

HENRY COUNTY ENTERPRISE

Saturday, September 4, 2021

(USPS-6)

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Gov. Ralph Northam meets with a group including family members of the Martinsville Seven, members of the Martinsville community, and other groups advocating for pardons for the executed men.

Martinsville Seven pardoned Tuesday in action that was “about righting wrongs”

Callie Hietala
Staff writer

One chapter in the decades-old saga of Martinsville's most infamous criminal case came to a close on August 31, when Gov. Ralph Northam issued a posthumous pardon for the Martinsville Seven, a group of young Black men executed in 1951 for the alleged rape of Ruby Floyd, a white woman.

“I’ve thought about this a lot,” Northam said at meeting in Richmond that included descendants of the seven men, members of the Martinsville community, and representatives from several groups advocating

for the pardons. “I’ve been looking forward to meeting with you all. So yesterday I asked my staff to go ahead and put some paperwork together. And so today, I’m giving each one of the seven a posthumous pardon.”

According to a press release issued by the governor’s office, while these pardons do not address the guilt of the seven, they serve as recognition that the men were tried without adequate due process and received a racially biased death sentence not similarly applied to white defendants.

“This is about righting wrongs,” said

See **Pardoned**, page 6

Residents plan to share reversion concerns

Debbie Hall
dhall@theenterprise.net

Many people plan to attend a public hearing on September 8.

The Commission on Local Government (CLG) commission will preside over the hearing that begins at 7 p.m., in the New College Institute.

The Rev. Tyler C. “T.C.” Millner is among those working behind the scenes to encourage residents to attend the hearing and participate.

Millner, who is the pastor of Morning Star Holy Church, said his concerns include the impact on local school divisions, the city’s finances and “taxes. Double maybe, and/or rates up or down” for residents in both the new town and the county.

He also listed other concerns like “the re-figuring of both the schools and the political lines,” and “how and in what manner will the citizens have a voice? Will citizens work in conjunction with the two government bodies? Will there be an advisory” committee to ensure input from residents?

Mary Martin, a former member of the Henry County School Board, said she also plans to attend the public input session and is encouraging others to do the same.

“I want to share my perspective on this whole thing. It is short and sweet: Citizens in the city and in the county have all been left out of the entire process,” Martin said.

“Neither school board has been involved in this, and they” will bear the brunt of changes wrought by reversion, Martin said. “The very people that it affects the most haven’t had any input.”

Millner agreed.

He said residents were excluded from “having a say,” and added that a “bad attitude toward the citizens that has been on open display in this process. The question is why? After all, the two governing bodies both represent the citizens, and they work for the citizens.”

“That simply is not true,” Assistant City Manager and City Attorney Eric Monday said. “City Council held multiple sessions where the input of the public was solicited, heard, and considered before they ever voted to proceed with this in 2019.”

“Public input also occurred when council considered it in 2008 and 2012. We — and by that, I mean the citizens of Martinsville and Henry County, have been very publicly

See **Reversion**, page 2

Local school divisions fight to keep students safe in classrooms

Callie Hietala
Staff writer

Student health and safety was the main topic of discussion at Wednesday’s weekly COVID-19 press conference, hosted by the Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce.

With students back in the classrooms and schools being required to provide an in-person learning option this year, school administrators, faculty, and staff in Henry County are working hard to make sure students

have a safe environment in which to learn.

So far at least, it seems to be working.

“There’s a difference between outbreaks in the school and outbreaks in the community which cause outbreaks in the school,” said Nancy Bell, Public Information Officer with the West Piedmont Health District. “And there’s no evidence that any of our outbreaks originated at school.”

“Students are glad to be back, teachers are excited about having them, and of course parents are

concerned about safety,” said Dr. Zebedee Talley, Martinsville City Schools Superintendent. “Safety is always going to be valued. The social-emotional learning for students has more of a priority here than learning, because if students and their families have emotional well-being, they’ll do well.”

Talley said Martinsville schools has various programs for counselling, including two hotlines the parents can all to deal with instructional issues or

See **Classrooms**, page 8

County, city students in step with state on SOL scores

Callie Hietala
Staff writer

Students in Martinsville City and Henry County Public Schools fell behind during the 2020-2021 school year, according to state assessment data released last week by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE).

Students who took the federally mandated Standards of Learning tests for the 2020-2021 school year (the tests were cancelled for 2019-2020 due to the onset of the

Coronavirus pandemic) underperformed across the board in both the city, county, and state, reflecting the unique challenges facing schools, teachers, and students during the ongoing COVID health crisis.

Math and science scores fell most dramatically. Statewide, there was a 54 percent pass rate on the math SOL while 59 percent of students passed in science. During the 2018-2019 school year, the last year tests were taken, Virginia students had an 82 and 81 percent pass rate in

each of those subjects, respectively.

Martinsville City had a 30 percent pass rate in math for 2020-2021, down from 80 percent the last time the SOLs were taken while Henry County dropped from an 82 percent pass rate in the 18-19 school year to 45 percent in 20-21.

In science, Martinsville fell from a 68 percent pass rate to only 28 percent. Albert Harris Elementary recorded the biggest drop—down from 75 percent to only 11 per-

See **SOL Scores**, page 8

City school board is not, has not discussed injunction in reversion

Callie Hietala
Staff writer

The Martinsville City School Board is not and has not discussed an injunction in the city’s reversion process, according to board chairman Donna Dillard.

She was responding to a recent report suggesting that the school board could be using a closed-session meeting, originally scheduled for

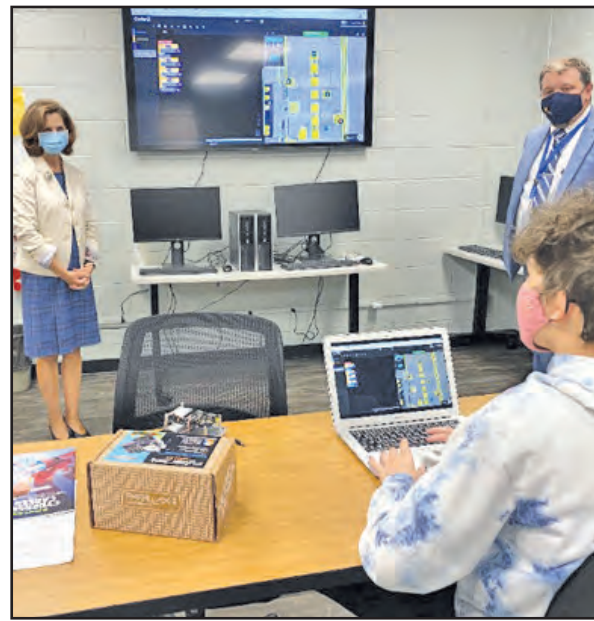
August 31 but since rescheduled for September 2, to explore legal options by which to file an injunction on reversion. That same report seemed to suggest that the school board had recently retained outside legal counsel—Lindsay Brubaker of BotkinRose PLC—perhaps to pursue legal action on the reversion process. That firm has been council to the board “for at least the last 10 or 15 years,” Dillard said.

After the council and Henry County Board of Supervisors voted on the Voluntary Settlement of Town Status agreement, Dillard said wrote in a statement that “in Martinsville City Schools, our focus has always been and continues to be on the best interests of our students. We will continue to maintain this focus, even in this time of uncertainty.”

See **School Board**, page 8



Virginia’s First Lady Pamela Northam received drone-flying lessons from Magna Vista student Tyrian Hairston.



Student Logan Surber at work in the cybersecurity classroom as Pamela Northam (left) and Mike Minter, Director of Career and Technical Education at the Career Academy, look on.

Virginia’s First Lady stops in Henry County on annual tour

Callie Hietala
Staff writer

Virginia’s First Lady, Pamela Northam, visited Henry County on August 27, as part of her fourth annual back to school tour. Northam and her team, including Assistant Secretary of Education Tori Feyrer, toured the Career Academy where they met with students and faculty to learn about how students are being prepared to enter the workforce.

The annual tour, which over the years has taken Northam more than 10,000 miles across the Commonwealth and to more than 200 different schools in all eight of Virginia’s superintendent districts, has several goals. One is to bring first-hand experiences and stories from various schools back to Richmond to share with lawmakers, giving real-world examples of how leg-

islation and funding are impacting schools.

“We work with our heads down” on the policy side of governing, Northam said. “So, it’s exciting to do the tour to see the policies and funding working and touching the lives of kids. We fight for it really hard all year, and then come out and see what great talented people are actually doing on the ground.”

Listening is a big part of the tour, too, and asking questions like, “what can we as a state do for you?” Northam said. “Each locality has great strengths that cater to their population, and each school and region faces its own challenges, from childcare deserts in Southwest versus Northern Virginia, where you have the challenge of fifty or sixty languages in one small area.”

Though the challenges are different,

See **First Lady**, page 8

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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, Sept. 4

Vision Uptown will hold a community visioning event from 1-4 p.m. in the garden courtyard of Albert Harris Elementary School. Team members will be answering questions about the Martinsville Uptown revitalization and presenting some initial ideas that are emerging from the visioning process so far.

Tuesday, Sept. 7

P&HCC invites the community to help kick off Dr. Greg Hodges' first fill semester as president with a community celebration and COVID-19 vaccine clinic. The event will include music, food trucks, games, and a chance to meet the new P&HCC president. The vaccine clinic is open to anyone age 18 and over to receive first doses of the Moderna vaccine for free. Vaccines will be given on a first-come-first served basis. Anyone interested in participating should bring a photo ID and insurance card (if applicable.)

