

HENRY COUNTY ENTERPRISE

Saturday, July 9, 2022

(USPS-6)

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Dale Wagoner, who now is the County Administrator and General Manager of the Henry County PSA is prepared to tackle the challenges ahead. He said, "I feel like the county ... got me ready—my coworkers, my supervisor, the citizens, the elected officials, they all got me ready for this. They challenged me along the way, corrected me when I needed to be corrected. I feel like they have gotten me ready for what's coming."

Changing of the guard: Wagoner prepared to continue service

Callie Hietala
Staff writer

The middle school student once tagged as "future mayor of Bassett" by his 7th grade teacher now holds the top two posts in Henry County. Dale Wagoner assumed the dual positions of County Administrator and General Manager of the Public Service Authority (PSA) on July 1, following the retirement of Tim Hall. Wagoner's roots run deep in Henry County. He has spent his life in Henry County—he was born in the county, lives in the county, and has served it

and its residents throughout his professional career.

Just as he is dedicated to the county, he is the first to admit that the county has given much to him along the way.

Days before Wagoner was slated to move into his new positions, he reflected on his history with Henry County, the place to which he owes and has given so much.

Wagoner grew up in Bassett, where his mother still lives, in his childhood home on the river.

"I had a special pair of shoes I wore to play in the river," he recalled with a smile.

See **Wagoner**, page 9



Dan River Basin Association (DRBA) Education Outreach Manager Krista Hodges, Martinsville Mayor Kathy Lawson, and Rotarians Jim McMillan, Trippi Penn, Joe Keiper, John Scott, show off the new storm drain markers that will be placed on drains around Martinsville. The markers are the final phase of the Inspire Clean Water project, a partnership between DRBA and local Rotary clubs to educate people about storm drain pollution.

DRBA and Rotary partner to inspire clean water

Callie Hietala
Staff writer

On Thursday, June 30, Martinsville Mayor Kathy Lawson presided over the dedication of permanent storm drain markers in Uptown. This project, funded by the Martinsville Uptown Rotary Club, the Rotary Club of Martinsville, and the Henry County Rotary Club in partnership with the Dan River Basin

Association (DRBA) was initiated to bring awareness to the need to protect the water in our local streams and creeks in Uptown Martinsville as they all drain into the Smith River. This was the third and final event of the Inspire Clean Water project supported by Rotary.

"This project will leave a lasting legacy to inspire clean water and environmental protection in

See **Clean Water**, page 9

Mustangs honor veterans on Independence Day

Callie Hietala
Staff writer

On a Fourth of July holiday marked by a dearth of public observances, the Martinsville Mustangs stepped up to the plate to provide the community with an Independence Day celebration worthy of the sport best-known as America's favorite pastime.

The organization opened its Fourth of July game against the Tri-City Chili Peppers with a tribute to local World War II veterans, who took the field before the game.

The first pitch was thrown by U.S. Navy veteran Martin Harris, who served in New Guinea and the South Pacific during the war. He was joined on the field by Leonard Hairston, who served in the U.S. Navy in the Mediterranean Sea and is set to turn 100-years old next month, and by John McCain, a veteran of the U.S. Army who served in



World War II veteran Martin Harris threw out the first pitch at the Martinsville Mustangs game against the Tri-City Chili Peppers on Monday, July 4. Harris was one of three WWII veterans honored by the Mustangs during its Independence Day Celebration. (Courtesy of Danny Turner)

England, France, Belgium, and Germany during the war.

The game ball was flown in via helicopter, delivered by crew members from AirLife Virginia, based at the Blue Ridge Regional

Airport. The low hum of its rotors grew louder and louder as the helicopter approached. Kids and adults alike could be seen pointing and smiling as

it made its final descent, landing in the outfield.

The AirLife crew delivered the game balls, taking time to shake hands and speak to each of the

See **Mustangs Honor Veterans**, page 6

Community Storehouse comes 'home' to Martinsville

Callie Hietala
Staff writer

The Community Storehouse has returned to Martinsville.

The 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, which provides food to those in need funded in part through the operation of a thrift shop, has moved from its Ridgeway location and taken up residence in the former Leggett building at 128 East Church Street, Martinsville. Community Storehouse staff, volunteers, and eager shoppers celebrated the move with a ribbon cutting July 1.

Community Storehouse Executive Director Travis Adkins said the move was a homecoming of sorts for the 21-year-old organization.

"We started out right up the street on Cleveland Avenue in the old Pannill Knitting building," he said. "That's when we expanded our store and saw that we could actually reduce waste with people giving us stuff they don't want, turning it into money" and using that money to support the organization.

"We needed a storefront, so that's when we moved to Ridgeway," Adkins explained. "We outgrew that, and now we're back Uptown."

He said the organization is leasing the 25,000 square-foot space because the size, cost, and everything else about the building "benefits the Storehouse to be able to do more for the community."

See **Storehouse**, page 10



The first shoppers file in to the Community Storehouse at its new location in Uptown Martinsville. The Storehouse operates a thrift shop which helps fund its central mission—to provide food to those in need, reduce food waste, and educate people about nutrition.



Items currently available at the Community Storehouse include a wide selection of children's clothing.

BZA approves Ridgeway solar farm

Callie Hietala
Staff writer

The Henry County Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) unanimously (with one absent) approved a special use permit for a new, large-scale solar farm in Ridgeway at its June 29 meeting.

Shifting Sands Solar, LLC, a subsidiary of Energix, based in Arlington, VA, plans to construct an 18.8 megawatt facility on approximately 268-acres of property located on the east and west side of Old Sand Road, approximately .4-miles south of its intersection with Eggleston Falls Road in the Ridgeway District.

Of the 268-acres, 177 will be used for solar.

Director of Planning, Zoning, and Inspections Lee Clark noted that Shifting Sands included in its proposal plans to retain existing vegetation on the property to create a more robust vege-

tative buffer, erecting a berm around the property to help with sound deflection and also using sound curtains during construction.

Sound created during the construction phase has been a concern brought up numerous times during public hearings held by the BZA about other solar proj-

See **Solar Farm**, page 4



Shifting Sands Solar Project Manager Eliana Ginis told the BZA that the developer estimates the solar project will contribute approximately \$3.3 million in machinery and tools tax revenues over the life of the project as well as creating around 70 well-paying jobs during the construction phase.

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UPDATES**



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)

Saturday, July 9

Come learn all about canning at the Spencer-Penn Centre (475 Spencer Penn Road, Spencer) with instructor Melanie Barrow. More people than ever are growing their own food at home. This hands-on preservation workshop will teach you how to safely preserve your fresh foods for year-round enjoyment using proper pressure canning and boiling water bath techniques. You'll learn the science behind these techniques and receive step by step guidance on how to do them at home. All supplies are provided. \$15 for members and \$20 for non-members. Call the Centre to register by Friday July 1 at (276) 957-5757.

Sunday, July 10 through Friday, July 15 Fort Trial Baptist Church will hold a Vacation Bible School. School will be held from 6:15-8 p.m. for children ages 2-5, from 6:15-8:30 p.m. for grades K-12, and adult sessions will begin at 7 p.m. Each night will have a different emphasis. For more information or to register, visit www.forttrialbaptist.com/events.

Monday, July 11

The Patrick & Henry Community College Board Budget & Finance Committee will meet at 11 a.m. in Room 124 in the Frith Economic Development Center. This is a public meeting, but the committees will not receive public comment.

The Patrick & Henry Community College Board will meet at 12:30 p.m. in the Hooker Exhibit Hall, Frith Economic Development Center. This is a public meeting, but the Board will not receive public comment.

Monday, July 11 through Friday, July 29

Patrick & Henry Community College and Verizon are preparing the next generation for a future filled with opportunities with the Verizon Innovative Learning STEM Achievers program— an engaging, hands-on program developed to enrich learning through design thinking, 3D printing, augmented reality, social entrepreneurship and mentorship. This program creates a more diverse pipeline for future careers in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields; no prior knowledge or experience is required. The program is for rising 6th-8th-grade students and is held Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. Lunch and transportation are provided. To register, visit <https://bit.ly/STEMAchievers>. For more information, contact Amy Reed at areed@patrickhenry.edu or 276-656-5461.

Tuesday, July 12

Join Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC) for a Workforce Programs Open House beginning at 6 p.m. in the Frith Exhibit Hall on the P&HCC campus. At this free informational session, learn about the short-term workforce training programs offered at the college and the funding assistance available. For more

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

Friday, July 15

Henry County Parks and Recreation invites you to enjoy the movie "Space Jam: A New Legacy" at Jack Dalton Park! Admission is free for all. Drinks, snacks, and candy will be available for purchase. The movie begins at 8:55 p.m.

Thursday, July 14

Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC) will host a continuing education for gas fitter course from 5-6 p.m. Journeymen, master plumbers, electricians, HVAC mechanics, and gas fitters are required by the Virginia Board of Contractors to take a pre-determined number of continuing education hours specific to their trade. This course covers code changes, general requirements, impacts on the job, and special equipment included in the codes. The cost for the course is \$65. Pre-registration is required. To register or learn more, call (276) 656-0260 or visit ph.augusoft.net.

Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC) will host a continuing education for plumber course from 6-9 p.m. Journeymen, master plumbers, electricians, HVAC mechanics, and gas fitters are required by the Virginia Board of Contractors to take a pre-determined number of continuing education hours specific to their trade. This course covers code changes, general requirements, impacts on the job, and special equipment included in the codes. The cost for the course is \$125. Pre-registration is required. To register or learn more, call (276) 656-0260 or visit ph.augusoft.net.

Friday, July 15

Henry County Parks and recreation hosts Movies in the Park at Jack Dalton Park (3300 Kings Mountain Road, Collinsville). Friday night's movie is Space Jam: A New Legacy. Music and games begin at 7:30 p.m. and the movie begins at 8:55. Drinks, candy, and snacks are available for purchase!

Don't miss the 2022 TGIF Concert Series in Uptown Martinsville! Located in the Bridge Street parking lot at 65 West Main Street, the Rotary Clubs of Martinsville and Henry County present an evening of music with The Pizzaz Band. The show begins at 7 p.m.

Saturday, July 16

The Bassett Highway 57 Cruise In will take place in downtown Bassett from 3-7 p.m. All makes and models are welcome! Admission is free.

Patrick & Henry Community College will host a Basic Contractor Licensing class from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The cost of the course is \$189 and pre-registration is required. To register or to learn more information, visit ph.augusoft.net or call (276) 656-0260.

Thursday, July 21

Uptown Partnership presents Third Thursdays in Uptown in collaboration with the Virginia Museum of Natural History. The events will be held in the

Franklin Street/Depot Street parking lot in Martinsville. Food trucks will be on-site with entertainment from DJ What and beer sales from Mountain Valley Brewing from 5-9 p.m. This event is free and open to the public.

Piedmont Arts (215 Starling Avenue, Martinsville) hosts Painting with Kimberly from 6-8 p.m. with instructor Kimberly Boyd. Bring your friends, some snacks, and your favorite wine for a fun night out! This class is intended for students ages 18 and up. Pre-registration is required. To register or learn more information, call (276) 632-3221 or visit PiedmontArts.org.

Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC) will host a continuing education for electrician course from 6-9 p.m. Journeymen, master plumbers, electricians, HVAC mechanics, and gas fitters are required by the Virginia Board of Contractors to take a pre-determined number of continuing education hours specific to their trade. This course covers code changes, general requirements, impacts on the job, and special equipment included in the codes. The cost for the course is \$125. Pre-registration is required. To register or learn more, call (276) 656-0260 or visit ph.augusoft.net.

Friday, July 22-Saturday, July 23

Dino Fest returns to The Virginia Museum of Natural History (21 Starling Avenue, Martinsville)! The event features life-size dinosaur cast skeletons & skulls, a wide variety of dinosaur fossils, dino-themed games & crafts, and all of the festivities you'd expect at a VMNH Science Festival! Dino Fest takes place from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For more information, visit www.vmnh.net.

Saturday, July 23 and Sunday, July 24

TheatreWorks Community Players will hold auditions for the drama "12 Angry Jurors" Saturday from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. and Sunday from 2-4 p.m. Auditions will be held at the Black Box theatre at 44 Franklin Street, Martinsville. The play requires a mixed cast of 13 men and women, all adults (over 18-years old.) Show dates are Sept. 8-11 and 15-17. Those auditioning must be available for all show dates. All cast and crew members must be completely vaccinated for COVID-19. For more information, visit www.twcp.net.

Sunday, July 24

The Spencer-Penn Centre (475 Spencer-Penn Road, Spencer) hosts a barn quilt class from 1-5 p.m. Price depends on the size of your barn quilt and all supplies are provided. Registration (with payment) is due July 15. For more information or to register, call (276) 957-5757.

Tuesday, July 26

Piedmont Arts hosts drawing studio lessons from 6-9 p.m. This is the first in a series of level-progression drawing classes and the focus will be on learning to see and draw. Classes in August will focus on intermediate drawing, perspective drawing, and drawing from start to finish. The cost is \$35 for members and \$40 for non-members. Pre-registration is required. To register or learn more information, call (276) 632-3221 or visit PiedmontArts.org.

Piedmont Arts (215 Starling Avenue, Martinsville) hosts Chix with Stix, self-guided knitting sessions, from 10:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. This session is geared toward knitters ages 12 and up. Bring your own supplies. Chix with Stix is free to members, \$5 for non-members.

Thursday, July 28

Piedmont Arts hosts drawing studio lessons from 9:30 a.m. until 12 p.m. This is the first in a series of level-progression drawing classes and the focus will be on learning to see and draw. Classes in August will focus on intermediate drawing, perspective drawing, and drawing from start to finish. The cost is \$35 for members and \$40 for non-members. Pre-registration is required. To register or learn more information, call (276) 632-3221 or visit PiedmontArts.org.

Friday, July 29

Piedmont Arts (215 Starling Avenue) hosts a youth drawing class, See It...Draw It!, from 10 a.m. until 12 p.m. for students ages 8 to 15. This is a basic skills class for youth with some drawing experience with instructor Ginnie Conaway. The cost is \$30 for members and \$35 for non-members. Pre-registration is required. To register or learn more information, call (276) 632-3221 or visit PiedmontArts.org.

Thursday, Aug. 4

Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC) will host a continuing education for HVAC technician course from 6-9 p.m. Journeymen, master plumbers, electricians, HVAC mechanics, and gas fit-

ters are required by the Virginia Board of Contractors to take a pre-determined number of continuing education hours specific to their trade. This course covers code changes, general requirements, impacts on the job, and special equipment included in the codes. The cost for the course is \$125. Pre-registration is required. To register or learn more, call (276) 656-0260 or visit ph.augusoft.net.

Piedmont Arts (215 Starling Avenue, Martinsville) will host a Bob Ross Painting Class from 9:30 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. with instructor Naomi Hodge-Muse. Learn Bob Ross' famous painting technique! The cost is \$75 for members and \$85 for non-members. This class is intended for students ages 14 and up. Advanced registration is required. For more information call (276) 632-3221 or visit PiedmontArts.org.

Friday, August 5

The Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society Hosts Uptown First Friday at the historic Henry County Courthouse from 6-9 p.m. Bring an instrument to play at open mic hosted by Kat and Dennis Calfee or just come enjoy an evening of music in Uptown. Food will be available to purchase and there will be a cash bar. The event is free and open to all.

Thursday, August 18

Uptown Partnership presents Third Thursdays in Uptown in collaboration with the Virginia Museum of Natural History. The events will be held in the Franklin Street/Depot Street parking lot in Martinsville. Food trucks will be on-site with entertainment from DJ What and beer sales from Mountain Valley Brewing from 5-9 p.m. This event is free and open to the public.

Friday, August 19

Henry County Parks and recreation hosts Movies in the Park at Jack Dalton Park (3300 Kings Mountain Road, Collinsville). Friday night's movie is Boss Baby: Family Business. Music and games begin at 7:30 p.m. and the movie begins at 8:55. Drinks, candy, and snacks are available for purchase!

Don't miss the 2022 TGIF Concert Series in Uptown Martinsville! Located in the Bridge Street parking lot at 65 West Main Street, the Rotary Clubs of Martinsville and Henry County present an evening of music with The Pizzaz Band. The show begins at 7 p.m.

ONGOING

The Martinsville Farmers' 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.

The Louise R. Lester Spay/Neuter Clinic is hosting wellness clinics by appointment only—no walk-ins are accepted. Call (276) 638-7297 to schedule your appointment.

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.

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 brl.lib.va.us.

