

# HENRY COUNTY ENTERPRISE

Saturday, January 8, 2022

(USPS-6)

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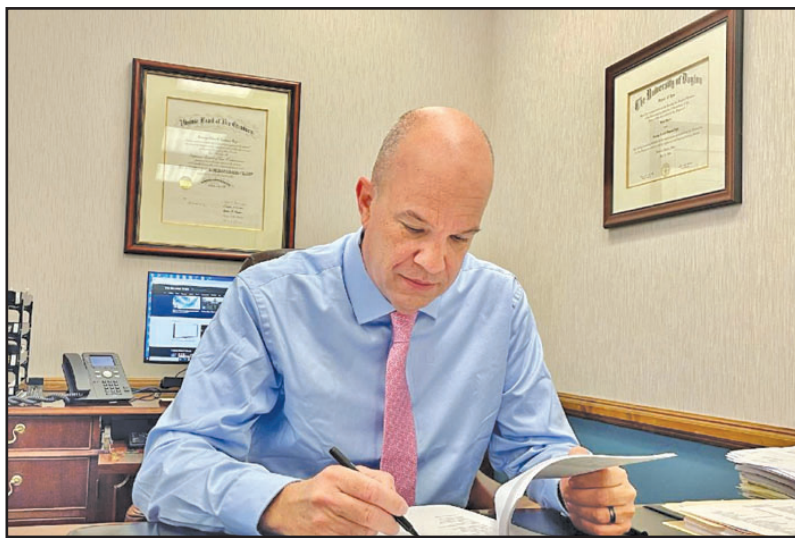
## County counters city's effort to force reversion agreement

The Henry County Board of Supervisors unanimously voted to file a complaint for declaratory judgement to stop the City of Martinsville's attempt to force the board into a voluntary settlement agreement that it already rejected.

The board approved the motion during its Jan. 4 organizational meeting. A complaint for declaratory judgement was filed Wednesday in the Henry County Circuit Court requesting the court to stop Martinsville's attempt to force the county into a voluntary agreement.

A judgement from the court would halt the city's bid to use a third-party, private arbitrator to rule on a matter "where it lacks both jurisdiction and authority," according to a release from the county. "The Board of Supervisors voted Dec. 10 to reject the proposed settlement agreement and Martinsville is attempting to have an arbitrator force the county to vote in favor of the agreement."

County Attorney George Lyle said, "the Board of Supervisors negotiated and considered a settlement agreement with Martinsville and ultimately rejected the agreement. If Martinsville wants to pursue this, the matter of reversion and the future of our schools should be re-submitted to the Commission



County Attorney George Lyle reviews a complaint for declaratory judgement at his desk Wednesday, before filing it in the Henry County Circuit Court. The filing seeks to stop Martinsville's attempt to force the county into a voluntary agreement.

of Local Government for further consideration in an open and public process. A private arbitrator should not decide this matter."

In a statement, Jim Adams, chairman of the Henry County Board of Supervisors, said, "the City of Martinsville is attempting to use smokescreen theatrics to force the Henry County Board of Supervisors into entering an agreement that the residents of the city and county do not agree with. Though they cite previous votes on non-binding legal documents as their rationale for

seeking arbitration, the city fails to mention the events that have followed those votes.

"Multiple public hearings have occurred since then which led to the Board of Supervisors ultimately rejecting the ordinance on the Voluntary Settlement Agreement," Adams said. "There is a reason that we conduct public hearings and there is a reason that this process requires multiple votes to move forward. The reason isn't so we can check a box, it is so we can actually hear

See Reversion, page 6

## COVID-19 continues to spike, peak still 2-3 weeks away

Callie Hietala  
Staff writer

As the post-holiday COVID caseload continues to surge, data indicates that the spike of the peak is still 2-3 weeks away.

"It's already worse than (the numbers from) a year ago," said Dr. Sheranda-Gunn Nolan, chief medical officer at Sovah Health.

The post-holiday surge has led to testing resources becoming more and more limited, meaning people often must wait longer to get a test. She noted the local health departments can help locate testing sites for those in need of testing, and that there are reasonable and valid at-home testing kits that provide early information, particularly symptoms are present.

Gunn-Nolan cautioned that hospitals are continuing to reserve COVID-19 tests for critically ill patients. "Coming to the hospital won't get you a test quicker," she said.

However, Gunn-Nolan said she was reassured by a recent phone call with state officials that testing resources should improve as early as next week.

In the meantime, she cautioned people to stay home if they are feeling unwell.

"If you can't get tested, treat it like it's COVID," she said, of self-quarantining and scheduling a test as early as possible.

In terms of quarantine, Gunn-Nolan said many in the medical community were surprised at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) recent recommendation of a five-day quarantine for COVID-positive patients.

"It's important for people to know that the varying degrees of quarantine are dependent on what you do," she said. Healthcare providers, for example, may be asked to quarantine longer since they are in contact with so many people, many

See COVID-19, page 5

## Adams, Bryant tapped to lead county in 2022

Callie Hietala  
Staff writer

The Henry County Board of Supervisors selected its chairman and vice-chairman for the upcoming year during its 2022 organizational meeting on Jan. 4.

Jim Adams, of the Blackberry District, was chosen to serve as the chairperson and Joe Bryant, of the Collinsville District, was elected vice-chairman.

"I am humbled by the fact that the board has put their faith in me again," said Adams, who was selected to lead the board for the ninth time during his 20-year tenure. "There will undoubtedly be some tough decisions ahead, but we have a board that is second to none, and I have the utmost confidence that we will continue to deliver for the people of Henry County."

Adams said he is committed to maintaining



Jim Adams, of the Blackberry District, was tapped to serve as chairman for the Henry County Board of Supervisors.

good lines of communication between himself and board colleagues, ensuring each has answers to any questions on working papers and elsewhere so every member is well-prepared for each meeting.

Adams added that a strong bridge of communication is essential, too, as the county's leader-



Joe Bryant, of the Collinsville District, was elected to serve as the board's vice-chairman for the first time.

ship transitions mid-year when long-time County Administrator Tim Hall retires. Current Deputy County Administrator Dale Wagoner was named to fill the position.

Additionally, "we have a new member on the board," Adams said of

See Lead, page 2

## Dillard casts initial vote on reversion, outlines goals in new office

Callie Hietala  
Staff writer

A vote on reversion was among the issues confronting Garrett Dillard on Tuesday when he officially began his tenure on the Henry County Board of Supervisors.

Dillard, who is representing the Iriswood District, supported a motion to file a complaint for declaratory judgement to stop the City of Martinsville's attempt to compel the county to comply with the terms of the Voluntary Settlement Agreement. (See related story.)

The reversion issue also prompted transparency to the forefront in terms of Dillard's goals.

While he does not know how he would have voted if he had been in office at the December meeting during which



Garrett Dillard said his tenure on the Henry County Board of Supervisors is off to a "good start."

the board voted to reject the Voluntary Settlement Agreement, and still believes "there's not a lot at this point Henry County can do to stop reversion," Dillard said there are ways to delay the

process. Regardless of the outcome, Dillard said he hopes residents in both localities remember "we're still one

See Dillard, page 3



The Rev. Tyler Millner displays some of his collection of photos, books, pins, and documents related to Martin Luther King, Jr. and Community Learning Week. He hopes he can use the materials and his own experiences to "resource the community," helping others educate themselves about King's teachings and encouraging them to help carry on his legacy.

## Finishing the dream: recommitment to King legacy urged ahead of holiday

Callie Hietala  
Staff writer

The Rev. Tyler Millner has set out on a mission: to encourage people to celebrate—actively celebrate—the upcoming Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday.

The day, Millner said, is about much more than just time off from work. Spending it sleeping in or going shopping, he said, is doing a disservice to the man the holiday honors. Rather, the day should be spent honoring King's

teachings and committing or recommitting to continuing the work begun by King and his contemporaries.

The movement led by King "significantly impacts all of our lives," he said, "and is still relevant" mainly because many of the issues King fought for "are not solved, like race, like equality for women, like equal pay, like voting. All those things that King was involved in."


Millner, pastor of Morning Star Holy Church, said the holiday

is unique.

It is "a fantastic opportunity to be reminded, to be inspired, and to say, 'I'm going to commit to the unfinished work'" of Dr. King and those who worked and marched alongside him. "No other holiday has that kind of capacity," he said.

Millner has a long history of community organizing to honor King, and he has collections of materials—books, posters, photos, and more—which he displays at his church

See Legacy, page 4

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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 news-reporter@theenterprise.net)

## Tuesday, Jan 11

Piedmont Arts hosts a class, Kreate with Kolinski, from 2-4 p.m. at the museum (215 Starling Avenue, Martinsville.) Participants of all experience levels will explore the beautiful world of alcohol inks by working on jewelry, earrings, and a necklace. Please bring a cover-up to protect your clothes. This class is for participants ages 18+. The cost is \$30 for members and \$35 for non-members. To register, visit PiedmontArts.org.

## Wednesday, Jan. 12

The Virginia Museum of Natural History (21 Starling Avenue, Martinsville) is offering its monthly Doodle Bugs! program, an opportunity for children ages 3-5 to experience science first-hand. The theme is winter wildlife. The hour-long workshop includes imaginative stories, fun activities, and games and crafts that spark creativity and curiosity. This is the perfect opportunity for parents and grandparents to learn and have fun with their children. Pre-registration is required one week prior to the program and the cost is \$7 per child. Masks are required for all indoor activities. For more information or to register, contact VMNH at discover.vmnh.virginia.gov, call (276) 634-4187 or register online at www.vmnh.net.

Thursday, Jan. 13  
Patrick & Henry Community College hosts a virtual professional development workshop, Setting Achievable Goals, from 12:30-2:30 p.m. Registration is \$49 and can be completed at ph.augusoft.net or by calling (276) 656-0260.

## Friday, Jan. 14

Come join in the fun for Music Night at the Spencer-Penn Centre. This month, the Rock Castle Ramblers will entertain. Doors open at 5 p.m. and music begins at 6:15. Admission is a \$5 donation and concessions will be available.

The American Red Cross is hosting a blood drive at Stone Memorial Christian Church (3030 Virginia Avenue, Collinsville) from 12-5 p.m. To schedule a donation appointment, visit redcrossblood.org.

## Saturday, Jan. 15

The Tau Omicron Chapter of Omega Psi Phi, Inc. will hold the Martin Luther King, Jr. Leadership Breakfast beginning at 9 a.m. at New College Institute (191 Fayette Street, Martinsville.) The event's guest speaker is Brittany McGraw of WSLN News 10. Tickets are \$10. Masks are required for attendees.