Tuesday, Sept. 7 through Thursday, Sept. 9

Public hearings by the Commission on Local Government on Martinsville's reversion process will be held at the Martin-Lacy Lecture Hall at New College Institute. The City will present on Sept. 7 from 9-5 p.m. and the County will present the following day. Public comment will be heard Wednesday, Sept. 8 at 7 p.m. All meetings will be open to the public. Anyone wishing to attend the meetings is required to wear a mask and adhere to social distancing guidelines.

Thursday, Sept. 9 through Dec. 2

P&HCC's Latin Dance Workshop begins. Classes will be held Thursdays from September 9 through December 2 from 5:30-6:30 p.m. Students learn salsa, bachata, merengue, cumbia, and kizomba dances with intensive dance workshops covering frame, posture, lead and following technique, cross-body, and pattern combinations. Cost of the class is \$59. Pre-registration is required. To

for more information or to register, call (276) 656-5461 or visit ph.augusoft.net.

Friday, Sept. 10

Miles 4 Vets 6th annual golf tournament will take place at Forest Park Country Club. Entry is \$50 per play or \$200 per team. Entry fee includes cart, lunch, and beverages. Cash prizes will be awarded to the top three teams. For more information contact Mandy Folman: (276) 632-6442 or mfolman@southernaaa.org. Sign up online at www.mile1.net.

The Spencer-Penn Center will host its monthly Music Night, featuring great music and dancing! The doors open at 5 p.m. The Hard Times Band and Two Young Two Old will take the stage. There will be no open mic. We will be back inside in the Alumni Hall for a great night of music. Concessions will be available. Admission is a \$5 donation at the door.

Friday, Sept. 10 through Saturday, Sept. 11

Fido's Finds at 119 East Main Street, UpTown Martinsville will hold a BIG BASEMENT SALE on Friday, September 10 from 10 - 5 and Saturday, September 11 from 9 - 2 to benefit the Martinsville-Henry County SPCA. Thousands of items are at rock bottom prices. Come save money while saving animals.

Saturday, Sept. 11

The Bassett Heritage Festival, in Bassett, gets underway at 8 a.m. with a pancake breakfast to benefit the Stanleytown Ruritans. Festival vendors will be set up by 10 a.m..

Sunday, Sept. 12

The Henry County Bike Club's Sunday Road Ride begins at the Ridgeway Library at 2:00 p.m. Bring your bicycle and join in! For more information call Tommy at (276) 618-0343

Tuesday, Sept. 14

P&HCC will hold an Equity vs. Equality discussion as part of its diversity, equity, and inclusion training from 9:30-11:30 a.m. The cost of the class is \$85 if you register by August 21, \$99 for any registrations after that date.

Friday, Sept. 17

Miles in Martinsville will host the Harvest Moon 8K & 5K. Starting time is 6:30 p.m. Participants may pick up their packets on Friday, September 17 from Noon - 4:00 p.m. at the YMCA - 3 Starling Avenue; and from 5 - 6:00 p.m. at the Gazebo on Depot Street. No race day registration. Runners are strongly encouraged to register online at www.milesinmartinsville.com. COVID-19 protocols in effect. The races start and finish at the Gazebo on Depot Street. Runners will follow the Uptown Connector Trail to the Dick & Willie Passage. They then run along the Dick & Willie Passage to a turn-around point, before returning to the finish. A course map with details is at www.milesinmartinsville.com.

Saturday, Sept. 18

The Bassett Hwy 57 Cruise-In will take place from 3-7 p.m. in downtown Bassett. See hundreds of classic cars and enjoy great food and live entertainment.

Sunday, Sept. 19

The Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society will present a lecture, The Hairston Family Homes: Exploring 18th and 19th Century Architecture in Southern Virginia. The speaker is local historian and collector Jarrad Marlowe, 1st Vice President of the George Waller Chapter of the Virginia Society of the Sons of the American Revolution. Marlowe will discuss the history of the architecture of the George Hairston family, owners of the Beaver Creek Plantation and other properties. The talk begins at 3 p.m. Admission is free.

Saturday, Sept. 25

The Martinsville-Henry County Relay for Life will take place at the Smith River Sports Complex from 3-7 p.m. The 5k event begins at 9 a.m. Visit relayforlife.org/MHCVA for more information or to register.

Friday, Oct. 1

The Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society celebrates its final First Friday of the year from 6-9 p.m. at the Historic Courthouse (1 E. Main Street, Martinsville) with a special performance from the band Midnight Pony. There

will be cornhole, a cash bar with proceeds benefitting the Historical Society, and more! Free for all to attend.

Friday, Oct. 15 through Saturday, Oct. 16

The Blue Ridge Regional Library in Martinsville will be hosting a book sale. The sale will be at the library from 1-5 p.m. Oct. 15 and 9:30 a.m.-2 p.m. Oct. 16.

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.

The Henry County Adult Learning Center offers free in-house and online classes to help prepare for college, career, or earn your high school equivalency or GED. Classes can help improve your digital literacy, job skills, English language skills, and earning potential. Contact the Center for Community Learning (15 Primary School Road, Collinsville) at (276) 647-9585.

Two exhibits are on display at Piedmont Arts now through October 9. Artists Charlie Brouwer and Jennifer L. Hand collaborated Leaves of the Tree, a unique exhibition based on life-giving trees. Narrative by Nature features work from artists Leslie Pearson and Jennifer Reis.

The Martinsville Farmer's Market is open every Saturday from 7 a.m. to 12 p.m. through November 20 and Wednesdays from 7 a.m. to 12 p.m. through September 29. Shop with SNAP/EBT and receive up to \$20 in free fruits and vegetables each week. To shop market vendors online, visit martinsvilleuptown.com.

Reversion

from page 1

discussing and debating the pros and cons of reversion since the 1970s," Monday said.

"People who don't like reversion, and don't want to see it happen, may say there has been no public input, but that is not so — there are 50 years' worth of news articles, studies, minutes, notices and meetings that prove otherwise," Monday said.

Stephen C. Piegrass, of troutman pepper, the law firm retained by the city, said "the facts belie

any assertion that there has been no opportunity for public input during the reversion discussion/process."

He said the current reversion "has been (and will be) publicly presented, debated and discussed by the city," on occasions that include, but are not limited to:

*November 19, 2019 – Reversion study presentation at City Council public meeting (studies incorporated information from various sources, including

City schools and finance department)

*December 10, 2019 – Presentation on reversion at City Council public meeting, followed by vote confirming intent to pursue reversion

*January 26, 2021 – Update on reversion progress at City Council public meeting

*May 26, 2021 – Joint public meeting of City Council and County Board of Supervisors with presentation and vote on Memorandum

of Understanding

*August 24, 2021 – Resolution passed in public City meeting, authorizing filing of Notice of Intent to Revert with Voluntary Settlement Agreement with Commission on Local Government.

"This list does not include the numerous public meetings held by the county, nor does it include the many times reversion was discussed at other meetings by city bodies where it was relevant, including for example, in public meetings to discuss the city budget," Piegrass said.

Additionally, the list also does not include "the many times reversion was publicly discussed and debated before the current reversion effort – including most recently in 2012-2013," he said, and added that "certainly, some meetings regarding this reversion had to be held in closed sessions, both because the Virginia Freedom of Information Act provides for closed meetings to discuss actual or probable litigation, and because matters in mediation (including specifically mediations regarding reversion) are required to be kept confidential under Virginia law. Full public presentations were made after each such closed meeting, however, during which the decisions coming out of those meetings were presented to the public."

The county's Public Relations and Community Liaison, Brandon Martin, said

"we understand the public's frustration with the reversion proceedings so far and we've taken steps to make information available as soon as it can be shared. Given that this is a city-initiated effort, the most we can do is respond. It's important to note that this is still a legal proceeding and to protect the county's ability to negotiate on behalf of our residents, there are some aspects which should only be discussed in closed session.

"Even with that said, we have done everything on our end to keep citizens informed when new information arises," Brandon Martin said, and noted documents, agreements and letters are available on the county's website.

"Now that we are officially into the actual proceedings, we highly encourage our residents to sign up to speak during the public input session as it is the appropriate forum for such discussion," Brandon Martin said.

Both Mary Martin and Millner plan to do just that, in hopes the reversion process will end.

"Henry County and the Board of Supervisors, and Martinsville and the City Council, those two entities, have chosen to do this. They made the decision for you," Mary Martin said. "The citizens" in both localities "are just now starting to figure out how bad this will really be. What should and needs to happen is, this whole thing (reversion) needs

to stop in its tracks."

"Clearly, we'll have to be strategic," Millner said. "We've got to make two or three crucial points if we want to impact the commission."

The commission has a series of meetings set for Sept. 7 to 9 at the New College Institute in Martinsville.

The city is scheduled to present before the commission on Tuesday, Sept. 7, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The county will follow suit on Wednesday, Sept. 8, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The commission will meet again at 9 a.m. on Sept. 9.

