

HENRY COUNTY ENTERPRISE

Saturday, August 14, 2021

(USPS-6)

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Rhonda Hodges, Vice President, Workforce, Economic & Community Development at Patrick & Henry Community College (left to right); Carolyn Byrd; Kendall Davis; Clay Campbell of the Campbell Family Group; Lisa Watkins, president of the chamber.

Small businesses set for success with Startup MHC

Callie Hietala
Staff writer

A leap of faith recently paid off big for three Martinsville and Henry County entrepreneurs.

On Wednesday, August 11, the Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber's Partnership for Economic Development (C-PEG), and Patrick & Henry Community College awarded funding to three new graduates from their entrepreneurial mentoring program, Startup MHC.

The three businesses awarded Wednesday were initially part of the 2020 Startup program, which was put on hold due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Eventually, the boot camps were able to resume via Zoom instruction.

Ashleigh Pritchard,

owner of CharmCat Creative - which operates out of Uptown's Studio 107, was awarded \$3,329, including \$2,729 in cash to purchase equipment and a booth at a New York trade show to expand her business and customer base. Pritchard was also awarded an in-kind gift of six months use of the virtual incubator space at the West Piedmont Business Development Center to virtually meet with clients and discuss commissions, plan, and work on designs.

"I want to say thank you so much for the support," said Pritchard, who attended the ceremony via Zoom. "I really love the Martinsville community and I look forward to growing my business and becoming an integral part of the art community in the

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Council hears update on efforts to combat Coronavirus

Callie Hietala
Staff writer

The Martinsville City Council on Tuesday heard from Nancy Bell, Public Information Officer for the West Piedmont Health District, about "the ongoing saga about COVID-19," City Manager Leon Towarnicki said.

Bell said the health district is mounting a new effort to combat widespread misinformation about COVID-19 and to encourage residents to get vaccinated. The region has some of the

lowest vaccination rates in the state — 42 percent of eligible people in Martinsville have been vaccinated, she said, while only 30 percent of the eligible population of neighboring Patrick County have received a vaccine.

Bell also pointed out that currently, more than 90 percent of people who have contracted the COVID-19 virus are unvaccinated.

These low vaccination rates caught the attention of the Virginia

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Nancy Bell (at podium) addressed members of Martinsville City Council (seated) at a meeting Tuesday. Bell is the Public Information Officer for the West Piedmont Health District.

County, city students return to classrooms

Callie Hietala
Staff writer

Backpacks, pencils, notebooks, and masks are on the basic school supply list for students returning to Martinsville and Henry County schools.

Martinsville students returned on August 8. Henry County students begin classes on August 16.

In February, the General Assembly passed Senate Bill 1303 which required all Virginia school systems to offer five days of in-person instruction for the 2021-2022 school year.

In Henry County, middle and high school students had the option to choose between in-person learning and an

online virtual academy. Nearly 100 eligible students chose the virtual option.

"We'd been planning to offer a virtual academy," said Monica Hatchett, director of communications for the county division. "The pandemic taught us that we could very easily do that."

Students in good academic standing could apply for consideration for the virtual option. Following that, the student and parents met with school officials to make sure everyone involved was well-prepared for what virtual learning would be like.

"Most of the classes offered are in conjunction with Virtual Virginia, and some



Buses bring students home from their second day of in-person learning at Martinsville Middle School.

are taught by our own teachers," Hatchett said.

Virtual Virginia (VVA) is a program of the Virginia Department of Education whose mission is to provide "flexible options for the diverse educational needs of students and their families," according to the VVA website.

Courses are taught by full-time and adjunct instructors who are fully licensed in Virginia.

Martinsville City Schools also offered a virtual option for students, but only 8 students opted in that program.

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Short scholarship ride set for Saturday



The 18th annual Jennifer Short Memorial Scholarship Bike/Car Ride will be held on Saturday. Jennifer, 9, and her parents, Michael and Mary Short, were killed in 2002.

The 18th annual Jennifer Short Memorial Scholarship Bike/Car Ride is set for Saturday, Aug. 14.

The event raises funds for a scholarship of the same name.

Jennifer Short and her parents, Michael and Mary Short, were killed in 2002. Jennifer was 9-years old at the time of her death. There have been no arrests in the case.

Sign-up for the ride, which costs \$10 per person, gets underway at 11 a.m. at CrossPoint Church, 3951 Greensboro Road, Ridgeway, according to Ray Reynolds, organizer.

Kickstands go up at 1 p.m. for the 35-mile ride, Reynolds said.

Participants will travel U.S. 220 south the state line and proceed to Exit 135. The ride will turn right at the stoplight, left onto Dan Valley Road, left onto River Road, and then left onto Grogan Road to the Jennifer Short Memorial Bridge, Reynolds said.

Sponsors of the event include Razor's Edge Photography, Bojangles, Cool Knobs and Pulls, State Farm, Bryant Radio, Autos By Nelson, Queens Landing, Speed 365 by McMillon. Fraternal Order of the Eagles, Ray Reynolds Construction, Henry County Sheriff's Office, Martinsville City

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO FROM PAST EVENT

Bikers for Babies Charity Ride and the first annual Celebrating Life Festival will be held on Saturday, August 28 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Bassett Furniture. Event coordinator Patrick Rusmisl said he expects between 1,000 and 4,000 will attend.

Bikers' charity event set for this year

Taylor Boyd
Staff writer

The 10th annual Bikers for Babies Charity Ride and the first annual Celebrating Life Festival are set for

Saturday, August 28, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Bassett Furniture.

Patrick Rusmisl, event coordinator for Bikers for Babies, said the motorcycle charity event raises funds for the Pregnancy Care Center of Martinsville-Henry County. "We're not incorporated, we're not a 501c3, we're just a bunch of guys that ride motorcycles and raise money," he said.

The festival will include a stage with live music, a play area for youngsters, a cruise-in to display classic cars,

and a raffle. Vendors and food trucks will also be onsite. The public is invited to attend free of charge.

Rusmisl said the charity ride will take place during the festival.

"So, at 12 p.m. all the motorcycles and some of the hotrods will leave for a cruise in the countryside and they'll come back to the festival at about 1:30 p.m. They'll be gone a little more than an hour," he said, adding the festival will continue during the ride.

State politicians have also been asked to speak during the festival. The group has asked Sen. Bob Good of Virginia's 5th District, Republican candidate for Governor Glenn Youngkin, Republican candidate

for Lieutenant Governor Winsome Sears, and GOP candidate for the 9th District Wren Williams.

"All of the politicians have been asked to speak about pro-life legislation. So, I want to hear what these politicians are going to do to get Virginia back to a reasonable state for reproduction rights," Rusmisl said.

There are no plans to cancel the festival because of COVID-19, however Rusmisl said organizers will be on the lookout for the inclement weather. But he noted the event will be held rain or shine.

Rusmisl said he is expecting between 1,000 and 4,000 people to attend the event.

While he does not

know how much money the group will raise, he said \$30,000 was raised during the first nine years.

Donation buckets will be stationed throughout the event. The proceeds

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Visit
<http://www.henrycountyenterprise.com>
for updates



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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

(Event information/calendar items must be received by 5 p.m. on the Tuesday before the desired publication date. Email to dhall@theenterprise.net)

Saturday, Aug. 14

The 18th annual Jennifer Short Memorial Scholarship Bike/Car Ride. \$10 sign-up begins at 11 a.m. at CrossPoint Church, 3951 Greensboro Road, Ridgeway. Kickstands go up at 1 p.m.

The Smith River Mile will become the UpTown Martinsville Mile. Same distance. New name. New course, at 7 p.m. The Uptown Martinsville Mile is a salute to the historical allure of the one-mile run. This race will not be run on a standard 400-meter track but rather at a unique venue. The UpTown Martinsville Mile will be run in historic UpTown Martinsville. Course is two laps around the central business district. All on mostly level city streets. Race will be run in multiple small heats to facili-

tate social distancing. COVID-19 precautions will be observed. Liquid refreshments and awards to follow.

Handmade Journal Workshop with Genie, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Spencer-Penn Center. Pages will be made with 4 x 6 140-pound, landscape, watercolor paper and hand sewn together. For questions, e-mail spc.susan@yahoo.com

Tuesday, Aug. 17

Barn Quilt Class at Spencer-Penn from 1 to 5 p.m. All supplies are provided. Options for the class: 24"x 24" exterior \$65; 36"x 36" exterior \$85; 12"x 36" exterior \$75; 12x 12 exterior kits (to go only) \$35. Class will be filled on a first paid first served basis. Once payment is received by Spencer-Penn, design choice should be sent to the instructor, Lauren at miss-laurenbyron@gmail.com. Questions may be e-mailed to Lauren or to Susan at spc.susan@yahoo.com. Cut off for registration

is Monday, August 9.

Friday, Aug. 20

Opera singer Kevin Maynor will perform at 570 Mary Hunter Drive, Bassett. Opening performance by Jarrett Hagwood and Friends at 6 p.m. Admission is a requested donation to Fresh Harvest Christian Church (D.O.C.) For more information or additional details, email N3Believe@gmail.com.

August Music Night at Spencer-Penn's monthly Music Night. Doors open at 5 p.m. with music starting at 5:30 p.m. Timbre Trail will take the stage at 6:15 p.m. in the Alumni Hall. Concessions will be available. Admission is a \$5 donation at the door. This is a cash only event.