## Friday, Jan. 21

Join Piedmont Arts (215 Starling Avenue, Martinsville) in celebrating the opening of its first new exhibits for the new year. From 5:30-7:30 p.m., guests can enjoy music by Lauren Luther as well as complimentary wine and refreshments as they get their first look at three new exhibits: "Our Living Past: Platinum Portraits of Southern Music Makers," "Dear B.J.: Postcards from the Pandemic," and works by Tara Compton. All three of these exhibits are open through March 12. This opening reception is free and open to the public. RSVP to bjohnson@piedmontarts.org by January 18. For more information, visit piedmontarts.org.

## Saturday, Jan. 22

Soar over to the Virginia Museum of Natural History (21 Starling Avenue, Martinsville) for the grand unveiling of its newest special exhibit, "The Science of Flight!" This day of flight-focused fun includes live birds of prey, balloon animals, food trucks, flight-themed activities and crafts, and more! The first 500 children in attendance will receive a free giveaway. For more information and pricing visit www.vmnh.net.

The Horsepasture Volunteer Fire Department (17815 A.L. Philpott Highway, Ridgeway) will host a country buffet breakfast from 6-10 a.m. The cost for adults is \$8 and children under 10 can eat for \$4. All carry outs are \$8.

TheatreWorks will present another fantastic "Piano Bar" at the Black Box Theatre (44 Franklin Street) in Uptown Martinsville. Tickets are just \$10. Get yours at www.twcp.net.

## Thursday, Feb. 3

Patrick & Henry Community College

hosts a professional development workshop, Wow with Public Speaking, from 9-11 a.m. This class can be attended virtually or in person and the cost is \$49. To register, visit ph.augusoft.net or call (276) 656-0260.

## Friday, Feb. 4

Make magical memories with your little princess at Piedmont Arts' Magical Mask-erade. This daddy-daughter-style dance offers an enchanted night of music and dancing featuring kid-friendly tunes from DJ What. Guests can create fun crafts and enjoy light snacks. The Magical Mask-erade will be held at Piedmont Arts (215 Starling Avenue, Martinsville) from 6-8 p.m. Tickets are \$20 per non-member couple with a \$5 charge for each additional child. The event is free for Piedmont Arts members. Get your tickets at the museum or at PiedmontArts.org.

## ONGOING

The Warming Center of Martinsville and Henry County, located at Forest Hills Presbyterian Church (725 Beechnut Lane), is open to provide a warm place to sleep, a warm meal, and personal supplies at no cost to those in need. Anyone who needs transportation to the center can be picked up at 6:45 p.m. at the Martinsville library and 6:25 p.m. at the Collinsville library. Weekly schedules are posted at the Martinsville library, YMCA, and on the MHC Warming Center Facebook page every Saturday. For more information, call (276) 207-9660. Anyone who wishes to volunteer at the Warming Center or make a donation can find more information on Facebook or at www.foresthillspc.com/mhc-warming-shelter.html.

Patrick & Henry Community College is organizing a virtual Leadership Learning Community! If you have leadership questions, P&HCC can connect you with answers through this virtual community. Participants have the opportunity to collaborate and brainstorm current, real-time challenges and successes with fellow leaders while learning from each other or gaining insights from professionals skilled in areas of concern. Sessions will be held from 4-5 p.m. every other Wednesday from January 12 through June 22. Prices range from \$225 for 12 sessions all the way to \$25 for individual sessions. For more information or to register,

visit ph.augusoft.net or call (276) 656-0260.

Henry County Parks & Recreation invites you out for a trek along the trail! Meet as a group and walk along a different trail each week. Explore the trails of Martinsville-Henry County, make new friends, and get some fresh air and exercise. Call the HCPR Senior Services office at (276) 634-4644 to find out where the week's trek is happening! Trail Trekkers meet Thursday of each week (weather permitting) at 1 p.m. in the fall and winter and 9:15 a.m. in spring and summer.

Piedmont Arts is hosting two exhibits, "Print/Imprint: Asheville Printmakers" and "Carl Chiarenza," on loan from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Both exhibits are on display through January 8.

The Blue Ridge Regional Library offers free one-day passes to the Virginia Museum of Natural History and the Henry County YMCA with your library card. The passes are good for one day and exclude special events. There is a wait period before you can check out the pass again. For more details and exclusions, visit brrl.lib.va.us.

The Fontaine Ruritan Club hosts Bingo every Tuesday at their headquarters (1903 Joseph Martin Highway, Martinsville.) Doors open at 5:30 p.m. and games begin at 7. Money from Bingo supports community service awards, scholarships, and other community efforts.

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. Call the center at (276) 647-9585.

# Burn ban lifted in county

Effective Tuesday, January 4, the county-wide ban on outdoor burning was lifted.

While the recent rainfall and snow have made conditions favorable enough to continue outdoor burning, continuing to exercise safe practices is encouraged.

Examples include never leaving a fire unattended, accounting for windy conditions that could spread the fire and having an

extinguishing agent, such as water or a rake, nearby.

A state-wide law on open-air burning will be in effect from Feb. 15-Apr. 30. The law prohibits burning before 4 p.m. each day if the fire is in, or within 300 feet, of woodland, brush or fields containing dry grass or other flammable materials.

Contact the Fire Marshal's Office at (276) 634-4660 with any questions.

# Lead

Garrett Dillard, "and we want to make sure he has the working support that he needs to be successful." Also, Adams said he hopes to continue the trend of strong economic growth the county has enjoyed in recent years.

"The board in the past have proven to be visionary in the development of industrial parks and looking ahead to what the next step is. Last year we had a sizable success, specifically with SCHOCK coming in and taking over the last county-owned shell building," he said.

This year, the board also will examine options to determine the next step and identify the most appropriate type of facility to create and where to locate it.

"That puts us in the game because when folks are looking at

an area, it cuts out a number of months and a lot of different obstacles" to potential new industry, he said, adding that will be completed while the county works to retain existing businesses, both large and small.

Bryant will serve as vice-chairman for the first time after winning re-election in 2021.

"It is truly an honor that the Board has seawant to make sure he has the working support that he needs to be successful."

n fit to select me as vice-chairperson," Bryant said. "I look forward to continue working with the board in my new leadership position."

In other matters at its organizational meeting Tuesday, the board:

\*Set regular meeting dates for 2022. The board will meet every

fourth Tuesday in the month except December. That meeting was set for Dec. 13 to avoid scheduling conflicts around the holidays.

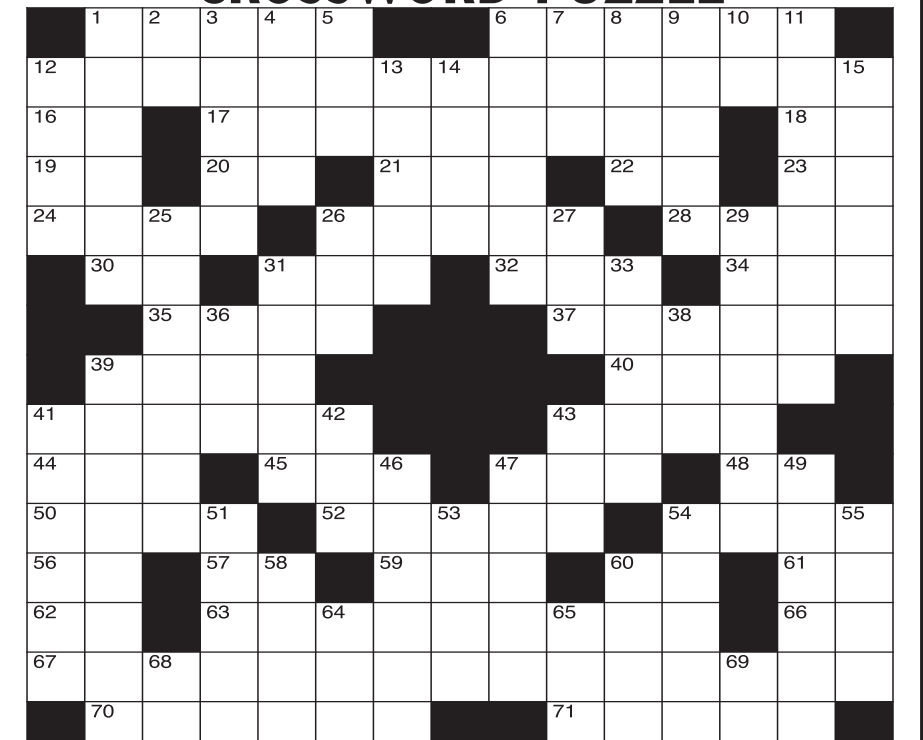
\*Adopted bylaws for 2022.

\*Selected Feb. 8 at 3 p.m. as the date and time of its 2022 planning session.

\*Adopted a proclamation authorizing the Declaration of Local Emergency on Jan. 3 to deal with weather-related emergencies and adopted a second proclamation rescinding the declaration.

\*Approved a motion to file a complaint for declaratory judgment in the Henry County Circuit Court to stop the City of Martinsville's attempt to force the board into a voluntary agreement which it previously voted to reject. (See related story.)