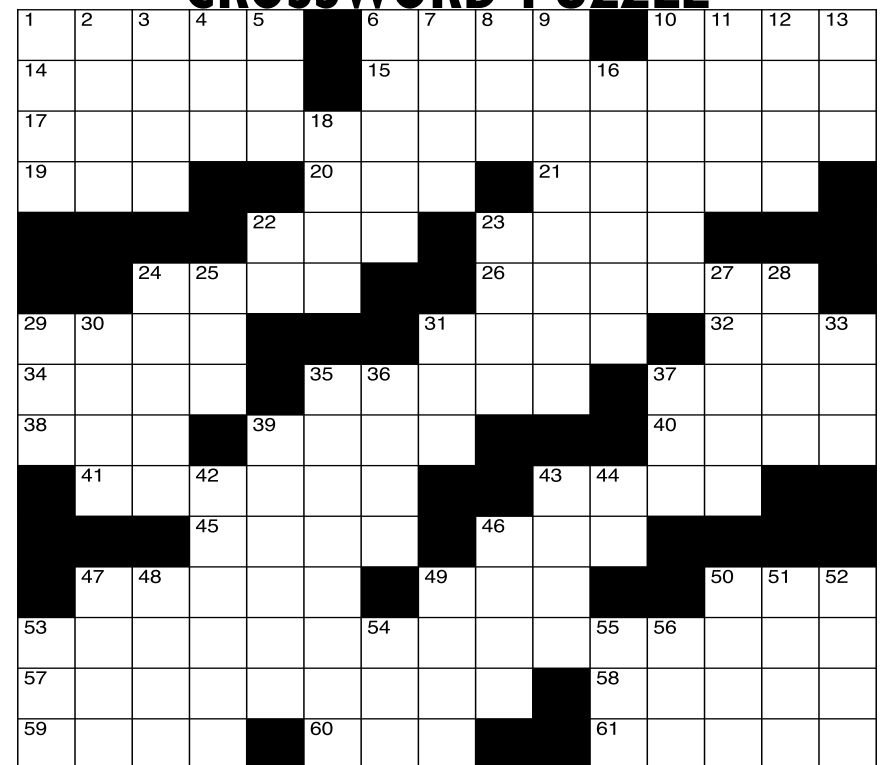
While all meetings are open to the public, input from residents will be accepted only on Wednesday, Sept. 8 at 7 p.m.

Those who want to address the commission must register before 5 p.m. on September 8 by emailing cody.anderson@dhcd.virginia.gov with their name and contact information.

Those attending the public meetings must wear a mask and comply with social distancing requirements, Monday has said.

Written testimony must be submitted or postmarked by September 17 and mailed to the Commission on Local Government Department of Housing and Community Development Main Street Centre 600 East Main Street, Suite 300 Richmond, VA 23219, or emailed to david.conmy@dhcd.virginia.gov.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



- 1. Secret clique
- 6. Earliest in and out
- 10. Ancient Egyptian symbol of life
- 14. Olfactory property
- 15. Kidnapping
- 17. Golf prize
- 19. Helps little firms
- 20. Cast a spell on
- 21. Panama is one
- 22. Dishonorable man
- 23. Sea eagle
- 24. Part of the healing process
- 26. Vin's last name
- 29. Wings
- 31. Made older
- 32. Political device
- 34. Looks like a rabbit
- 35. Gurus
- 37. Philippine Island
- 38. Not or
- 39. Hindu model of ideal man
- 40. Exam
- 41. Making less difficult
- 43. Without
- 45. Dravidian ethnic group
- 46. A baglike structure
- 47. Buenos Aires capital
- 49. Dab
- 50. Singers who perform together
- 53. Pirates' saying
- 57. OK to allude to
- 58. Somaliland diplomat
- 59. Has to pay back
- 60. Felix is one
- 61. Intestinal pouches
- 1. Harsh cries of a crow
- 2. Type of horse
- 3. ___ fide: authentic
- 4. Doctors' group
- 5. Fugitives are on it
- 6. Forged
- 7. Wild goat
- 8. Influential American president
- 9. Calls for help
- 10. Repents
- 11. Palm tree with creeping roots
- 12. Black powder used in makeup
- 13. Happy New Year
- 16. Stretched out one's neck
- 18. Whale ship captain
- 22. Atomic #20
- 23. Border
- 24. River that borders India and Nepal
- 25. After B
- 27. Fencing swords
- 28. Where researchers work
- 29. Expression of satisfaction
- 30. Broadway actor Nathan
- 31. Heavy, heat-retaining stove
- 33. A way to eliminate
- 35. Type of tree resin
- 36. Russian river
- 37. Children's TV network
- 39. Troublemaker
- 42. Averts or delays
- 43. Self-immolation by fire ritual
- 44. It cools your home
- 46. Satisfy to the fullest
- 47. Stinks!
- 48. Popular board game
- 49. Attack by hurling
- 50. A vale
- 51. Type of acid
- 52. Tasmania's highest mountain
- 53. No seats available
- 54. Licensed for Wall Street
- 55. Family of genes
- 56. Constrictor snake

Submit your community news and photos

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Grant program helps beautify Uptown business



(From left:) Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce Deputy Director Sharon Shepherd, President Lisa Watkins, Uptown Entrepreneurial Development Director Kimberly Keller, present a check for façade improvements to Elle Wilk, owner of Southern Virginia Properties.



The newly renovated exterior of Southern Virginia Properties, at 10 Bridge Street in Uptown Martinsville.

Callie Hietala
Staff writer

The Uptown is looking a little brighter, thanks to Elle Wilk, owner of Southern Virginia Properties.

The real estate business, located at 10 Bridge Street in Martinsville, was the recipient of \$17,175.00 from the Small Business Grant Program run by the Martinsville-Henry County Chamber's Partnership for Economic Growth (C-PEG.) The money was for improvements to the building's

façade.

"I really appreciate the opportunity that the chamber and C-PEG have given me to refurbish and remodel the façade of our building," Wilk said at the Aug. 26 grant presentation.

"From the time we bought the building, about 15 years ago, we did all the interior painting, redecorating, and all of that," said Wilk. More recently, she renovated the upstairs office space into an efficiency apartment that visitors can rent on Airbnb.

Between the apartment

and the new façade, Wilk said nearly \$15,000 was spent on building improvements. The C-PEG grant covered half of the amount spent on updating the façade, which involved painting the exterior, putting up a new sign, and replacing bulbs, and just generally "brightening the whole thing up," said Wilk.

Though a fresh coat of paint may seem like a small thing to some, Wilk said she thinks the outside of a business is just as important as the inside. "My paint was chipping and peeling,

it looked old. We felt it was important to be clean and presentable because your storefront is the face of your business, so we had to have it improved."

Businesses wishing to be considered for C-PEG's Small Business Grant Program must have been members of the chamber for at least three years and be located in Martinsville or Henry County. Applicants must be prepared to match one-third of the requested funding and the funds must be used to either improve the

façade of the business, create jobs, assist in the training of the current workforce, or expand or make a required payment essential to the well-being of the business.

"There's a lot of activity in Uptown," said Mark McCaskill, Martinsville's Community Development Director at the grant presentation. He added that

many pieces are starting to come together and that façade improvements like Elle's are "just the beginning" of a transformation.

Standing with McCaskill and representatives from the chamber in front of her newly painted building, Wilk shared his positive outlook for the future. "I'm looking forward to great things to come," she said.

Group hosts "FUNraiser" to lure new residents to Martinsville

Callie Hietala
Staff writer

Music, wine, food, and a view that can't be beat were just a few of the assets on display on August 26 when Move to Martinsville hosted a "FUN"raiser at Hamlet Vineyards. The sold-out event, featuring music by Will Overman and a lobster roll dinner, was part of the group's effort to promote the quality-of-life people can expect living in Martinsville.

Move to Martinsville is a nonprofit group that

formed in 2019, said Dean Johnston, president of the organization. Its mission is to recruit a mobile, professional class to the area by promoting local and regional assets.

"Historically, this is an area that, because of manufacturing, had to compete against its neighbors for blue collar workers," said Johnston. "But one of the beauties of Martinsville is not just what's available in our community, it's also what's available inside the 60-mile economic circle of Martinsville. If you live in a big city, a 45 to

50-mile drive to the airport is nothing. A 50-mile drive to a Broadway play is nothing. So, the people moving here didn't see 45 minutes as being a hindrance to anything. They thought it was inclusive."

The organization received its 501 c3 status in 2019, but its efforts were abruptly halted by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. It wasn't all bad news for the new organization, however.

"COVID proved the premise that we were already thinking," said Johnston. "People are

becoming more mobile. They don't have to work in a congested city, and they can live wherever they want to. They can live here."

Johnston said events like the one at Hamlet Vineyards are not fundraisers. Rather than asking people to donate money to Move to Martinsville, "we want people to contribute to those things that make Martinsville better."

The group has funding, said Johnston. In 2019, it hosted a social event where donors contributed seed money to the

organization. The City of Martinsville also gave the group a CARES Act grant to help their efforts in promoting the community.

Thus far, the organization has created a Facebook page (MoveToMartinsville) and a website. The site includes a regional search engine called Martinsville Life that allows people to search for particular quality of life components "that maybe we don't have, but it's close by," Johnston said.

The group also has

partnered with other organizations, including the Uptown Partnership, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Economic Development Corp. to help promote local assets, including a joint promotional piece that can be handed out at local events that draw crowds from outside the area listing the benefits of living in Martinsville.

"The biggest thing we hope to do," Johnston said, "is to collaborate with everyone else that's trying to make Martinsville a better place."



A crowd of around 100 people gathered at Hamlet Vineyards for music and dinner at the Move to Martinsville event.



Lobster rolls and Hamlet wines were on the menu at the Move to Martinsville event, organized to promote local and regional assets.



Will Overman performed to a sold-out crowd at Hamlet Vineyards.



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OPINION

Anti-vaxxers of the 1940s

Um, excuse me? Hello? Mr. Mayor, I'd like a chance to speak to the city council, please.

Thank you.
I moved to this city because I love the coast. I love the beaches, the feeling of the waves washing over my toes. I also love this country, and up until recently, I thought this city loved America, too.

