives from Patrick Henry Community College were also present to close the deal.

“As they were leaving, their HR (human resources) folks told us that they site plants all over the world,” Hall said. “He told us that they have never seen a more impressive local presentation than what they got with us. The teamwork worked.”

Hall said the company hopes to start operations in December or early next year.

With the beginning of operations, Hall said the company will likely hire local talent to run the lines.

He added that Press-Glass, the first tenant at CCBC, demonstrated the ability to acquire a strong workforce from Henry County residents.

“We were able to access their management teams and their HR people in meetings with Crown and we walked out,” Hall said. “It was just the two companies talking to each other and (PressGlass) was able to demonstrate that they got their folks and are happy with their folks. They told them their experience was really good and they had no issue employing the people that they needed.”

He said the average salary for the 126 new jobs will be approximately \$49,000 a year.

“We’ve got 1,600 people a day who leave this community and go to the Piedmont Triad to work. All you’ve got to do is give them a reason to turn right before they leave town,” Hall said. “These are well above av-

erage wages and you save an hour to an hour and half of your day, every day that you’re not driving. It gives you time to coach soccer, teach Sunday School, or volunteer at the Kiwanis Club.”

Hall said he expects the company to look for employees that “have already proven they want to work and just want a better job,” adding that companies who lose employees will likely “back-fill” those positions from those out of work.

In addition to agreements with Crown Holdings, the IDA also approved agreements with Laminate Technologies.

With a first performance date of Dec. 31, 2024, the company will receive \$50,000 from the COF upon reaching \$4 million of capital investment and 42 new jobs. If the company maintains those benchmarks, it will receive another \$50,000 on Dec. 31, 2025.

The Martinsville-Henry County Economic Development Corporation is also providing a \$50,000 cash grant to Laminate Technologies.

“Both Crown and Laminate are located in Enterprise Zones so they will get those statutory benefits,” Hall said. “You pay your real estate and personal property taxes in your first year. You pay 100 percent of it, we document it, and we rebate 100 percent of it. In years 2-5, you pay them, we document it, and we pay you back half of that. It’s year six before they begin to pay 100 percent of their total local tax burden.”

In conjunction with requirements for operations of Crown Holdings, the IDA also approved a performance agreement with Southwestern Virginia Gas Company.

“Crown needed natural gas infrastructure to Lot 4. That would be a deal killer if we did not provide that,” Hall said. “We don’t currently have that at the park, so we had to figure out a way to solve that pretty quickly.”

To that end, Hall said the county took up the financial responsibility for the project.

“The Board of Supervisors approved up to \$3.5 million out of the fund balance. We’ve already gotten a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission for \$1.5 million,” Hall said. “This will work as a draw down. It may not take all that we’ve allocated for it but we wanted to do a not-to-exceed number so we didn’t have to come back and do it again.”

Hall said details are still being discussed about the financial ben-



**County Administrator Tim Hall credited the Commonwealth Centre for Advanced Training as vital in attracting both Press Glass and Crown Holdings to the Commonwealth Crossing Business Centre.**

efits towards the county but “we will also get paid back for use of the gas. There is a utility tax based on consumption.”

Hall said adding natu-

ral gas will complete the park’s utility portfolio.

“Natural gas is the only utility not at the park. Once that is available, we become what is

called a Tier 5 site,” Hall said. “As site developers or site consultants begin to search for a place to go, Tier 5 sites come up first.”

## SUDOKU

				8				
1						3		
	2	8						9
				2		6		8
	8		5					
		9		4			3	
		1			7		6	
9						1		2
	6	4		9				

Level: Advanced

### Here’s How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

3	7	8	5	6	1	9	4	2
2	9	1	8	9	4	6	3	7
4	6	9	7	3	2	1	5	8
5	3	2	9	4	6	8	1	7
7	6	4	3	1	5	2	8	9
8	1	9	6	2	7	5	3	4
6	4	5	1	7	9	8	2	3
9	8	3	2	5	6	7	4	1
1	2	7	4	8	3	9	6	5

ANSWER:

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# OPINION

## Mr. Potato Head, the media, and the profitability of rage

Last week I was scrolling through Facebook when I saw that a local news channel had posted an article on their page. The title: “A mister no more: Mr. Potato Head goes gender neutral.”

My first thought, of course, was that I definitely shouldn't read the comments on the article. Then I read the comments and immediately regretted doing so.

Over the next couple of days, I saw multiple people share the story. It seemed as though every news agency in the country had copied and pasted the same four-paragraph article and slapped it on their Facebook page. And everyone who shared the article voiced the same sense of outrage.

This, they said, was ridiculous, an example of political correctness run amok, of the softening of our society, of the sinister liberal agenda to remove gender labels from root vegetables. Where would it end? How long, oh Lord, how long? Etc. etc.

And then I actually read the article everyone was sharing, brief though it was. It made absolutely no sense to me.

The article was vague and lacking in detail, and I couldn't understand why the toy company Hasbro would want to

make this particular statement when literally no human being on Earth has ever complained that Mr. Potato Head does not adequately encompass the gender spectrum.

I went to Hasbro's website to try to find some sort of press release that would explain all this. I couldn't find one.

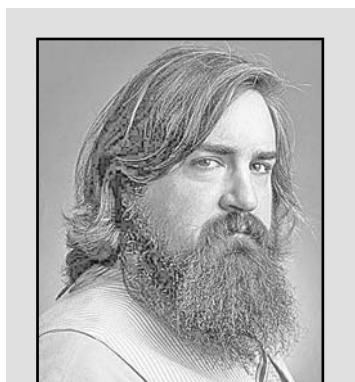
And then, for whatever reason, I checked the website again a few hours later.

About five hours after the news story broke, Hasbro released an official statement. Here's the first paragraph from it:

“Hasbro is officially renaming the Mr. Potato Head brand to Potato Head to better reflect the full line. But rest assured, the iconic Mr. and Mrs. Potato Head characters aren't going anywhere and will remain Mr. and Mrs. Potato Head.”

You see, Hasbro's Mr. Potato Head line does not just include Mr. and Mrs. Potato Head. You can go on their website and purchase up to 39 different variations on the iconic tuber, including a Han Solo Potato Head, a Spider-Man Potato Head, and my personal favorite, a grizzled sea captain Potato Head named Saul T. Chips.

This is pure speculation on my part, but here's what I think happened: Hasbro decided to



By Ben R. Williams

update their branding, and someone suggested that they officially change the name of the product line to simply “Potato Head” since Mr. Potato Head himself is only one part of it.

Next, this information was probably shared with stockholders, and one of them either accidentally or deliberately misinterpreted the announcement to mean that Hasbro was taking a strong stand against the gender binary rather than modifying the name of a product line for branding purposes.

This information was then sent to a media outlet (I couldn't figure out who initially broke the story) and that outlet deliberately misinterpreted Hasbro's announcement. The article, if you can call it that, was then

picked up by every media outlet in America and shared widely, which probably caused a very bad day for everyone at Hasbro and resulted in someone having to hastily write a press release.