## CROSSWORD PUZZLE



- |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
| <p><b>CLUES ACROSS</b></p> <p>1. Struck firmly</p> <p>6. Shirt part</p> <p>12. Nevertheless</p> <p>16. Article</p> <p>17. Adornment</p> <p>18. Educator's helper</p> <p>19. Healthcare pro</p> <p>20. Atomic number 28</p> <p>21. Extinct flightless bird</p> <p>22. Mystic syllable</p> <p>23. College sports decision maker (abbr.)</p> <p>24. Edible mushrooms</p> <p>26. Venerable English monk</p> <p>28. Surrounded by</p> <p>30. Forming fractional numbers from 4 onwands</p> <p>31. Eastern France river</p> <p>32. Short cry or yelp</p> <p>34. Brew</p> <p>35. Ornamental box</p> <p>37. In a way, surfaced</p> | <p>39. Attired</p> <p>40. Peculation</p> <p>41. Nettled</p> <p>43. It shows you paid (abbr.)</p> <p>44. Payroll firm</p> <p>45. Antidiuretic hormone</p> <p>47. Japanese classical theater</p> <p>48. The first two</p> <p>50. Ancient burial chamber</p> <p>52. Type of card</p> <p>54. Expression of sorrow or pity</p> <p>56. Hectoliter</p> <p>57. Morning</p> <p>59. NYC subway dweller</p> <p>60. Law enforcement</p> <p>61. Sodium</p> <p>62. Elevated subway</p> <p>63. Facility where wild animals are kept</p> <p>66. Integrated circuit</p> <p>67. Seaman's tool</p> <p>70. Drink to</p> <p>71. Small group</p> | <p><b>CLUES DOWN</b></p> <p>1. Poem</p> <p>2. Everest is one (abbr.)</p> <p>3. Olympic legend Jesse</p> <p>4. Portable tent</p> <p>5. When you hope to get there</p> <p>6. Unwavering</p> <p>7. Back muscle</p> <p>8. Within</p> <p>9. Excessive fluid accumulation in tissues</p> <p>10. Six</p> <p>11. Involved as a necessary part</p> <p>12. 2002 Liotta, Patric film</p> <p>13. Living thing</p> <p>14. Type of gin</p> <p>15. Moved around in pursuit of fun</p> <p>25. Makes light bulbs</p> <p>26. Story of one's life</p> <p>27. Small island in a river</p> <p>29. A type of bliss</p> <p>31. Genus of large herons</p> <p>33. A way to make dry</p> | <p>36. One's grandmother</p> <p>38. Vocal style</p> <p>39. Pronunciation mark</p> <p>41. American Indian chief or leader</p> <p>42. Insecticide</p> <p>43. Go bad</p> <p>46. Capital of Zimbabwe</p> <p>47. Polish river</p> <p>49. Cast out</p> <p>51. People of India and Sri Lanka</p> <p>53. Cleaning fabrics</p> <p>54. Very skilled</p> <p>55. Pouches</p> <p>58. Restaurant must-have</p> <p>60. Native Americans from Arizona</p> <p>64. Remaining after all deductions</p> <p>65. Fleece</p> <p>68. Dorm official</p> <p>69. It cools your home</p> |
|--|--|--|--|

## Appreciation



I am sharing my heartfelt thanks to the citizens of the Iriswood District and the Henry County community for allowing me to serve on the Board of Supervisors the last four years. I also wish to commend my colleagues on the Henry County Board of Supervisors and the administrative staff for always keeping the "main thing" -- doing what is in the best interest of the citizenry of Henry County. Over the past four years, I am extremely proud to

have been a small part in the development of an economic development program which ensures the future of the community with good-paying jobs from national and international companies. Of particular interest to me is the funding of the school system to be one of world class.

However, during my tenure on the Board of Supervisors, I have learned that you can't please everyone. On a positive side, I have learned how to rustle cattle out of a yard of an elderly lady whose plants were in peril, arranged multiple VDOT issues to resolution in the district, and tried to make every voice in the district distinct and of equal importance.

I learned over the 20 years as a school superintendent that a thick skin is imperative as long as one could rest assured you were acting in the best interest of the individuals you serve and represent. The last four years as a member of the Henry County Board of Supervisors confirmed for me that keeping a focus on the "main thing" means moving an organization and community forward. I am blessed to have been a part of such a community. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
J. David Martin

# Vaccine is key to stopping COVID-19

**Taylor Boyd**  
Staff writer

As COVID-19 cases increase following holiday celebrations, health officials continue to tout the need for widespread vaccination as the key to curbing the rising rates.

Gov. Ralph Northam said even as the Omicron variant spreads across Virginia, vaccinations are helping to keep people safe.

“Data from around the world show that if people have gotten vaccinated, and then get COVID, then symptoms are likely to be minor. That’s how the vaccines are designed to work, and it’s more good news,” he said.

More than 14 million vaccines have been given in Virginia. Only nine states with larger populations have given more.

Current data shows that nearly everyone hospitalized with COVID-19 are unvaccinated. Similarity, the majority of those who die from the virus also are unvaccinated.

“This is entirely avoidable, if everyone gets their shots,” Northam said, and added the vaccine is particularly important because healthcare workers

are exhausted and overworked from caring for those who have gotten sick. He also advised people to only go to the hospital if they believe they really need to.

“It’s not fair to put even more pressure on hospital workers to care for people whose sickness is avoidable,” he said.

To stay safe, Northam suggests staying away from the unvaccinated or those who have recently been in contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19. Other suggestions include getting a booster shot, vaccinating children ages five and above, wearing a mask, and practicing social distancing.

Appointments to get a vaccine can be made at the Patrick County Health Department, CVS Pharmacy, Walgreens, and other pharmacies.

Rapid tests are available at most drug stores and pharmacies.

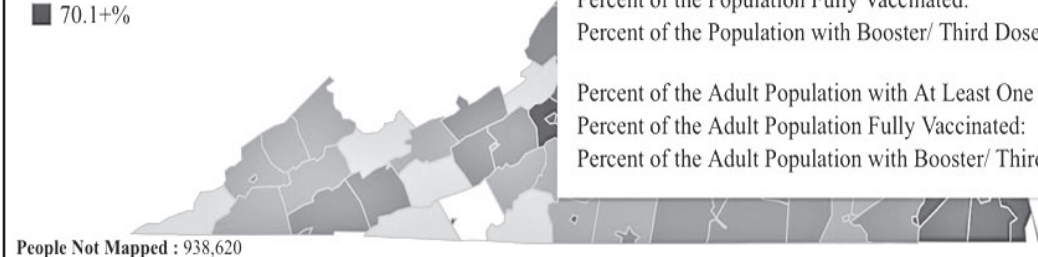
As of December 30, 40.1 percent of the population, or 7,062 people, have been fully vaccinated in Patrick County; 45.2 percent of the population has received at least one dose, and 46.5 percent of the adult

\*People vaccinated with a booster or third dose after the primary vaccine series. Federal Doses Administered dashboard are not included.

## People Vaccinated by Locality of Residence a

Percent of the Population with At Least One Dose

- 40.1% - 45.0%
- 45.1% - 50.0%
- 50.1% - 55.0%
- 55.1% - 60.0%
- 60.1% - 65.0%
- 65.1% - 70.0%
- 70.1%+



People Not Mapped : 938,620

## Patrick

Vaccine Doses Administered:	17,495
People With At Least One Dose:	7,953
People Fully Vaccinated:	7,062
People With Booster/ Third Dose:	2,841
Federal Doses as of 11/28/21 (At Least One Dose):	139
Federal Doses as of 11/28/21 (Fully Vaccinated):	106

At Least One Dose Rate per 100,000: 45,167  
Fully Vaccinated Rate per 100,000: 40,107  
Booster/ Third Dose Rate per 100,000: 16,135

Percent of the Population with At Least One Dose: 45.2%  
Percent of the Population Fully Vaccinated: 40.1%  
Percent of the Population with Booster/ Third Dose: 16.1%

Percent of the Adult Population with At Least One Dose: 52.2%  
Percent of the Adult Population Fully Vaccinated: 46.5%  
Percent of the Adult Population with Booster/ Third Dose: 19.4%

Information about COVID-19, case numbers, and vaccination rates can be found on the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) website, at [www.vdh.virginia.gov](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov).

population is fully vaccinated.

In Henry County, 47.7 percent of the population, or 24,120 people, has been fully vaccinated; 54.2 percent of the population has received at least one dose, and 55.8 percent of the adult population is fully vaccinated.

In the City of Martinsville, 54.8 percent of the population, or 6,883 people, are fully

vaccinated; 61.2 percent of the population has received at least one dose, and 69.1 percent of the adult population has been fully vaccinated.

As of Thursday, December 30 information from the Virginia Department of Health suggested there are 7,687 cases, with 487 hospitalizations, and 211 deaths in Henry County.

In Patrick County, 2,537 cases with 139

hospitalized, and 72 dead from the COVID-19 virus were reported by the VDH.

In Martinsville, 2,373 cases were reported, with 190 hospitalized, and 100 dead, the data showed.

The data also suggests there are 1,100,900 cases in the state, with 41,592 hospitalized, and 15,565 dead from the COVID-19 virus. Information from the

CDC suggested there are 53,275,589 cases in the United States and 818,444 dead from coronavirus.

Data also suggests that as of December 30, 5,763,240 Virginians have been fully vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus.

For more tips on how to stay safe, visit [www.vdh.virginia.gov](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov) or [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov).

## Health officials urge those with mild symptoms to avoid emergency departments

The Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association and the Virginia Department of Health issued a joint statement urging Virginians with mild to moderate cases of COVID-19 or other seasonal illnesses to avoid visiting hospital emergency departments as the Omicron variant spreads and new coronavirus cases and hospitalizations surge.

In the current climate, Virginia public health officials and hospital leaders are urging individuals with asymptomatic or mild coronavirus cases, or other non-serious illnesses, to avoid unnecessary trips to already burdened hospital emergency departments.

Hospitals across Virginia have recently experienced an influx of patients seeking emergency department care for asymptomatic or relatively mild COVID-19 infections as well as cases of the flu or other seasonal illness. In many

cases, a hospital emergency department is not the appropriate venue for patients with mild to moderate COVID-19 symptoms to seek medical care. Most individuals who contract coronavirus do not need to visit the hospital emergency department and can effectively recover from their illness at home, or by seeking primary care treatment and/or speaking with their primary care provider.

People with severe COVID-19 symptoms such as significant difficulty breathing, intense chest pain, severe weakness, or an elevated temperature that persists for days unabated are among those who should consider seeking emergency medical care for their condition. Individuals should not visit the emergency department if the symptoms of their illness are mild to moderate – including a cough, sore throat, runny nose, or body aches – or simply for the pur-

pose of having a COVID-19 test administered. In those situations, people are encouraged to instead consult an outpatient primary care provider.

Unnecessary visits to hospital emergency departments place great strain on hospitals and the frontline clinicians and caregivers who continue to bravely battle the pandemic. These visits can also cause a delay in care for patients experiencing a true medical crisis and contribute to the depletion of finite resources including medical staff, testing kits, personal protective equipment, and therapeutic treatments.

Virginia is in the midst of a fifth coronavirus surge since the pandemic began last year. The peak of this latest surge may not arrive until several weeks after the holiday season concludes, making it likely that its true impact on public health and the health care delivery

system is yet to be fully felt.

Infections have spiked this month – the Commonwealth recently eclipsed 1 million total COVID-19 cases and has documented 51,564 new infections since Dec. 24. Meanwhile, daily COVID-19 hospitalizations have risen from 922 on Dec. 1 to 2,101 as of today (Dec. 30), a 128 percent increase in that time.

While these numbers are elevated, they remain below the peak hospitalization numbers Virginia encountered this time last year. That is thanks in part to the widespread availability of COVID-19 vaccines. Data continues to show that the majority of patients currently hospitalized in Virginia for COVID-19 care are unvaccinated.