The Fontaine Ruritan Club hosts Bingo every Tuesday at their headquarters (1903 Joseph Martin Highway, Martinsville.) Doors open at 5:30 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 (276) 647-9585.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

	1	2	3	4	5	6		7	8	9	10	11	12	
13								14						15
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65		66							67				68	
	69								70					

- CLUES ACROSS**
- 1. Plant of the mint family
 - 7. Hand tool
 - 13. Made of the color of gold
 - 14. A volume of several novels
 - 16. Type of degree
 - 17. Good job!
 - 19. Seventh tone in major scale
 - 20. Fevers
 - 22. One's mother
 - 23. Fertile desert spots
 - 25. Large integers
 - 26. Plate for Eucharist
 - 28. Tennis matches have them
 - 29. Peyton's little brother
 - 30. Monetary unit of N. Korea
 - 31. Head movement
 - 33. Twelve
 - 34. Renaissance musical instrument
 - 36. Behavior showing high moral standards
 - 38. Letter of the Hebrew alphabet
 - 40. Notes to be sung
 - 41. Women's garment
 - 43. Coarsely ground corn
 - 44. One point south of due east
 - 45. A way to deplete
 - 47. Rough, prickly covering of a seed
 - 48. LA hoopster, but not a Laker
 - 51. Hindquarters
 - 53. Franz van ____, German diplomat
 - 55. Liquid body substances
 - 56. Rhythmic patterns
 - 58. A beaver might build one
 - 59. Police officer's tool
 - 60. Indicates who you are
 - 61. Pinwheel
 - 64. Exist
 - 65. Ornamental molding
 - 67. Closes again
 - 69. Verses
 - 70. Come into view
- CLUES DOWN**
- 1. Short stick used as a weapon
 - 2. An alternative
 - 3. Laws
 - 4. Sense organs
 - 5. One from Utah
 - 6. Mariner
 - 7. People in charge of cattle
 - 8. Health insurance organization
 - 9. Ornamental box
 - 10. Forest-dwelling deer
 - 11. One quintillion bytes (abbr.)
 - 12. Atomic #71
 - 13. Become less intense
 - 15. Cowards
 - 18. Body ornament (slang)
 - 21. Applicable to all classes
 - 24. Multiplied by 6
 - 26. Afghanistan monetary unit
 - 27. Calendar month
 - 30. Cena and Lennon are two
 - 32. Monetary unit of Serbia
 - 35. First time on the market
 - 37. Georgia rockers
 - 38. Free from contamination
 - 39. Coastal region of Canada
 - 42. Clothing retailer
 - 43. It rises and sets
 - 46. Fathers
 - 47. Stain with mud
 - 49. Suitable for crops
 - 50. Feels concern for
 - 52. Orange-brown
 - 54. Buddy
 - 55. Late sportscaster Craig
 - 57. Used to align parts
 - 59. Wake up
 - 62. Solid water
 - 63. Semiprecious stone
 - 66. Atomic #45
 - 68. Top lawyer

SNAP households to receive emergency allotments in July

Virginia's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) will again release emergency allotments of benefits to eligible households this month. Benefits will be automatically loaded to recipients' Electronic Benefits Transfer cards on Saturday, July 16.

The emergency allotments raise existing SNAP households' monthly benefit amount to the maximum allowable based on household size as follows:

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS TEMPORARY MAXIMUM

MONTHLY ALLOTMENTS OCTOBER 1, 2021 TO SEPTEMBER 30, 2022

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 to access account information. For additional information regarding SNAP, how to apply, and other assistance programs, visit 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 to download the COVID-19 Virginia Resources mobile app.

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

Harvest Youth Board Funds Racquets for Reading



The Harvest Youth Board funded a \$5,000 grant to QuickStart Tennis of Central Virginia to bring the Racquets for Reading program to Martinsville and Henry County Public Schools.

Racquets for Reading, created in November 2020, prepares young children to read at or above grade level by third grade. QuickStart Tennis created the project after COVID-19 forced them to divert from their primary focus of teaching tennis and healthy living and explore new ways to reach kids during the pandemic.

QuickStart Coordinator & Founder, Lynda Harrill, as well

as vice-president of the organization, strives to provide the tools to improve reading levels city, county, and state-wide.

"Age-appropriate books in the home are the foundation for all learning," Harrill said. "All kids, especially disadvantaged and at-risk kids, need to have 'home libraries' so they can read and re-read books, form family bonds over reading and develop a lifelong love of reading."

As part of the program, teachers receive funding to purchase books from Scholastic to support their students' needs. Classrooms receive giveaways to foster the love of reading,

including mini reading rubber duckies, "I Love Reading" pins, and fruit-scented bookmarks and stickers.

The Harvest Youth Board is excited to partner with a program that will help achieve the goal of having every local child reading at their grade level.

"The Racquets for Reading program is one of my favorite grants, not only because it aligns perfectly with our goal of getting more books into the hands of the youth in our area, but also because those in charge of the program have a definite passion for helping our area, and that is something I find extremely important," said

Cristiano Di Maro, Harvest Youth Board member and Special Events Committee Chair.

Another Harvest Youth Board member and secretary, Camille Underwood, said, "The Racquets for Reading grant is a great opportunity that supports the youth of Martinsville and Henry County through reading initiatives. It aligns with our Books and Bunnies Event and helps create awareness and improvement of literacy rates of youth in our area. Reading is such an important skill and low literacy rates have such a big impact on children and their futures. Low literacy rates

can cause a child to not only fall behind but stay behind in school. The Harvest Youth Board wants to help boost reading skills and literacy rates in the community by ensuring access to books for all children."

The first round of giveaways is planned to arrive this September. The Harvest Youth Board is excited to get books in the hands of Martinsville-Henry County youth!

For more information about QuickStart Tennis, its programs or how to donate, visit quickstartcentral.org. To find out more about the Harvest Youth Board, visit harvestyouthboard.org.



Students in Martinsville and Henry County schools work with QuickStart Tennis of Central Virginia staff on reading skills through the Racquets for Reading program. The Harvest Youth Board recently funded a \$5,000 grant to support the program.

Hollins University announces Dean's List for Spring 2022

Naomi Hairston and Shyanne Helms, both of Bassett, were among students who earned Dean's List honors during the spring 2022 semester at Hollins University.

To attain this distinction, students must earn at least a 3.5 average on a 4.0 grading scale. Congratulations to these distinguished scholars on earning this

academic achievement.

Hollins is an independent liberal arts university offering undergraduate liberal arts education for women and selected graduate programs for women and men. The university features 29 undergraduate majors and 15 coed graduate and certificate programs. Hollins is also home to a nationally recognized creative

writing program; the innovative Batten Leadership Institute; and the Rutherford Center for Experiential Learning, which encompasses study abroad at an array of destinations around the world, domestic and international internships with top tier businesses and organizations, and undergraduate research opportunities in a range of fields.



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- State Graded Feeder Sale every Saturday

For directions to our facility, weekly updates of upcoming events and current sale prices, please visit our website: www.springlakeauctions.com.

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OPINION

Burn on, big river

When I was a little kid, one of my favorite treats was snow cream.

If you haven't had the pleasure, snow cream is a bowl of snow mixed with sweetened condensed milk and some sugar. My mom would routinely make snow cream whenever we had a heavy snow.

However, it had to be a heavy snow. I remember we would always wait until the flakes had been falling for a couple of hours before setting our bowls outside.

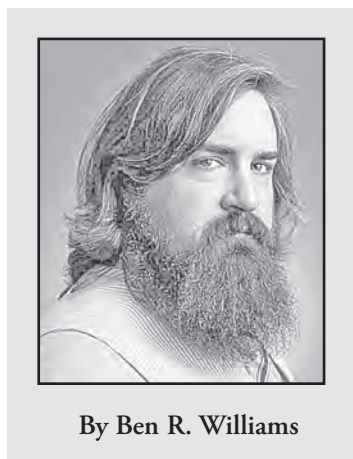
There was a good reason for this. I was born in 1984, and in the 1980s and early 1990s, the smokestacks at Bassett Furniture and Stanley Furniture were constantly billowing. The initial snowfall would have little black specks in it, carcinogenic soot that had fallen from the sky. That stuff would also strip the clear coat off your car.

While I'm too young to remember it, I've heard that you used to be able to tell what

color the textile mills were dyeing their fabrics without even setting foot inside the plants. All you had to do was look at the Smith River; the dye ran straight into the river and turned it every color in the rainbow.

Speaking of which, a family friend who had a shop along the Smith River once had to call a plumber because his toilet backed up. He told the plumber that he suspected his septic tank was full. The plumber came back with good news and bad news. The good news was, his septic tank was not full. The bad news was, he didn't have a septic tank, just a straight pipe that ran into the Smith River, and it was stopped up.

When you look at the Smith River today and see folks fishing for trout, it's hard to remember a time when it was nearly too toxic to support life. It's hard to remember the thick clouds of smoke that once poured from our local factories. It's hard to remember



By Ben R. Williams

what things were like before the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency picked up steam.

In a real sense, the EPA was born on June 22, 1969, when a train passing over the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland threw a spark into the water and the Cuyahoga caught fire. Catching fire is something we typically don't associate with large bodies of water, but the Cuyahoga had become a dumping ground for all manner of pollution from Cleveland's industrial district, and the thick film of oils coating the river generated fifty-foot flames that billowed into the air.

President Richard Nixon

signed the executive order that created the EPA in 1970. The agency's purpose is to create a cleaner, safer world by promoting and enforcing air and water quality and pollution mitigation, among other goals.

The most popular criticism of the EPA is that the standards it enforces, such as those outlined in the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act, are draconian and unrealistic measures that serve only to stifle free market capitalism. In fact — and believe me, it pains me to point this out — that exact criticism is perhaps best exemplified in my beloved "Ghostbusters," in which EPA Inspector Walter Peck shuts down the Ghostbusters' containment unit unleashing vengeful spirits on New York City.

I won't deny that the EPA can make industry expensive. It costs a lot of money to retrofit coal plants to meet new emissions regulations, or to cart away waste instead of just dumping it in the river.