“But Ben,” you are perhaps asking, “why would so many different media outlets run the same poorly-written, misleading story without bothering to do the small amount of fact-checking that you apparently did in your free time?”

The answer to that question, my friends, is money.

First off, most small media outlets — whether we're talking about your local newspaper (present company excluded) or your local network affiliate — no longer have the staff to generate enough local content to meet demand. Instead, they pick up random stories off the newswire and run it under their banner.

But why run a misleading story about poor old Mr. Potato Head? That's easy: no one is going to click on an article titled “Hasbro rebrands product line,” but everyone is going to click on an article titled “Mr. Potato Head is going to infect your child with the liberal agenda.”

Those clicks equal ad revenue. They equal cold, hard cash. And the best way to get

people to click on your articles is to make them angry.

For example, I have noticed that at least one southwest Virginia media outlet has shared more articles about Barack Obama since he left office than they ever did while he was President. They don't do this because folks around here are clamoring for updates on the former President; they do it because a whole lot of folks in southwest Virginia despise Barack Obama, and they're going to voice that rage in the comments, which will boost social media engagement, which will generate clicks, which will generate ad revenue, which will allow the president of the massive conglomerate that owns the media outlet to pay the monthly slip fee at the marina where he keeps his yacht.

How do we combat this misinformation? The only answer is critical thinking. We have to remember that if a news story seems solely designed to make us angry, there's a good chance it's not showing the whole picture.

I once read a quote about social media that applies equally well to clickbait journalism: If you aren't paying for it, you're not the customer, you're the product.

## Could we have a vaccine surplus?

**Morgan Griffith**  
*9th District U.S. Rep.*

The headline on February 27 was a story that seems to be both old news and extraordinary: the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved for emergency use a COVID-19 vaccine produced by Johnson & Johnson after finding it to be safe and effective.

It could be considered old news because Johnson & Johnson's vaccine is the third COVID-19 vaccine to be authorized since December 2020, following those from Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna.

Nevertheless, the successful creation of these vaccines, with possibly more on the way, remains a remarkable accomplishment. A U.S. Government Accountability Office report found that vaccines typically result from a process that takes ten

years from the exploratory stage to large-scale manufacturing and FDA review and licensure.

In contrast, the FDA approved the first two COVID-19 vaccines only eleven months after our country recorded its first case of the coronavirus. Each vaccine dose today being administered to Americans represents a great scientific and logistical accomplishment.

As of February 26, more than 68 million doses have been administered, resulting in 13.9 percent of the total U.S. population receiving at least one dose. The United States is well ahead of President Biden's goal of administering one million doses a day for the first one hundred days of his presidency. In fact, the country had already met that goal on at least three days before he took office.

The Trump Adminis-

tration's Operation Warp Speed, which brought together government, the private sector, and the scientific community to achieve the unprecedented feat of creating a coronavirus vaccine within a year, supported the manufacture of promising vaccines before they met with final FDA approval. As a result, as soon as the FDA signed off on a candidate, doses of it were available for distribution. Pfizer began shipping its vaccine within 24 hours of the FDA's approval.

Operation Warp Speed offered a head start, but manufacturers now are focused on increasing capacity to keep up with demand. Vaccinating the entire eligible population of Americans, currently estimated at 260 million people, presents a great challenge. The eligible population is less than our total population because no vaccine is currently authorized for children or

pregnant mothers. Also, there are people who do not want to be vaccinated, and that is their right.

During a recent Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations hearing, we heard testimony from representatives of the companies developing vaccines that have been approved or are promising candidates. In addition to Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson, AstraZeneca may be approved in March or early April, and Novavax currently has a vaccine candidate far advanced into clinical trials.

I came away from the hearing with optimism that they would meet that challenge.

Pfizer is on track to deliver all 300 million doses that it has been contracted to deliver by Operation Warp Speed by the end of July. So is Moderna. Both of these vaccines require two doses, so that means 150 million people would be covered by

each of these manufacturers.

At the time of the hearing, Johnson & Johnson's vaccine had not yet received emergency use authorization, but it nevertheless is set to deliver 100 million doses by the end of June. This vaccine only requires one shot.

Taking these three vaccine manufacturers together, enough doses have been pledged by the end of July to cover 400 million people, well over the 260 million Americans eligible for vaccination.

When I asked the panel of witnesses whether this meant the United States would have a vaccine surplus in the summer, all five agreed that it was plausible.

With a vaccine surplus after eligible Americans are vaccinated, the remainder could be distributed for use in other countries.

That will not be the end of the work. Mutations of the coronavirus threaten to prolong the pandemic, as the current vaccines may not provide as much effective protection against

them. Fortunately, both the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines apparently do defend individuals against emerging variants, but the companies are nevertheless studying the possibility of booster shots to maintain their efficacy.

Children are not currently eligible to receive these vaccines, so pediatric trials are under way to see whether a separate vaccine for children would be necessary.

Vaccines offer the best path to a restoration of normalcy in our lives. I appreciated the update from the vaccine manufacturers and was encouraged by their reports of progress in our effort against the coronavirus. I am hopeful that better days are on the way. Too many vaccine doses is a problem I would like to have.

For questions, concerns, or comments, call my Abingdon office at 276-525-1405, my Christiansburg office at 540-381-5671 or via email at [www.morgangriffith.house.gov](mailto:www.morgangriffith.house.gov).

## Carlisle senior a Jefferson Scholar finalist

Carlisle School announced that senior student Polina Padun was selected as a finalist to compete for a Jefferson Scholarship from the University of Virginia in March.

Padun is an international student from Krasnodar, Russia, who has attended Carlisle since her sophomore year. She is the daughter of Audrey and Yana Padun of Krasnodar, Russia, and resides with her grandmother Luba Toubik of Martinsville.

In her time at Carlisle, Padun has been actively involved in extracurricular activities such as Interact, CHILL (Communities Helping Improve Local Lives), and the production crew for our virtual Grandparents Day program this past fall. She has also participated in Carlisle's Mentoring program serving as a role model for younger students. In addition to being a Jefferson Scholar finalist, Padun has been accepted into Pace University, Suffolk University, and the University of Tampa.

The Jefferson Scholars Foundation has hosted the Jefferson Scholarship Program since 1980. If selected for the

honor, the awardees receive funding intended to cover the entire cost of attendance for four years at the University of Virginia, plus coverage of supplemental enrichment experiences and a stipend. The total scholarship award is valued at more than \$190,000.

According to the Foundation's website, more than 2,000 candidates from 41 US states and 42 countries were nominated in 2019. Students are then placed into regional competitions, which determine 120 finalists to compete for the Scholarships. At the 2019-2020 event, 32 Scholarships were awarded out of the pool of 2,000 candidates.

Since the program began, Carlisle School has produced four Jefferson Scholars. They include Michelle Unterbrink- 2004, Manas Nigam- 2007, Anne Pryor Gravely- 2013, and Caleb Tisdale- 2017. An additional six students from Carlisle have been named finalists during that time. Padun will attend the finals for the Jefferson Scholar Competition in March, and we wish her the best of luck.