That is among the reasons why the health care community continues to urge unvaccinated individuals to make a plan to get the vaccine and to get boosted. U.S.

adults 18 and older are eligible to receive a two-dose course of either the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine. The Pfizer vaccine has also been approved for use in children ages 5-12 and adolescents up to age 17. Adults 18 and older are also eligible to receive a single dose of the Janssen/Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

The available vaccines offer strong protection against illness from COVID-19. And for those who contract a breakthrough case of the virus after being vaccinated, the vaccine reduces the risk of serious illness that leads to hospitalization or death. Please visit [vaccinate.virginia.gov](http://vaccinate.virginia.gov), call 1-877-VAX-IN-VA, or visit [vaccines.gov](http://vaccines.gov) to learn more about getting vaccinated. At Community Vaccination Centers, appointments are strongly encouraged to avoid extended wait times, but walk-ins are welcome.

## Dillard

from page 1

community. Martinsville’s success and Henry County’s success is locked hand in hand. Therefore, we should work together for the betterment of our community.”

For now, Dillard said one of his first priorities is to become more familiar with the basic operating procedures of the board, get to know his fellow supervisors, and “get a better understanding of the issues that are impacting Henry County.”

Also, he plans to bring to the forefront some of the issues he feels need to be addressed and which were a focal point of his campaign—crime, poverty, drugs, and violence or, as he calls them, “people issues.”

“People is really what we deal with,” Dillard said.

Discussions about reversion, about the county’s use of the 1 percent sales tax increase, about bringing in new jobs, are all relevant but “until you get people in a good place where they’re content and able to live their lives, it’s hard for them” to care about what’s going on in their local government. “It’s hard for someone dealing with a drug issue to worry about broadband,” Dillard said.

“If we can help families have a better income and pull people out of poverty,” then those people are more likely to have the time, interest, and opportunity to engage with what’s going on in Henry County.

“When you have to work two and three jobs just to survive, a lot of the political stuff doesn’t really mat-

ter,” Dillard said. “I’d like to see more conversations about (issues like poverty) and have people affected by those issues come in and share their perspectives with the board.”

Dillard said he also would focus on continuing to attract new, higher paying business and industry to the area to give workers more opportunity for good wages. In addition to new business, he wants to sit down with current business leaders to see what solutions are available to increase wages for staff.

However, he noted it may be difficult to attract some of those higher-paying industries if steps aren’t taken to address some of his core concerns, particularly drugs and violence.

To address those concerns, Dillard envisions working with the Henry County Sheriff’s Office to form a community group tasked with finding solutions to fight drug problems. Then, he hopes “some of those young folks we’re losing will finish high school,” perhaps go to college or to the military or start a business and return to Henry County and live as a law-abiding, tax-paying residents.

Dillard also wants to focus on increased transparency in local government, encouraging attendance at meetings, as well as public comment “so we know what they’re thinking, they know what we’re thinking, and there’s nothing that is a secret to anybody that is allowed to

be public information.”

Part of his plan to make local government more transparent is to hold community meetings and listen to residents in his district to determine the issues that are important to them, such as solar projects.

At a Nov. 24 meeting, the Henry County Board of Zoning Appeals voted to reject two proposed solar projects in the Axton area. Dillard said since he does not live on or near farmland, the issue would not affect him directly, hence his desire to speak with those residents

in his district who have a greater stake in the issue.

“You really have to do your research,” he said, adding that, in addition to speaking with constituents, he wants to speak with experts versed in the pros and cons of constructing solar farms.

So far, Dillard said his board colleagues and county officials have been warm and welcoming. In advance of his initial meeting, Dillard said he met with board chairman Jim Adams, as well as several county officials, and

received calls from other supervisors who told him to reach out if he had any questions.

“That’s important because it’s all new to me,”

he said. “It’s good to know that you have folks that you’re working with that are reaching out that want you to be successful. It’s been a good start.”



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# OPINION

## On the Flag Code

I was driving down the road the other day when a truck passed me, an American flag flapping from a pole mounted in the truck's bed.

While flags are designed to be majestically whipped by the wind, they aren't so much designed for flapping behind a truck running 70 miles per hour every single day, and there wasn't much left of this poor piece of fabric. It was coming apart at the seams, little more than red, white, and blue streamers covered in filth and blackened with exhaust.

The irony was obvious. Here was a guy who wanted to show everyone that he's a True American Patriot (TM), and in doing so, he had desecrated an American flag.

It made me think about the United States Flag Code.

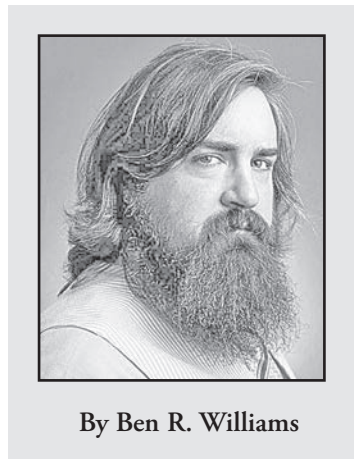
The Flag Code is Chapter 5 of Title 4 of the United States Code. It's a U.S. federal law, but it's not really enforceable. Our Patriot is in no danger of going

to federal prison for the crime of being a disrespectful dunce. However, the Flag Code does lay out the customs for the display and care of the American flag, and so if someone truly respects the flag, the best way to show it is by following the Flag Code.

There are a lot of different parts of the Flag Code, but let's focus on some of the most relevant aspects.

For one thing, when a flag is so tattered and beaten up that it's no longer fit to serve as a symbol of our nation, it should be replaced in a dignified manner, generally by burning. A number of organizations routinely conduct flag retirement ceremonies, including the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Boy Scouts, and the Girl Scouts. Our Patriot should ideally take his flag to one of these groups to be retired.

There are also some rules that I think most folks are familiar with. For example, the flag



By Ben R. Williams

should never be flown upside down except to signal distress or danger, and it should never touch anything beneath it.

But there are some rules that are less well-known. For example, did you know the flag should never be used as apparel, bedding, or drapery?

There's some debate about what this means exactly. Some people say that wearing a T-shirt with an American flag on it is fine; the problem would be if the shirt was made from an actual American flag. Others say that any clothing that depicts

the American flag or features a flag-based motif is against the code.

Personally, I defer to Mark Leepson, author of "Flag: An American Biography," who wrote that "there is something off-kilter about revering the ideals that our flag embodies, attempting to ban its destruction, then using it as a political club or sitting down in a flag-patterned lawn chair, tucking into red-white-and-blue-frosted cupcakes, and dabbing our mouths with a Stars and Stripes napkin."

Which reminds me, the code also says that the flag shouldn't be used on anything that would be thrown away, so those Stars and Stripes napkins and paper plates are out.

Another element of the Flag Code is that the flag should never be used for advertising purposes in any manner whatsoever. Of course, next to attractive ladies, it's hard to imagine anything that has sold more products than the American flag.

There's one more element

of the Flag Code I find particularly interesting. The code states that "the flag should never have placed upon it, nor on any part of it, nor attached to it any mark, insignia, word, figure, design, picture, or drawing of any nature."

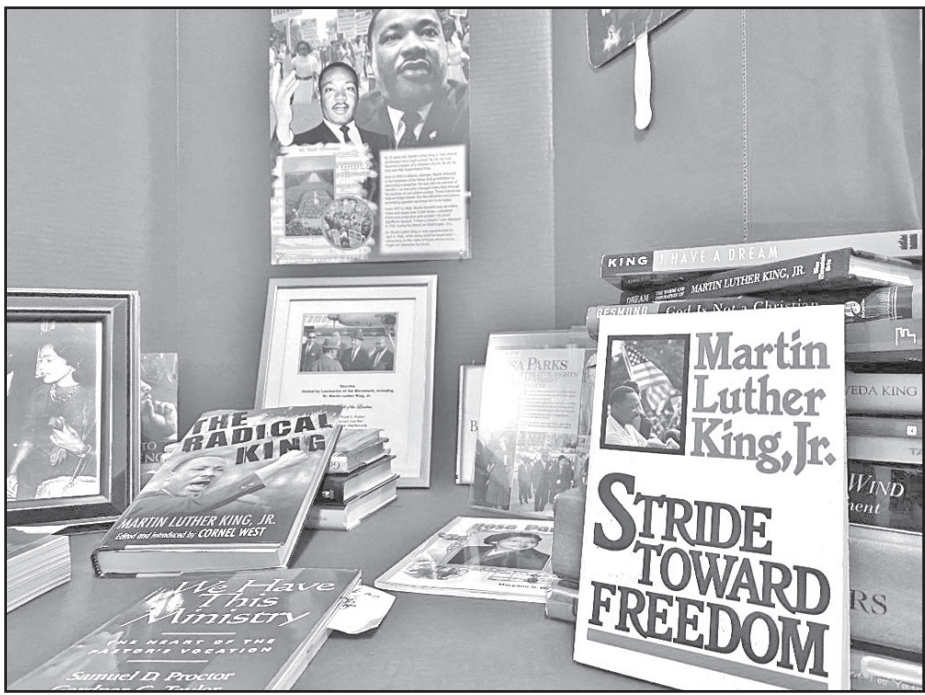
It seems to me that if you were to take an American flag, make it black and white, put a big blue stripe along the middle, and then print the words "BLUE LIVES MATTER" on it, you would absolutely be violating the Flag Code.

I realize this news may be upsetting to some, but it's not all bad. In the United States v. Eichman, the U.S. Supreme Court voted 5-4 that the federal government cannot prosecute a person for desecrating an American flag because that would violate the person's First Amendment rights. So if someone has a Blue Lives Matter flag, a tattered American flag, or a whole bunch of Stars and Stripes paper cups, they can sleep easy knowing that it's their absolute right to desecrate Old Glory with impunity.

## Legacy from page 1



Among the Rev. Tyler Millner's vast collection is a photograph of Martin Luther King, Jr. during one of his three visits to Danville, VA.



on Stony Mountain Road in Axton. He hopes to share these, as well as his own knowledge, stories, and experiences, with members of the community who are interested in learning how they can more fully honor King's

legacy, both during the holiday and after.

In an earlier chapter of his life, Millner was the president of the Richmond Committee of Black Clergy, an alliance of Black pastors in Richmond, VA, who

encouraged each other to continue improving both as pastors and as community leaders. The year King was assassinated, Millner said the organization sponsored a worship service in honor of his life and legacy.

After several years of the service, Millner felt that something more needed to be done.

"I said, 'look, King was more than worship, more than religion,'" Millner said, and in 1978, he and the committee partnered with Dr. Grace Pleasants and Virginia Union University, a historically Black university in Richmond, to lay the foundations of Community Learning Week.