But if you want a good example of what happens when there isn't an EPA in place, just look to China. Rampant indus-

trial expansion coupled with a lack of concern for the environment has caused horrible issues, such as cities covered in toxic gray clouds of pollution and huge sections of the surrounding ocean devoid of marine life. It's been estimated that nearly half a million Chinese citizens die prematurely each year due to heart disease and cancer brought on by exposure to pollutants.

But hey, at least we don't have to worry about that here in the U.S., right?

Yeah, funny thing about that. The Supreme Court just voted 6-3 to limit the EPA's power to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from power plants in the U.S.

In his 1972 song "Burn On" about the Cuyahoga River, Randy Newman wrote the following:

"Now the Lord can make you tumble/And the Lord can make you turn/And the Lord can make you overflow/But the Lord can't make you burn."

Randy was right; only we can set the rivers ablaze, and it looks like a significant portion of our country has voted us back into that exact situation.

Solar Farm from page 1

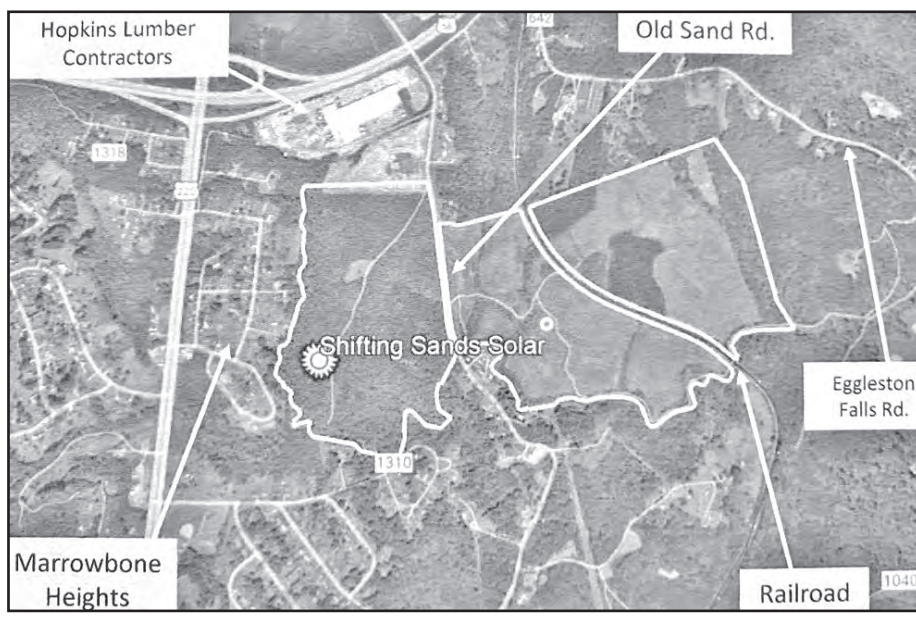


Brenda Sessor, who lives in the Marrowbone Heights neighborhood near where the solar farm will be constructed, expressed concerns about local wildlife and the visibility of the project from the neighborhood. She also said that some residents were not aware that a solar development was being planned.

Clark said the developers will create conservation easements for the life of the project to protect the surrounding vegetation and buffers.

Following meetings and discussions with residents of neighborhoods near the project, Clark said the developers identified that

the Marrowbone Heights neighborhood along the western border of the project would require extra screening because it is the closest residential neighborhood to the development. To that end, Clark said developers proposed 150-foot setbacks and the retaining of 100-feet of existing mature vegetation in that



A map provided by Shifting Sands Solar, LLC to the Henry County Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) shows the 268-acres of property will house an 18.8-megawatt solar facility. The BZA approved a special use permit for the project at its June 29 meeting.

area. Eliana Ginis, project manager for Shifting Sands, said Energix is one of the leading solar energy companies in Virginia with 8 operational projects, 6 under construction this year, and others in development.

Energix, she said, "is a long-term partner for the communities in which we operate. We site, develop, construct, own, and operate projects through their entire lifecycle, which makes us a reliable partner through every step of the process."

She added the company sources most of its equipment within the United States.

Ginis said the 91-acres of the property not being used for solar will be used for setbacks, vegetative buffers, pollinator plants, and wetland protection areas.

The 18.8-megawatt capacity of the project, she said, is enough to power approximately 3,000 homes. "Shifting Sands will deliver economic and tax benefits to Henry County," she told the board. "With the machinery and tools tax model, Shifting Sands is estimated to contribute approximately \$3.3 million over the life of the project." It will also create about 70 well-paying construction jobs as well as provide a boost to the local hospitality industry because, she said, those who cannot be hired locally will be housed within the county.

At the end of project's lifespan, which Ginis said could be up to 35-years, the project will be decommissioned, removing all above- and below-ground equipment and seeding the soil with local grass mixes. She noted that, once decommissioned, the area will be suitable for other types of development.

"This is a high-value, non-permanent land use that doesn't limit the poten-

tial future of the land," she said.

The group hoped to start construction on the project in the second or third quarter of 2023, she said, adding that she anticipated construction would take about 6-months, with the peak activity lasting 3-4 weeks.

Brenda Sessor said she lived in the Marrowbone Heights area just three houses from the wood line that is set to serve as a buffer for the project. She expressed several concerns about the development, including the fate of area wildlife during construction and whether or not they would flee into roadways, how visible the project would be in the fall and winter when the trees lost their leaves, and, primarily, the number of people living in the area who she said did not know about the proposed project.

"I have spoken to at least five other families in my neighborhood that said they did not get door-to-door contact (by the company.) I've spoken to several families that said they did not get anything in the mail," she said.

On her way to the meeting, Sessor said she spoke with another neighbor, asking if he knew about the meeting about the solar farm to which he responded, "what solar farm?" Clark explained that the Code of Virginia dictated the extent to which his office was required to inform residents of the project.

"I have to advertise it in the newspaper, and I have to notify all the adjoining property owners," he said. However, he said his office also requires applicants to notify a larger area outside of the adjoining property owners.

"I don't tell them which people to notify because invariably I'm going to leave somebody out," he said. "We require them to

have the community meeting (which was hosted by the developer at Drewry Mason Elementary School on April 20) ... to hopefully get out even more information" to nearby residents.

Clark said for those who did not receive a newspaper or have internet access, "unfortunately, I have to depend on people like you that take an interest in it to let your neighbors know what's going on."

"The Marrowbone Heights neighborhood was my number one concern" from the outset of the project, he said. "That's the very first thing I mentioned to them when the applicants first started talking about this project. It was obvious to me that would be the main (residents) that could be affected" by the solar project.

Ginis said that, though the company initially only went door-to-door and sent information to directly adjoining properties, "when we had the community meeting, we realized there was a big neighborhood that missed out on that information."

Following that, "I went through the county GIS and got the addresses for every single person in the Marrowbone Heights neighborhood and beyond and sent project information sheets with my phone number and email."

She added that "because we own the project, we're not going anywhere. Throughout any stage of the development process or construction, we're happy to meet with any of the neighbors."

Addressing the concerns about wildlife, she noted that the property had natural wildlife corridors and would maintain existing vegetation so animals would be able to resume their normal migratory patterns upon completion of construction.

Additionally, wildlife

fencing would be installed around the project allowing smaller wildlife to move in and out of the property freely.

"Around this project there are streams, and we have setbacks and buffers from the streams" to project wildlife living in and around that area," she said. "We really take a lot of care to make sure we disrupt as few wildlife as possible on our sites."

BZA member Paul Setliff noted that any type of construction in the area would be disruptive to animals living there.

Clark noted the portion of the property behind Marrowbone Heights was already zoned for industrial development.

"If we were putting a trucking company there right now instead of a solar farm, we wouldn't be here today," he said. "I actually appreciate this use being proposed. This is a much more benign project than what could have been going there."

Before the vote, Clark commended the developers on the strength and quality of their application.

"I like the history of this company," Clark said. "Some of the other folks that we've dealt with, they don't tell you that they're going to be the designers, developers, builders, operators, maintaining it. I have firsthand seen projects in Henry County change hands four times before it ever got constructed. So, for me, it's a big plus that this company is a one-stop shop. They don't just build them and flip them."

The BZA included a number of conditions suggested by Clark in its motion to approve:

First, the site must be maintained in compliance with standards contained in applicable federal, state, and local building codes and erosion and sedimentation control standards and regulations.

Second, existing mature tree growth and natural land forms on the site will be preserved to the maximum extent possible, and conservation easements will be submitted to memorialize that preservation.

Third, any pile driving done during construction can only occur Monday through Saturday, from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m.

Fourth, a double row of evergreen trees must be planted on the interior western boundary of the property to shield the project from view.

Finally, the permit must be exercised within 5-years of approval, and must comply with all requirements set forth in the applicable sections of the Zoning Ordinance.