According to Carlisle School's College Coun-



selor, Susan Aaron, “Polina Padun is one of the most exceptional students I have encountered in my teaching career. Traveling from Russia to live with a host family, Polina came to a small Southside Virginia town, Axton, to experience an American education with a severely limited English vocabulary. Additionally, she had to continue her education in Russia online in her sophomore year at Carlisle to finish her Russian schooling.

Undeterred, Polina demonstrated diligence, independence, integrity, and determination in learning the language quickly to succeed in class and socially.” She added, “In recent years, Polina's personality has blossomed as she began to thrive at Carlisle and develop her leadership qualities. Courageous and independent yet kind and considerate, Polina became an involved student in every aspect of Carlisle School.”

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

# OBITUARIES

## Era A. Penn

Era A. Penn, 83, of Spencer, VA, departed this life on Monday, February 22, 2021. She was born June 23, 1937 in Patrick County, VA, to the late Edward Reynolds and Lilie Reynolds.

Era graduated from Patrick Central High School in Stuart, VA. She married Johnnie Penn and became a stay-at-home mother until her kids were grown. She later became self-employed and started a cleaning service for local banks and doctors' offices in Stuart, VA. She was a member of New Hope Missionary Baptist Church (Patrick Springs, VA) for many years, where she served as a church mother, Deaconess, part of the culinary ministry and taught Sunday school. She also served for many years in the culinary ministry in the Smith River Baptist Association. She later joined The Galilean House of Worship in 2010, under the leadership of her son, Bishop Michael Penn, and served as a church mother. She was



preceded in death by her parents, Edward and Lilie Reynolds; sisters, Dora Tatum and Margaret Penn; brothers, Randolph Reynolds, Douglas Reynolds, Richard Reynolds and Tommy Reynolds.

Era leaves to cherish her memory, her husband of 63 years, Johnnie B. Penn, of the home; sons, Wayne Penn, of Charlottesville, VA; Bishop

Michael Penn (Angela), of Martinsville, VA; and Greg Penn, of Danville, VA; Brother, Moses Reynolds; a host of grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces and nephews; and her Goddaughters, Candice Redd, Tarongular Redd and Angel Marie Campbell, whom she loved dearly.

The funeral service was Feb. 27, 2021 at Wright Funeral Service Chapel, with burial at Patrick Memorial Gardens.

Wright Funeral Service & Crematory is serving the family. Online condolences may be made at [www.wrightfuneralservices.net](http://www.wrightfuneralservices.net).

## Richard Wayne "Big Bird" Holcomb

Richard Wayne "Big Bird" Holcomb, 65, of Ridgeway, Virginia passed away February 25, 2021 at his residence. He was born December 24, 1955, in Martinsville to the late Frank Noland and Betty Sue Wolfe Holcomb. He was owner/operator of Big Birds Big Twins. He was a member of Trash Ministries. He was founder of Big Birds Toy Run and Co-ordinator for over 25 years. BTW 21 and Trash Ministries stepped in three years ago to help carry the tradition of the toy run for the community. He had a passion for family, fast cars, Harleys and supporting and helping people.



ceded in death by a sister, Sandra Holcomb Graham.

He is survived by his wife, Paige Holcomb; sister, Lisa Ann Holcomb; niece, Susie Brown; nephews, Chris Bowman and Jamie "Exxon" Cannaday; and many special great nieces and nephews; "fur babies," Sassy, Diesel, Gabriel and Gus.

A memorial run for Big Bird will be held in the

spring. In lieu of flowers, donations in memory of Big Bird may be made to Christmas Cheer. Wright Funeral Service & Crematory is serving the family. Online condolences may be made at [www.wrightfuneralservices.net](http://www.wrightfuneralservices.net).

## Percy Cornell Barnes

Percy Cornell Barnes, 92, of Ridgeway, Va. passed away Thursday, February 25, 2021. He was born January 24, 1929 in Henry County, to Jerry A. Barnes and Ellen Compton Barnes Blaken-ship.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his brother Ken-non C. Barnes.

He is survived by his wife of 72 years, Clara C. Barnes; his daughter Debra B. Anderson (Marvin); sons, Percy C. "Rusty" Barnes II (Wan-da) and Clark D. Barnes (Yvette); five grandchildren; 9 great grandchildren.

Mr. Barnes worked as a salesman for Blue Ridge Hardware and Supply Com-pany for 43 years. He was very good at



working with his hands and he loved woodwork and antiques. He also enjoyed his yearly trip to Myrtle Beach with his wife.

A memorial service will be held at 1 p.m. Saturday, March 6, 2021 at Rich Acres Christian Church with Rev. Tim Hunt officiating.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the Rich Acres Christian Church, 422 Mountain View Road, Martinsville, VA 24112.

Arrangements are by McKee-Stone Funeral Home-Martinsville, VA.

To express condolences online, please visit <http://www.collinsmckeeastonemartinsville.com>.

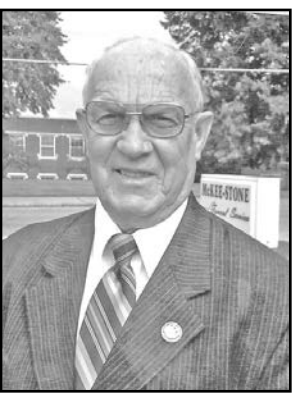
## Andrew Haley Wright

Andrew Haley Wright, 95, of Martinsville, a man who dearly loved God, his family, country, friends and who never met a stranger, passed away on Thursday, February 18, 2021. He was born on February 17, 1926 in Henry County to Charlie Martin Wright and Nannie Martin Wright.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his wife, Ella Donavant Wright; son, Kent Wright; sisters, Mary Wright Payne and Maude Wright Holley; brothers, Leonard, George, Clarence, Jesse, Cooper, and infant brother, Martin Wright.

He is survived by his sons, Sammy Glenn Wright (Robin) and Mark Andrew Wright (Wenona); six grandchildren; and eleven great grandchildren.

Mr. Wright retired as a rural letter carrier for 32 years. He was a past president of the Dyers Store Ruritan Club and past state president of the National Rural Letter Carriers Association. Mr. Wright also greatly enjoyed the 25 years he worked for Collins



and McKee-Stone Funeral Home where he was able to continue seeing and helping so many of his friends.

A joint funeral service for Mr. Wright and his son, Kent Ellis Wright, who passed away on Monday, February 15, 2021, both of whom were members of Chatham Heights Baptist Church, was held at 2 p.m. Wednesday, February 24, 2021 at Chatham Heights Baptist Church. Rev. Dr. Michael Hatfield and Rev. Lewis Harris officiated. Interment at Roselawn Burial Park was private.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the Chatham Heights Baptist Church, 1235 Old Chatham Road, Martinsville, VA 24112 or to the Martinsville & Henry County Veterans Honor Guard, P.O. Box 1002, Collinsville, VA 24078.

Arrangements are by McKee-Stone Funeral Home-Martinsville, VA. To express condolences online, visit [www.collinsmckeeastonemartinsville.com](http://www.collinsmckeeastonemartinsville.com).