"From there forward, we had a whole week providing the opportunity for the community" to learn about King, anchored at Virginia Union, Millner recalled.

The weeklong event, which included workshops, forums, religious services, and cultural events, was in its eighth year by the time Martin Luther King, Jr. Day officially became a holiday. Such was its success that Coretta Scott King, Dr. King's widow, helped kick off the 1983 celebration.

Millner said the week included an annual Community Leaders Breakfast that is currently celebrating its 44th year at the college. The idea behind the breakfast was to draw leaders together — corporate executives, politicians, presidents of major organizations — and invite a "major speaker, with reputation" to deliver a charge to those

leaders and encourage them to "keep up with the likeness of King."

For nearly 20 years, "we commanded the presence of the governor at the breakfast," he said.

Over time, the week expanded and encompassed more events, including a mass meeting modeled on those held by King. Millner explained that King would host such meetings to keep the public up to date on the progress of the Civil Rights movement and identify the next steps.

Millner recalled that Shirley Chisholm, the nation's first Black congresswoman, attended Community Learning Week's first mass meeting.

"I got 12 invitations to speak. Something told me to come to Richmond," Millner said Chisholm told him. From that first event onward, Millner said these re-envisioned mass meetings became a "premier platform" that attracted mayors, authors, governors, and other prominent figures.

Millner hopes Community Learning Week can serve as a model for similar events locally, and he is happy to share his knowledge and experience with those interested in learning about King's teachings and how they can honor his legacy.

The holiday, for Millner, is a way to "remind ourselves, educate ourselves, but then commit and say 'I am going to be part of the work that is going to finish the dream.'"

Finishing the dream to Millner is achieving King's vision for what he called the Beloved Community,

defined by The King Center (thekingcenter.org) as "a global vision in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In the Beloved Community, poverty, hunger, and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry, and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood."

Millner believes that everyone has an obligation to work toward this ideal.

"If Martinsville had the Beloved Community," Millner said, "everybody would be represented and looked after, not just the special interests and the well-connected. Let the government work for people like me and the marginalized and the poor like it does for everybody else. That, to me, is the mark of the Beloved Community."

He emphasized this call to action is not directed toward only the Black community or the church community, but to all, regardless of race or creed. In fact, Millner sees the universality of King's teachings as a boon to the movement.

"I think that's part of why the movement can be reenergized, because there are so many young people with a sense that this is wrong and with a sense that we must do something. I don't think a lot of them got that because they were in a church," Millner said.

He hopes others not only take time to educate themselves about King and take action to carry

on his torch, but that they will pass his story on to their children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews so that they, too, may pick up and carry the torch.

"But if you take a day off, go out shopping, then (the young people) won't have that connection," he warned. "I can show you what can be done. Just come out here to Stony Mountain Road and I can show you what can be done."

Millner encouraged residents to celebrate King's memory by fanning the flames the civil rights leader helped to ignite.

"The holiday can be a way to shake us out of apathy, provide a level of sensitivity, and provide an awareness that there's still a long way to go," he said, and added that now, more than ever, he sees an urgent need for people to become actively engaged in fighting for social reforms.

"Why? Because of what time it is. The racial unrest, the continuing killing of Black and brown people, the banning of books, the assault on our democratic principles, the assault on voting rights," he said. "You and me, we don't have anything to do?"

"King is not here," Millner said, "and so I must get up, get on the marching, get on the walking, and become part of the army that finishes the dream."

To view the collection of King memorabilia, or to discuss ways to honor and celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr. Day may contact Millner at (276) 650-8755 or morning-starholychurch@gmail.com.

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Michael Showell, *Publisher*

Debbie Hall, *Editor*  
dhall@theenterprise.net  
(276) 694-3101

Callie Hietala, *Reporter*  
newsreporter@theenterprise.net

Randy Thompson, *Advertising Manager*  
advertise@mainstreetnewspapers.com  
(540) 230-1129

Liz Moonbury, *Advertising Specialist*  
advertising@theenterprise.net  
(276) 694-3101

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## Youngblood graduates from University of the Cumberlands

Christian Youngblood, of Collinsville, completed his Doctor of Philosophy in Information Technology from the University of the Cumberlands.

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# Local school divisions among those in line for School Security Equipment Grants

The Virginia Department of Education announced \$12 million in state School Security Equipment Grants to protect students, faculty and visitors in 583 schools in 93 school divisions. The grants will pay for video monitoring systems, voice and video internal communications systems, school bus interior cameras, mass notification systems, visitor-identification systems, access control systems, two-way radios, security vestibules and other security upgrades. "The health and safety of students and school staff is paramount," said Superintendent of Public Instruction James Lane. "These grants are an important part of equipping schools with the systems necessary to mitigate security risks, detect threats and connect schools with first responders. The commonwealth continues to lead the nation in proactively addressing school safety as VDOE works in partnership with other state agencies and local school divisions to keep students, faculty and visitors safe in our schools."

The criteria for making the awards — developed by VDOE and the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services — give priority to schools most in need of modern security equipment, schools with relatively high numbers of offenses, schools with equipment needs identified by a school security

audit, and schools in divisions least able to afford security upgrades. The divisions awarded grants include:

- Henry County — \$52,000 for Axton Elementary, Bassett High, Fieldale-Collinsville Middle, G.W. Carver Elementary, Laurel Park Middle, Magna Vista High, Mount Olivet Elementary, Rich Acres Elementary, Sanville Elementary and Stanleytown Elementary.
- Martinsville — \$32,533 for Albert Harris Elementary, Clearview Early Learning Center, Martinsville High, Martinsville Middle, and Patrick Henry Elementary.
- Patrick County — \$143,922 for Meadows of Dan Elementary, Stuart Elementary and Woolwine Elementary.

Also, among localities receiving grants are:

- Carroll County — \$62,240 for Carroll County High, Carroll County Middle, Fancy Gap Elementary,
- Danville — \$94,330 for Edwin A. Gibson Elementary, Forest Hills Elementary, G.L.H. Johnson Elementary, Galileo Magnet High, George Washington High, Grove Park Preschool, O. Trent Bonner Middle, Park Avenue Elementary, Schoolfield Elementary, The Northside Preschool, Westwood Middle and Woodberry Hills Elementary.
- Franklin County — \$28,720 for Benjamin

Franklin Middle, Boones Mill Elementary, Burnt Chimney Elementary, Callaway Elementary, Dudley Elementary, Ferrum Elementary, Franklin County High, Henry Elementary and Rocky Mount Elementary.

- Galax — \$200,000 for Galax Elementary, Galax High and Galax Middle.
- Grayson County — \$83,553 for Fairview Elementary, Fries Elementary, Independence Elementary and Independence Middle.

A local match of 25 percent is required of most divisions. Three school divisions with composite indices of local-ability-to-pay of less than 0.2 — Buena Vista, Lee and Scott counties — are exempt from the local-match requirement.

The 2019 Appropriation Act doubled the total annual appropriation for the grant program — effective in 2020 — from \$6 million, to \$12 million. The 2019 General Assembly also approved Governor Ralph Northam's proposal to increase the maximum award per school division — also effective in 2020 — from \$100,000, to \$250,000.

The School Security Equipment Grants program was established by the 2013 General Assembly in the aftermath of the 2012 mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut.

# Emergency allotments to continue for SNAP households

Virginia's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) again will release emergency allotments of benefits to eligible households this month. Benefits will be automatically loaded to recipients' Electronic Benefits Transfer cards on Sunday, January 16. The emergency allotments raise existing SNAP households' monthly benefit amount to the maximum allowable based on household size as follows:

Household Size	48 States and DC
1	\$250
2	\$459
3	\$658
4	\$835
5	\$992
6	\$1,190
7	\$1,316
8	\$1,504
Each additional person	\$188

Maximum SNAP Allotments for 48 States and D.C.

The enhanced SNAP benefit is made available through a public health emergency declaration that requires government agencies to request an extension of emergency allotment issuances on a month-to-month basis. Accordingly, the status of future emergency allotment benefits will be determined by this monthly approval process.

SNAP participants with questions related to their benefits are encouraged to contact their local department of

social services or visit CommonHelp at [commonhelp.virginia.gov](http://commonhelp.virginia.gov) to access account information. For additional information regarding SNAP, how to apply, and other assistance programs, visit [dss.virginia.gov/benefit/](http://dss.virginia.gov/benefit/).

For streamlined access to other critical and actionable resources from 2-1-1 Virginia, CommonHelp, and other state and federal agencies, visit [COVID.Virginia.gov/app](http://COVID.Virginia.gov/app) to download the COVID-19 Virginia Resources mobile app.

## COVID-19 from page 1

of whom are more medically vulnerable.

"Personally," she said, "I would follow a 7-to-10-day quarantine. Omicron tends to pass a little bit faster, but there's still a lot we have to learn."

Gunn-Nolan said that there are fewer than 50 patients hospitalized with the virus across both Martinsville and Danville campuses, and that hospitals continue to see unvaccinated patients that are much sicker.

She said recent data from the CDC indicated 95 percent of new cases of COVID-19 across the United States are the omicron variant. Data from the Virginia Department of Health showed that among fully vaccinated Virginians, 1.5 percent have developed COVID, 0.045 percent have been hospitalized with the virus, and 0.01 percent have died.

However, there is hope on the horizon, though it may be distant.

Gunn-Nolan said

research continues to look at other means that may be more appealing to those who feel they cannot take the vaccine and for those in countries where vaccines are not readily available. These studies being conducted into medications to prevent COVID infections as well as medications to

minimize the risk of the virus.

"Now is not the time to let down your guard," Gunn-Nolan cautioned, emphasizing that masking, good hand hygiene, social distancing, and, of course, vaccinations remain important to fighting the pandemic.



Dr. Sheranda Gunn-Nolan, chief medical officer for Sovah Health, said many in the medical community were surprised by the CDC's recent recommendation of a 5-day quarantine period for all COVID-positive patients. She said she would continue to follow a 7- to 10-day quarantine protocol.

# Program to provide mortgage relief launched

Gov. Ralph Northam announced the launch of a statewide Mortgage Relief Program to help people stay in their homes and help ease mortgage delinquencies, defaults, foreclosures due to the pandemic.

Applications opened on Monday, January 3.

The Mortgage Relief Program is like the highly successful Virginia Rent Relief Program which has received national recognition for its success. Virginia was one of the first states in the nation to create a statewide rent and mortgage relief program with federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds.

The Commonwealth has implemented rent and mortgage relief programs through designated state and federal resources. Combined, these programs have provided more than \$519.5 million in 106,621 rent relief payments for more than 76,500 households across Virginia. Families with children represent most households assisted by the program.