Saturday, Aug. 28

The 10th annual Bikers for Babies Charity Ride and the first annual

Celebrating Life Festival will be held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Bassett Furniture.

Saturday, Sept. 11

The Bassett Heritage Festival, in Bassett, gets underway at 8 a.m.

ONGOING

MHC Coalition for Health and Wellness offers no contact Medicaid application assistance for eligible Virginia residents from birth to 64 years of age. No sign-up fees, no premiums, no deductibles. Including Children's Medicaid/FAMIS, Pregnancy Medicaid and Adult Health Care -19 to 64 years old. Questions can be answered, and applications completed by phone. In-person application assistance is available from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Thursdays at The Community Storehouse. Call or text Ann Walker 276 732-0509 to see if you qualify.

Congressional staff set visits

Ninth District U.S. Rep. Morgan Griffith's staff will visit Stuart and Martinsville on Aug. 25.

Staff members will be in the Patrick County Administration Building Conference Room, located at 106

Rucker Street, Stuart, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Staff will be in Martinsville from 2 to 3:30 p.m. at the City of Martinsville Municipal Building, Conference Room #32, Lower Level, 55 W. Church Street.

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Police Department, Martinsville Sheriff's Office, Buford Boitnotte, Fieldale Café, Martinsville Family Medicine, People's Save No. 9, Vernon W. Peters & Sons, West Window Corp., Sam Adkins Hoe Builders, Bassett Kiwanis, In Memory of Tommie E. Wright, Sarver Cleaning Services, Community Fellowship Church, Los Nortenos, Blue Ridge Mustang & Ford

Club, The Spencer Group, Rockingham County (N.C.) Sheriff's Office, Laurel Park Tire & Auto, Debbie's Flooring, Checkered Pig BBQ, Stone Dynamics, B&B Trucking, Victory Baptist Church, Robert's Best Way and others.

The rain date is Aug. 21. For more information, call Reynolds at (276) 340-2000.

Bikers

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of a festival or a motorcycle T-shirt will be donated to the event.

"There will be opportunities to buy raffle tickets. We have items to raffle off like gift baskets, and we have a chainsaw that we're going to raffle off," he said.

If anyone wishes to make a donation but are unable to attend the event, a link is available on the group's website.

Applications are still open to register to ride during the event. The cost is \$10 per driver and \$5 per additional passenger. The registration fee is due on the day of the event.

To register to ride or as a volunteer, sponsor, or vendor, visit www.mhc-bikersforbabies.com.

For more information, call Rusmisl at (276) 734-9585 or Jay Santoemma at (276) 732-4100.

Update

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Department of Health, which granted the district \$1.5 million in additional funding to help fight the spread of the virus in whatever way they saw fit. Bell said the district will use some of the funds to hire three community health workers. These workers will be hired from communities with low vaccination rates and tasked with going out among their friends and

neighbors to talk about the vaccines, their safety, and their efficacy. They can even arrange transportation to help residents reach vaccination sites.

Addressing a question from council member Danny Turner, Bell said, "Research shows that if you, Danny Turner, as an official of the city, talk to people about getting vaccinated, they will listen to you more than they will

listen to me."

These new community health workers will be selected specifically because understand the communities they are serving. Bell said the jobs will be posted soon, with new hires expected to be working by late August or early September.

Ideally, a good prospect would be someone from a community struggling with low vaccination rates,

Club donates to center



The Kiwanis Club of Bassett recently contributed \$1,000 to the Bassett Heritage Center to be used for maintaining the Center. Pictured are Fran Snead, (left), from the center receiving the check from Kiwanis Club of Bassett member Len Dillon.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

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| <p>CLUES ACROSS</p> <p>1. Calls balls and strikes</p> <p>4. Turkish officer</p> <p>9. Repaired shoe</p> <p>14. Grass genus</p> <p>15. Small, sealed vial</p> <p>16. Primp</p> <p>17. Immoral act</p> <p>18. A tool to communicate</p> <p>20. Crumbles away</p> <p>22. Egg-like</p> <p>23. Districts (abbr.)</p> <p>24. Dressed</p> <p>28. Small island (British)</p> <p>29. Dialect of Chinese</p> <p>30. Force unit</p> <p>31. Borderlines</p> <p>33. Norse gods</p> <p>37. Morning</p> <p>38. Fiddler crabs</p> <p>39. Tell a story</p> <p>41. Consumed</p> | <p>42. Atomic #58</p> <p>43. About old Norse poems</p> <p>44. Fencing swords</p> <p>46. One-time Tigers third baseman</p> <p>49. Southpaw (abbr.)</p> <p>50. Neither</p> <p>51. Conversations</p> <p>55. Distinctive manner or pronunciation</p> <p>58. Cyprinids</p> <p>59. Appropriate to a festival</p> <p>60. Pearl Jam frontman</p> <p>64. Wrath</p> <p>65. Italian city</p> <p>66. A way to get there</p> <p>67. A nose or snout</p> <p>68. German seaport</p> <p>69. A horse for riding</p> <p>70. Airline representative (abbr.)</p> | <p>CLUES DOWN</p> <p>1. Unhappy</p> <p>2. Silk fabric</p> <p>3. Unbroken view of a region</p> <p>4. Middle Eastern territory</p> <p>5. ___ and Andy, TV show</p> <p>6. Central processing unit</p> <p>7. Department of Housing and Urban Development</p> <p>8. Midcentury newspaper columnist</p> <p>9. Weapon</p> <p>10. Delivered a speech</p> <p>11. Probably going to happen</p> <p>12. Midway between northeast and east</p> <p>13. Danish krone</p> <p>19. Synthetic resin (abbr.)</p> <p>21. Fall slowly in drops</p> <p>24. Bestow an honor upon</p> <p>25. Childishly silly</p> <p>26. Related on the mother's side</p> | <p>27. Populations of related plants</p> <p>31. Coherent</p> <p>32. Tribe of ancient Britons</p> <p>34. Financial firm Goldman ___</p> <p>35. Stephen King thriller</p> <p>36. Went in again</p> <p>40. Commercial</p> <p>41. Poking holes in the ground</p> <p>45. Prisoners of war</p> <p>47. Pursued pleasure</p> <p>48. "Seinfeld" character</p> <p>52. Body of water</p> <p>53. Hovering vehicle (abbr.)</p> <p>54. People who utilize</p> <p>56. Nostrils</p> <p>57. Inner mass of some fungi</p> <p>59. Honor lavishly</p> <p>60. Midway between east and southeast</p> <p>61. Turn down</p> <p>62. Small round mark</p> <p>63. Expected at a certain time</p> |
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Bell said. The candidate also would have a high school diploma or GED, be sensitive, culturally aware, and have a lot of energy.

"This is not a desk job," she said.

The new positions will come with benefits, phones, computers, and ongoing certification training so that once their pandemic-related work is complete, the health workers will be able to apply their skills in new ways within the community.

Bell said the rest of the money from VDH will be used on marketing to help educate the public about the safety of vaccines.

"We hear a lot of rumors so we're really working to quell the rumors," Bell said.

The health district is producing posters to help combat some of the widespread myths surrounding the vaccines, including narratives about vaccinations leading to infertility or changing a person's DNA.

"It's not our role to chase people down and stick them in the arm," Bell said. "We want to convince them using facts."

Turner noted that some vaccine hesitancy could be related to the opioid crisis in the region.

"Big pharma was pushing it out the door, so people have a lot of doubt about big pharma," he said.

Bell said she hopes that approval from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) will help soothe some of those fears.

The Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson, and Moderna vaccines have all been under emergency authorization since last year. She expects FDA approval for at least one vaccine "any

day now."

Until the region reaches a higher vaccination rate, Bell said the best thing residents can do to protect the unvaccinated - including children who are not yet eligible to receive the vaccine - is continue to distance, wash hands, and wear masks.

"Millions of people have gotten the vaccines, and they are very healthy. Johnson and Johnson has had some weird side-effects, but nothing deadly. The Delta variant is deadly," Bell said.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Delta variant is nearly twice as contagious as previous variants and data suggest it may cause more severe illness in unvaccinated people than previous strains of the virus.

Bell hopes that the district's new efforts to reach under-vaccinated populations in the area will convince more residents to trust the vaccines and get a shot.

"We are here to help you have a healthy life. We don't want to harm you at all. If I thought this vac-

cine was harmful in any way, I wouldn't recommend you get it," she said.

Mayor Kathy Lawson thanked Bell for her work.

"I just want to say thank you for the job that you have done in educating the community. I appreciate you coming here tonight and sharing this information with us.... And hopefully this will be a positive move forward toward getting people vaccinated."

In other matters, the council:

*Adopted a resolution confirming concurrence with revisions to the West Piedmont Planning District Commission's Charter, as approved by the WPPDC's Board of Commissioners at a meeting in May.

*Reviewed, discussed, and approved an updated policy for public comment at future council meetings, including limiting a speaker to three minutes, requiring speakers to sign up to speak by noon the day before the meeting, and asking that groups (such as citizen or neighborhood groups) speaking on the same topic select one representative speaker.



Council member Tammy Pearson questioned Nancy Bell about COVID in Martinsville during a recent meeting.

Local resident among those joining ranks of state police

A Henry County resident was among the 40 new Virginia State Police (VSP) Troopers to officially graduate during the 134th Basic Session, trainees' 27-week tenure at the VSP Academy.