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

### Bill Stanley State Senator

As we start to wind down the 2021 General Assembly session and enter our final week, I must say that the Northern Virginia ("NoVa") Democrats have demonstrated that when it comes to the needs of the rest of Virginia ("RoVa"), they just don't care. The liberal legislative agenda that they have put forth is not only aggressive, but also is single-minded in that they believe that if it is good for NoVa, it must be good for the rest of us. And it is all being passed through each chamber of the General Assembly with little debate, consideration or even a complete understanding by them of how these policy decisions will affect everyday Virginians. But, they just don't care to get it right, they just don't care if it hurts small businesses, and they just don't care if it makes us less safe. Case in point, the Northern Virginia liberal demonstrated how they actually feel about the poor in both our inner cities and rural areas when they defeated SJR 275, my bill that would have amended the Virginia

Constitution to ensure that all children who attend public school, no matter where they live, would receive the same equitable education opportunities as those children who attend public school in the more affluent regions of our Commonwealth. You see, it is the responsibility of the General Assembly to provide for a free, quality education for all children who attend public school, whether it be elementary, middle or high school. In our inner cities and rural areas, most of our schools were built before World War II, some even earlier than that. These schools are deteriorating at a rapid pace, and need to be modernized, so that the child in Petersburg or Pearisburg receive the same world class education as those children who attend public school in a shiny new school building in Loudoun County. The reasoning behind this is easy: modern schools in rural and urban areas will create a talent pool and workforce pipeline that will attract businesses to these regions who will bring the high paying jobs with them. That is how you revitalize the economies in these areas. But North-

ern Virginia just doesn't give a damn. One would think that this would be a "no brainer" for the liberal left of Northern Virginia, for they profess to care about the poor, but in actuality, they don't. Northern Virginia legislators proved once again that they are either too scared to deal with this critical issue, or more likely that they just don't care. I believe it to be the latter. They don't care about using public education to help our children in our rural areas and our inner cities break the cycle of poverty. They don't care about fixing the schools in those areas, so long as their children get to attend nice new shiny and modern schools and receive a world class education while others who live in the rest of Virginia can't. Delegate Mark Sickles, a liberal Democrat from Northern Virginia let it be known during the House committee hearing just how they feel about us. To him, when it comes to the modernization of our schools, we should just be on our own to handle it ourselves. His answer to just have the rural and inner-city localities raise their taxes to pay for it demonstrates both a regional

ignorance and arrogance on their part. Consequently, they killed my proposed constitutional amendment. The reason that the Democrats gave to the press for killing the measure was that "Virginia's voters should only consider 2 amendments to the constitution in 2022 election." And what were those proposed amendments that were more important than providing equal educational opportunities to all of Virginia's public school students? The first is a proposal to fully restore all convicted felons (even the most violent ones) with their civil rights; the second, redefining marriage in our constitution regardless of orientation or gender – the true priorities of their liberal agenda. Other than this spectacle, there's still a lot that has to be done before the session ends. House and Senate negotiators must reach agreement on a package of amendments to the 2020-2022 Biennial Budget. There are more than 300 bills still under con-

sideration by the House and Senate. Before Saturday the 27th ends, final determinations must be made on all these bills. Among the scores of bills debated by the Senate this week, legislation to give illegal immigrants an additional taxpayer-funded benefit won approval. In addition to receiving subsidized in-state tuition rates at Virginia's state-supported colleges and universities, those here in violation of federal immigration laws will now be eligible for taxpayer-funded tuition assistance at state and private schools. Every Republican senator opposed this legislation. Like their national counterparts, Virginia Democrats have adopted "open borders" policies that give taxpayer-funded benefits to illegal immigrants. As a result, the legislation passed on party-line vote. It is now headed to Governor Northam's desk, and, having previously expressed his support for the measure, he is expected to sign it. But that's not all. Next

week, I will give you a list of all the outlandish legislation that the Democrats have passed, over our objection, that will change Virginia in ways that we never imagined possible. Weather continues to dominate Richmond's local news coverage, which intensified during the ice and sleet storms that wreaked havoc with traffic and transportation in the city toward the end of the work week. It makes it hard to believe that the forecast for the coming week includes temperatures above 60 degrees. I'll be back next week with what should be a wrap-up of Special Session I for 2021. Until then, have a great week.

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# Positions

from page 1

post-reversion, “Henry County would assume full responsibility for operating the educational system for all residents of Henry County, including residents of Martinsville.”

The city also proposes eliminating its positions for Sheriff, Circuit Court Clerk, and Commonwealth’s Attorney, along with the separate jail and Circuit, General District, and Juvenile and Domestic Relations District courts.

“In FY2019, Martinsville spent \$2,401,821 for judicial administration services and \$3,473,582 for support of correction and detention services provided through the Sheriff and the Probation Office,” according to the notice.

After reversion, the city proposes “Henry County and its Sheriff, Circuit Court Clerk, and Commonwealth’s Attorney would provide and finance all judicial administration services provided to the citizens of the new town of Martinsville and receive all state funding appropriated for those purposes. Judges appointed to serve in the 21st Judicial Circuit and 21st Judicial District would continue to serve the citizens of Martinsville and Henry County.”

This is the same proposal as for the city’s Commissioner of Revenue, Treasurer, Registrar, and Board of Elections.

Currently, the city and county are served by a joint Henry-Martinsville Department of Social Services (HMDSS). The Henry-Martinsville Social Services Board (HMSSB) presides over the department, with Henry County appointing six members and Martinsville appointing the other three.

“Martinsville and Henry County have an agreement providing that Martinsville will reimburse Henry County for its share of administrative, operating, and maintenance costs that are unreimbursed by state or federal grants,” the notice states. “In FY2019, Martinsville provided \$349,886 in local funding to the HMSSB.”

After reversion, the city proposes “Martinsville would have no responsibility for local funding of the Social Services Board. Henry County would assume full responsibility for local funding of the Social Services Board.”

A similar proposal is suggested for Martinsville’s role in the Henry-Martinsville Health Department and Piedmont Regional Community Services Board.

Martinsville also proposes to continue providing “door-to-door curbside waste collection and drop-off recycling services in the same manner as it currently provides.”

Other services the city would continue to provide are law enforcement, public safety, fire, rescue, building inspections, public works, parks and recreation, the library, Blue Ridge Regional Airport Authority, and planning and community development.

In conjunction with the transition of services to the

county, Martinsville also proposes to transfer Clearview Elementary School (\$1.2 million), Martinsville High School (\$16.4 million), Albert Harris Elementary School (\$9 million), Martinsville Middle School (\$7.3 million), and the old gym (\$317,400). The Town of Martinsville would retain all other properties.

The city also lists the terms and conditions for the use of other schools and associated properties that will be retained in the possession of the newly formed town.

The counsel for the city states on pages 69-70, “The Henry County School Board should be given the right to use those school facilities currently owned by Martinsville on a basis that will fairly recognize the value of Martinsville’s interest in such facilities.”

It adds that, “The Henry County School Board should be given the right to use those school buses currently owned by Martinsville on a basis that will fairly recognize the value of Martinsville’s interest in those vehicles.”