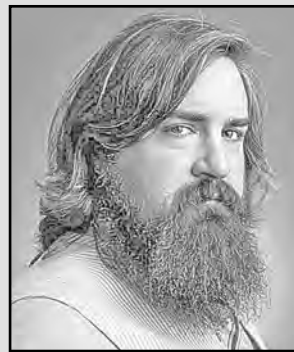
Unfortunately, Mr. Hot Shot over here from the so-called Office of Civilian Defense just proved that I might as well be living in a gulag with the Soviets.

Let me get this straight, Mr. Hot Shot: you're telling me that until this war is over, I have to cover up my windows at night? That I can't turn on every light in my house and run all my appliances when its dark

out? That if I want to exercise my God-given American right to go out and aim a spotlight directly into the night sky, I'm not allowed to?

I thought this was America. I guess Mr. Hot Shot over here wants us to live in fear of the so-called "Germans." He says that German planes might see our lights, and German U-boats will see the outlines of ships against the lights of the coast. He wants us all to be a bunch of scared little sheep, just bleating and wetting ourselves.

First things first, let me ask the council a question: have any of you ever SEEN a German? I haven't, and I'm not convinced they're real. Just the other day, I was eating lunch over at Jürgen's Haus of Schweineschnitzel, and I said, "Hey Jürgen, you ever



By Ben R. Williams

seen one of those nasty so-called Germans we're fighting?" He said he'd never seen a German in his life and he didn't ever want to see one, and he got so agitated that he spilled his märzenbier all over the place as he was walking away. If a great American like Jürgen Schrödervogt doesn't believe in the Germans, I don't see why I should either. I think

they're just a big made-up hoax.

But hey, let's just say for the sake of argument that the Germans ARE real and their U-boats are patrolling right off our coast. And let's say that I leave every light in my house on, and that allows a U-boat to spot one of our Navy ships, and they torpedo it, and it sinks.

So what? That's not my problem. If the Navy is so worried about these ships getting torpedoed, maybe they ought to keep them in the dock where they're safe.

I think this whole "lights out" business is part of a much bigger conspiracy. First they tell you to leave your lights off. Then they ask you to buy bonds to support the war effort. You know what comes next? That's right: taking away all of your guns for some reason.

Besides, this whole blackout thing came together way too quickly to be safe. We don't

yet know the long-term effects of leaving our lights off. What if I stub my toe going to the bathroom in the middle of the night? Or what if I transform into a human version of one of those weird blind cave salamanders? Who's going to pay for that?

I'll tell you this: when I get home, I'm going to switch on every light in my house, throw open every shade, turn on every appliance, and crank up the volume on my record player. Heck, I might even build a bonfire in the front yard. I'm not going to live my life being afraid like the rest of you dumb sheep. And hey, if you don't like it, you know what you can do? Just leave your own lights off. Maybe that'll make you snow-flakes feel safe.

Honestly, supporting this so-called war effort is the single most un-American thing I can think of.

No to a Second Death Tax

Morgan Griffith
9th District U.S. Rep.

Benjamin Franklin famously noted that "in this world, nothing is certain except death and taxes." He never said those two certainties needed to go hand in hand. That came later with the imposition of the death tax, also known as the estate tax.

The federal death tax, enacted in 1916, is levied "on the transfer of the taxable estate of every decedent who is a citizen or resident of the United States." It tends to fall hardest upon farmers and small business owners seeking to pass their assets to the next generation.

Instead of cash, their assets are more likely to be dominated by land, livestock, and equipment. As a result, the heirs of the deceased may have to sell large portions of what they

inherited just to pay their tax bill.

I believe this is unfair tax policy that hurts residents of Virginia's Ninth Congressional District. Throughout my time in Congress, and previously in the state House of Delegates, I have consistently supported efforts to reduce or eliminate entirely the death tax. Earlier this year, I cosponsored H.R. 1712, the Death Tax Repeal Act.

Progress was made in the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act passed by Republicans in Congress and signed by President Trump. It increased the death tax's exemption so that its burdens fall on wealthier individuals.

Now a new threat to the ability to pass one's assets to his or her heirs looms.

President Biden has rolled out numerous plans for turbocharging fed-

eral spending. They are a cause for concern because of their wastefulness and misplaced priorities, but also in how the Biden Administration wants to pay for them.

Among President Biden's proposals for increasing the burden on taxpayers is repealing "stepped-up basis" and taxing capital gains at death. These actions would amount to a second death tax, and like the original death tax, fall hardest upon family-owned farms and small businesses.

Stepped-up basis allows heirs to only pay taxes on the gain in appreciation since the date of inheritance and only applies when the assets are sold. Thanks to this provision, if a family member inherits an asset, such as land or a farm that has been in the family for generations, he or she is not hit with

an outlandish tax bill if that asset's value has risen sharply from when it first came into the family's possession.

As a state Delegate, I once worked with two elderly gentlemen who were having their property, a mountain in the Ninth Congressional District, logged. They had grown up on this property in cabins without running water or electricity. The property itself came from a king's grant awarded to their families for services rendered in what I recall to be the French and Indian War, which ended in 1763.

President Biden's plan would end stepped-up basis and tax the capital gains at death. By the way, his plan also seeks to double the current tax rate for all capital gains. His plan would take a huge chunk of the value of land that had been in the families of

those two gentlemen for over 250 years.

I know of many families in Southwest Virginia who would be similarly threatened by death taxes, forcing the sale of their property to developers.

This plan found a place in the Biden tax agenda despite evidence that it would reduce jobs and wages. A study conducted by the accounting firm Ernst & Young for the Family Success Estate Tax Coalition found that these changes could reduce wages by \$32 for every \$100 in new taxes collected, eliminate 80,000 jobs per year over the first ten years, and eliminate 100,000 jobs per year each year after that.

The resulting damage to the American economy would be a \$10 billion annual hit to our gross domestic product, or a total of \$100 billion over the next decade.

If enacted, the repeal of stepped-up basis and the imposition of capital gains

taxes upon death would be a great administrative weight on the family of the deceased and for those involved in estate planning. They would have to determine the growth in value of an asset since it has been in the family, meaning for some landowners in Southwest Virginia a calculation of inflation and appreciation all the way back to the 1760s.

The costs imposed by a second death tax would be severe, not only in monetary terms, but to the idea that Americans should be able to pass the benefits of their hard work onto their descendants. That's too high a price to pay for President Biden's big spending.

For questions, concerns, or comments, contact my Abingdon office at (276) 525-1405, my Christiansburg office at (540) 381-5671, or website at www.morgangriffith.house.gov.

Submit your letters to the editor
to newsreporter@theenterprise.net

Holiday paddle on the Smith, from Sports Complex to Mitchell Bridge

On Saturday, September 4, the Dan River Basin Association (DRBA) invites you to paddle a particularly interesting section of the Smith River in celebration of Labor Day weekend. The organization's First Saturday Outing will float 6 miles from the Smith River Sports Complex Access to the Mitchell Bridge Access in Henry County, Virginia.

Participants will meet at 9 a.m. at the Smith River Sports Complex.

Coordinator for the outing is Wayne Kirkpatrick, avid paddler and chairman of DRBA's Outings Task Force.

"Within the first two miles of the float, we will reach the Class III rapid known as Eggleston Falls. Because the rocks at Eggleston Falls are known to flip boats, when we reach the falls those who are not wearing helmets will be directed to the less challenging, but still fun, batteau sluice on river left, which makes this outing appropriate for novice paddlers," Kirkpatrick said.

In the nineteenth century, the Smith River was improved to allow long, narrow batteaux, the commercial craft that carried cargo up and down the river, to pass through rocky ledges.

According to DRBA's Insider's Guide to the Smith River, available at www.danriver.org, the river's navigation improvements included "a batteau sluice blasted out of bedrock adjacent to the falls river left." Boaters still use that channel to bypass the falls. Just downstream of Eggleston Falls,

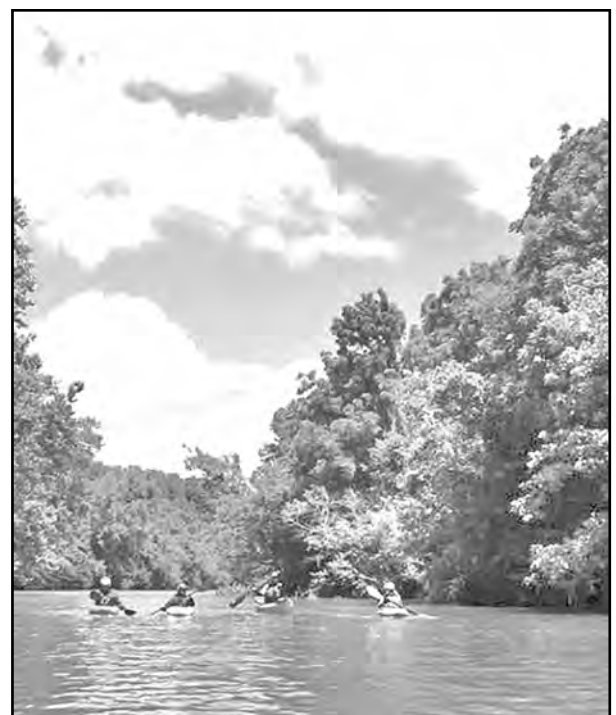
Marrowbone Creek enters the Smith River from the right. The Marrowbone Creek Access is one of the most popular launching sites on the river.

On a hillside just below Marrowbone Creek, covered by a rhododendron thicket, is the 75-acre Gravelly Nature Preserve, developed by DRBA as part of the Smith River Trail System. The preserve, part of the Henry County park system, boasts two miles of trails with interpretive signs, a wealth of wildflowers and ferns, and the family cemetery of the historic Burgess Plantation. Hikers may be glimpsed on the riverside trail.