Trooper Zane M. Forbes, 26,

of Henry County, has a bachelor's degree in Criminology from Virginia Tech and is a United States Army Veteran. He will begin his career with VSP in Prince William County.

The new graduates received instruction in more than 100

different subjects spanning hundreds of hours. Academy training includes such areas as crime scene investigation, survival Spanish, judicial procedures, self-defense, cultural diversity and firearms.

Forbes and other new troop-

ers will report to their individual duty assignments this week. For their final phase of training, each will spend an additional six weeks paired up with a Field Training Officer learning his or her new patrol area.

As the need for highly-skilled

and capable law enforcement officers increases, the agency continues to seek qualified applicants for the positions of trooper. All interested applicants are encouraged to contact the Virginia State Police Recruitment Office at www.vatrooper.com.

Piedmont Arts to host 60th anniversary Family Day

The 60th anniversary Family Day will be held at Piedmont Arts on Saturday, August 28 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the Gravelly-Lester Art Garden

Enjoy crafts, games, magic workshops and a performance by acrobat/juggler/magician Gypsy Geoff Marsh. Gypsy Geoff has performed his unique circus stunts and zany marionette puppet shows at schools, family festivals and Renaissance fairs all over the

world.

Blue Ridge Regional Library will lead a craft and story time and Hylton's Woodcooking Grill and Lickin' Lizard Ice Cream will provide free refreshments compliments of the Harvest Youth Board.

Timed activities include:

10 a.m. to noon

Craft and story time with Blue Ridge Regional Library

11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Free food from Hylton's

Woodcooking Grill and Lickin' Lizard Ice Cream

11:30 a.m.

Magic workshop with Gypsy Geoff Marsh

12:45 p.m.

Magic workshop with Gypsy Geoff Marsh

2 p.m.

Performance by Gypsy Geoff Marsh

All-day activities include:

• Tie-dye a Piedmont Arts

t-shirt (while supplies last) or bring your own white t-shirt

- Rock painting
- Make a pinwheel
- Sidewalk chalk
- Art goody-bags
- Hoola hoops, bubbles and other games

The event is sponsored by VisitMartinsville, The Lester Group, Sovah, Blue Ridge Aquaculture, Service Roofing &

Sheet Metal, Martinsville Eyecare, Virginia Mirror Co., Third Bay Cafe, ValleyStar, Whitescarver Engineering, Fidelity Bank American National Bank & Trust, Richard and Pat Galos, Betty Lou and Ron Pigg, Dr. Edward Snyder, Collins-McKee-Stone Funeral Home, Blue Ridge Bank, Eliza Walmsley, Laurel Park Community Boosters, Quirk Design Build, Harvest Youth Board and Carter Bank & Trust.

State correctional facilities continue reopening

The Virginia Department of Corrections began reopening its facilities to the public on July 15 and will enter another important phase of reopening on September 1, when families will be able to visit inmates in nine facilities across the state.

On July 15, all state correctional facilities opened to attorneys and court officials, embassy and consulate officials, and other official visitors. On August 1, all facilities were opened to religious visitors and volunteers.

On September 1, the VADOC will open nine pilot sites for in-person family visitation. The Department anticipates that in-person family visitation will be resumed at all VADOC facilities statewide by October 1.

Pilot sites opening as of September

1 for family visitation are St. Brides Correctional Center, Greenville Correctional Center, Caroline Correctional Unit, Buckingham Correctional Center, Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women, Nottoway Work Center, Green Rock Correctional Center, Keen Mountain Correctional Center, and Patrick Henry Correctional Unit.

As the delta variant of COVID-19 spreads, the VADOC continues to follow Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Virginia Department of Health (VDH) guidance for congregate settings. Safety is of the utmost importance, and sanitation measures will continue to be followed as family visitation restarts, including cleaning between visitors/visitor groups. Currently, there is one active

COVID-19 case among incarcerated individuals and 32 cases among VADOC staff.

Visitors aged 12 and over are required to take a self-administered (or guardian-administered) COVID-19 rapid antigen test and must receive a negative test result in order to visit an inmate or Community Corrections Alternative Program (CCAP) probationer in person.

Because correctional facilities are congregate settings, masks are required. Inmates and CCAP probationers who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 are eligible to meet with members of the public in person. Video visits continue to be available to unvaccinated inmates. Virginia DOC staff have set up thousands of video visits and meet-

ings for inmates during the pandemic.

Information regarding the testing process and visitation requirements, including an online scheduling system, will be available on the VADOC website before family visitation resumes.

Currently, about 75 percent of VADOC inmates/CCAP probationers have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine and 62.4 percent are fully vaccinated. These percentages fluctuate as the inmate population changes; inmates and CCAP probationers who are released from VADOC correctional facilities are no longer counted amongst the vaccinated population, and new individuals enter the system on a regular basis.

While prevention efforts at facili-

ties continue to be very successful, the spread of COVID-19 variants and community vaccination rates are considerations that will continue to be monitored.

The VADOC's public health and safety responsibilities extend to the department's probation and parole offices as well as administrative offices. The VADOC currently supervises more than 66,000 people on community supervision. Precautions will continue to support employees, probationers/parolees, contractors, and representatives of government and other partner agencies. Community conditions and consistent screening and testing practices continue to be essential.

The VADOC continues to vaccinate all staff and inmates who want to be vaccinated against COVID-19, and to test staff and inmates for COVID-19.

More information can be found at <https://www.vadoc.virginia.gov/>.

Masks required in Virginia's community colleges

The Chancellor of Virginia's Community College System has announced an indoor mask mandate for all community colleges in Virginia.

In step with this mandate, Patrick & Henry Community College will be requiring the use of a face covering indoors for both vaccinated and unvaccinated people on its campus. The only exceptions for the indoor face covering policy will be for employees who are working alone in their offices and student athletes who are competing

or actively practicing on the court.

In a statement to the college presidents, VCCS Chancellor Glen DuBois said this decision was made largely because transmission rates have increased substantially in every one of the 23 community colleges' service regions. The chancellor also cited recent guidance from the CDC which urged colleges to consider requiring the use of face coverings in in-door public spaces.

"Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, we have repeatedly stated our shared

commitment to the safety of our students, faculty, and staff and to make safety-related decisions based on the best guidance of health-care professionals," DuBois wrote in his email to the college presidents. "The rise of the virus's easily transmitted Delta variant is requiring us, once again, to reconsider what is necessary to continue to pursue our academic mission as safely as possible."

To this sentiment, Greg Hodges, Patrick & Henry Community College's President said, "At P&HCC, the health and wellbeing of

our students, faculty, and staff is our number one priority. If you are sick, someone you love is sick, or you are worried about becoming sick, you're probably not focused on class. As such, doing everything we can to keep our PHfamily safe goes hand-in-hand with our core mission."

Both DuBois and Hodges stressed that the situation caused by the pandemic is ever-changing and requires much flexibility. Students are encouraged to check their college emails regularly for updates regarding COVID-

19 precautions and other important institution-wide notices. Currently, the college plans to continue offering a full range of in-person and online courses this fall.

According to the Virginia Department of Health website, the number of cases rose by approximately 74,000 between June 22 and August 3, with more than 90 percent of those new cases caused by the Delta variant.

According to the Medscape website for physicians and other healthcare professionals, U.S. data show that the Delta variant

is roughly twice as contagious as the initial strain of COVID-19, and unvaccinated people infected with it are more likely to need hospitalization. Although the vaccine is effective in preventing serious illness, health officials are recommending mask use by both vaccinated and unvaccinated people to reduce the spread.

Anyone needing help to locate a vaccine for themselves may do so at vaccinate.virginia.gov. The college is also offering a vaccine clinic on campus on September 7 noon to 2 p.m.

Poll shows majority of unvaccinated Virginians are reluctant to get vaccine

Nearly seven in 10 Virginia adults (69 percent) indicate they have been vaccinated against COVID-19. Yet among those who haven't been vaccinated, the majority (87 percent) say they don't plan to get the vaccine. Virginians also maintain favorable views of hospitals, with some saying their views have grown more favorable as a result of the work of hospitals during the pandemic.

These findings are among the results of a recent statewide poll of 800 registered Virginia voters conducted by Mason-Dixon Polling & Strategy that included a range of questions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, perceptions about hospitals and health insurance companies, and other health care issues.

On the subject of vaccinations, those who are unvaccinated offered a range of reasons for not being inoculated, including concerns that the vaccine could cause other health problems (28 percent), doubts about the health threat posed by COVID-19 (22 percent), doubts about vaccines in general (18 percent), a feeling that the vaccine is unnecessary for individuals who have already contracted coronavirus (17 percent), and skepticism about the federal government's role in vaccine development (13 percent).

The scientific evidence clearly demonstrates that

the vaccines help limit the spread of COVID-19 and protect people from becoming seriously ill, being hospitalized, or dying from the virus.

Virginia Department of Health data shows that since late January when vaccines first became available to the public in the Commonwealth, 99.4 percent of cases, 99 percent of hospitalizations, and 99.3 percent of deaths have occurred in people who have not been vaccinated.