The county responded, “The primary flaw with Martinsville’s proposal is its failure to provide the county with sufficient assets to carry out the services the city proposes to transfer to the county. The city also seemingly asks the county to compensate it for those assets that it does propose to transfer to the county.”

To provide the additional services inherited from Martinsville, and “to procure additional assets” and “incur additional capital, personnel and other expenses associated with those obligations,” the city must “grant to the county, at no cost, all of the assets the city currently uses to provide the services that will be transferred to the county post-reversion. Martinsville would have no need for the majority of those assets once it transfers the related services to the county.”

The additional facilities include Patrick Henry and Druid Hills elementary schools and the Municipal Building, the Sheriff’s Office Jail Annex, Prison Farm and others.

“The additional facilities requested by the county amount to “a minimum of \$11,205,800 using the City’s assessed and insured values.”

The county generally agreed to all the transferring noted by the city in its filing, but did however, add the need to address one-time expenses brought upon by the combining of services.

In a best-case scenario, with the city transfers all the assets associated with the transferred services, the county still projects that it will incur one-time costs of \$1,310,000.

“Even after the one-time onboarding costs for new employees and facilities, there will be ongoing administrative costs associated with the larger workforce and asset base,” the county states in their notice. “These recurring costs will be reflected in increased expenses in areas

like human resources, information technology, procurement, finance, legal, contractual services, facilities repair and maintenance, and salary and benefit equalization to bring compensation and benefits for former city employees in line with county compensation.”

The county anticipates that the recurring costs will be at least \$31,287,234.

## Finances

The city stated on page 34, “Assuming that the net aggregate fiscal impact on Henry County resulting from the reversion is addressed solely by an adjustment in Henry County’s real property tax rate, the estimated adjustment required in that rate would be a 5¢ increase reaching a rate of 60.5¢ per \$100 assessed value of real property.”

To mitigate the financial impact on the new town, the city would decrease its rate to 45.71¢ per \$100 assessed value of real property.

The city notes that the county would gain taxable property from the new town as well.

“Based on 2019 data, reversion would increase Henry County’s total assessed real estate values to \$3,514,619,854 (\$631,445,800 from Martinsville) and total assessed public service real estate values to \$213,170,305 (\$24,296,670 from Martinsville),” the city states in the notice.

It also noted the new real estate would increase the county’s bond capacity.

By deriving additional resources from the corporate limits of Martinsville, the city contends that equitable sharing of resources will be maintained even in the event of annexation.

On page 53, the city cites the Bedford County reversion to note “to Martinsville’s tax advantage, reversion would restore its ‘authority to extend its boundaries through annexation,’ allowing it the ‘opportunity to share . . . in the development which has occurred arounds its periphery.”

The city added “as a town, Martinsville would be able to annex territory without threatening Henry County’s tax basis in such territory.”

The county responded it disagreed with the numbers provided by the city and stated that new revenue would not be enough to cover expenditures.

“The county projects a \$2,547,507 deficit in the initial year following reversion, not including the anticipated one-time costs associated with reversion,” they state in their filing. “That deficit will increase in the ensuing five years thereafter. Each penny of real property tax will generate \$333,889 of revenue at a 95 percent collection rate. Thus, if the county used solely real property taxes to cover the deficit, it would have to raise its real property tax rate by \$0.08 to \$0.63 per \$100 of value.”

Additionally, the county estimates that the city would have to reduce its real property

tax rate by \$0.51 per \$100 of value.

Given other obligations incurred by the county in the process of reversion, they state that only adjusting real property taxes would be insufficient to cover their shortfalls.

“One of the few benefits to the county of reversion will be the ability to derive additional revenues from within the new town,” the county states in the notice. “Primarily, the revenues will come from property taxes. That benefit will be mitigated over time as the assessed values of property within Martinsville are not appreciating.”

To help close the gap, the county requested the Town of Martinsville be required to maintain the same funding each year for ten years on the Martinsville Henry County 911 Communications Center (\$479,053), the Blue Ridge Regional Library (\$295,308), the Martinsville Henry County Economic Development Corporation (\$100,000), the Martinsville Henry County Chamber’s Partnership for Economic Growth (\$60,000), and the Blue Ridge Regional Airport (\$9,000).

The county also requests that revenue-sharing agreements be voided on jointly built industrial parks, making the county the sole benefactor once the debts are paid.

The county also requested the CLG require Martinsville to make single or multiple payments to offset the one-time expenses from the transfer of government services.

## Wastewater

The city stated that after reversion, it intends to continue providing sewer and wastewater services set forth in the “1974 Contract” between the city and the Henry County Public Service Authority (HCPSA).

The city has owned and operated the Martinsville Regional Sewage Disposal Facility since the 1960s. To transport its waste to the facility, the city maintains a system of interceptor sewer lines that extend beyond city limits. Given the large capacity, the city eventually entered an agreement to accept, transport, and treat sewage and waste originating in Henry County.

“Currently, a dispute exists as to how much HCPSA should be contributing to pay for recent capital improvements and emergency repairs that were made to 6.2 miles of Martinsville’s Smith River sewer interceptor,” the city stated, adding the dispute is presently in litigation.

In November 2014, a 200-foot portion of the Smith River Interceptor partially collapsed. The collapse required the emergency installation of a temporary pump-around line to ensure the continued transportation of Martinsville and Henry County waste. According to the city, the emergency repairs cost Martinsville \$3,346,537.

Upon inspection of the system, it was discovered that an additional \$14,999,975.32

would be needed to fix other urgent problems with the interceptor lines.

“Martinsville has demanded that the HCPSA pay its contractual share of the total cost the capital improvements to the Smith River Interceptor (47%), which amounts to \$7,049,988.40, along with its contractual share (47%) for the emergency repairs to the Smith River Interceptor, \$1,572,872,” the city states in their notice to the CLG. “HCPSA has paid nothing toward the cost of these improvements and claims it owes nothing.”

Per the terms and conditions of reversion, Martinsville is calling for the payments to be made and that “Henry County will not open or re-open any competing wastewater facility.”

The county responded, “Martinsville’s attempt to involve the PSA in its reversion is improper. The PSA is a separate legal entity created pursuant to Virginia Code § 15.2-5100 et seq. It is not a county department. It owns its own property, employs its own employees, provides water and sewer services to parts of the county, and is responsible for setting the rates it charges for those services.”

Additionally, the county states that they have no control over the finances of the PSA to be able to repay any debts.

“Likewise, the PSA would not be a necessary party in any subsequent judicial proceeding related to reversion,” the county states, citing Va. Code § 15.2-4103. “Other interested parties, including political subdivisions such as the PSA, may intervene in the judicial proceeding, but they are not required to do so, nor can they be compelled to do so. The commission should not consider evidence concerning the PSA in its evaluation of Martinsville’s proposed reversion.”

## The process

Currently, both parties are awaiting a 2- to 3- day hearing in which both localities will have the chance to present evidence and cross-examine witnesses before the CLG. Once the hearing is over, the CLG will file a report with their findings and conclusions. This will trigger the formation of a three-judge panel appointed by the Virginia Supreme Court, who will also serve as the appellate court for the panel. The panel will then issue a ruling and set the conditions in which the reversion can take place.