A mile below the Gravelly Nature Preserve, Leatherwood Creek enters the river from the left. Near the headwaters of the creek, Patrick Henry lived on a large plantation from 1779 - 1786. Both Patrick and Henry counties are named in honor of this Revolutionary War patriot.

Boaters may wish to take a side excursion up Leatherwood Creek to enjoy the shade and explore for wildflowers and birds. A short distance downriver a broad rounded boulder in the middle of the Smith, fondly dubbed "Lunch Rock," beckons paddlers to stop and break out a snack.

Within half a mile is a long bedrock layer that spans the river, with a channel on the far right, possibly cut for batteau navigation. Another half mile brings boaters to Long Island, flanked by Long Island Rapids that provide one last maneuvering opportunity in sight



of the takeout at Mitchell Bridge Access.

Henry County, in partnership with DRBA, has made the Smith River accessible to the public over the past 15 years by building public access points at eight new sites along the river, including those at Marrowbone Creek, which opened in 2007, and the Smith River Sports Complex and Mitchell Bridge, both built in 2009.

Participants in the outing are asked to bring boat and paddles, a life jacket for each boater, lunch, and water. Dress in layers of synthetic (quick drying) fabric and be prepared to get wet. Because its waters come from the bottom of Philpott Lake, the Smith River is always refreshingly cold. All participants are asked to sign a waiver.

The put-in is at the Smith River Sports Complex, 1000 Irisburg Road, Axton, Virginia.

From US 220, turn east on US 58 toward Danville. Drive 2.5 miles and turn right onto County Road 650/Irisburg Road. The Sports Complex is ¼ mile on the right. Immediately after passing through the gates, turn left onto a gravel road beside the maintenance sheds. Follow the road downhill to the parking lot at the top of the ramp.

Outings and meetings of the Dan River Basin Association are open to the public without charge. For trip information, contact trip coordinator Wayne Kirkpatrick, wynbryk@embarqmail.com.

The Dan River Basin Association (DRBA) will hold its First Saturday Outing on Saturday, Sept. 4. Participants will float 6 miles from the Smith River Sports Complex Access to the Mitchell Bridge Access in Henry County, Virginia.

By Betty Kirkpatrick

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See more on

www.henrycountyenterprise.com

Presidential reception celebration, vaccine clinic set at P&HCC

Dr. Greg Hodges recently kicked off his first school year as Patrick & Henry Community College's new president. To celebrate his inaugural semester, the college is inviting the community to a Kick-Off Celebration on Tuesday, September 7.

Anyone in the community can come to campus to meet the new president from 12 – 2 p.m. in the Dalton Quad (which is located between the LRC building and West Hall). With food trucks, music, and games, it is sure to be a celebration.

Hodges will give an address at noon and will be available throughout the event to meet attendees.

Concurrently, the college will also be hosting a public vaccine clinic. The clinic is open to anyone over the age of 18

but shots will be administered on first-come-first serve basis. Those interested in participating, should bring photo ID and insurance card (if applicable). Members of the public and constituents of P&HCC can receive the first doses of

the Moderna vaccine for free. After the shot, participants will receive an appointment for their second dose. The vaccine clinic will also be taking place in the Dalton Quad. In case of rain, all activities will be moved to Stone Hall gym.

Results of SOL tests reflect unprecedented challenges

As expected, the results of Virginia's 2020-2021 Standards of Learning tests taken by students reflect the extraordinary circumstances faced by students and schools last year and establish a baseline for recovery from the pandemic.

The 2020-2021 SOL test results — required by federal law and recently released by the Virginia Department of Education — followed trends on state tests nationwide.

Pass rates reflect disruptions to instruction caused by the pandemic, decreased participation in state assessment programs, pandemic-related declines in enrollment, fewer retakes, and more flexible "opt-out" provisions for parents concerned about community spread of COVID-19. The SOL results also reflect disproportionate nationwide impacts across all student groups, especially African American students, Hispanic students, economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities and English learners.

"What matters now is where we go from here, and we will use the data from the SOLs to identify the unique needs of every learner as our schools resume in-

struction for all students," Superintendent of Public Instruction James Lane said.

The commonwealth's SOL testing in 2019-2020 was cancelled, which means the 2021 SOL tests were the first state assessments administered in two years.

Students were required to take state assessments in school buildings to maintain testing security protocols. In a typical school year, participation in federally required tests is usually around 99 percent. In tested grades in 2021, 75.5 percent of students took the reading assessment, 78.7 percent took math, and 80 percent took science.

In addition, significantly fewer students retook SOL tests during 2020-2021 because of the waiver of state accreditation for 2021-2022, and the flexibility for students granted by the Board of Education in its emergency guidelines for the awarding of verified credits for graduation. Students are allowed to retake SOL tests if they fail their first attempt by a small margin. Retakes typically account for an up to 5% increase in school pass rates following first attempts.

The SOL pass rates in

2020-2021 were anticipated by school divisions and VDOE, given the impact of the pandemic as reported on local assessments administered earlier in the school year. Pass rates in federally required SOLs are 69 percent for reading, 54 percent for mathematics, and 59 percent for science. Last year was not a normal school year for students and teachers, in Virginia or elsewhere, so making comparisons with prior years would be inappropriate.

"Virginia's 2020-2021 SOL test scores tell us what we already knew—students need to be in the classroom without disruption to learn effectively," Lane said. "The connections, structures, and supports our school communities provide are irreplaceable, and many students did not have access to in person instruction for the full academic year. We must now focus on unfinished learning and acceleration to mitigate the impact the pandemic has had on student results."

At the state level, the 2020-2021 SOL results will inform initiatives and policies to help schools and students recover from the disruptions to teaching and learning caused by COVID-19.

Recovery efforts are sup-

ported by an infusion of state and federal funding for the commonwealth's public schools. In May, Gov. Ralph Northam announced \$62.7 million in Virginia LEARNS Education Recovery grants to help school divisions expand and implement targeted initiatives to address the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on student learning. The Virginia LEARNS grants included funds to address unfinished learning through the following strategies:

Increased in-person instruction and small-group learning.

Targeted remediation, extended instruction, and enrichment.

Strategic virtual learning, technology, and staff training.

Social-emotional, behavioral, and mental health supports for students and staff.

Alternate learning opportunities.

Student-progress monitoring and assessment.

Planning and implementing year-round or extended-year calendars.

Additionally, \$147 million from the federal American Rescue Plan's Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief

Fund are required to be used by the commonwealth to support instructional recovery efforts. The funding includes \$105 million to address unfinished learning, \$21 million for evidence-based afterschool programs, and \$21 million for evidence-based summer learning. Details on the uses of these funds are forthcoming.

At the local level, SOL results are one of many tools that provide teachers, principals and superintendents with information on where students are excelling, and where they are struggling in order to design instruction and supports that meet their unique academic needs.

"While the impact of the pandemic is clear, the SOL data from last year also highlights inequities between student groups," Lane said. "VDOE remains resolute in its commitment to supporting educators to close these achievement gaps and help all students succeed in the classroom. Virginia is fortunate to have world class teachers and school leaders that continue to demonstrate their ability to successfully navigate these ongoing challenges and help every student thrive."

In addressing unfinished

learning from the pandemic, VDOE and school divisions are emphasizing acceleration, not remediation. Acceleration maintains advancement trajectories for students by combining grade-level content with the teaching of skills and concepts not mastered during 2019-2020 and 2020-2021.

Data on the performance of students who participated in SOL testing during 2020-2021 — including pass rates for schools and school divisions — is available on the VDOE website and on VDOE's School Quality Profile reports for schools, divisions and the commonwealth. As Lane stated in April, the focus of SOL testing during 2020-2021 was on collecting data to identify the academic needs of students and inform local and state efforts to help students recover academically from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

While the department has reported the results of the 2020-2021 SOL tests, accreditation ratings for the 2021-2022 school year will not be calculated. All schools will have the rating "Accreditation Waived," as during 2020-2021.

VEC to host series of virtual job fairs

This September, the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) is hosting the "LIVE, LOVE & WORK IN VIRGINIA!" Virtual Job Fair Series as part of its continued effort to connect job seekers and employers. The series is composed of three virtual events focused on highlighting employment opportunities

in Northern Virginia, Eastern Virginia, and Western Virginia.

"Virginians are eager to get back to work and the VEC is here to provide assistance to individuals looking for jobs and also to employers, who are increasing their workforces," said Commissioner Ellen Marie Hess, Virginia Employment Commission. "Throughout the

state, businesses are hiring and the VEC is committed to helping Virginians get back to work with the tools and resources they need," added Hess.

Job seekers may view jobs, post their resumes, and apply for positions up to two days before the event. During the event, job seekers are given the opportunity to chat or video conference

with employers interested in their qualifications.

More information on the LIVE, LOVE & WORK IN VIRGINIA! Job Fair series can be found below:

LIVE, LOVE & WORK IN VIRGINIA! Northern Virginia, Shenandoah Valley, and Charlottesville

September 8 – 1 to 5 p.m.

LIVE, LOVE & WORK IN VIRGINIA! Eastern Virginia, including Norfolk, Hampton and Richmond

September 9 – 1 to 5 p.m.

LIVE, LOVE & WORK IN VIRGINIA! Southwestern and South Central Virginia

September 14 – 1 to 5 p.m.

To register, find information on job openings, and view other services offered to support job seekers, visit www.vec.virginia.gov.

Restaurants needed for community development project

Local restaurants are invited to participate in a new project headed by the West Piedmont Planning District Commission (WPPDC) that will provide meals to low-to-moderate income senior citizens in the region.

Participating eateries are eligible for a reimbursement of \$20 per meal.