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TGIF returns to Uptown Martinsville

TGIF, a long-standing summer music concert series in Uptown Martinsville, returns again this summer, hosted by the Rotary Club of Martinsville-Henry County. Each month, from July through September, a feel-good band will take the stage located in the Bridge Street Parking Lot in Uptown from 7-10 p.m. to entertain the crowd.

The Pizazz Band kicks off this year's series on July 15, followed by The Kings on August 19, and Slick Jr. and the Reactors wrap up the season on September 16.

"It's an exciting mix of good-time rock, soul, and blues," said Rotarian Rob King, who helped organized the events. "People will enjoy music they're familiar with and may hear a few numbers new to them as well."

Admission to each concert is \$7. Food will be sold on-site by Hugo's Restaurant and Sports Bar, while The Ground Floor will be selling lemonade and smoothies, with water sold by Infinity Acres Ranch. Sodas as well as alcoholic beverages will be for sale by Rotary, with all proceeds

from tickets, sodas, and alcohol supporting projects and scholarships funded by Rotary. Brad Kinkema, Rotary's regional Area Governor, said that the funds generated by TGIF help the community in a number of ways.

"The Rotary Club of MHC provides scholarships for students to attend P&HCC, and benefit area non-profits, parks, and the environment," said Kinkema. "We support other music and community enrichment events, such as First Fridays at the Historic Courthouse in Uptown Martinsville."

TGIF title sponsors for 2022 include Carter Bank & Trust, Burton & Co., Rives S. Brown Realty, Southwestern Virginia Gas Co., and Lawrence Distributing.

Rotary is a service organization, and its members have a shared responsibility to take action on our world's most persistent issues. Its 46,000+ clubs work together to promote peace, fight disease, provide clean water, save mothers and children, support education, grow local economies, and protect the environment.



"We won't be silenced," residents protest SCOTUS abortion ruling

Callie Hietala
Staff writer

Despite the 90-degree heat, a number of people lined the sidewalk at the corner of Virginia Avenue and Daniel's Creek Road in Collinsville last Thursday to protest the recent Supreme Court decision in the case of *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*. The decision overturned *Roe v. Wade* and held that the constitution does not confer a right to abortion, returning the authority to regulate abortion to the states. Of the dozen or so protestors gathered last Thursday, all were there to express their dissatisfaction with the Court's decision, and some stated they were fearful that this decision could just be the tip of the iceberg in terms of stripping groups of their rights.

"I'm out here because I refuse to be treated like a second-class citizen or to be treated like breeding stock,"

said protester Ashleigh Pritchard. "I demand from my government that they protect my right to my bodily autonomy and to determine what my body is used for."

In addition to attending the protest, she promotes activism in her social circles and through her business, Charmcat, Pritchard said.

She encouraged people to vote in upcoming elections to ensure their voices would be heard at the polls.

"One of the biggest problems with voting is most of us don't vote because we've somehow decided that what happens to other people doesn't matter, so why should we vote?"

Some people, she said, seem to believe, "I'm not a gay person, I'm never going to need an abortion, so why should I care? They're going to come for you eventually," she warned. "So, vote, and vote in the primaries so that we have better options in the general election and we're

not choosing the lesser of two evils anymore."

Melody Cartwright said she graduated from Martinsville High School in 1975, just two years after the *Roe v. Wade* decision.

"All of my life, I enjoyed federally protected rights which have now been turned over," she said.

Though, at the age of 65 she can no longer have children, Cartwright said, "I have a daughter who is 25-years-old. This sort of thing is just so crushing to women who care and want to have the right to do their own family planning. No one wants abortion. No one is for abortion. No one. We're pro-life, actually. We want people to have children when they want them. It's a great thing."

However, she noted, abortion should be available for "those who don't want to have children, who can't afford to have children right now, or people who have accidents."

She said she was "heartbroken" by the Supreme Court's decision, "but we knew it was going to happen" because it is used as a political topic. (Former President Barack Obama said he was going to codify it. It was one of his platforms. Did he do it? No. And you know why? Everybody thought it was protected, it was a sure thing, it was an ace in the hole, and it was not. Now we really need to fight.")

Cartwright said she was pleased that a number of men were on the protest line, because the right to abortion was not just a gender issue. "It's a human rights issue."

She said that she also hoped to attend larger protests in other areas and has already been in contact with her representatives, but was dissatisfied with the response she received.

"They just give you a form letter. Do something. Do something because this is serious," she demanded.

Like Pritchard, Cartwright said she is concerned about future decisions handed down by the court.

"They're going to start taking away more than just abortion rights," she said, prompting a discussion between herself and Pritchard about the concurring opinion filed by Justice Clarence Thomas in the *Dobbs* decision.

In that opinion, Thomas mentioned three other cases that relied on the same legal arguments as *Roe*: *Griswold v. Connecticut*, which found married couples had a right to contraception; *Lawrence v. Texas*, which struck down laws against sodomy and made same-sex sexual activity legal in the U.S.; and *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which legalized gay marriage.

He wrote that, "in future cases, we should reconsid-

er all of this Court's substantive due process precedents, including *Griswold*, *Lawrence*, and *Obergefell*" as the court had a duty to "correct the error" established in those precedents.

Further, "After overruling these demonstrably erroneous decisions, the question would remain whether other constitutional provisions guarantee the myriad rights that our substantive due process clause have generated."

"If they're taking away *Roe v. Wade*, they could take away anything," said protestor Chandler Roberts. "They (the Supreme Court) can do whatever they want and it's too much power."

Protest organizer Benjamin Compton-Lawson said he was already planning a new sign that would read "LGBTQ, they're coming for you," as a warning to the lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer community that their rights may come under attack.

Compton-Lawson said he chose to protest because, "I believe that all people with uteruses deserve more bodily autonomy than dead bodies. A dead body cannot be forced to relinquish its organs, even though it might save a life. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court and a number of states would have women and other people with uteruses giving birth just because they think it's the right thing to do."

He said that response to the protests from passers-by had been mixed.

"Of course, we had somebody call us murderers, someone revved up their motorcycle engine to the point that the decibels hurt my ears," he said, calling such reactions "expected."

"But we've had a lot of positivity too. We've had a lot of people honking in

support. We've had several people thank us for being out here."

As the group of protestors grew to a dozen in less than an hour, a number of people driving by were observed honking, waving, and raising their fists out of their car windows in solidarity and support. These gestures were met with cheers from the people lining the sidewalk.

Others drove by with their middle fingers raised in insult, some revved their engines loudly, and one, stopped at a light, shouted at the protestors that they were indoctrinating children.

Regardless of the negativity, Compton-Lawson said, "I think it's worth it" to continue the effort.

The protest was the second in a series of planned protests which will be held at a number of different locations throughout the area, according to Compton-Lawson. He later wrote in a Facebook post those protests would be held every Tuesday and Thursday from 4-8 p.m. and Saturdays from noon until 8 p.m. "for the foreseeable future."

He said more information regarding future protests can be found on the Abortion and Reproductive Rights Protest page on Facebook, and suggested those interested in other events join the MHC Protest group on Facebook, which he said he runs, and the Martinsville Protest Facebook group, run by Adin Linkous and Lydiah Hachbart. He said he will also be sharing protest information on his personal Facebook page, Benjamin Garland Compton-Lawson, and would be "open to anybody adding me that would be interested in joining."

"We're going to keep coming out here," Compton-Lawson said. "We won't be silenced."



About a dozen protestors lined Virginia Avenue in Collinsville last Thursday to protest the recent Supreme Court decision overturning *Roe v. Wade*. Protest organizer Benjamin Compton-Lawson said protests will continue "for the foreseeable future."

Several residents among spring graduates

Radford University presented undergraduate and graduate degrees during the spring 2022 commencement exercises. On Friday, May 6, 250 graduate degrees were awarded during a hooding ceremony at the Dedmon Center on campus in Radford, Virginia. On Saturday, May 7, 915 undergraduate degrees were presented on Moffett Lawn at the Radford campus.

In all, Radford University conferred degrees on 1,165 undergraduate and graduate students from main campus and Radford University Carilion (RUC) including:

Darleni Jackelin Dalton of Collinsville - Associate of Applied Science in Occupational Therapy Assistant

Sarah Elizabeth Walsh of Axton - Associate of Applied Science in Occupational Therapy Assistant

Victor Lamont Hairston of Martinsville - Associate of Science in Physical Therapist Assistant

Luis Carlos Martinez of Bassett - Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice

Lauren Brooke Handy of Ridgeway - Bachelor of Science in Exercise, Sport and Health Education

Noah John Inman of Collinsville - Bachelor of Science in Exercise, Sport and Health Education

Kevin Undra Witcher of Martinsville - Bachelor of Science in Healthcare Administration

Sophia Grace Mansour-Bruderer of Martinsville - Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences

Reagan Saige Griffith of Martinsville - Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies

Twila Marie Ledyard of Bassett - Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies

Kaitlin Keene of Martinsville - Bachelor of Science in Medical Laboratory Science

Katanie Shombræ Stockton of Martinsville - Bachelor of Science in

Recreation, Parks and Tourism

Cameron Glenn Brummitt of Ridgeway - Doctor of Physical Therapy in Physical Therapy

Stacey Price '99, M.S. '01 delivered the keynote address at the graduate hooding ceremony Friday night.