"Virginia is taking aggressive steps to help people stay in their homes," said Northam. "Owning a home is the American dream, and this new program will help keep that dream alive."

The Commonwealth of Virginia received more than \$258 million through the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Homeowners Assistance Fund to support homeowners facing housing instability resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Providing housing stability and supporting Virginia homeowners is of the utmost importance right now as we continue to advance our recovery efforts from the pandemic," said Virginia Housing Chief Executive Officer Susan

F. Dewey. "This program will protect homeowners at risk of losing their homes thereby strengthening our communities and our economy and improving the lives of many Virginians across the Commonwealth. Our mission is to help Virginians attain quality, affordable housing and foster successful homeownership, and this program directly aligns with our goals by providing vital financial support to homeowners during a time of great need."

Eligible homeowners must have experienced a reduction of income or increase in living expenses after January 21, 2020 and must currently own and occupy the property as their primary residence. In addition, there are maximum income limits and other eligibility requirements. More information on eligibility requirements from the U.S. Department of the Treasury can be found at <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/HAF-Guidance.pdf>.

Funds from the Virginia Mortgage Relief Program will be distributed directly to mortgage lenders and servicers, contracts for deed holders, county treasurers or local taxing authorities, property insurance companies, and homeowner and condominium associations. Utility assistance is not an eligible expense under the Virginia Mortgage Relief Program but is available under other state, local, or private sector programs. For other housing related resources visit [www.211Virginia.org](http://www.211Virginia.org).

To apply or learn more about VMRP, visit [www.VirginiaMortgageRelief.com](http://www.VirginiaMortgageRelief.com) or call 833-687-8677 (833-OUR-VMRP).

To Apply for Rent Relief, visit <https://web.getgov2go.com/signin?returnUrl=%2Fdashboard>.

## Letter of Appreciation

to the

Henry County/Patrick County/Martinsville Communities

It is with a great sense of appreciation and bittersweet emotions that we write this letter to the citizens of Henry County, the City of Martinsville and Patrick County. When my wife and I were here from 1995 until 2001, I as superintendent of Henry County Schools and my wife as an educator, we knew then this community would be our retirement destination. Of all the places we have lived, the quality of life and the people living here are remarkable. But, we have come to recognize that there is another life-cycle after retirement: being around family. It is with sad hearts and mixed emotions that we announce we will be moving out of the area, to be close to our family, in the months to come. This was an extremely hard decision to make, but one that is essential.

As we reflected on the years in the community, it was an opportunity to remember fondly the following:

- The one-on-one computer initiative, one of the first in the state, and archived in the Smithsonian Institute.
- Development of the O'Henry career development program, beginning in kindergarten.
- Development, coordination, and serving as emcee of Dancing for the Arts with Piedmont Arts
- President of Piedmont Arts
- Member of the Henry County Board of Supervisors
- Board Member, Patrick Henry Community College
- TheatreWorks Community Players, Franklin Hart in "9 to 5"
- Patriot Players, Gomez in the "Adams Family", Principal Panch in "Putnam County Spelling Bee", Daddy Warbucks in "Annie", and Walt Disney in "Mary Poppins"
- President and member of Altrusa International of Martinsville and Henry County
- Coordinator and Instructor for James Madison University at the New College Institute, Education Administration Program
- Realtor at Vaughn Real Estate and Rives S. Brown
- Interim superintendent for Henry County Schools
- Interim superintendent for Patrick County Schools -- twice

All of these past reflections would not have been possible without the many friends, colleagues, parents, and students we have come to know and respect. Even though we did not grow up in this area, we have always felt a part of and contributing members of the community. We shall be forever grateful to a community that has been through a great deal, from furniture and textile manufacturing downfalls to reinventing itself to become a vibrant economic powerhouse once again. Thank you for letting us call this our home.

Joyce and David Martin

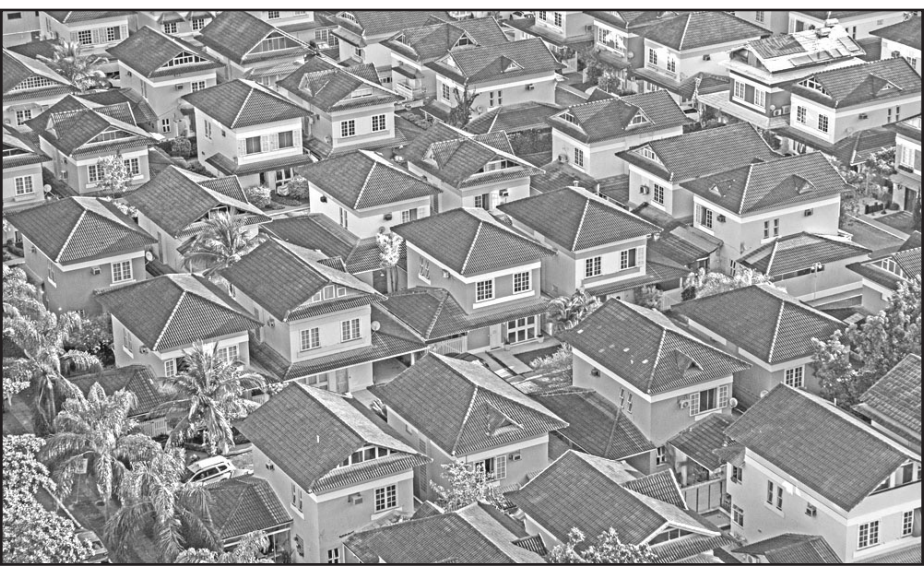


PHOTO BY BRENO ASSIS

# Reversion from page 1

from the public. Thus, the board has emerged with a different position than when we originally began.

"To the residents of Martinsville and Henry County, know that we not only listened to you, but we heard you. Henry County will continue to fight the city's efforts to jam through this unenforceable agreement, not because the city is our enemy, but because it is the right thing to do," Adams said.

Upon the official notice of Martinsville's intent to revert to a town, the county began negotiations to seek a voluntary settlement agreement with the city. There is a four-step process for any voluntary settlement agreement to be considered binding and enforceable, the county release stated.

"First, the two parties must negotiate an agreement that they believe is in the best interest of their respective constituencies. This step was completed when the city and county adopted resolutions on Aug. 24, 2021, to approve the Voluntary Settlement Agreement (VSA).

"Next, the agreement must be presented to the Commission on Local Government (COLG) for it to conduct a hearing and issues a report with its own findings. The COLG conducted hearings on Sept. 7 and 8, 2021. A public hearing was part of this process. The COLG issued its final report on Oct. 15, 2021. In the report, the COLG noted that citizens were concerned about the lack of transparency with the process and the lack of involvement of the two school systems," the release stated.

"It was expressly stated that 'citizens voiced concerns over the impact reversion would have on Black students who would have to be integrated into county schools, community engagement, and the impact on the city's voting power when included in the county' government and school board districts, the release stated.

"The third step in the process is the two localities must adopt an ordinance approving the (agreement) VSA. Once the ordinance has been adopted, the parties would petition an appropriate circuit court to affirm the proposed settlement. The Virginia Supreme Court would then appoint a special court to hear the case. This would trigger the fourth step where the special court either affirms or denies the agreement, giving it 'full force and effect,' the release stated.

The county did not complete the third step in the process. Before passing an ordinance that would impanel the special court, the county held its own public hearing, and residents voiced similar concerns noted by the COLG. Being swayed by these concerns, the supervisors voted to reject the VSA ordinance. This means the VSA was never submitted to or affirmed by a special court, which has the sole power of making the VSA binding and enforceable.

On December 20, 2021, the city filed a Claim for Arbitration with The McCammon Group, Ltd., citing provisions within a previously approved Memorandum of Understanding and the VSA as binding, even though neither was affirmed by the special court.

Through the declaratory judgment, the county intends to stop "the promulgation of this baseless claim," the release stated. It also will continue to fight any effort by the city to compel the county "into an agreement that runs contrary to the wishes of its constituents," the release stated.

Adams, of the Blackberry District, and Tommy Slaughter, of the Reed Creek District, previously voted against a motion to reject the VSA. Both voted in favor of filing the complaint.

Adams said he sees no contradiction in his votes. Once the board decides on a course of action (such as rejecting the VSA), regardless of how individual board members voted, it is time for supervisors to put personal feelings aside and support the decision made by the entire board.

"This is how we as a board, in the same concept as a team, move forward together," he said.

City Attorney and Assistant City Manager Eric Monday said that he found out about the board's action via local news media the next morning, though, as of press time, had not seen the actual complaint so could not respond specifically.

Generally, however, Monday said, "we already told them 'See you in court,' so I suspect we'll be haggling over this for a while."

Stephen Piegrass, of Troutman Pepper, who is representing the city in reversion proceedings, said that, though he also had yet to see the complaint and did not know the specifics of the county's argument, "we would not have filed this claim in arbitration if we didn't believe that that's exactly where this claim needs to be. I think both agreements make that very clear."

Both the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and the VSA include arbitration clauses specifying the steps and requirements for disputes that may arise, according to Piegrass, who added the city's action was consistent with both agreements, which were both signed by city and county officials.

"The VSA was also signed by the county," Piegrass said. "In the VSA, they said they would be passing the ordinance, and they failed to do that, but both (documents) have the county's signature all over them."

Piegrass noted the county previously passed a resolution that it would vote favorably for the VSA.

"They have said time and time again that they were going to abide by their agreement, and it was only in the very last minute that they changed position," he said.

# OBITUARIES

## Carl Frances Barksdale

Carl Frances Barksdale, 83, of Martinsville, VA passed away on Wednesday, December 29, 2021. She was born on April 11, 1938, to the late John R. Barksdale and Gracie Stockton Barksdale. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her sister, Dorothy M. Barksdale; brothers, Charlie Barksdale, John Barksdale, Jr., and Joe Robert Barksdale; and nephew, Troy Barksdale.



met a stranger, always loved her family, and always had a smile on her face.

She is survived by her sister, Thelma Ann Divens of Martinsville, VA; a very special niece, Lisa Gears of Collinsville, VA; and two nephews, James Divens, Jr. of Martinsville, VA and Sammy Mullins of Roanoke, VA.

Mrs. Barksdale loved to cook, never

Norris Funeral Services, Martinsville, VA is serving the Barksdale family. Online condolences may be made at [norrisfuneral.com](http://norrisfuneral.com).