Kathleen McEvoy, Community Development Specialist for WPPDC, said that the reimbursement is a flat rate which will cover the meal and other associated costs such as packaging.

Over the course of 35 weeks, the Southern Area Agency on Aging (SAAA) will be responsible for distributing the meals to approximately 300 qualifying seniors in Henry, Patrick, Franklin, and Pittsylvania counties and the cities of Martinsville and Danville.

One lunch will be provided per week to each senior. The day of the week will vary depending on the senior's locality.

Participating restaurants may contact the WPPDC for examples of sample meals to prepare.

The meals are intended to address urgent needs in the community related to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

"Since the beginning, this pandemic has been a persistent threat to not only the lives of seniors in our area but also to the livelihoods of our local


restaurants. We have an opportunity to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on both through this project," McEvoy said. "The restaurants get a nice stipend to support their operations and seniors get a hot meal without needing to risk their health. It's truly a win-win scenario."

McEvoy said the meals will need to be packaged individually but restaurants may use their usual to-go containers for the program.

Transportation drivers from the SAAA will pick

up the meals from the restaurant. Upon arrival, the restaurants will be asked to complete a form verifying the number of meals prepared. The same form will be used by the drivers to verify the meals were dropped off at the appropriate homes.

In addition to the meals provided by the restaurants, fresh food boxes from local producers will be given to nearly 500 seniors within the same service area in partnership with regional farmers' markets.



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OBITUARIES

Jennifer Lynn Norman Rumley

Jennifer Lynn Norman Rumley, 53, of Fieldale, passed away Thursday, August 26, 2021, in Roanoke Memorial Hospital. She was born October 6, 1967, in Rocky Mount, to Lois Hairston Norman and the late Quincy Alfred Norman. She was also preceded in death by her husband, Robert Melvin Rumley.



son, Mario Norman; sister, Lakenna Saunders; brother, Dytanyon Norman; grandchildren, ZiMaya Rumley, Kiana Motley, Jamira Motley and Zerrayl Motley; Godchildren, Chrissy Rumley, Tia Rumley and Ashnaya Valentine; and grandparents, Samuel Hairston and Wilder Hairston.

The funeral was August 31, 2021, at Way of the Truth Church, 3736 Preston Road, Martinsville, with Elder Lewis B. Simmons and Eva Angela Dones officiating. Burial was at Fair Haven Memorial Park.

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

She graduated from Fieldale-Collinsville High School and was a member of Way of the Truth Church. She was a homemaker, loved elephants, enjoyed helping people, and being with her grandchildren. She was an usher and a member of the choir in her church.

In addition to her mother, Jennifer is survived by a daughter, Matawya Rumley;

Donald Wayne "Duckman" Conklin

Donald Wayne "Duckman" Conklin, 60 of Martinsville, Virginia passed away August 29, 2021, at SOVAH of Martinsville. He was born in Welch, West Virginia to the late Robert and Cecelia Catron Conklin on March 24, 1961. He had worked as a Tow Motor Operator for Thomas Systems. He loved his truck, going to flea markets, wrestling and had a collection of Coca-Cola items.



Roark; son, Donnie Conklin; sisters, Pam Steele (Dean), Christine Crews (Junior) and Linda Patterson (Johnny); brother, David Conklin; grandchildren, Nicole Bridges, Raelyn Roark, Lilly Boyd and Addyson Boyd.

His memorial service will be held in the chapel of Wright Funeral Service on Thursday, September 2, 2021 at 7p.m., with Pastor Kenny Daniels officiating.

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

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by a sister, Deborah Wyatt.

He is survived by daughter, Patricia

Ruby Eskalene Brammer

Ruby Eskalene Brammer (96), peacefully passed away on August 31, 2021, surrounded by her family, at her home in Martinsville, Virginia. She was the widow of Edward Leonard Brammer. They shared over 60



years of marriage together. Ruby was born in Woolwine, Virginia she loved playing sports in high school and later taught at the Heidelbach School. After moving to Martinsville, she opened and operated

Brammer Tax Services until her retirement. She was a member of Landmark Baptist Church and loved listening to gospel music. Some of her favorite hobbies were sewing and cooking as well as going on family fishing trips. Those who know her best will remember her kindness and love for all of God's creatures. No one ever left her home a stranger or with an empty stomach,

not even the raccoons on her back porch. She is survived by her three children Jimmie Lane Brammer (Gladys), Carol Rakes and Ronald David Brammer (Sue Ann). Grandchildren Anthony Joseph (Heather), Edward Lane (Cassandra), Great grandchildren Eli Joseph and Iris Jade.

She is preceded by her parents Lula Gaye and James

Hunter Eanes, late husband Edward Leonard Brammer, granddaughters Shanna Lynn and Lisa Marie

Brammer, brothers Stanley Hugo, Billy Edward, James Herbert, Ivan Darryl.

A memorial service will be held Saturday, September 11, 2021, at 2 p.m. at Landmark Baptist Church with Dr. J. D. Harmon and Pastor Rick Randall officiating. Visitation will be one hour prior to the service. Burial will be private.

Pardoned

from page 1



The Martinsville Seven in 1949

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NEA SERVICE

Northam. "We all deserve a criminal justice system that is fair, equal, and gets it right—no matter who you are or what you look like. I'm grateful to the advocates and families of the Martinsville Seven for their dedication and perseverance. While we can't change the past, I hope today's action brings them some small measure of peace."

The Martinsville Seven were Frank Hairston Jr. (18), Booker T. Millner (19), Francis DeSales Grayson (37), Howard Lee Hairston (18), James Luther Hairston (20), Joe Henry Hampton (19), and John Claybon Taylor (21). All seven men were convicted and sentenced to death within eight days by juries made up entirely of white men.

At the meeting announcing the pardons, Deputy Secretary of the Commonwealth read a poem written in the 1950s by Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén about the Martinsville Seven, reflecting the international attention the case garnered at the time:

"Seven Black voices in Martinsville call seven times to Jesus by name and they ask him in seven cries of rage, like seven lances, they ask in Martinsville, in seven strikes of sulphur, like seven volcanic rocks, they ask seven times for revenge."

The pardon announcement came nearly a month after Martinsville City Council, working in conjunction with the Martinsville Seven Initiative, sent a resolution to Northam asking that he posthumously reprieve and commute the sentences of the seven men. Securing the pardon was the priority of the Martinsville Seven Initiative, said Initiative director Faye Holland.

"It's been so long coming," said Holland after the pardon was announced. "It's pretty amazing that it happened now."

She said she hopes the pardon will be considered a vehicle of healing, both for the families and the community.

The announcement also was met with tears of joy and relief from family members, along with feelings of elation and relief as the group traveled back from their meeting with the governor, Holland said. "It's an emotional day for the families," she said, and added she hopes that, with this first milestone accomplished, the Initiative can now move forward with plans for commemoration and memorialization for the seven men.

Martinsville Mayor Kathy Lawson also was pleased with the governor's decision.

"As we reviewed the information and facts presented to council regarding the Martinsville Seven, it became apparent that the sentence to death was cruel and unusual punishment. As we presented in our resolution, 'under the mandates of

modern jurisprudence and our nation's devotion to the principle of 'equal justice under law,' the Martinsville Seven would, under any and all circumstances, never have been executed—without regard to their guilt or innocence, and with that we requested a commutation of their respective death sentences.

"I feel this was the correct decision made by the Governor and applaud those whose combined efforts resulted in the Governor's granting of the pardons," Lawson said.

In a statement, Vice Mayor Jennifer Bowles wrote, "This is a very momentous occasion for our area. The Martinsville City Council, the Martinsville Seven Initiative, the families of those affected by the tragedy, and our citizens. In today's society, this sentence would never be imposed. I am very appreciative for Governor Northam and his staff for their forward thinking and helping right a wrong. Let's use this moment to continue to be inclusive and make a more equitable world for everyone."

City Attorney and Assistant City Attorney Eric Monday added his own congratulations to the announcement.

"Thanks to Governor Northam for his historic action today. Congratulations to the Martinsville Seven Initiative, and to city council, for their work in obtaining this outcome," Monday said. "In addition, the Virginia Bar Association, the oldest organization of attorneys in Virginia, had endorsed this effort. As all involved have stated, the death penalty would never have been considered for the Martinsville Seven, under modern principles of justice.

"There is a pending application for an historical marker for the Martinsville Seven which will be considered by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources at its December meeting, and obviously it will now need to include this fitting, and just, ending to a long and sad story," Monday added.

Before abolishing the death penalty earlier this year, Virginia had executed more people than any other state—and studies have shown that a defendant is more than three times as likely to be sentenced to death if the victim of a crime is white than if the victim is Black. From 1908 to 1951, all 45 prisoners executed for rape in Virginia were Black men. In 1977, the Supreme Court ruled that imposing the death penalty for rape was cruel and unusual punishment.

According to the release, the pardons recognize the unjust, racially biased sentences these men received, as well as the disturbing lack of due process in their trials and convictions.

Nyambura honored with award



James Nyambura, RN of Sovah Health – Martinsville was a recent recipient of The DAISY Award® For Extraordinary Nurses. The award is part of the DAISY Foundation's programs to recognize the super-human efforts nurses perform every day.

James, who works in the critical care unit at Sovah Health – Martinsville's campus for 2-years, was nominated for the award by two of his patients, who credit the nurse for being completely compassionate and professional.

They said, "He was there for me on an emotional level, and that is something I will never forget."

Nyambura goes above and beyond to care for his patients by comforting and praying with them when needed. He is calming in nature and is always professional with his care. Moments like this truly

highlight what an extraordinary nurse he is, according to a release.