The poll also found that 13 percent of Virginians either personally experienced a mental health or substance abuse challenge during the pandemic or had a close family member who did. Of that 13 percent, 85 percent indicated they had already received treatment for their challenges or plan to seek help, while 11 percent said they don't plan to pursue treatment. Those figures reflect a broader continuing trend of increased utilization of behavioral health treatment by Virginians – a pattern that held true during 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Even as hospital admissions, emergency department visits, and most other hospital service lines saw considerable declines in volume last year, the use of behavioral health and substance abuse services in hospitals rose during the pandemic. Nearly 9 in 10 Virginians (88 percent) now

say they feel safe about going to a hospital or doctor's office to get medical care despite the continued presence of COVID-19. And fewer Virginians are delaying health care services due to COVID-19 concerns.

Last year, nearly four in 10 people (39 percent) said they had delayed care due to the pandemic. Now, just 23 percent say they have delayed care. Of those, four in 10 (40 percent) said they still have not rescheduled care they put off during the pandemic.

In other poll findings: Favorable View of Hospitals • 83 percent of people view Virginia hospitals favorably and 78 percent said they have had a positive personal or family experience in Virginia hospitals.

• One in four Virginians (25 percent) said the work of hospitals during the pandemic – when hospitals treated and discharged more than 58,000 COVID-19 patients, administered more than 2 million vaccine doses, and served as a first line of public health defense – made their views of hospitals more positive.

Views on Insurance Companies and State Insurance Oversight

• Nearly two-thirds of people (63 percent) believe it is unfair for insurance companies to make record profits in a pandemic while health care providers and the rest of the economy suffers, and a majority (56 percent)

view health insurance companies unfavorably, compared to 21 percent who view them favorably.

• As in previous polling, results from this survey show that most Virginians (57 percent) said they aren't aware of the State Corporation Commission's Bureau of Insurance, its regulatory function, and the services it can provide to the public.

• And three in four Virginians (75 percent) say they support changes to the state Ethics and Fair Business Practices Act law to prevent insurers from unilaterally changing contract terms with providers that can result in patients being out-of-network with their preferred providers.

Certificate of Public Need and Medicaid Expansion Provider Assessment

• A majority (54 percent) believe that Virginia's Certificate of Public Need (COPN) program should be kept in place, as opposed to just 14 percent who believe it should be eliminated. That is in line with the results of polling conducted in 2020 and 2019 when 59 percent and 55 percent of people, respectively, said that the program should be retained.

• And 74 percent support requiring insurers and drug companies to help fund the annual state share of costs for Medicaid expansion. Those results are consistent with previous polling when

70 percent (2020) and 72 percent (2019) expressed support for this concept. Right now, Virginia hospitals are the only health care sector partners shouldering those costs, which this year will exceed \$400 million.

The recent statewide public opinion poll conducted by Mason-Dixon is the latest in a series of surveys commissioned by VHHA to help identify health care issues of concern to Virginians and

to inform the Association's approach to developing corresponding public policy solutions.

The poll of 800 registered Virginia voters was conducted June 3-10, 2021 and featured live landline and cell phone interviews with Virginians from all regions of the state representing a wide array of ethnic, gender, age, and political diversity reflecting the demographics of the Commonwealth.



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OPINION

Regarding school dress codes

Back when I was in middle school and high school in the late '90s/early '00s, we had a slew of dress code regulations.

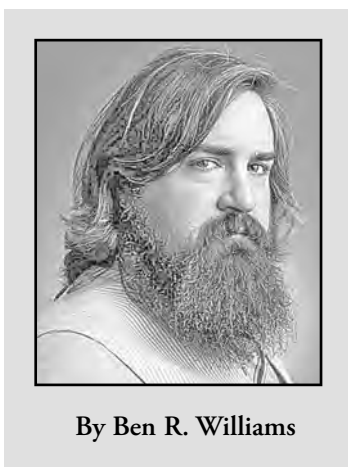
For one thing, boys' hair could not touch their collars. Anarchy would have ensued. After graduation, I didn't get a haircut for several years. Boys also weren't allowed to have facial hair at my school; the only exception was sideburns, although the sideburns could not extend past the earlobe. As a hirsute young man, I was busted on sideburn violations on several occasions.

Of course, boys also had to wear collared shirts. No one can possibly be educated while wearing a T-shirt. To abide by the letter of the law if not the spirit, my buddy Wes and I used to go to the Eden Flea Market; a lady had a booth there where she used to sell old mechanic work shirts that usually still had the name patches attached. I got a lot of mileage out of my old brown work shirt that identified me as "CARLOS." The

name was stitched in cursive so I figured it was pretty classy. The school administrators disagreed.

Boys also couldn't sag their pants. That one didn't really affect me since I was never cool enough to sag my pants. Instead of looking like an early 2000s fashion plate, I would have looked like I'd wandered out of a mental hospital. Several of my friends were constantly admonished to pull their pants up, though.

Sometimes the rules seemed to have been made up on the fly. There was apparently a brief window around the year 2000 when it was considered cool to wear designer overalls, but ONLY if one strap was hanging loose. My classmate Marcus showed up to school wearing some slick Tommy Hilfiger overalls only to be told by the principal that overalls could only be worn to school with BOTH straps over the shoulders. Marcus shrugged the loose strap back on, and all day long, people called him "Farmer Marcus." He



By Ben R. Williams

never wore those overalls again.

Of course, the dress code rules for the boys had nothing on the rules the girls had to follow.

I remember multiple occasions when girls were asked to stand up and hold their arms straight down at their sides; if their shorts or skirts were shorter than the spot where their fingertips fell, they had to either cover up or go home and change. They also couldn't

wear spaghetti straps, and God forbid a shirt showed any midriff whatsoever. Coming into school baring midriff was maybe a half-step down on the punishment scale from rolling in with a bag of cocaine.

Of course, all of the dress code rules for the girls were intended to keep them from distracting the boys. Today, a lot of people argue that it's deeply unfair to punish girls for distracting boys with their dress when the onus should be on boys to not be weird little creeps. While I don't disagree with that logic, I would add that it's stupid for another reason. As a former teenage boy, I can confirm that a particularly shapely cloud is enough to provide a distraction. A girl covered head-to-toe in U-Haul moving pads would distract a teenage boy. The school administrators are basically King Canute shouting down the waves at that point.

The reason I got to thinking about school dress codes is because right now, with school starting back up imminently, districts in many states across our nation are debating whether or not students should be required to wear masks

to school.

During a pandemic.

Involving an airborne virus.

A virus that children under the age of 12 cannot yet be vaccinated against.

In some districts, school administrators are actually fighting the state government to allow them to enforce a mask mandate. In Florida, for example, districts face a loss of state funding because Gov. Ron DeSantis has banned mask mandates. He claims that requiring students to wear masks "lacks a well-grounded scientific justification," which sounds like the kind of thing a Civil War battlefield surgeon would mumble at you while spit-polishing his leg-cuttin' hacksaw.

In other districts, however, school administrators have argued that it's simply impossible to require students to wear masks. It would take too much time and effort to even try. They are powerless, simply powerless, to enforce such rules on the young people in their care.

That sounds like bunk to me. If you don't believe me, ask Farmer Marcus.

A Health Care Agenda for the Future

Morgan Griffith
9th District U.S. Rep.

For most Americans, health care ranks among the top public policy issues. Its cost, accessibility, and quality have a direct and tangible impact on a person's well-being.

Improving these factors in health care for residents of Virginia's Ninth Congressional District continues to be a priority for me. As a member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee's Subcommittee on Health, I have worked on lowering prescription drug prices, addressing the opioid crisis, increasing telehealth opportunities, prioritizing mental health, and more.

In addition to the work I am doing on the Committee, House Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) recently appointed me to a task force charged with developing a health care agenda for a future House

Republican majority. Our agenda will focus on reducing barriers to better health and wellness, increasing choice in health care, expanding the range of available providers, encouraging investment in new cures and therapies, and lowering costs.

Some of my priorities for this task force will be those I have championed throughout my time in the House.

The costs of prescription drugs remain a great concern for those who depend on them. I believe more transparency and accountability in the drug pricing system can help. This requires greater clarity regarding the role of pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) in drug pricing.

PBMs manage prescription drug benefits for insurers and government health programs, negotiating rebates and discounts, but how they do this work is often inscri-

table. One of their most egregious methods is the use of direct and indirect remuneration (DIR) fees. DIR fees allow insurance companies to claw back money from pharmacies after the sale. In other words, your pharmacist fills your prescription for \$100 based on the understanding that she would get reimbursed by the insurance company at the \$100 rate. Six months to two years later, the insurance company says, "Sorry, we are only going to pay you \$80." This is true even if the pharmacy originally bought your medication for \$90. It is an unfair practice that places a great burden on community pharmacists in particular.

This is why I have co-led HR 2608 and HR 3554, the Ensuring Seniors Access to Local Pharmacies Act and the Pharmacy DIR Reform to Reduce Senior Drug Costs Act. Both of these

ills would contribute to lowering prescription drug costs and increasing options. When these are successful, we can apply this policy to all prescriptions.

Shining light on these practices and preventing abuses is important to the effort to keep down drug prices. This legislation is just one of the ways I am fighting to do so.

Additionally, I care deeply about addressing the ongoing opioid crisis. I introduced HR 1899, the Ensuring Compliance Against Drug Diversion Act. HR 1899 passed the House in April and is currently pending a Senate vote. This bill provides legal authority for certain regulations over the modification, transfer, and termination of a registration to manufacture, distribute, or dispense controlled substances, including opioids.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

(CDC) recently published data showing there were 93,000 drug overdose deaths just last year. This is clearly an ongoing problem and I will continue to work with my colleagues to combat this tragic epidemic.