## James Alfred Stinnett

James Alfred Stinnett, 87, of Figsboro, VA, passed away peacefully into his eternal home on Tuesday, December 28, 2021. He was born on February 28, 1934, in Covington, VA to the late Ashby and Eva Stinnett. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his first wife of 52 years, and the mother of his children, Shirley Woodzell Stinnett; two brothers, Gene Stinnett and Robert Stinnett; five sisters, Frances Vick, Lucille Scott, Evelyn Ratcliff, Phyllis Shelton, and Julia Tumbleston; and one grandson, James Phillip Byrd.



Stinnett, Jessica Philpott, Josh Byrd, Sara Philpott Wade, Chris Sites, and Hunter Sites; and nine great-grandchildren.

Mr. Stinnett graduated from Covington High School and served in the U.S. Army in Ft. Bliss, TX. He worked at the Newport News Shipyard before going to work at Westvaco in Covington, where he retired after nearly 40 years of service.

He was an avid outdoorsman, loving hunt, fish, and golf. He was known for his talent and love for music. He played guitar and wrote many songs.

Mr. Stinnett loved his Lord, loved his family, and loved his church, Trinity Baptist Church in Snow Creek where he served as a Deacon for many years.

A memorial service was held on Sunday, January 2, 2022, at Trinity Baptist Church. Pastor Glen Stinnett and Lennie Stinnett officiated.

Norris Funeral Services, Martinsville, VA is serving the Stinnett family. Online condolences may be made at [norrisfuneral.com](http://norrisfuneral.com).

## Jacqueline (Jacque) Osborne Stone

"When we lose someone we love, we must learn not to live without them but to live with the love they left behind," ~ Snoopy



she was 82 years old, and never wanted to retire.

In Clinton, Jacque attended, and was baptized at Rowan Baptist Church. When she married Elwood, she became a member of Pocahontas Bassett Baptist Church. She often sent her famous pound cake to the gatherings there. Jacque loved God and had a strong prayer relationship with

Jacqueline (Jacque) Osborne Stone, age 88, of Bassett Virginia passed away on December 30, 2021. Jacque was born on July 7, 1933, to the late Wilson Buchanan Osborne and the late Ivan Beatrice Bullock Osborne. She was married to the late Elwood Norman Stone for 66 years. She is survived by her daughter Kimberly Stone Glass (Robert) of Ruckersville, Virginia.

Jacque is also survived by her sisters Nancy Osborne Martin (the late Bobby), Patsy Osborne, and sister-in-law, Peggy Jordan (the late Frank). She has three grandchildren: Matthew Helms of Richmond, Virginia; Ashton Bratton (Drew) of Roanoke, Virginia, and Sarah Helms-Smith of Richmond, Virginia. She has four great-grandchildren: Kyle Bratton, Chase Bratton, Alaina Bratton, and Amara Salavaggi. Nieces: Jane Osborne Ramsey (Spencer), Sandra Greeson (Tim), Carol Ellis (Brian), Michelle Campbell (the late Scott). Nephews: Lee Martin (Amy), Harold Martin (Lela), and Randy Martin (Barbara). Jacque has many great nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her parents, the late Wilson Buchanan Osborne and the late Ivan Beatrice Bullock Osborne, her brother Billy Osborne (the late Mary Jane) and sister-in-law, Betty Carol Martin (the late Harold).

Jacque was the 1952 senior class treasurer at Clinton High School in Clinton, North Carolina. Upon graduation, she attended and graduated from Perry Business School. She became an executive secretary for Bassett Furniture Industries for 35 years. Later, she became a buyer for Lwood's Inc, and an executive administrator for the Anne S. Chatham Company. She worked full-time until

him.

Jacque is best known for acts of kindness, supportive nature, and spreading love to others. No words can describe how intense these acts were demonstrated. She was the matriarch of her family and made sure that she had annual holiday get-togethers. She loved to give gifts to others and shopped for special items that they would cherish.

Jacque loved to bowl and play bridge and cherished each and every member of her clubs. She even bowled in a league until she was 83 years old.

If you knew Jacque, you would know of her love for Myrtle Beach, S.C., and her home there. She was blessed with great South Carolina neighbors with whom she maintained friendships until the end of her life.

The family requests donations be made in her memory to the Bassett Rescue Squad or the Bassett Fire Department.

A visitation will be held from 12 to 1 p.m. on Friday, January 7, 2022, at Pocahontas Bassett Baptist Church. The funeral begins at 1 p.m., officiated by Reverend Susan Spangenberg. Entombment will be in Henry Memorial Park.

Jacque's family would like to thank the Bassett community and the Pocahontas Bassett Baptist Church family for the extended acts of love and kindness during her final years.

Collins Funeral Home in Bassett is serving the Stone Family. To express online condolences, please visit [www.collinsmckeebassett.com](http://www.collinsmckeebassett.com).

# U.S. farmers have until Jan. 24 to respond to USDA survey

In preparation for the 2022 Census of Agriculture, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service is now mailing the National Agricultural Classification Survey to American farmers.

The survey, which is expected to reach over 1 million agricultural producers, will ask recipients if

they are involved in agricultural activities, and for basic information about their farms. The deadline to respond to the survey is Jan. 24.

"NACS plays an integral role in getting a complete count of U.S. agriculture," said Barbara Rater, NASS census and survey division director. "It is one of the most important early steps to determine who should receive next year's Census of Agriculture questionnaire. Every response to NACS is vital."

Since 1974, USDA has defined a farm as any place where \$1,000 or more in agricultural products are produced, or sold throughout a calendar year. Rater explained the defini-

tion is not determined by size, type or location, and examples of modern farms can range from an urban rooftop garden to large fields of corn.

"Our mission is to give every U.S. producer the opportunity to share their voice in the ag census," she said.

A response to the NACS is required by law for all recipients, even if they are not active farmers or ranchers. The questionnaire may be completed online or by mail.

Data collection for the 2022 Census of Agriculture will formally begin in November 2022. To learn more about NACS and the Census of Agriculture, visit [nass.usda.gov/AgCensus](http://nass.usda.gov/AgCensus).

**CROSSWORD ANSWERS**

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Submit your community news and photos to [newsreporter@theenterprise.net](mailto:newsreporter@theenterprise.net)

# Free COVID-19 testing event to be held in Danville

The Virginia Department of Health's Pittsylvania-Danville Health District will offer free COVID-19 testing on Tuesday, January 18, from 3 to 5 p.m. inside the Danville Farmers' Market at 629 Craghead St. Appointments are not necessary; the first 100 individuals will be eligible to be tested at no cost.

The polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test is a proven test for detecting active infection. PCR may also reveal fragments even after the virus appears to be gone. The test is performed by using a swab to collect a respiratory specimen with results expected to be available one to three days following the test.

"Testing is another significant tool we are deploying to identify COVID-19 among those who may be displaying symptoms. The goal is to prevent further spread of the virus and to help keep our healthcare systems from being overwhelmed," said Director of Pittsylvania-Danville and Southside Health Districts Scott J. Spillmann, MD, MPH. "Omicron is proving to be very transmissible. Early studies show the variant is about 2.5-times more contagious and it can replicate at a rate 70 times more quickly than Delta. It is an accelerated new phase of the disease, which makes testing even more important."

Testing is available to all ages. However, a parent or guardian must accompany anyone under 18 years old.

To protect yourself and healthcare workers, wear a cloth face covering or mask. Keep at least six feet of distance between yourself and others at all times. Be sure to tell the testing providers if you have any symptoms of COVID-19, including fever, deep cough or shortness of breath, or believe that you may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19.

The VDH recommends that the fol-

lowing be tested for COVID-19:

- Those with symptoms or signs of COVID-19, regardless of vaccination status.

- Those who have had close contact with someone known or suspected to have COVID-19.

- o Fully vaccinated people should be tested three to five days following a known exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, even if you don't have symptoms.

- o People who are not fully vaccinated should be tested immediately after an exposure, and again five to seven days following exposure if the first test is negative.

- Those who participate in activities that are higher risk for COVID-19 exposure, for instance travel, attending large events where social distancing is not possible, or being in crowded indoor settings.

- Those who have been referred for COVID-19 testing by their healthcare provider or the health department.

- Those who plan to travel or who have recently returned from travel with some exceptions for fully vaccinated people.

- Those who are not fully vaccinated and who plan to visit people at high risk of developing severe COVID-19.

For more information about this event, call (434) 713-5199 or (434) 766-9800. For questions about COVID-19 testing or a list of testing locations, visit the VDH website or call 877-VAX-IN-VA (877-829-4682), Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

For those still needing a COVID-19 vaccine, visit or call 1-877-VAX-IN-VA (877-829-4682, TTY users call 7-1-1). English- and Spanish-speaking operators are available. Translation services also are available in more than 100 languages.

# Atkins to lead state Department of Education

Gov. Ralph Northam has named Rosa Atkins as acting superintendent of public instruction to replace James Lane, who served as the leader of the Virginia Department of Education from June 2018 to January 2022.

Atkins joined the Virginia Department of Education in July as assistant superintendent for talent acquisition and development before being appointed the first assistant superintendent for diversity, equity and inclusion a few months later.

"In Charlottesville, Dr. Atkins was a true pioneer as she engaged her community in courageous conversations and implemented strategic initiatives to expand opportunities for all students and eliminate disparities," said Northam. "Throughout her career, she has made an amazing impact on public school students in Virginia, is extremely well respected by her colleagues across the commonwealth, and I know she will be able to step in and provide a seamless transition in leadership for the Virginia Department of Education."

Atkins served as superintendent of Charlottesville Public Schools for 15 years before retiring in May. As the city's second-longest serving superintendent, Atkins led the division's successful efforts to raise graduation rates, reduce dropout rates and expand opportunities for all

students.

"It is an honor to be appointed to this position and be able to provide continuity in leadership to Virginia's school divisions," Atkins said. "I look forward to working in partnership with all of our divisions to ensure that every student experiences high-quality instruction based on rigorous curriculum, and that all of our teachers and school leaders are equipped to provide those experiences."

In addition to serving as superintendent in Charlottesville, Atkins served as assistant superintendent in Caroline County, director of instruction in Richmond and director of leadership development in Henrico County, where she began her career in education, serving first as a special education teacher, and then as an assistant principal and principal.

Atkins is a past president of both the Urban Superintendents Association of America and the Virginia Association of School Superintendents, which named her as the Virginia Superintendent of the Year for 2011.

Atkins earned a bachelor's and master's degrees in special education, and a master's degree in administration and supervision from Virginia State University, and a doctorate in educational leadership and policy studies from Virginia Tech.