"Congratulations to all of you. You made it!" said Price, a Washington, D.C.-based social entrepreneur who leads a retail incubator that supports nearly a thousand entrepreneurs. "You not only made it through all of the classes and the papers and the exams, but I want to you

take a moment to acknowledge that you did it with the weight that you have felt over these last two years."

Alumnus Nick Mayhugh, '18, delivered the message, "Be the best Highlander you can be," as undergraduates eagerly awaited receiving their degrees Saturday morning during spring commencement ceremonies on Moffett

Lawn. Mayhugh, who won three gold medals in the Paralympic Games in Tokyo in August 2021, delivered the keynote address under gray, rain-threatening skies at Saturday morning's ceremony. He offered an inspirational message to the class of 2022, speaking about his journey from being diagnosed with and overcoming a mild form

of cerebral palsy and his transition from Highlander soccer player standout to an international track star.

Radford University is a comprehensive public university of 8,998 students that has received national recognition for many of its undergraduate and graduate academic programs, as well as its sustainability initiatives.

CROSSWORD ANSWERS

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Mustangs Honor Veterans from page 1



The Martinsville Mustangs lined up along the baseline behind the Martinsville-Henry County Honor Guard for the national anthem ahead of its Fourth of July game.

veterans seated just behind the pitcher's mound, thanking them for their service.

Once the helicopter had once again taken to the sky, Harris stepped up to the mound and let fly a low fastball, caught by Mustang J.T. Inskeep over home plate, to kick off the game.

Mustangs President Jason Davis said the organization wanted to provide some form of celebration for the community on the holiday.

"It all comes back to being part of the community," he said. "Isn't baseball the great American pastime? We're proud to be part of that and we're fortunate to be able to serve our community in that capacity."

He noted that the team suited up in its salute to service uniforms, which were red, white, and blue, for the evening's game.

Davis credited all of the Mustangs' sponsors, whose names and logos were emblazoned along the back wall of the field, "but tonight is (radio station) B-99.9's night," he said. "B-99 has been a great sponsor, it's a great partnership to have. Dan the Man himself is our game day announcer. They do a fantastic job for us."

Ahead of the game, Martinsville Mayor

Kathy Lawson was seated at a table, slicing watermelon. She and Council Member Danny Turner partnered to provide the cool, sweet treat to game-goers free of charge to add to the festive atmosphere of the Fourth.

"There really wasn't anything going on uptown, so Danny came up with the idea," Lawson said. She was more than happy to help.

Turner said the watermelon was donated by Stanley Fain of All Seasons Produce in Patrick Springs.

Following the game, which resulted in a loss for the home team, the Mustangs hosted a concert with musician Tate Tuck, and Independence Day revelers continued celebrating.

Before the music, before the first run of the game, even before Harris' first pitch, the crowds streamed into Hooker Field, wearing red, white, and blue shirts and hats and shoes and even socks, some carrying American flags, all with smiles on their faces, looking forward to the evening ahead. Those smiles, the festive atmosphere, the excitement in the air at Hooker Field all lent credence to Davis' earlier claim:

"There's nothing better than baseball on the Fourth of July."

VEC resumed collections of overpayments on July 1

The Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) resumed collections of overpayments on July 1. An overpayment is the sum of benefits under title 60.2 of the Code of Virginia that a claimant was not entitled to receive.

The VEC was provided authority from the General Assembly to temporarily suspend outside collections activities until July 1, 2022, to allow for the ongoing processing of claims and waivers.

Customers who have a pending waiver or appeal will not be referred to billing and collections until all other options have been pursued. During this period, the agency has continued to pursue recovery through repayments or installment plans for customers who owe money. For those who do not enter in a repayment plan, they will now be referred to collections.

The VEC works with the Attorney General's Office, an outside collection

agency, and other governmental agencies to collect funds in those situations where a customer does not enter into a payment plan and make regular payments. Customers will receive an "Overpayment Billing Statement" including instructions on making payments. Customers who have questions about their billing statement should contact the VEC's Benefit Payment Unit at 804-786-8593.

The VEC, in partnership with the Virginia Attorney General's Office, will continue to work with law enforcement to prosecute and pursue recovery of fraudulent claims. For eligible customers who did not commit fraud, but were overpaid through no fault of their own, the VEC has approved 23,310 overpayment waivers and waived over \$80 million in payments.

Additional information can be found on VEC's webpage at: <https://www.vec.virginia.gov/unemployed>

OBITUARIES

Jason Lewis White

Jason Lewis White, 44, of Axton, VA passed away Wednesday, June 29, 2022. He was born December 4, 1977, in Martinsville, VA to Jimmy Lewis White and Patricia Gail Norton White. He was predeceased by his mother, Patricia Gail Norton White and sister Stacey G. White.

Jason was owner and operator of J-Roc towing.

He is survived by his son, Seth White; father, Jimmy White; sister, Christie Phillips (T.J.); fiancé, Elisha Nichols; Uncles, Tom White (Sherry),



Paul White (Donna), and Roger White (Teresa); Aunts, Alice Pruitt, and Diana Holt; eight nieces and nephews; and numerous cousins

A memorial service was held on Saturday, July 2, 2022, at Norris Funeral Services, Martinsville Chapel with Pastor Jody Pollard, and Pastor Dean White officiating.

Norris Funeral Services, Martinsville, VA is serving the White family. Online condolences may be made at norrisfuneral.com.

Benjamin H. Hairston, Jr.

Benjamin H. Hairston, Jr., 59, of Martinsville, Virginia passed away Monday, July 4, 2022, at Duke University Hospital. He was born December 31, 1962, in Martinsville, Virginia to the late Benjamin H. Hairston, Sr. and Virginia Hairston. He proudly served his country in the United States Marines. He was a member of First Baptist Church East Martinsville. He enjoyed working on his truck, football, especially the Eagles, ushering and spending time with family.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by sisters, Faye Hairston, Lillie Hairston and Shirley Bannister.

He is survived by his wife, Tonya Law Hairston of the home; step-daughter, Porsha Law of New York; step-son,



LaQuain Law (Taylor); sister, Nancy Dillard; six grandchildren, two step-grandchildren; two god-children, Jasmine Lowe and Nykerion France; one step god granddaughter, Keilani Dillard; and a host of nieces, nephews, other family and friends.

A funeral will be held on Saturday, July 9, 2022, at noon, in Wright Funeral Service Chapel with Pastor Charles Whitfield officiating. Visitation is 30 minutes before the service. Burial will be at Fair Haven Memorial Park. A floating visitation will be held Friday, July 8, 2022, from 2 to 5 p.m. at Wright Funeral Service Chapel.

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

Hazel "Iliene" Hite

Hazel (Iliene) Hite 93, passed away peacefully at her home on Monday, July 4, 2022. She was born January 6, 1929, in Martinsville Va. She was the first of 8 children of Charlie Samuel Lawrence and Cordie Fuller Lawrence. She was predeceased by her husband Donald (Don) Hite, and will finally be reunited with the love of her life. They were married for 49 years. Iliene loved growing up with her large family, and told many stories of the family, and hosted many family gatherings.

She is survived by her brother Charlie Wayne Lawrence and wife Karen Lawrence of Columbia, S.C. her sister Nancy Hall of Columbia, S.C. Many nieces and nephews who she loved very much, and many other family members and friends including long-time friends Marge Dunn, Sue Cooper, and Teri Ferguson. Iliene was blessed with devoted caregivers who were committed to her comfort and wellbeing, Audrey, Garnet, Renee, and her nephew Robert (Robbie) Lawrence. The family is also



very appreciative of those provided care to her through Mountain Valley Hospice. She is leaving to mourn many family members and friends who have cherished and loved her.

She was a member of First Presbyterian Church, and in the choir for many years. She had a very strong faith in the Lord.

A visitation will be held at 10 a.m. on Saturday, July 9, 2022, at McKee-Stone Funeral Home. The funeral will be held at 11 a.m., officiated by Reverend Dr. Dwight Christenbury. Interment will be private.

Memorials may be made to the Martinsville Henry County SPCA, 132 Joseph Martin Hwy, Martinsville, VA 24112, Mountain Valley Hospice & Palliative Care, 730 E. Church Street, Suite #13, Martinsville, VA 24112, or to a charity of the donor's choice.

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

To express condolences online, please visit www.collinsmckeestonemartinsville.com.

Barbara Smith Barr

Barbara Smith Barr died peacefully at Kings Grant Retirement Community, Martinsville, VA, on Tuesday, June 14, 2022.