Also, improving access to telehealth is a top priority. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the typical restrictions on telemedicine services were lifted as part of the emergency response. This experience helped prove the technology's value but also indicated where reforms are needed. I co-sponsored HR 1332, the Telehealth Modernization Act, to modify the requirements for covering these services under Medicare. We need to look at enhanced privacy protections and strengthened rules against potential kickbacks, among other areas.

Telemedicine can greatly improve health care in rural areas. In rural areas like ours, we are underserved by health

professionals. Particularly noticeable during COVID was our lack of mental health resources.

Accordingly, the last two Congresses, I have co-led HR 1667, the Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act. This bill establishes grants and requires other actions to improve mental and behavioral health and prevent exhaustion among our nation's health care providers. I am also a co-sponsor of HR 432, Mental Health Access Improvement Act, to provide coverage of marriage and family therapist services and mental health counseling services.

As I advocate on behalf of Ninth District residents while the health care task force crafts its agenda, I invite you to provide feedback.

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.

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Health officials said a child died from COVID-19 complications

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) announced Thursday that a child in the Eastern Region died from complications of COVID-19.

Further information about the child will not be disclosed to protect privacy and out of respect for the patient's family.

This is the first reported death of a child in the Eastern Region with COVID-19 in Virginia.

"We extend our condolences to the family and friends of this child at this time of great loss," said State Health Commissioner M. Norman Oliver, M.D., M.A. "COVID-19 has taken thousands of lives from us, and every death is a tragedy. The COVID-19 pandemic is far from over. As we have seen in recent weeks, a COVID variant, the Delta variant, spreads more

easily from one person to another. We have made progress in these past months against this virus, but a tragic event like the death of this young child is a stark reminder that our work is not done."

To lower the risk of spreading respiratory infections, including COVID-19, VDH encourages everyone to:

Get a COVID-19 vaccine when it is available to you or your children.

To locate a free vaccine near you, visit virginia.gov/.

Wear a mask in indoor public settings, even if you are fully vaccinated. Virginia is currently experiencing high levels of COVID-19 spread.

Practice physical distancing. Maintain at least 6 feet of space between yourself and others.

Avoid large gatherings, crowds, and indoor spaces with poor ventilation

(airflow).

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you have been in public spaces; use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.

Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Stay home when you are sick. If you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, get tested.

Avoid contact with sick people.

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.

For more information on COVID-19 in Virginia, visit www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus and www.cdc.gov/coronavirus.

Virginia DMV continues to migrate services online

The Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) continues to expand its offering of online transactions by adding the ability for credentialed customers to establish a payment plan contract online. This new online option will enable more than 150 customers per week to skip a trip to DMV and create additional appointment opportunities for customers who require in-person service.

If customers owe fees as a result of not insuring their vehicles, they may be able to enter into a payment plan to pay the fees over time and continue driving. Since payment plans were established by the General Assembly in 2017, more than 53,000 customers have successfully completed their contracts with DMV.

In Virginia, in order to purchase license plates or register a vehicle (to receive decals), customers must certify that their vehicle is covered by the minimum insurance requirements or pay the Uninsured Motor Vehicle Fee.

When a customer is cited for driving without vehicle insurance their license is suspended until they comply with the following three requirements: 1) file a Financial Responsibility Insurance Certificate (SR-22), 2) pay the reinstatement fee, and 3) pay the non-compliance fee up front or enter into a payment plan to pay the fee over time in monthly installments, which may also be paid online. The suspension action and requirements are the same whether an insurance company reports to DMV that a

customer's liability insurance coverage on a vehicle has terminated or been cancelled during the registration period and the customer has not obtained another policy, or the customer has not temporarily deactivated the license plates or permanently surrendered the license plates.

To avoid a suspension of driving privileges, the requirement to pay the non-compliance fee and the related requirements, customers must ensure that there are no lapses in insurance coverage for vehicles during their registration period and that they either deactivate or surrender license plates to DMV prior to cancelling their insurance.

Visit www.dmv.virginia.gov/vehicles/#statpay.asp for more information.

McAuliffe calls on health systems to mandate vaccines for employees

Gubernatorial candidate Terry McAuliffe, D, on Wednesday called on all Virginia health systems and health care providers to require their employees to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

McAuliffe made the announcement as part of a visit to Inova Center for Personalized Health in Fairfax. Inova Health System was one of the first in Virginia to require COVID-19 vaccinations for all of its 19,000 employees, an announcement the health care provider made in June of this year. Earlier this week, his campaign announced that it is requiring all campaign

employees to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

“The only way we’re going to end this pandemic and keep our economy strong is by getting every eligible Virginian vaccinated as quickly as possible. Leadership on this issue is critical, and I’m proud to be here today at Inova Health System, which has been a leader in our great Commonwealth in requiring its employees to be vaccinated against COVID-19,” said McAuliffe. “I urge all health care systems and providers in Virginia to take this important step and require their employees be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Together, we

can beat this virus once and for all, keep our fellow Virginians safe, and keep our Commonwealth’s economy running strong.”

Gov. Ralph Northam’s recent mandate that state employees be vaccinated for COVID-19 covers all state employees working in health care positions at Virginia’s state hospitals and health care facilities. Private hospitals and health systems, however, are not subject to the mandate, meaning there is no vaccine requirement for thousands of workers at privately-run health care systems, hospitals, and nursing homes. McAuliffe’s announcement calls on

those private employers to require full vaccination by their employees to keep Virginians safe and the Commonwealth’s economy strong.

The Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association (VHHA) in July issued a statement in support of hospitals and health systems amending existing vaccine policies to require COVID-19 vaccines for health care employees.

After McAuliffe’s announcement, the VHHA noted that its membership “includes a variety of unique organizations including independent health systems, multi-hospital health systems,

and multi-state health systems that are located in communities small and large across Virginia.

“As such, different VHHA members will proceed at their own pace as they continue to fight COVID-19 and care for patients with other medical needs while also determining the best path forward on vaccination policies that are appropriate for their organizations, their staff, and their communities,” it stated.

“Some members have already announced updated vaccination policies. Others are in the development or evaluation stage. While VHHA’s statement

was developed in consultation with its members, it is not a binding requirement of Association members,” the VHHA stated.

A former governor, McAuliffe is being challenged in November by GOP contender Glenn Youngkin, who supports parental rights regarding masks. Princess Blanding, Liberation, and Paul Davis, Independent, also are running in the election. Blanding will appear on the general election ballot; Davis is a write-in candidate.

Northam is unable to seek reelection due to term limits.

Vaccine required for state employees, other sectors encouraged to follow suit

Virginia will require its state workers to show proof that they are fully vaccinated or be tested for COVID-19 every week. This policy will impact approximately 122,000 employees and will go into effect on September 1, according to an announcement by Gov. Ralph Northam.

The announcement came as the highly transmissible Delta variant is driving up cases across

the Commonwealth and around the country, primarily among unvaccinated people. Nearly 73 percent of Virginia adults have had their first shot, and 54 percent of all Virginians are fully vaccinated against the virus, which is higher than most states.

“The only way to end this pandemic is to for everyone to get vaccinated against COVID-19,” said Northam. “As head

of state government, we have a responsibility to lead by example and ensure the safety of our employees and the people they serve. The three vaccines are safe, effective, free, and widely available, and I strongly urge every eligible Virginian to get their shot. The time for waiting is over.”

Last week, President Joe Biden announced a vaccination

requirement for federal workers and Northam’s executive directive is consistent with this policy.

“Our valued state employees are dedicated to public service, and I am confident they want to do what is necessary to keep themselves, their co-workers, and the public safe,” said Secretary of Administration Grindly Johnson, who oversees the Department of Human Resource

Management.

Virginians who have not been vaccinated are encouraged to go to vaccinate.virginia.gov or call 877-VAX-IN-VA (877-829-4682, TTY users call 7-1-1) to find a nearby vaccination clinic. For answers to frequently asked questions or to learn more about vaccination for COVID-19 in Virginia, visit vdh.virginia.gov/covid-19-vaccine.

MHC from page 1



Lisa Watkins awards a check to Ashleigh Pritchard, owner of CharmCat Creative.



Carolyn Byrd of Imagination Lavender Farm receives her award from Lisa Watkins.



Kendall Davis, owner of BAG Productions, and Lisa Watkins.



Lisa Watkins, president of the Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce and executive director of C-PEG.

area.”

Carolyn Byrd and her Imagination Lavender Farm were awarded \$3,500 to purchase a seed cleaning machine. “This will not only save our hands, but it also will help us harvest our buds, which is the most important part of the lavender,” said Byrd. Byrd’s farm also houses a retail shop housed in a renovated barn on the property.

Kendall Davis was awarded \$6,921.46 for his BAG Productions, a video production and social media company. BAG stands for “blessed and gifted.” The award included \$5,500 in cash to buy a new camera and editing equipment. Davis was also awarded six months of free space in the West Piedmont Business Development Center.

“I learned a lot from the classes, just about becoming a business owner,” said Davis. He said he lost many commissions during the pandemic and was feeling deflated but being able to come back into the program in 2021 and continue through the process was rejuvenating.