The not-for-profit DAISY Foundation is based in Glen Ellen, CA, and was established by family members in memory of J. Patrick Barnes, who died at the age of 33 in late 1999 from complications of Idiopathic Thrombocytopenic Purpura (ITP), a little known but not uncommon auto-immune disease. The care Patrick and his family received from nurses while he was ill inspired this unique means of thanking nurses for making a profound difference in the lives of their patients and patient families.

"When Patrick was critically ill, our family experienced first-hand the remarkable skill and care nurses provide patients every day and night," said Bonnie Barnes, FAAN, CEO and co-founder

of The DAISY Foundation. "Yet these unsung heroes are seldom recognized for the super-human work they do. The kind of work the nurses at Sovah Health are called on to do every day epitomizes the purpose of The DAISY Award."

"I was honored to present James with the DAISY Award today," said Barbara Seymour, Chief Nursing Officer at Sovah Health – Martinsville. "The way he steps up and cares for his patients is truly remarkable. When we receive letters from patients, like the ones we did for James, it truly highlights our heroes that work here. James has touched the lives of many patients and we were so excited to honor him today."

To nominate a Sovah Health nurse for the DAISY Award, visit www.sovah-health.com/community/sovah-health-daisy-award.

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Oktoberfest cancelled for second year

The COVID-19 pandemic has claimed yet another victim. Martinsville's annual Oktoberfest has been cancelled for the second year in a row due to the continuing rise of new coronavirus infections.

"This is a decision that we have been contemplating for a while now," said Kimberly Keller, the Uptown Entrepreneurial Development Manager with the Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce. While the decision is unfortunate, community safety was the determining factor.

"We wanted to ensure our vendors, our customers, our citizens, and our staff were safe. That is our main priority, and we didn't want to have an outbreak of COVID as a result of Oktoberfest,"

Keller said.

Oktoberfest has been a popular event in Uptown Martinsville since its inception. This year would have been the 41st celebration of the festival, which draws anywhere between 5,000 and 8,000 visitors and more than 200 vendors to the Uptown.

"It's one of the best days for many of our Uptown businesses," said Keller. "It's great for individuals to get uptown and see these businesses that we have locally that they can come shop at and support."

There are some alternative events in the works, however, to highlight the Uptown and allow vendors an opportunity to showcase their wares. Keller hopes to share details on some of those new endeavors soon.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

The face painting booth manned by New Life Community Church at Oktoberfest 2019.



Crowds fill the streets of Uptown Martinsville (above and below) at a previous Oktoberfest.



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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 REZONING PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Pursuant to Section 15.2-2204 of the Code of Virginia, a series of public hearings has been scheduled for **September 15, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.** in the Summerlin Meeting Room of the County Administration Building, Kings Mountain Rd, Collinsville, Virginia. Following these public hearings, the Planning Commission will make a recommendation on each application to the Board of Supervisors.

The Henry County Board of Supervisors will conduct public hearings on the following applications on **September 28, 2021 at 6:00 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 input into the possible rezoning of property. Following are the specifics of the public hearings.

Case R-21-14 Mark A. Spangler
The property is located at 94 Bryants Lake Rd, in the Blackberry District. The Tax Map numbers are 13.8/61F,61G,61H,61J,61K. The applicant is requesting the rezoning of approximately 21-acres from Rural Residential District R-R to Agricultural District A-1. The applicant wishes to construct additional accessory buildings on the property.

Case R-21-15 Donna Mellott
The property is located at 3090 Mt Olivet Road, in the Iriswood District. The Tax Map number is 43.5/56. The applicant is requesting the rezoning of approximately 12-acres from Suburban Residential District S-R to Mixed Residential District M-R. The applicant intends to remove the old house from the property and replace it with a double wide manufactured home on a masonry foundation.

Case R-21-16 Equetta Burnette
The property is located at 1285 Bassett Heights Road, in the Reed Creek District. The Tax Map numbers are 15.6(034)000/001,2,3, 1A-3A. The applicant is requesting the rezoning of lots 1,2,3 and 1A-3A from Suburban Residential District S-R to Rural Residential District R-R. The applicant wishes to place a single wide mobile home on the property.

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

Parcel ID# 000756900
000346-400

NOTICE JUDICIAL SALE OF REAL PROPERTY

On October 6th proceedings will be commenced under the authority of § 58.1-3965 et seq. of the Code of Virginia to sell, or to transfer to the City of Martinsville, the following parcels for payment of delinquent taxes:

PARCEL ONE: BEGINNING at an intersection of the south line of West Church Street and the west line of Massey Street, 2 feet from a concrete monument; thence with Massey Street, S.A deg. 6 min. E. 68.22 feet to a concrete monument in the north line of Endless Street; thence with Endless Street, S. 87 deg. 28 min. W. 76.90 feet to a 9 foot alley; thence with said alley, N. 2 deg. 15 min. W. 68.57 feet to the south side of West Church Street; thence with Church Street, N. 87 deg. 45 min. E. 78.25 feet to the point of beginning, being shown as the "Nightengale Lunch" property at the intersection of W. Church Street and Massey Street on map of property of Levi Hairston's Estate, recorded in the City of Martinsville Circuit Court Clerk's Office in Map Book 6, page 23.

LESS AND EXCEPT an off conveyance of 477.5 square foot to the City of Martinsville, Virginia, a Virginia Municipal Corporation, as shown on a map titled "Right-of-Way Acquisition - Charlie A. Holland, Massey Street Improvements," prepared by the City of Martinsville Engineering Division, dated October 8, 1996, of record in the aforesaid Clerk's Office in Deed Book 245, page 405; and

Being in all respects the same lot or parcel of land conveyed to Charlie A. Holland, from Mervin R. Pruitt's Trustee, James H. Johnson, Jr., by deed dated May 9, 1990, of record in the Martinsville Circuit Court Clerk's Office in Deed Book 193, page 391. Specific reference is hereby made to the aforesaid deed and plat for a more particular description of the property herein conveyed.

PARCEL TWO: Being known and designated as Lot #1 of the record plat of the Levi Hairston Estate as prepared by W. C. Brown, C.L.S., on May 27, 1959, and recorded in the City of Martinsville Circuit Court Clerk's Office in Map Book 6, page 23; and

Being in all respects the same lot or parcel of land conveyed to Charlie A. Holland, from Mervin R. Pruitt, by deed dated May 30, 1990, of record in the Martinsville Circuit Court Clerk's Office in Deed Book 193, page 394. Specific reference is hereby made to the aforesaid deed and plat for a more particular description of the property herein conveyed.

VDOT

ADVERTISEMENT FOR SNOW REMOVAL EQUIPMENT SERVICES WITH OPERATOR SIGNUP

The Virginia Department of Transportation invites heavy equipment owners to sign up for the rental of their equipment with operators for SNOW & ICE REMOVAL purposes in Martinsville Residency which includes the counties of Henry, Patrick and Carroll during the winter of 2021-2022. Price per hour shall include operators, fuel, tire chains, supplies and required insurance. VDOT will need dump trucks, pickups with plows, motorgraders, backhoes, dozers, track loaders, tractors, rubber tire loaders and farm tractors. All equipment shall be equipped for night work and be in good mechanical condition to ensure a safe and dependable 24/7 operation. VDOT reserves the right to determine acceptability of equipment size and condition for the task. Contractors submitting prices meeting the requirements of the Agreement may be contracted with and may be eligible to receive a mobilization payment.

Contractors must submit their application on the electronic M7B bidding site at <https://www.plow4va.com/>. All new and returning Contractors must be active in the Virginia eProcurement Portal (eVA) in order to do business with the Commonwealth of Virginia (<https://eva.virginia.gov>).

Applications received by 7:00 PM on Friday September 24, 2021 may be eligible for a mobilization bonus. See the EVA posting for additional information, including contract requirements.

Questions can be directed to the Martinsville Residency from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM Monday - Friday. Phone: 276-629-2582
Email: SalemDistrictSnow@vdot.virginia.gov
EEO/AA Employer

SOL Scores from page 1

cent. Forty-six percent of Henry County students passed the science SOL last year, down from 79 percent previously.

Reading scores remained relatively level across the board. City-wide, Martinsville students dropped from a 67 percent pass rate to 53 percent and Henry County dropped from 75 to 69 percent. However, Martinsville High School and Fieldale-Collinsville Middle School improved on their scores in that subject over the previous testing year. Martinsville High jumped

from 63 to 71 percent and FC Middle went from 68 to 76 percent.

There was a statewide decrease in the number of students who took the SOLs. In a typical year, around 99 percent of students take the federally mandated tests. In 2021, 75.5 percent of students took the reading test, 78.7 percent took math, and 80 percent took science.

Henry County schools saw a slightly higher participation rate than the state. According to Assessment Coordinator

Shonna Pilson, 84 percent of Henry County students took English Reading, 86 percent took math, and 86 percent took science. She also noted that participation varied from school to school with high schools having higher rates of participation because their assessments were still required for graduation.