If the court declines to grant town status, the city must wait five years before it can attempt the process again. If the court grants the city’s request, then the city will have a 21-day period to formally accept or decline the town status. The 21-day period provides the last opportunity for residents to sway the opinion of City Council.

If accepted, the new status will become permanent and Martinsville will never be able to return to independent city status.

# Answers

from page 1

from it.”

Polly Dodson fears she’s becoming a hoarder. She can’t bear to part with anything of sentimental value. “I used to joke about turning into a hermit and I pretty much have done that,” she added.

Although she appreciates the help her other children and grandchildren provide now, “Ricky was always my helper. I think that’s why I don’t do anything anymore,” Polly Dodson said.

She and Hylton both say not knowing who killed the two and why is hard.

Hylton hopes someone with knowledge of the incident will give authorities leads in the case.

“Finding his body did bring us some closure, but not hearing anything is just driving us crazy,” Hylton said. An arrest “is not going to change anything or bring them back, but at least we’ll know. We just keep praying” for resolution.

Anyone with information may call the Henry County Sheriff’s Office at (276) 638-8751 or the Franklin County Sheriff’s Office at (540) 483-3000.

# Legacy

from page 1

when the riders returned, Draper said, and recalled the Christmas 2020 Toy Run “was the only time he couldn’t physically get there.”

Because of his deteriorating health, Draper visited Holcomb a few days before the event and asked if he wanted to watch the ride from a window in his home. Due to his health, Holcomb declined.

Holcomb “will be greatly missed. He suffered long enough,” Draper said. “He’s no longer suffering and he’s in a bet-

ter place.”

Ray Reynolds met Holcomb during the initial Jennifer Short ride, which was organized by Joe Bryant and Todd Turner to raise funds for Crimestoppers.

Holcomb led the event, and “from then on, Big Bird asked me to attend rides and take photos. I participated in more than 50 rides with him,” Reynolds said. Holcomb “loved kids and he loved elderly people too. He helped raise money when needed to help with burial

expenses. He helped anybody and everybody in the community who needed help.”

Draper also worked with Holcomb on numerous other events, and many were familiar with Holcomb’s spirit of community service, including Clay Campbell, president of Martinsville Speedway.

After learning about Holcomb’s death, Draper recalled that “Clay said, ‘it’s a shame,’” and remarked that Holcomb was “a big man with a big heart.”

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

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ENGAGEMENTS



BIRTHS



ANNIVERSARIES



WEDDINGS

# Sole

from page 1

would run into him every now and then. Us finding each other in Charlotte and both being from Martinsville, we started to talk and began selling our personal collection to each other before it grew into this,” Shively said. “It’s crazy how things happen sometimes.”

At the time, Shively said there weren’t many local places that resold shoes.

With a large clientele in Charlotte, N.C., Shively said “I’ve been going since 2012 to buy and sell down there. I’ve always wanted to do it, but I’m only 23. I didn’t think it was possible until I got older. Once I started buying and growing my collection, I decided I might as well see if I could start my own shop. We really jumped on faith to do it.”

The leap came naturally for the two basketball fans, which Shively credits for spurring his interest in the sneaker industry.

“I played basketball my whole life, so I was a big Kobe Bryant fan. With basketball, you see everybody with the crazy shoes on the court. When I was playing, I would always try to have a new pair of shoes on because that’s what they did,” he said. “They were big trend setters and it’s something I always admired, but when you’re 12, you can’t really financially do that with money from taking the trash out or shoveling snow.”

Conversely, Hairston didn’t play basketball, but he grew up in the best time to be a basketball fan, according to Shively.

“He’s about to turn 31, so he grew up in the Michael Jordan prime era. He saw it all evolve throughout the years,” Shively said. “He got to actually see it, whereas I have to YouTube it. I missed all of the good memories.”

Even without the firsthand memories, Shively developed a love and appreciation for sneakers as a fashion accessory.

“It kind of describes who you are. You can tell a lot about someone based on what their style is like,” he said. “You’ve got your basketball models that appeal to athletic, sporty people. You’ve got the expensive items where people want to be flashy and go out to hit the town. It’s really interesting to see people’s outfits in general and how they piece the two together.”

Given his affinity for flashy footwear, Shively amassed an impressive collection of sneakers before opening the business.

“I sold a bunch of my personal collection to start this,” he said. “I probably had around 25-30 pairs and he had about the same amount,” he said of Hairston. “It was roughly around 100 (pairs) after we bought a little bit more to open up the place.”

The duo officially launched in 2019, and Shively said the whole process has been a learning experience.

“When I first got my business license, I was 21,” he said, adding that the two sought guidance through the Startup Martinsville, Virginia program.

The program is an intensive eight-week entrepreneurial boot-camp program, culminating into a business plan competition in which participants vie for a total of \$45,000 in grant funds and additional prizes and loan opportunities to help start or expand their businesses in the uptown area.

“We met a lot of influential people from the area, and they guided us through the hard stuff,” Shively said. “They helped us figure out all the technical things, like the necessary paperwork, taxes, licenses and things of that nature. It was very overwhelming for someone just jumping straight into it.”

Their establishment currently is located on Virginia Avenue in Villa Heights.

“We originally started with just the bus,” Shively said. “We wanted a store, but we also wanted to try a different route where we could go to Charlotte or Richmond and bring everything we’ve got. That’s where the bus came from.”

Shively said that the business eventually outgrew the bus and the brick-and-mortar store opened on Black Friday in 2019. The pandemic underscored the importance of the site.

“We have a website that we use for our out-of-town customers. When COVID hit, we initially focused more on that aspect of the business,” he said. “Something strange happened though, because unlike everybody else, the website kind of fell on its face. We started selling more in the store than we were on the website, even though we could only allow like 3-4 people in the store.”

Shively said the pandemic had a tremendous impact on the fashion industry.

“All of a sudden, everyone was stuck in a house. They couldn’t go out to show their outfit off,” he said. “People weren’t able to put on their new shoes to go out to a bar or to eat. There wasn’t really a need to buy a \$200 to \$300 shoe every other weekend just to look at it.”

The effects began to wear on the startup, forcing tough decisions that ultimately stalled the business.

“With half of our business taking a hit, low traffic and low funds, we were barely forking out enough to make rent and pay utilities. Those are the basics, so we knew we had to at least cover those expenses if we wanted our business to have a chance at making it,” Shively said. “We had to stop buying new shoes, which prevented us from having a new selection for customers.”

To make it through the



**Hunter Shively, co-owner of Sole Zone, displays a shoe created by Shawn Witherspoon which is valued at \$1,000.**

tough economic times, Shively said the business applied for and received a grant through the Pay it Forward MHC Small Business Relief Fund.

The fund was created after the Harvest Foundation invested \$1 million in honor of local healthcare workers and frontline responders to the Virginia 30 Day Fund. The Virginia 30 Day Fund was created by Pete Snyder and his wife, Burson, to save as many Virginia jobs as possible while small businesses wait for mandated shutdowns to end and for federal funding to be allocated.