“It means a lot to be able to use this stuff to help our city grow,” Davis said.

All three business will receive in-kind membership with the Chamber of Commerce for one year to help them make connections and continue to grow.

The Startup MHC initia-

tive began in 2015 as Startup Martinsville with the help of a Community Business Launch grant from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development.

Initial efforts were focused on developing businesses in the Uptown Martinsville area, but the program has since expanded to encompass all of Martinsville and Henry County.

To participate in Startup MHC, hopeful entrepreneurs go through a competitive application process. Successful applicants then participate in an intensive entrepreneurial boot camp—eight weeks long for startups and four weeks for growing companies.

C-PEG partners with Patrick & Henry Community College, Longwood’s Small Business Development Center, Martinsville SCORE, and the Martinsville-Henry County Economic Development Corp. on the boot camps, as well as a host of staff from both the city and county, local entrepreneurs, and business experts.

Before the Wednesday awards added three new businesses to their list of alumni, 231 individuals had graduated from its training program and 32 businesses were awarded more than \$191,000 in cash and in-kind donations.

“These businesses have created

over \$1,151,000 in new capital investment and created 130 new jobs,” said Lisa Watkins, president of the chamber and executive director of C-PEG.

“We’ve had a lot of success stories with this program,” said Sharon Shepherd, the chamber’s deputy director. She mentioned Uptown Martinsville’s Books and Crannies book shop and Cocoa Trail Chocolates as just a few of the initiative’s successes.

“We really could not do this without our sponsors,” Watkins said. Sponsors for this year’s program included the Campbell Family Group, American National Bank, Appalachian Power, and Lawless Welding & Fabrications (also a graduate of the Startup MHC program.)

Martinsville City Council member Danny Turner also attended the ceremony.

“It’s always great to see people who will invest their future in Martinsville and Henry County,” he said.

City Manager Leon Towarnicki, who has been a part of the Startup MHC program since its inception, said in closing, “It is really very encouraging to see so many people in our community take that leap of faith to jump into their own business.”

“There are many success stories,” he added, “and I’m sure there are going to be more right here in this room.”



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OBITUARIES

Billy Lester Robertson

Billy Lester Robertson, 80, of Martinsville, Va. passed away on August 1, 2021. Billy was born August 9, 1940, to Lester Robertson and Virginia Lynch Robertson. In addition to his parents, Billy was preceded in death by his brothers Clyde and Ronnie Robertson.



Corporation as a sales representative with 30 years of service. He was an avid golfer and past member of Forest Park Country Club and the Elks Club. He was a passionate fan of UVA sports.

The family is very appreciative of the care provided by Ebony Brimmer, Billy's caretaker for 10 years, and to Rocky Mount Health & Rehab where he had resided for the last 10 months.

A celebration of life service will be held at a later date.

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

To express condolences online, please visit www.collinsmckee-stonemartinsville.com.

He is survived by a sister, Marie Mongon; brothers, James Robertson, Ray Robertson, Onix Robertson and Charlie Dillon; several nieces and nephews; a very special niece, Liza Mize; and his former wife, Kathy Robertson, whom he remained good friends with after their 9-year marriage ended.

Billy retired from West Window

Jose Lorenzo Justice

Jose Lorenzo Justice, 29, of Martinsville, Virginia passed away on August 5, 2021. He was born March 12, 1992, in Stuart, Virginia, to Samantha Kay Osland Sanchez. He had worked for Triad Loading Company. He loved his family, friends, the outdoors, hiking, the Carolina Panthers, and Boston Celtics.

He was preceded in death by a special nephew, Diego Aparicio, and grandparents, Daniel, and Lucy Spencer.

In addition to his mother, he is sur-

vived by his stepfather, Jacobo Sanchez; his sister, Keshia Aparicio (Alejandro); brother, Daniel Salinas; and special nieces, Eva, Emma, and Alexa Aparicio.

His funeral was held in Wright Funeral Service Chapel on August 10, 2021, with Pastor Neil Pressley officiating. Interment was in the Fairhaven Memorial Park.

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

AITC welcomes applications for educator grants this fall

Teachers interested in starting a school garden or helping students learn about a chicken's life cycle could benefit from Virginia Agriculture in the Classroom's educator grants.

To help educate youth on the source of their food and fibers, and the importance of agriculture in daily life, AITC is offering grants for K-12 educators who incorporate agricultural concepts and experiences in their classrooms.

Virginia AITC has over \$30,000 available for the 2021-22 school year to support classroom agricultural experiences. Teachers and other organizations like 4-H clubs and FFA chapters that work with schools and parent-teacher associations can apply for up to \$500 for agriculture-related initiatives.

"The grants paid for the majority of our raised-bed projects," said Deborah Horowitz, a Southampton Middle School agriculture teacher.

Horowitz previously received two AITC grants for projects at her school. The first grant funded the materials for raised-bed gardens, which the students built and filled with topsoil and compost mix, and then planted. The second grant funded installation parts for an irrigation system, which students assembled. Cold frames were purchased, assembled by students and installed, allowing students to grow off-season produce.

Horowitz used the projects to teach students how to grow a variety of herbs and vegetables. In addition, the nearby

high school's culinary arts students were able to use some of the freshly-grown produce for their classes, and excess produce was donated to a local food bank.

"Students learned about square-foot gardening and were amazed to see what could be produced," Horowitz said. "This year, they learned how to grow garlic, which none of the students had ever done. Students loved braiding the garlic and hanging it in the chicken coop to cure."

The deadline for grant applications is Oct. 15. However, applications received by Aug. 20 will be eligible for AITC's new "early bird notification." This early notification allows educators to begin their projects in time for schools' openings.

"As a number of schools return to in-person learning beginning in early August, educators are eager to start the year with a hands-on project," explained Tammy Maxey, Virginia AITC programs director. "Virginia Agriculture in the Classroom is encouraging educators to start the year with agriculture, and is providing the funding to increase school and program opportunities."

Projects may occur at school or virtually, addressing topics like gardening and horticulture, nutrition, embryology and STEM themes that provide unique agriculture experiences.

To learn more about educational activities available through Virginia AITC, or to apply for a grant, visit va.agclassroom.org.

Second round of flood preparedness grants announced

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation announced the opening of a second grant round for the Virginia Community Flood Preparedness Fund.

Communities across Virginia have until Nov. 5 to apply for \$17 million in grants to address the effects of recurrent flooding, sea level rise and extreme weather.

Flooding is the most common and costly natural hazard in Virginia and the United States. The Community Flood Preparedness Fund will provide an estimated \$75 million per year to improve local flood resilience, including targeted funding for the most vulnerable and underserved communities.

The General Assembly voted to estab-

lish the fund during the 2020 session. It is financed by the sale of carbon emission allowances under the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, or RGGI, which Virginia joined in January 2021.

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, in cooperation with the Virginia Resources Authority, administers the fund and grant program. DCR oversees the state's floodplain management program.

A grant manual with eligibility rules and application procedures is available at www.dcr.virginia.gov/cfpf.

The first Community Flood Preparedness Fund grant cycle opened June 4 and closes Sept. 3.

U of M Medical School receives funds to launch clinical trial of ivermectin as a COVID-19 treatment

Angel Mendez
Contributing writer

An ongoing COVID-19 clinical trial studying the outpatient use of metformin, a generic medication for type 2 diabetes, has expanded and will now be the nation's first to include fluvoxamine, an antidepressant, and ivermectin, an antiparasitic, as possible treatment options to prevent hospitalization and "long COVID."

Led by the University of Minnesota Medical School, the multi-site clinical trial received new support — \$1 million from the Rainwater Charitable Foundation and \$500,000 from Fast Grants — to expand the study, which is also the first randomized clinical trial for COVID-19 in the world to include pregnant women.

The clinical trial launched after U of M Medical School researchers identified, through computer modeling and observational studies, that outpatient metformin use may decrease the likelihood of dying from or being hospitalized for COVID-19. Their research was published in the Journal of Medical Virology and in The Lancet Healthy Longevity, which was in partnership with UnitedHealth Group's OptumLabs. These findings, along with other prospective studies supporting the use of fluvoxamine and ivermectin, helped provide enough evidence to expand the randomized clinical trial to include all three medications as well as combination arms.

"Observational studies and test-tube experiments cannot be conclusive but do contribute to bodies of evidence," said Carolyn Bramante, MD, principal investigator of the study and an assistant professor of internal medicine and pediatrics at the U of M Medical School. "To complete this study, we are currently enrolling volunteers nationwide through six institutions in the U.S., including in Minneapolis."

The study is simple — patients are randomized to receive 14 days' worth of either one of the three drugs indi-

vidually, a placebo or a combination of metformin and fluvoxamine or fluvoxamine and ivermectin to take twice per day and track their symptoms. After 14 days, volunteers complete a survey.

Volunteers for the trial should be between the ages of 30 and 85 years old with a body mass index greater than or equal to 25kg/m2, or someone who is at least five feet and six inches tall and weighs more than 155 pounds. To qualify for the study, volunteers must enroll within three days after receiving a positive COVID-19 test.

"Some new strains of the virus may evade immunity from some of the vaccines. Additionally, worldwide vaccine availability will take time, and not all individuals may get the vaccine. Thus, we feel we should study safe, available, inexpensive outpatient treatment options as soon as possible," said Bramante, who is also an internist and pediatrician with M Health Fairview. "Having an outpatient treatment option could ensure more people survive the illness if they contract it and have fewer long-term symptoms."