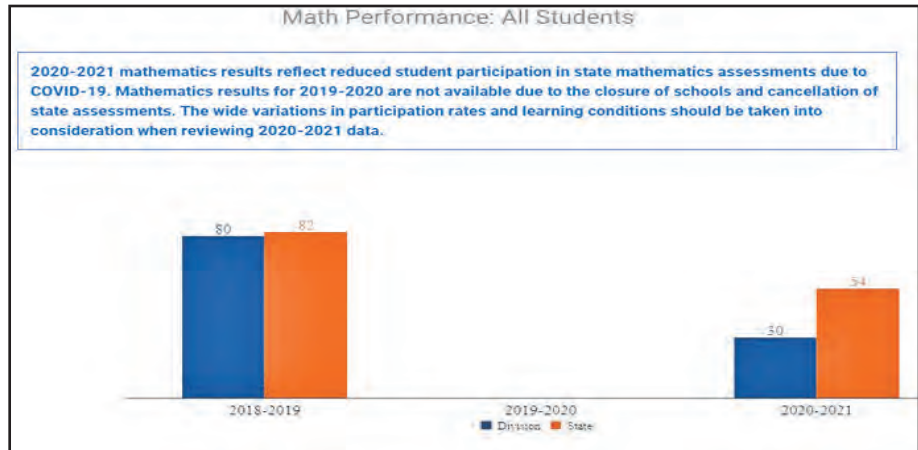
“State assessment data are only one component of student achievement from last year,” Pilson noted. “A single data point should not be used to determine the whole pic-

ture for student success last year. Academic achievement is only one piece of the puzzle.”

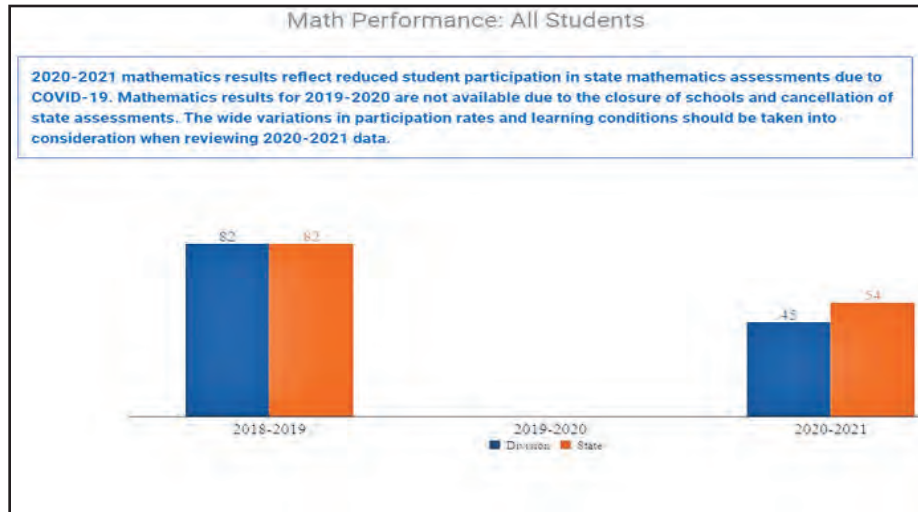
Lisa Millner, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, said that the county school system applied for and received \$171,431.52 from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSR II) grant to help students recover academically from an unprecedented year. The funds will be used “to assist with summer school and after school enrichment

and remediation transportation costs. We realize that our students will need support after school and during the summer. We do not want transportation to be a hindrance for our students at any level, therefore this grant funding will assist with those needs.”

Parker Gunn, Communications and Community Outreach Coordinator of Martinsville City Schools, did not respond to a request for comment by press time.



A graph from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) shows Martinsville City Schools' math SOL pass rates from the 2018-2019 school year (left) and 2020-2021 (right). Martinsville's scores are in orange and Virginia's statewide scores are in dark blue.



Math SOL pass rates for Henry County students are in orange, while statewide scores are in dark blue.

Classrooms from page 1

to have someone to talk to.

“Sometimes we get so involved with the academic areas that we forget that we’re actually dealing with people and families and homes, so we always want to be a caring division that’s focused not only on learning excellence, which we have, but also the social-emotional well-being of students,” said Talley.

“We have had our share of quarantine.”

He added that the school system is in the process of creating an online dashboard with pertinent COVID-related data, like the one for Henry County Schools, which is updated weekly.

“We believe that that

layer of transparency is important for the general community,” said Monica Hatchett, Director of Communications for Henry County Public Schools. However, “we can only share what’s reported to us.”

She noted that it’s important for families to tell a teacher, principal, or other school official if they have a positive case in the home, or are quarantining, so that schools can take appropriate action to protect others in the school.

She said that families who need to quarantine are being contacted directly via phone call.

Hatchett said that nearly 80 percent of county school staff members have been

vaccinated, but only 20 percent of eligible students have received a vaccine.

“We are working to provide a vaccination clinic for our students in the coming weeks ahead” to increase that number, Hatchett said.

Both divisions require masks to be worn in school by everyone, regardless of vaccination status. Hatchett noted that, within the school setting, if a student is exposed to a positive case but they are masked, they may not have to quarantine.

Henry County Administrator Tim Hall said a mask requirement was reinstated for all employees regardless of vaccination status.

“Society is better off if

I wear a mask,” said Hall. “If I wear a mask and if I’m proven wrong that it’s not necessary, all I’ve done is cover half of my face. If other folks don’t wear a mask, they could potentially be putting others at risk. This is not about us. It’s not about me, it’s about the person next to us. Anything that we can do to assist in that effort, I think we need to do. It’s incumbent on us as decent human beings to do that.”

Masking is also required for all visitors at Sovah Health locations, including in the emergency waiting room area, said Dr. Sheranda Gunn-Nolan, Chief Medical Officer with Sovah Health. Once an

emergency room patient is taken back to a room, one well visitor may accompany them.

“It is imperative that the visitor wear their mask. It must be fitted properly; they must stay in the room the entire time. If they are disruptive to the care of the patient or others or if they can’t maintain masking, they will be asked to depart our facility.”

Gunn-Nolan encouraged residents to not delay seeking medical care if necessary. Though wait times may be longer, patients will be seen and evaluated. Non-critical patients are encouraged to seek care from a primary care physician or urgent care rather than going to the

emergency room.

The best way to protect against the spread of COVID-19 is to get vaccinated, because “vaccine is the number one prevention to help minimize risk of death for COVID-19,” said Gunn-Nolan. “We encourage everyone to get vaccinated. We don’t want to see anyone else fall victim to COVID-19 and it continues to happen.”

She emphasized that vaccines are free, readily available, and easily accessed within the community.

To find a local vaccination site, visit vaccine.gov. To learn more about the status of COVID-19 in the state and/or communities, visit vdh.virginia.gov.

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School Board from page 1

When issuing her statement, Dillard said, in part, that “The Martinsville City School Board is not a party to that agreement and has not received an approved copy of this agreement. My priority is to ensure that the needs of our students and staff continue to be met, in accordance with our legal obligations as a public body.”

“Our focus is on education. We will continue to educate our students and are committed to open dialogue to promote understanding and reassurance in our school communities,” Dillard wrote.

She said the council has not discussed the reversion process with schools.

“We’re willing to meet with them, and I think they’re willing to meet with us,” Dillard said, “We just have a difference of opinion on where and how” that meeting will take place.

Dillard said the school board wants a meeting that is open to the public.

“We want an open session. We have nothing to hide from the public.” City council, she said, has asked to meet in closed session.

“It’s inaccurate to say that city council hasn’t discussed reversion with the school board,” said Stephen Piepgrass, an attorney representing the City of Martinsville in the reversion proceedings.

He noted that, before documents were filed initiating the reversion process, the city commissioned a study in 2018 which included a number of components, one of which was a study on schools in which the division participated. He added that the city and school jointly discussed reversion in several joint budget meetings, and that the school board has been kept updated on the process in multiple closed-session briefings. While the school board has no formal role, representatives have been invited to participate in the mediation.

Piepgrass said the city’s request for a closed-session meeting is due to confidentiality concerns imposed by Virginia law.

“Mediations on reversion matters are specifically to be held confidentially to have open and candid discussion,” he said.

First Lady from page 1

everywhere Northam goes she sees educators finding creative ways to meet those challenges.

Northam also uses the trips to discuss new initiatives and opportunities in the state, particularly in the crucial area of early childhood education.

“When we look at professions like (those the students are learning at the Career Academy) and we look at the kind of thinking that folks need to be able to do, what we’re finding out by research is that we have to look younger and younger,” Northam said. “When we deal with developing brains, in those first few years of life, 90 percent of the brain is developed before a child even gets to kindergarten. So, a lot of those mechanisms for problem solving and collaborative learning and the things that we’re using in these programs today start there.”

Most importantly, though, the back-to-school tour is a way to say thank you to those Northam dubs “superhero educators,” who work hard each year but especially during the last

year and a half during the ongoing pandemic.

“Every time we learn something about this crazy disease, (the educators) would pivot and do everything they could creatively and courageously to take care of the students and make sure they were safe and learning through the whole time,” she said.

Northam’s tour of the Career Academy began outside, where she received a quick lesson in drone technology from a Magna Vista student. She and her team also visited students learning coding in the cybersecurity classroom, aspiring electricians working on old gaming machines, young welders hard at work in their shop, and even met some of the students (and animals) who are part of the agriculture and veterinary science program.

As she spoke with students, some of whom had made gifts for the First Lady, including an ant welded from a railroad spike and a 3-D printed model of the Eiffel Tower, she gave them challenge coins.

“In the military or law

enforcement, when you do something outstanding, sometimes your commanding officer will give you a challenge coin,” she said. She developed and designed one of her own, with the seal and motto of Virginia on one side and a native species on the back. “I give them out to the children who share what they’ve learned and to folks who are doing great public service.”

“We are just so appreciative that she came here and expressed an interest in Henry County and Henry County students and what we are doing,” Schools Superintendent Sandy Strayer said.

“It means the world that they know that fabulous things are happening here, because there are so many hidden jewels in Henry County that people just aren’t aware of, so for her to put the spotlight on career and technical education, and also talk about preschool and the needs of our teachers, it just means the world that people are listening and people are taking action to do what’s best for our students,” Strayer added.