“That allowed us to start switching up our inventory and it all worked out so great for us,” Shively said. “We’re paid for through the year, so now we can refocus on what made us want to start the business in the first place. We can experiment a little more now. What we were spending on rent and utilities before, we can invest in purchasing more high-end shoes. It allows us to use some of that cushion to keep customers engaged in our latest items.”

Although times were tough, Shively said the store still had its share of dedicated shoppers.

“You still had the few heavy collectors that would buy just to keep it going, but the average people definitely stopped buying like they normally would,” he said. “We have collectors that have been buying and selling for 20 years. We have one shoe that is \$1,000, so you have people that might come in, buy that shoe and be

done for a few months. Then you have others that won’t purchase anything above \$250, but they will purchase like three or four. Those people might trade those three or four and get the \$1,000 pair. People also do the reverse and trade the pricier shoes for more pairs to build their own collection.”

The store offers more than just shoes, according to Shively.

“It’s the same with clothing but that is a little more technical,” he said. “We have a bunch of vintage stuff from the 80s, 90s and early 2000s. It’s stuff you can’t just go buy anymore but they are loved for the memories they bring. We also have high-end street wear that is more modern.”

Shively said the store can also be used by other local fashion startups.

“We have a bunch of local brands as well. People with business licenses for their clothing brand, we will take and provide a storefront for their clothes,” he said. “That part is really fun, and I like doing that a lot.”

With the business trying to rebound from the economic crisis, Shively said he is looking for ways to thank the store’s dedicated clientele. “I want to do a customer appreciation day, but I’m not certain what all that will entail at this point.”

For more information on Sole Zone, visit <https://solezoneva.com/>.

(For additional photos and stories, visit [www.henrycountyenterprise.com](http://www.henrycountyenterprise.com))

# CLASSIFIED

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**YARD SALE**  
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### HENRY COUNTY PUBLIC NOTICE INTENT TO REMOVE AN UNSAFE STRUCTURE

**RECORD OWNER:  
JAMES KEITH WINNINGHAM &  
WILLIAM TRACEY WINNINGHAM**

Pursuant to Section 6-300 of the Henry County Code, NOTICE is hereby given that the owner shall remove the structure which might endanger the public health or safety of other residents of the County on or before thirty (30) days following this publication and failure to do so will result in the County having to remove the structure and the cost or expense shall be charged to and paid by the owner and collected as taxes are collected.

PROPERTY IDENTIFICATION - Unsafe structure  
OWNER - JAMES KEITH WINNINGHAM &  
WILLIAM TRACEY WINNINGHAM

PROPERTY LOCATION and TAX IDENTIFICATION NUMBER-  
105 Stones Diary Rd - Horsepasture District

Henry County, Virginia  
Tax Map: 38.6(010 )000 /010 ,11,12  
Account Number - 181170000

County of Henry  
Cecil I. Stone  
Chief Building Inspector  
Telephone (276) 634-4615

### COUNTY OF HENRY BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Pursuant to Section 15.2-2204 of the Code of Virginia, a series of public hearings has been scheduled for **March 24, 2021 at 1:00 p.m.** in the Summerlin Meeting Room of the County Administration Building, Kings Mountain Rd., Collinsville, Virginia. The purpose of these public hearings is to receive citizen input into the possible issuance of Special Use Permits for the following cases.

**Case S-21-10 Donald Wayne Davis, Jr.**

A request for a Special Use Permit was received under Section 21-302 of the Henry County Zoning Ordinance to allow for the establishment of a Class B Home Occupation. The specific business will be to operate a gunsmith service, and to sell and install accessories. The property is located at 711 Old Well Road in the Horsepasture District, and is zoned Agricultural District A-1, as shown on Tax Map 58.5/86.

**Case S-21-12 Smith River Spirits**

A request for a Special Use Permit was received under Section 21-302 of the Henry County Zoning Ordinance to allow for an existing, licensed distillery to offer retail sales from that location. The property is located at 1317 Eggleston Falls Road in the Ridgeway District, and is zoned Agricultural District A-1, as shown on Tax Map 62.3/81C,81G.

**Case S-18-10 (Amended) Mitchell Kendall**

This request is to amend an existing condition on a previously approved Special Use Permit to allow the applicant to keep and operate the previously installed track lighting. The property is located at 2485 North Fork Road, in the Reed Creek District, and is more commonly known as the former Mountain Valley Recreation Club. The Tax Map number is 2.1.1/2A, and is zoned Agricultural District A-1.

The applications for these requests may be viewed in the Department of Planning, Zoning & Inspection between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Lee H. Clark, AICP  
Director of Planning, Zoning & Inspection

Submit your community news and photos  
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# Workshop aims to help parents navigate telework and virtual schooling

**Brandon Martin**  
*Staff writer*

One major hurdle for parents during the coronavirus pandemic has been learning how to juggle working from home while still ensuring their children receive a proper education in their new virtual setting.

To help parents struggling to maintain the balancing act, panelists discussed some of the most common issues during a free, virtual workshop hosted Feb. 26 by Patrick Henry Community College.

At the workshop titled, “Telework Plus Virtual School.Oh My!,” Monica Hatchett, director of communications for Henry County Public Schools, suggested parents remember their available resources.

“The strongest resource is the classroom teacher,” she said. “While it feels like a lot of the time that teacher isn’t there, the teacher is absolutely 100 percent there. Our teachers are essentially on-call” 24 hours, 7 days a week.

Hatchett said instructors are available to answer emails, talk with families, and share videos of lessons with parents.

“There are a lot of teachers that get questions from parents” who then “create videos to show the parent how to help their child learn something,” Hatchett said. “The school counselor is also there to support students and their families. It’s important for them to check in with kids on a more formal basis.”

While it can be difficult at times, Hatchett stressed the importance of remembering the basics.

“It’s important to check your child’s grades on a regular basis,” she said. “Log into Canvas and see what they are doing. Ask them questions about the work they are doing or the video they should have watched.”

The around-the-clock schedule of virtual learning comes at a cost for parents, according to Ashley Raynor, supervisor of school-based services at Piedmont Community Services in Franklin

County.

“I’ve had a lot of conversations with parents who are burnt out,” Raynor said. “I’ve really focused with people on making goals that are small and reasonable goals. Getting people to dial back on high expectations and make small reasonable goals has been helpful.”

Raynor said it’s important to understand there are multiple ways to learn that aren’t strictly school-related.

“My goal is to make sure that kids have learned more than just academic stuff this year,” she said. “What have they learned from this experience and what have they taken away from it? I hope that it has made some of our kids stronger. We learned how to reach out for help when we need it and how to support each other. My hope is that it made us all better as a community to work together during a time that is really hard.”

Beth Deatherage, a parent and the chief operating officer of Momenta, said she has found a couple of ways to remain resilient throughout the pandemic.

“One is how important your workspace is,” she said. “There are five people in my house all day. We didn’t have separate workspaces for all of us prior to, so setting up a desk in one space for my fiancé, one space for me, one space for my son was important. I also got a mobile desk along the way and that really helped. I can work in a chair, on the treadmill, so I don’t feel like I’m in that same spot every day.”