# Registration is now open for CyberStart America Competition

The Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA) and the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) are announcing the Commonwealth of Virginia's participation in the 2021-2022 CyberStart America competition. This is in partnership with the National Cyber Scholarship Foundation (NCSF) and the SANS Institute.

The CyberStart America competition offers students in grades nine through 12 free access to CyberStart, an immersive cybersecurity training game. Students can play the game to learn more about cybersecurity and build skills that could prepare them for a career in technology. They may also qualify for cyber training scholarships worth approximately \$3,000. Over 30,000 students participated in the competition last year, and NCSF awarded more than \$4 million in scholarships and advanced training.

"Stewardship of our Commonwealth's cyber health is a top priority for our team," said Virginia's Chief Information Officer Nelson Moe. "We're proud to partner with VDOE, NCSF and the SANS Institute to provide a productive, relatable and enjoyable way for Virginia students to learn about the critical field of cybersecurity."

"The expansion of online learning has

heightened awareness among students of the importance of cybersecurity," said Superintendent of Public Instruction James Lane. "The CyberStart America competition provides a great opportunity for students to learn more about cybersecurity and the many career opportunities available in this rapidly growing field."

"This competition is a great opportunity to provide Virginia students hands-on experience with real-world cybersecurity tasks and simulations," said Virginia's Chief Information Security Officer Michael Watson. "Cybersecurity is a dynamic industry that will continue to expand in the future, and we are committed to growing the next generation of cyber experts and professionals."

Registration for CyberStart America is underway. Students can play CyberStart until Wednesday, April 27, 2022. Students who have a high score in CyberStart will then be invited to apply for a scholarship, with scholarship winners being announced in early June 2022.

Visit the CyberStart America website at <https://www.cyberstartamerica.org/> for more information about the competition. For more information on the National Cyber Scholarship Foundation, visit <https://www.nationalcyberscholarship.org/>.

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To place a classified ad or for more information call (276) 694-3101.

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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 public hearing has been scheduled for **January 26, 2022 at 1:00 p.m.** in the Sumnerlin Meeting Room of the County Administration Building, Kings Mountain Rd., Collinsville, Virginia. The purpose of this public hearing is to receive citizen input into the possible issuance of a Special Use Permit for the following case:

### Case S-22-01 Rocky Ford Solar Energy, LLC

A request for a Special Use Permit has been received under Section 21-1801 through 21-1808; and 21-302 of the Zoning Ordinance to allow for the construction of a Large Scale Solar Energy Facility. The properties are located generally in the north east vicinity of Mountain Valley Road and Dees Road, and along Summerset Drive and Rufus Road. The proposal is to develop a 90MW facility covering approximately 378-acres, in the Iriswood District and shown on Tax Maps 46.1/4.7A;45.3/79.79A; 34.7/24.25,25A,26; 46.1(1)/7X; and 46.1/5. The properties are zoned Agricultural District A-1.

The application for this request 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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In addition to Henry County Enterprise, which covers Martinsville and Henry County, our other Virginia publications include: The Enterprise (which covers Patrick County/Stuart - including Meadows of Dan and other communities near the Blue Ridge Parkway); Salem Times Register; Fincastle Herald; New Castle Record; News Messenger; News Journal; Vinton Messenger.

Our publications in West Virginia are: Pocahontas Times; Parsons Advocate; Calhoun Chronicle; Clay County Free Press; Shinnston News; Harrison County Journal, and our flagship paper, Mountain Messenger.

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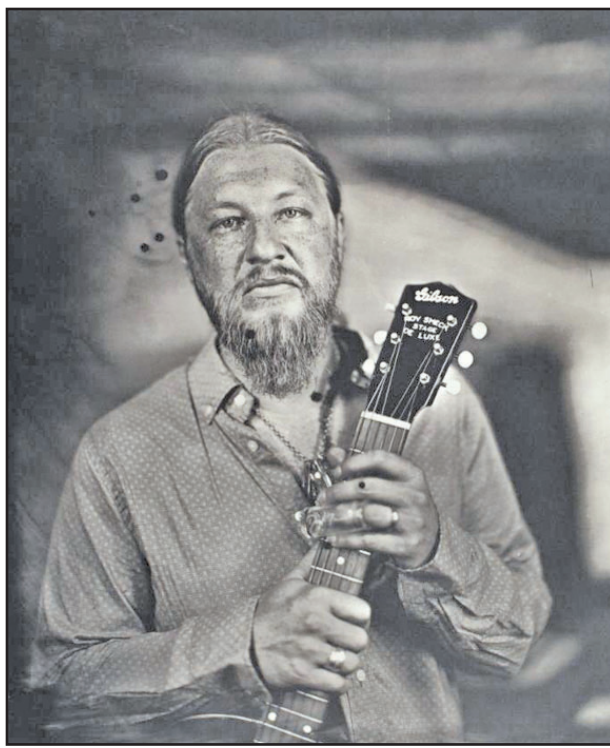
# New exhibits, opening reception set for Jan. 21

Join Piedmont Arts for an opening reception in honor of the museum's new exhibits on Friday, January 21, from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at the museum. Our Living Past: Platinum Portraits of Southern Music Makers is a collection of portraits and still life work by photographer Timothy Duffy. For more than 35 years, Duffy has forged a unique vision immortalizing Southern musical heroes and the world in which they live.

The founder of Music Maker Foundation — a non-profit that preserves the musical traditions of the South by directly supporting the musicians who make it — Duffy traveled the South to capture this compelling collection of 25 wet-plate collodion photographs, which were printed with the platinum/palladium process. Our Living Past includes portraits ranging from gui-

tar virtuoso and Allman Brothers Band member Derek Trucks and legendary bluesman Taj Mahal to lesser-known blues and soul artists, as well as images of instruments, like former Carolina Chocolate Drops member Dom Flemons' circa 1920 banjo, "Big Head Joe."

Dear B.J.: Postcards from the Pandemic is a creative non-fiction interpretation of life in Appalachia during the COVID-19 pandemic, as imagined by artist L.S. King through intimate postcard-sized images and written correspondence. Each card features a black-and-white photograph with a backside written to a mysterious B.J. and signed by "ME." Through these vagaries, King invites the viewer into a shared world. Perhaps you wonder who B.J. is, or maybe you know. Perhaps you relate to the "ME," who signed the cards. And



**Our Living Past: Platinum Portraits of Southern Music Makers, Derek Trucks, Guitar Virtuoso, Jacksonville, FL, 2015, Timothy Duffy.**



**Our Living Past: Platinum Portraits of Southern Music Makers, Ironing Board Sam, Ninth Wonder of the World, Hillsborough, NC, 2015, Timothy Duffy.**

as you think about it all, perhaps you overlay King's visual narrative over your own.

Tara Compton, featuring work by the local abstract painter, sculptor and jewelry designer will be on display in

the Lynwood Artists Gallery.

The opening reception is free and open to the public. Complimentary wine and light refreshments will be served. Limited capacity. RSVP required by January 18, to (276)

632-3221 or online at PiedmontArts.org.

Exhibits will be on display January 22 – March 12. Exhibit admission is always free.

Exhibits and reception sponsored by Gael and Smith Chaney, Cindy

and Steve Edgerton, Marty Gardner, Jennifer Reis and Pete Mannen, Barbara and Guy Stanley, The Martinsville Graduate Kappa Delta Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and Lynwood Artists.

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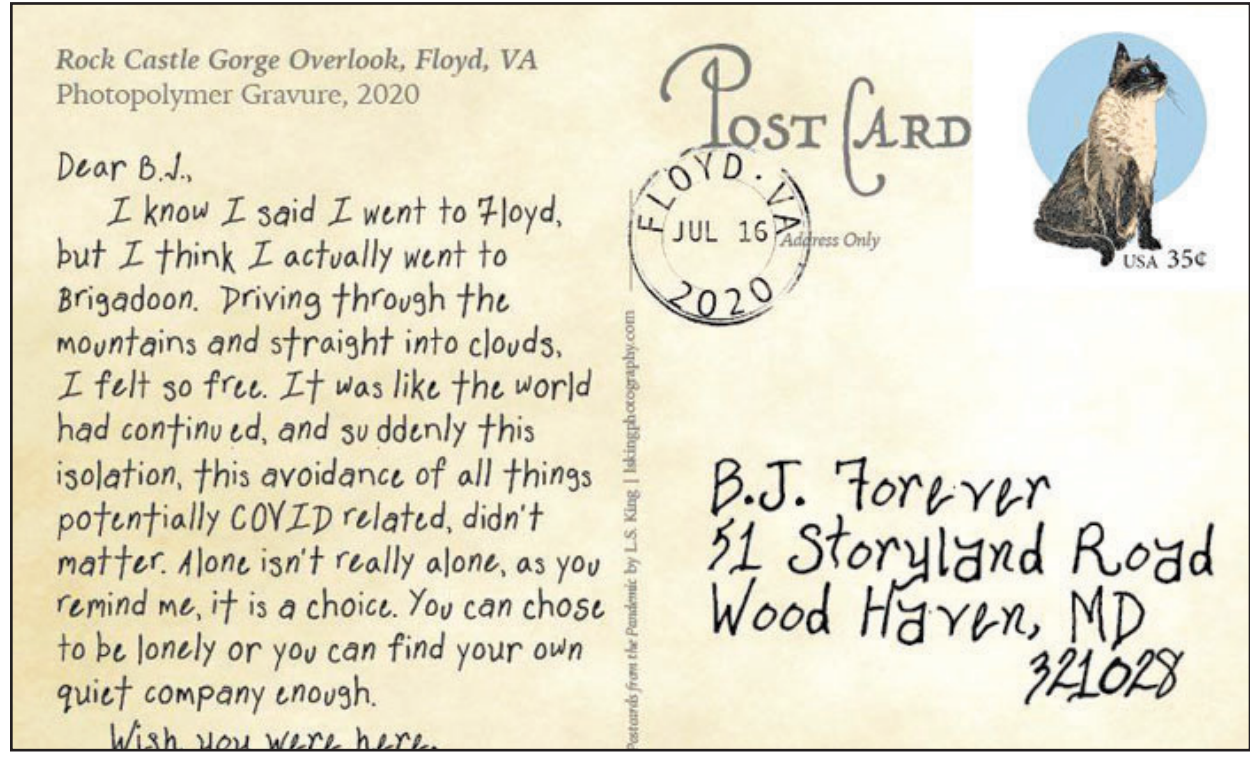
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Postcard from Dear B.J.: Postcards from the Pandemic by L.S. King.

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To find an appointment, visit [vaccinate.virginia.gov](https://vaccinate.virginia.gov) or call **877-VAX-IN-VA (877-829-4682)**.