Born May 1, 1930, she lived a full life, devoting herself to her family, friends, and community. Forever shaped by the values and virtues fostered by her parents during her childhood in Ambler, PA, she was rooted in a timeless Christian faith and winged for her next chapters. To the day she passed, she continued to nurture enduring childhood friendships and cherish memories of her parents, two brothers, and three sisters, all of whom predeceased her.

She was married to Harold T. Barr, Jr. on September 11, 1954. "Reds" predeceased her on May 1, 1992. She is survived by son Jeff Barr (Jeanne) of Nampa, ID, daughter Nancy Moore (Henry) of Martinsville, VA, and son John Barr (Sabrina) of Columbia, SC.

Together, she and Reds provided their children with a confidence to grow and go, to show their capabilities and pursue their futures. For that their children are most grateful and eternally indebted. Memories from days gone by will forever be cherished, and probably will cause smiles to slip across their faces and a ridiculous laugh or two.

Affectionately referred to by them as Bim, she was so fondly proud of her seven grandchildren (GA, CA, CO, and SC) and three great grandchildren (GA and CA).

We her children are thankful for her



nieces and nephews in Southeastern PA, MD, CO, GA, and HI who made it a point to include her in their lives; for her devoted brother-in-law and sister-in-law in Glen Mills, PA, and sister-in-law in Denver, CO; and for her church family at Trinity Presbyterian in Berwyn, PA. In addition, we want to acknowledge the special friendships, past and present, from her seven decades of living in Malvern, Glen Mills, and West Chester, PA, who supported and sustained her following Reds' death.

The past three years, which she spent living at Kings Grant with her rescue dog Mimi and newest formed friendships, were a timely blessing to her and her family.

A private memorial service to celebrate God's faithfulness and provision in the life of our mother and our parents will be held later this year at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Berwyn, PA.

Please consider making a donation, in memory of Bim's late grandson Corey Barr, to Our Military Kids, 2911 Hunter Mill Road, Suite 203, Oakton, VA 22214 or Trinity Presbyterian Church, 640 Berwyn Avenue, PA 29312.

"There are two things we should give our children: one is roots to grow, and the other is wings to fly." - Henry Ward Beecher (1813-1887); Clergyman

For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. Romans 14:8.

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PIEDMONT COMMUNITY SERVICES

Piedmont Community Services has a Full time position with benefits available for a **Residential Support Specialist (# CS-543-19)** in Patrick County, VA serving adults with intellectual, mental health & developmental disabilities. Duties include di-

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rect care and training in independent living skills, personal care skills, housekeeping skills, and recreational/leisure activities in the home and in the community. Includes some weekend hours. Must work well on a diverse team. High school diploma or GED required. Must exhibit good documentation and computer skills. Must have valid driver's license and good driving record.

PCS application REQUIRED & may be obtained online at <http://www.piedmontcsb.org/ApplyOnline.html>.

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The Henry County Enterprise and Virginia Media Inc. are seeking an energetic, fun-loving member to join our team as a General Assignment Reporter.

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Notice of Public Hearing

A public hearing will be held before the Martinsville Architectural Review Board on July 21, 2022 at 10:00 a.m. in Council Chambers at the City of Martinsville Municipal Building located at 55 W. Church Street, Martinsville, VA, 24112, for those parties in interest to the following request:

1) **APPLICATION for CERTIFICATE of APPROPRIATENESS-** Application of The Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society, Applicant(s) and Owner(s), requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness to allow for a three (3) story addition to business property located within the Martinsville Historic District. The property is located at 1 East Main Street, is currently zoned C-UB, Uptown Business District, and will be operated under a business use as a museum and historic site. The existing building is approximately 9,345 square feet and was built in 1929. New construction or additions to buildings within the Historic District require review by the Architectural Review Board and the granting of a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Any comments or questions can be directed to Hannah Powell, Community Development Specialist, at (276) or hpowell@ci.martinsville.va.us.
Notice Submitted By:
Hannah L. Powell, CZA
Community Development Specialist



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Jobs openings, labor turnover decreased in April

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' April 2022 Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS), released June 29, Virginia hiring rose 4.6% over the month to 206,000.

JOLTS data provides information on all pieces that go into the net change in the number of jobs. These components include job openings, hires, layoffs, voluntary quits, and other job separations (which includes retirements and worker deaths). Putting those components together reveals the overall change in payroll employment. JOLTS data is seasonally adjusted and describes conditions on the last business day of the month. Current month's data are preliminary and the prior month's data have been revised.

The number of April 2022 job openings in Virginia was a 19,000 decrease from March's 2022's revised figure of 340,000, which was a record high. The number of U.S. job openings fell by nearly a half of a million from March's revised figure of 11.9 million, which also was the highest level in the history of the series which began in January 2001. Nationwide, job openings decreased in most industries with the largest percentage decreases in federal government, arts, entertainment and recreation and healthcare and social assistance. The largest percentage increase occurred in real estate, rental, and leasing and transportation, warehousing, and utilities. The Virginia job openings rate (job openings as a percentage of total employment) fell by 0.4 of a percentage point to 7.4% in April and was significantly lower than the series high of 7.9% set in September 2021. In April, the U.S. job openings rate decreased in establishments with 250 to 999 employees but increased in establishments with 1,000 to 4,999 employees. The largest significant decreases in job openings rates occurred in Pennsylvania (-1.9 percentage points) and Kentucky (-1.4 points), as well as Alaska and South Carolina (-1.3 points each).

The number of hires in Virginia rose by 9,000 to 206,000 in April and was 50,000, or a third, higher than April 2021. JOLTS defines hires as all additions to the payroll during

the month. The series low of 77,000 was set in April 2020, while the high of 265,000 was set in June of that year. Nationwide, the number of hires was little changed at 6.6 million, which was lower than its peak of 8.1 million set in May 2020. The largest percentage increases in U.S. hiring occurred in real estate, rental, and leasing, financial activities, and finance and insurance. State and local government posted the largest percentage fall over the month. Compared to April 2018, U.S. hires were up by one million, or 18%. In Virginia, the hires rate rose 0.2 of a percentage point over the month to 5.1%. The U.S. hires rate increased in establishments with 1 to 9 employees and in establishments with 5,000 or more employees but decreased in establishments with 50 to 249 employees. Significant decreases in hires rates occurred in Michigan (-0.8 percentage point), Arkansas (-0.7 point), and Pennsylvania (-0.5 point). Significant increases in hires rates occurred in Colorado (+0.8 percentage point) and in California (+0.4 point).

An estimated 114,000 workers quit jobs from Virginia employers in April. The number of quits rose by 9,000 from March's revised figure of 105,000 but was ten percent lower than a year earlier. In addition, it was down significantly from the record-breaking month of December 2021 when 131,000 Virginia workers quit their jobs. Quits, a component of total separations, are voluntary separations initiated by the employee. Across the U.S. in April, the number of quits was little changed at 4.4 million. They increased by nearly 85% in real estate and rental and leasing over the month. Quits in financial activities rose by 27% while wholesale trade rose by 22%. The number of quits can be seen as a leading indicator of wage trends in that it includes workers who quit to move to another job.

The quits rate nationwide was unchanged at 2.9 percent. The quits rate in the Commonwealth rose by 0.2 of a percentage point to 2.8% and remained at the highly elevated levels seen during 2021. The U.S. quits rate significantly increased in establishments with 250 to 999 employees and in establishments with 1,000

to 4,999 employees but decreased in establishments with 10 to 49 employees. The largest significant decreases in quits rates occurred in Utah and Wyoming (-1.1 percentage points each) and in Arizona (-1.0 point). The largest significant increases in quits rates occurred in Missouri (+1.1 percentage points), North Dakota (+0.7 point), and Michigan (+0.5 point). The quits rate can serve as a measure of workers' willingness or ability to leave jobs.

The hires-per-job-openings (HPJO) ratio held steady at 0.6 in April in Virginia, roughly equal to the rate nationwide. This measure shows the rate of hiring compared to open jobs and is a proxy for time to fill positions. Over five years, the ability to hire for job openings has fallen by nearly a third nationwide but the decline has been less severe in Virginia.

In April 2022, there was less than one (0.4) unemployed worker per job opening in the Commonwealth, edging lower in recent months. This period marked the lowest rate since January 2001, when BLS began collecting the data. In Virginia, the unemployed per job opening ratio (sometimes called the 'job seekers ratio') peaked at 4.4 unemployed per job opening in February 2010 during the Great Recession, while the number of unemployed workers per job opening stood at 3.3 in April 2020 during the height of pandemic employment impacts.

On the last business day of April 2022, there were 11.4 million job openings and 6.0 million unemployed people nationwide. This yielded a ratio of unemployed people to job openings of 0.5 for April, matching the record low set the previous month. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate nationwide was much lower than in April 2021, declining from 6.0% to 3.6%. This, combined with many more job openings in most industries, indicated a growing imbalance between those measures of labor supply and demand.