In addition to the new support from the Rainwater Charitable Foundation and Fast Grants, initial funding and support for the multi-site trial came from the Parsemus Foundation and OptumLabs.

Participating clinical trial sites include M Health Fairview and Hennepin Healthcare in Minneapolis, Northwestern University in Chicago, Olive View — UCLA Education & Research Institute in Los Angeles, Optum in Colorado and Indiana and University of Colorado Denver. Co-investigators on the study include Hrishikesh Belani, MD; Michelle Biros, MD; David Boulware, MD; David Leibovitz, MD; Jacinda Nicklas, MD; David Odde, PhD; Matt Pullen, MD; Mike Puskarich, MD; and Christopher Tignanelli, MD.

To learn more about how to qualify for this study, visit <https://covidout.umn.edu/>.

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The looming challenge facing both divisions is helping students catch up from a year virtual and hybrid learning.

"Yes, we have concerns. However, we aren't going to be able to assess those fully until we get (the students) in the classroom and teachers can work with them. Reading is our greatest concern," Hatchett said. "It's not something they want to do a lot on their own."

She said teachers will assess which students have accelerated, maintained, or fallen behind during the past academic year.

Remediation options are in place for students who need extra support during the school day. There also are after-school programs in place to help students catch up.

Parker Gunn, communications and community outreach coordinator for Martinsville City Schools said, "While we know there has been some learning loss, we are looking to accelerate our instruction so we can ensure our students are ready for the next grade level and beyond."

In late July, the Virginia Departments of Health and Education released updated guidance for

PreK-12 schools for the 2021-22 school year which reinforced the importance of in-person learning and gave guidelines for keeping students and staff safe as classes resume.

"Due to the dedication, expertise, and close partnership with the Virginia Department of Health and the Virginia Department of Education, the Commonwealth's children and the individuals that help them learn will be protected by proven strategies, without a one-size fits all approach," Dr. Daniel Carey, Virginia's Secretary of Health and Human Resources, wrote in a release.

The guidance recommends that elementary schools implement required masking for all individuals, regardless of vaccination status, and that middle and high schools should, at a minimum, require students, teachers, and staff who are not fully vaccinated to wear masks while indoors. A federal order from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) requires masks to be worn on public transportation, including school buses.

Both local school divisions are requiring all individuals to wear masks, regardless of vaccination status.

Hatchett said that many county school staff have been fully vaccinated, as have about 20 percent of eligible students.

She added that the school division is con-

tinuing with pandemic practices put in place last year. For instance, schools will continue to make wipes and hand sanitizer available, conduct deep cleaning on a regular basis, and encourage social distancing. Guidance from the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) suggests that distancing of at least 3 feet is recommended, "but schools should not reduce in-person learning to keep a minimum distance requirement."

Additionally, Hatchett said, schools will maintain quarantine rooms for anyone exhibiting symptoms to wait in until a parent or guardian can pick them up.

Gunn said city staff has "worked diligently to create a plan to ensure staff and students are safe and following recommendations from the CDC and VDH. We have worked to set up our buildings to follow social distancing guidelines, while still providing quality instruction, and using other layers of protection like Plexiglas partitions and mandating masks be worn for all staff and students. We have distributed laptops to incorporate technology into our learning."

Hatchett is optimistic that schools are prepared for the year ahead.

"We believe that our schools are some of the safest places to be in our community," she said.

"We are thrilled to have our students back in our buildings," Gunn said.

CROSSWORD ANSWERS

U	M	P	P	A	C	H	A	S	O	L	E	D
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Virginia's forgotten founding fathers - George Waller

Jarred Marlowe
Contributing writer

The area of Fieldale as we know it has existed since 1916 when Marshall Field & Company came in and bought a large amount of land in Henry County and established the Fieldcrest Mills factory. Along with the factory, they also built the Marshall Field & Company Clubhouse and the beautiful Virginia home which originally served as a boarding house for factory workers.

Few people are aware though that when Marshall Field & Company bought the land, there was already a community existing there. The community of Waller's Ford had been thriving on the land near the Smith River for over a century before Fieldale even existed.

Waller's Ford (also known as the Village of Waller) was named after Col. George Waller, a Revolutionary War patriot who settled the area with his family in the year 1760. Waller was married to Ann Winston Carr, a first cousin to the noted politician and later Henry County resident, Patrick Henry. The Wallers would have eight children while living at their home place near the Smith River. George Waller was a noted tobacco farmer and a local politician during the pre-Revolution times in which Henry County was still a part of Pittsylvania County (the split occurred in 1777).

In the early days of the American Revolution, Waller trained local militia on the Smith River floodplains behind his home. His militia group would go on to join Penn's Regiment, led by local patriot Abram Penn. In 1781, Penn and

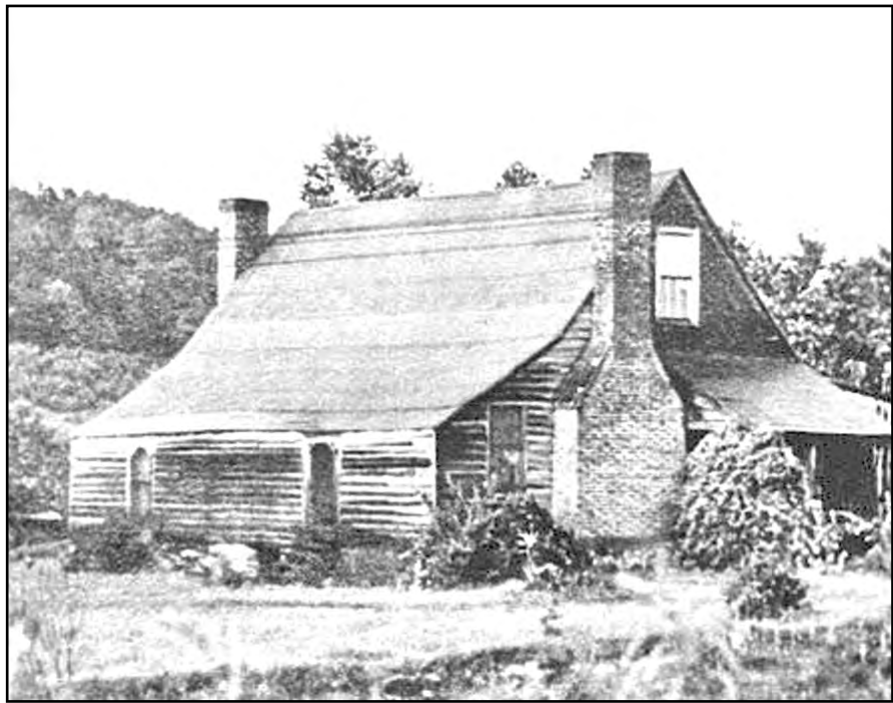
Waller led a group of soldiers from Henry County towards present-day Greensboro, N.C., to support Gen. Edward Stevens against Lord Cornwallis in the Battle of Guilford Courthouse. After this, Waller was promoted to the rank of colonel in the Virginia militia. Waller and his forces would be present with George Washington at the British surrender at Yorktown a few months later in October 1781.

Waller also helped establish the first local government of the newly formed Henry County. He, along with Penn, Edmund Lyne, and Peter Saunders were the first gentleman justices of Henry County. These gentlemen justices were locally appointed "men of good repute" who presided over the legal and administrative affairs of the county. Waller also served as an early sheriff of Henry County, alongside Robert Hairston, who established the first Hairston home in the area, Marrowbone.

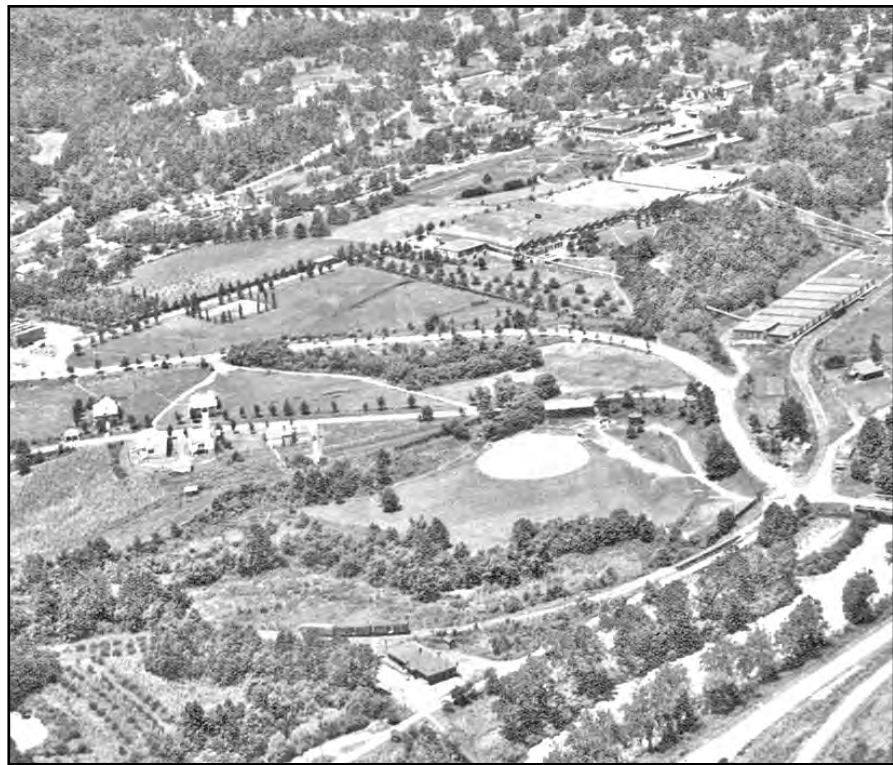
Waller lived in the Waller's Ford area until his death in 1814. He and his wife are buried in Oakwood Cemetery in Martinsville.