Deatherage also noted the importance of maintaining a normal balance between work and home life.

“Typically, when you work in an office you are done at 5 (p.m.) but now I’m more likely to check in and work at 6 (p.m.) because I’m not going anywhere,” Deatherage said. “My son said at one point ‘mommy, why do you work so much?’”

Deatherage said this helped her notice that she needed to “stop working so much and focus on the standard hours so I’m making sure that I’m spending more

time with him. Being in the same house with him is not the same as spending time with him.”

Jessica Butler, licensed professional counselor at Piedmont Community Services, also discussed the importance of downtime.

“Be flexible and pick your battles. One thing that I wish I knew before was to be able to take a break,” Butler said. “Figure out what has to be done and break it down to a more manageable schedule or manageable structure. This has taught me how to be flexible with how I interact with my children and even my job.”

Hatchett said a little empathy goes a long way.

“It’s really important for us all to show each other some grace,” she said. “Typically, we don’t reach out until we are already frustrated. I think it is important that we remember that about each other.”

Deatherage said there has been an increase in parental critics during the pandemic, “a lot of mom-shaming about technology for children. Because all of this virtual learning is technology-based, you feel this extra pressure to limit their technology. I’ve had to kind of let that go completely.”

She said that has helped her find some balance as well.

“My son is not allowed to have his technology before he finishes his schoolwork for the day, but once he does finish it, so that I can finish my working day, he

is allowed to have that tablet and that Nintendo,” she said. “That’s a lot of different screen time that we wouldn’t normally allow our children, but I just have to let myself not feel guilty about it.”

She added that each parenting style is different.

“There are some less supportive moms that are judge-y,” Deatherage said. “You just have to ignore that and do what works for you to get you through the situation. There is no right way.”

Through it all, Deatherage said parents should remember they aren’t alone.

“It’s okay to say that you are struggling,” she said. “I think relying on your friends to help you through these difficult times” will be beneficial. “Just remember that you can do it.”

Butler said other resources may be available.

“Check with your company or HR (human resources) department to see what your company provides for support,” she said. “For instance, I know at Piedmont, we offer an EAP (Employee Assistance Program) plan which is essentially where they will pay for us to get counseling ourselves.”

Butler said taking on different responsibilities can be rejuvenating.

“If there is another role that you can possibly switch to for a while, maybe talk to your employer about that,” she said. “Maintain a healthy sleep schedule, try to remain active, get as much vitamin D and sun-

light as possible.”

According to Butler, doing these things will help parents focus on their child’s mental health.

“Anytime there is some mood instability, that’s what you want to use as a red sign for you,” Butler said. “Your teenager is going to be different as they continue to grow so there will be some changes in their moods and behaviors but if you have a happy-go-lucky kid and they are typically an extravert then all of a sudden they are isolated and want to stay in their room, this should be a warning sign for you.”

Butler added that high-risk behavior, excess sleeping or eating, being withdrawn, complaints of pain, and difficulty concentrating, can be other warning signs.

Piedmont Community Services offers a variety of services to assist families.

“In the Martinsville office, we offer psychotherapy, which is individual counseling for adults and youth as well,” Butler said. “We offer psychiatric services where you can see a psychiatrist for medication management, case management services which are geared towards helping consumers with resources in the community,” substance-abuse services and peer support.

Raynor said PCS has developed new ways to reach adolescents.

“One of our newest programs is Youth Mobile Crisis. It is designed for kids that need more intensive

treatment than outpatient therapy which is maybe weekly or bi-weekly,” she said.

Raynor said it helps reach “kids that are maybe having some active self-harm like cutting behavior” or “kids that are having that kind or risky behavior and aren’t meeting that criteria they would need to get an inpatient stay at a hospital.”

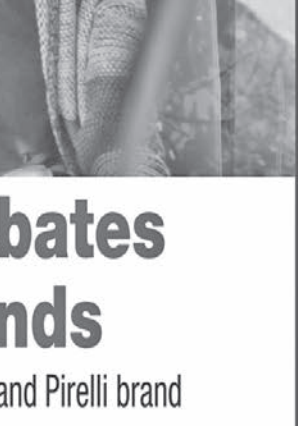
She said Youth Mobile Crisis allows for daily check-ins with struggling youngsters.

“Someone sees them every day,” Raynor said. “It can be in the community, school or their home. What I like about this program is it is really good for kids who don’t do well in traditional office-based settings. The idea is you meet the kid where they are and help stabilize them in their own setting.”

As schools start to return to hybrid instruction, Butler said PCS is adjusting to meet the emotional needs of students.

“We are trying to hire and staff more counselors because we know there is going to be a need from the schools,” Butler said. “We know we are going to get tons of referrals, so Piedmont is considering all these changes as well and trying to make sure we are staffed to provide those services whether it is in the school, as they allow us to, or if it’s from a telehealth perspective to make sure they have that support.”

Some of the participants on a free, virtual workshop, “Telework Plus Virtual School.Oh My!” The event was hosted by Patrick Henry Community College.



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# DRBA’s annual celebration to be held virtually

As the Dan River Basin Association (DRBA) marks 18 years of successes, it will host a special virtual meeting at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, March 6.

The program includes a special presentation, “An Introduction to the Reynolds Homestead Forestry Research Center,” by Kyle Peer, superintendent of the Reynolds Homestead Forest Resources Research and Extension Center.

Highlights during the event will also include DRBA’s accomplishments in 2020, a preview of the orga-

nization’s 2021 activities, annual awards, a business portion, prizes and a virtual hike at a new trail in Virginia.

In addition, DRBA will launch a new game at the event.

The celebration will be streamed from the Spencer Penn Centre in Spencer. The public is invited free of charge, but pre-registration is required. To register for the event, visit [www.danriver.org](http://www.danriver.org).

The virtual lobby opens at 9:30 a.m. Guests will have an opportunity to meet and greet until the program be-

gins at 10 a.m.

The short business session will include recognition of extraordinary volunteer service and election of board members. The day’s activities will reflect DRBA’s mission—preserving and promoting the region’s rivers and culture through education, recreation, stewardship, and regional identity.

With preservation of the rivers at the heart of DRBA’s focus, work continues to preserve and promote the natural resources of the basin. Staff members, including Executive Director Tiffany Haworth and program managers and coordinators from both Virginia and North Carolina, will report on DRBA’s many activities throughout the past year, as well as provide a glimpse of the year ahead.

Encompassing portions of sixteen counties in Virginia and North Carolina in its 3300-square-mile watershed, the Dan River Basin includes six rivers—the Mayo, Smith, Sandy, Banister, Hyco and, of course, the Dan. DRBA was formed in 2002 to preserve and promote the region’s abundant natural and cultural resources. Recognizing that this beautiful area shares a history of reliance on the rivers for drinking water, transportation, commerce, and industry, DRBA provides a unified vision of co-operation across geographic boundaries.

The program concludes at noon.

For more information visit [www.danriver.org](http://www.danriver.org).

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