Little else is known about Waller, but that may very well change soon. There are currently plans in the works to conduct an archaeological dig at Waller's homeplace in Fieldale. If the dig proves successful, we could soon have greater insight and appreciation for another one of our area's forgotten founding fathers.

(Jarred Marlowe is the Vice President of the Col. George Waller Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution and currently serves on the board of directors for the Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society.)



Home of Col. George Waller



An overview of the land surrounding Col. George Waller's home, from the 1935 Henry Bulletin Rotograve edition.



PHOTOS COLORED BY ANDY DOSS

An overview of the land surrounding Col. George Waller's home, from the 1935 Henry Bulletin Rotograve edition. Circled is Waller's home.

CLASSIFIEDS

PUBLISHER'S NOTICE

All real estate advertised in this newspaper is subject to the Federal Fair Housing Act of 1968, which makes it illegal to advertise "any preference, limitations or discrimination based on race, color, sex or national origin," or an intention to make any such preferences, limitation or discrimination. Our readers are informed that all dwellings advertised in this paper are available on an equal opportunity basis. This newspaper will not knowingly accept any advertising for real estate or employment which is in violation of the law.

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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 **August 25, 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-21-15 Amanullah Sarwary

A request for a Special Use Permit was received under Section 21-302 of the Henry County Zoning Ordinance to allow for the property to be used for special events, weddings and social events. The property is located at 4447 Preston Rd in the Horsepasture District and is zoned Agricultural District A-1, as shown on Tax Map 39.7/104.

Case S-21-16 Herbert M. Kendall

A request for a Special Use Permit was received under Section 21-215 of the Henry County Zoning Ordinance to allow for the construction of an off-site general advertising sign. The property is located on the south side of the highway, just east of 4061 A.L. Philpott Hwy in the Iriswood District, is zoned Commercial District B-1, as shown on Tax Map 44.9/49A/49X.

Case S-21-17 Henry County Parks and Recreation

A request for a Special Use Permit was received under Section 21-902 of the Henry County Zoning Ordinance to allow for the use of the property to conduct the Henry County Fair. The property is located just east of Speedway Rd. in the Ridgeway District, is zoned Commercial District B-1, as shown on Tax Map 52.8/101,103,104.

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



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Bye, Bye Birdie - America's beloved Purple Martins gather together before flying back to Brazil

Purple Martin pre-migratory roosts are forming now. North America's largest species of swallow, Purple Martins nest and raise their families in North America and winter in the rainforests of Brazil. East of the Rocky Mountains, Purple Martins nest almost exclusively in human-supplied housing. They are one of America's most well-loved songbirds, known for their chattering song, aerial acrobatics, insect-eating habits and their tolerance of humans. In late summer, after leaving their nesting colonies, Purple Martins gather in huge flocks to feed, socialize, and rest

before migrating. This activity, known as pre-migratory roosting, can attract hundreds of thousands of birds to sleep in one small area, arriving at sunset en masse in what Joe Siegrist, president of the Purple Martin Conservation Association (PMCA) calls "an amazing natural spectacle." "As the sun begins to set, all of a sudden, tens, even hundreds of thousands of Purple Martins appear out of nowhere in locations across the country. Their swirling acrobatics and sheer numbers are a phenomenon that everyone needs to witness." Purple Martins leave their roost near dawn in a mass exodus.

The number of birds leaving the roost at the same time is large enough to be detected on weather radar. It looks like an expanding ring on the radar map. By studying radar data, the PMCA can locate possible roosts located around North America. Roosts are typically associated with larger bodies of water where reed beds and dry islands with low, thick vegetation provide sanctuary from predators and a micro-climate warmer and less windy than land. They are also found in urban and suburban settings, sometimes formed in trees, or on man-made structures such as bridges

and pipes. Depending on location, roosting can begin in mid-June and run through mid-September, peaking at the end of July to early August. Martins can come from hundreds of miles away to roost. Individual birds may use a roost for several weeks before migrating, but the roost itself may last for 8-12 weeks or more. To follow along with the Purple Martins' roosts and learn more about how to help conserve this treasured bird, visit www.purplemartin.org. Roosts are currently occurring all over the United States. To find a roost near you visit

the PMCA's map of roost locations at: roost.purplemartin.org. In addition, those interested in learning more about how to attract and care for Purple Martins can receive a free booklet by contacting the Purple Martin Conservation Association by emailing info@purplemartin.org or calling 814-833-7656. The Purple Martin Conservation Association is an international tax exempt, non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of the Purple Martin through scientific research, state of the art wildlife management techniques and public education.

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During campus fire safety month in September, college students are urged to protect themselves and their peers from fire on campus this fall

This fall, college students are returning to campus, many for the first time in over a year, marking the start of new classes, new friends, and new living spaces. Through their annual Campus Fire Safety for Students campaign, the National Fire Protection

Association (NFA) and The Center for Campus Fire Safety (CCFS) are working together to ensure living spaces are as safe as possible for students heading back to school this September. Campus Fire Safety Month raises awareness about the threat of fire among college students in both on- and off-campus housing, and puts relevant information in the hands of students, parents, and campus housing administrators and staff who are encouraged to take proactive measures to protect themselves, family members, and peers from fire. Many of the resources, including videos, checklists, infographics, and tips sheets, are designed to be shared through social media, school newspapers, college websites, and posted in dormitory common areas.

As students return to college life to live on their own or with friends after being home for much of last year, it is important for them to review fire safety tips to learn how to prevent fires," said Lorraine Carli, vice president of Outreach and Advocacy for NFPA, and CCFS Advisory Council Member. "The more prepared students are, the more we can do to reduce fire risk. Campus Fire Safety Month provides a great opportunity

to share materials and action steps and foster a culture of awareness and preparedness about fire safety on our college campuses." According to NFPA research, from 2015-2019, there were estimated annual averages of 3,840 structure fires, 29 civilian injuries, and \$11 million in direct property damage in dormitories, fraternities, sororities, and other related properties. Cooking equipment was involved in nearly nine out of 10 reported fires in dormitory-type properties (87 percent). September and October have the highest incidences for fires in dormitories, and fires are also more common during the weekend and weekday evenings from 5 - 9 p.m.

CCFS stats differ as they reflect student fire deaths within a three-mile radius of a college or university campus," said Justin Daniels, CCFS president and fire marshal, University of Oklahoma - Norman Campus. "In the last 20 years, 92 documented fatal fires have occurred on a college campus, in Greek housing, or in off-campus housing within the three-mile definition - sadly, claiming a total of 132 student victims. The majority of fires occurred in off-campus housing, and more than half of these fires were accidental and included cooking, candles, smoking materials, or electrical equipment."

NFPA and CCFS offer these tips to students to help reduce the risk of fire and save lives:

- Know and practice the building's evacuation plan, as well as alternate routes.
- Cook in intended areas only, and never leave cooking equipment unattended when in use, even briefly.
- Test smoke alarms monthly in an apartment or a house. Ensure smoke alarms are installed in all sleeping areas, outside of all sleeping areas, and on every level of the apartment or house. NEVER remove or disable smoke alarms.
- Keep combustible items away from heat sources and never overload electrical outlets, extension cords, or power strips. Many fires are caused by portable light and heat sources, like space heaters and halogen lamps.
- Keep common areas and hallways free of possessions and debris. Never block exit routes.

For more resources and information online about the Campus Fire Safety for Students campaign, visit nfpa.org/campus or the CCFS website and its Share! For Students webpage.

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- 9:00 am - 10:45 am: Helgramite Hustle Registration (At Entrance)
- 9:30 am - 12:00 pm: DJ WHAT?!
- 10:00 am - 4:00 pm: Festival & Vendor Booths Open!
- 9:30 am - 11:30am: River Race Registration (At Entrance)
- 10:00 am: Yoga on the River (Free)
- 10:30 am - 3:30 pm: River Tubing (Free)
- 11:00 am: Helgramite Hustle Mud Run
- 11:00 am - 4:00 pm: Beer Garden Open
- 12:00 pm: Kids Mini Mud Run (Free)
- 12:15 pm - 1:00 pm: Joseph Young Magic Stage Show
- 1:00 pm: Last River Race Shuttle Departs
- 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm: Joseph Young Magic on Grounds
- 1:15 pm: Safety Meeting at Starting Line (Mandatory for River Racers)
- 1:30 pm: River Race Begins
- 1:30 pm - 4:00 pm: Live Music - Glen Shelton Band
- 2:00 pm: Trailside Bike Repair Clinic (Free)
- 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm: River Racers Arrive at Finish Line
- 3:30 pm: Awards Ceremony for Mud Run & River Race/Boys & Girls Club Duck Race
- 4:00 pm: Festival Closes - See You Next Year!

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