In April, the number of total separations in Virginia was little changed at 160,000. The rate was little changed at 4.0 percent. Nationwide, that figure was also little

changed at six million. Total separations increased in real estate and rental and leasing (+37,000).

In April 2022, the 'annual fill' rate (the ratio of 'this month' hires to 'last month' job openings, over the year) fell to 0.9 from the revised March figure of 1.0, the highest level since April 2021. The U.S. annual fill rate was little changed at 0.7. This indicates, in Virginia, a trend in recent month towards less difficulty in filling positions when compared to a year earlier. The fill rate is a measure used to evaluate how labor markets differ in the pace that job openings are filled. An annual fill rate near or above 1.0 can indicate that employers are growing more efficient at filling job openings. On the other hand, an annual fill rate of less than 1.0 can indicate a tighter labor market, with employers having greater difficulty filling job openings compared to a year earlier.

Going back to 2001, the highest annual fill rate occurred during June 2020 because, after the nationwide shutdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, employers across the country sought to quickly hire for vacated positions. The lowest fill rate in Virginia occurred in June 2021. During that time, there were many factors that hindered the filling of vacant positions by employers, such as health concerns, employee skills, and childcare needs, but the biggest factor was the comparison against the historic re-hiring hike the year before.

The number of layoffs and discharges in Virginia decreased by 4,000 to 38,000 in April 2022. This was a reduction of 87% from the pandemic high set in March 2020 but up 8.6% over the year. In April 2022, the number of U.S. layoffs and discharges fell by 170,000 to 1.25 million and pushed the rate down to 0.8 percent. This was a record-low number, going back to January 2001. U.S. layoffs and discharges significantly decreased in most industries over the month. Nationwide, the layoffs and discharges rate significantly decreased in establishments with 50 to 249 employees. The largest significant decreases in layoffs and discharges rates occurred in Georgia and New

Jersey (-0.5 percentage point each) and in Florida (-0.4 point). The largest significant increases in layoffs and discharges rates occurred in Minnesota (+0.3 percentage point) and in New York (+0.2 point). Layoffs and discharges are involuntary separations initiated by the employer. Layoffs and discharges are countercyclical, which means that layoffs typically increase during economic contractions and decrease during economic expansions.

The movement of the April 2022 churn rate (the sum of the hires rate and the total separations rate) to 9.0 from March's revised 8.9 in Virginia indicated increased velocity of movement into and out of jobs, to a pace of labor market turnover not seen since the pandemic summer of 2020. Nationwide, the movement of the April 2022 churn rate to 8.4 from March's revised 8.5 nationwide indicated continued elevated velocity in 2022. An elevated churn rate indicates a labor market with a high hires rate, a high separations rate, or both. It can signify that workers are moving more frequently into and out of jobs in the labor market. Conversely, a low churn rate indicates a labor market with a low hires rate, a low separations rate, or both. Labor markets with the most churn may also have more seasonal employment patterns not fully captured by seasonal adjustment factors, which can lead to more frequent job-to-job movement.

In April 2022, measures of Virginia job openings and labor turnover indicated that, despite a contracting economy during the first quarter of 2022, labor markets in the Commonwealth remained very tight. Driven by both layoffs and unemployment in the state at very low levels, the ratio of unemployed persons to job openings reached a record low. After March's record-setting numbers of job openings in Virginia and nationwide, firms appeared reluctant to let staff go in April as the number of U.S. layoffs and discharges also reached a record low. With April 2022 hires a third larger than in April 2021, the ratio of hires per job opening matched its highest level in over a year, as the flurry of movement of Virginia workers between jobs continued.

State officials to address the retail sale of THC infused edibles

The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) and Office of the Attorney General of Virginia (OAG) are initiating efforts to address the retail sale of certain products that contain tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) in response to provisions included in the budget recently passed by the General Assembly and signed by Gov. Glenn Youngkin. VDACS will assist businesses that wish to sell hemp-derived cannabinoids in compliance with the law.

“The VDACS regulatory response to chemically-synthesized cannabinoids in foods and beverages is to educate food manufacturers and retail food establishments of the law and encourage voluntary compliance. Once regulatory options are exhausted, the case could be referred to a Commonwealth’s Attorney for further enforcement,” said Joseph Guthrie, VDACS Commissioner.

VDACS’ Food Safety Program will distribute a communication to Virginia food manufacturers, retail food establishments, and registered industrial hemp processors advising that all products intended for human consumption are considered food or drink and must meet the requirements of the Virginia Food and Drink Law. Any chemically-synthesized cannabinoid is considered a

food adulterant and any person who manufactures, sells, or offers for sale a chemically-synthesized cannabinoid as a food or beverage is in violation of the Virginia Food and Drink Law. VDACS’ communication will also advise recipients that additional labeling regulations are pending as a result of the budget language and that, once in effect, these regulations will also apply to any industrial hemp extract intended for human consumption that contains THC. With the provisions provided in the budget, VDACS inspectors will have enhanced ability to identify retail locations selling industrial hemp extracts or food containing industrial hemp extracts that have not been inspected by its Food Safety Program. With limited exceptions, these locations must obtain a food and drink permit from VDACS in order to remain in operation.

VDACS’ communication will advise that any chemically-synthesized cannabinoid is a food adulterant and any person who manufactures, sells, or offers for sale a chemically-synthesized cannabinoid, including delta-8 THC, as a food or beverage is in violation of the Virginia Food and Drink Law. An industrial hemp extract that has a THC concentration of no more than 0.3 percent, is produced by

a manufacturer that has been inspected by the responsible food regulatory agency in the location in which the extract is produced, and does not exceed established contaminant limits may be distributed in Virginia. When VDACS identifies the production or sale of a food containing an adulterant, it will encourage voluntary compliance by asking the business to discontinue the practice. If voluntary compliance is not achieved, VDACS will utilize various escalating enforcement tools to achieve compliance, with the highest penalty prescribed under Virginia law a Class 1 misdemeanor.

“As THC-infused edibles become commonplace, some distributors have started advertising their products to look like popular candy and snack items. Their deceiving appearance and packaging can confuse young children who come across them and have led to an increase in accidental consumption, putting their health at risk. I look forward to collaborating with VDACS to address this growing issue,” said Attorney General Jason Miyares.

The OAG will enforce the new provisions of the Virginia Consumer Protection Act (VCPA) that are intended to inform adult consumers about the THC-containing products they are purchasing

and help prevent children from consuming potentially intoxicating products. Businesses may not offer for sale or sell an edible or inhaled product that contains THC to a person younger than 21. Additionally, businesses may not offer for sale or sell an edible or inhaled product that contains THC unless the product is packaged and labeled as required by the VCPA. Businesses may not offer for sale or sell an edible or inhaled product that contains THC in a package that mimics a trademarked brand or other famous or identifying mark. Additionally, the VCPA prohibits businesses from manufacturing, offering for sale at retail, or selling at retail a food containing an industrial hemp extract or substance containing THC that depicts or is in the shape of a human, animal, vehicle, or fruit.

Cannabis plants contain a variety of cannabinoids, including trace amounts of delta-8 THC; however, through a chemical reaction, cannabidiol (CBD), the cannabinoid most commonly extracted from hemp plants, can be converted into delta-8 THC or similar intoxicating compounds. Many of these chemically-synthesized cannabinoids have an intoxicating effect similar to that of delta-9 THC, the cannabinoid that produces the “high” asso-

ciated with marijuana.

There is currently little research on the long-term health effects of synthetically-derived cannabinoids. Intoxication can cause adverse effects similar to those observed during delta-9 THC intoxication and may include lethargy, uncoordinated movements, decreased psychomotor activity, increased heart rate progressing to slowed heart rate, low blood pressure, difficulty breathing, and sedation. Because these products can create impairment due to their psychoactive and intoxicating effects, this may present safety risks when driving, operating heavy machinery, or engaging in other activities where being impaired may be dangerous to the individual or others. Children may be at risk for accidental intoxication, as a wide range of products such as infused beverages, gummies, chocolates, cookies, and candy are marketed and packaged in a manner that is attractive to children.

Anyone experiencing adverse effects of THC-containing products should call their local or regional poison control center at 1-800-222-1222, or 9-1-1, or seek medical attention at their local emergency room and report the ingredients of ingested products to healthcare providers.

New laws offer more opportunities, streamline processes for some drivers

As a result of the 2022 General Assembly session, three new laws make the licensing process smoother through the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) and its partners by expanding commercial driver’s license (CDL) testing providers, removing the wait time and fee for retesting and extending the validity of the CDL skills test certification.

1 - DMV currently certifies government third parties to enable these organizations to conduct the CDL skills tests for the applicants they employ or train on site, saving them a trip to DMV. Under the new law, these certified third-party testers will also be able to test people

enrolled in a CDL training course offered by a community college or those employed or trained by another government entity, such as a local school system. This change offers more options for CDL testing, particularly for high-demand school bus driver positions.

2 - Applicants 18 years of age and older who need to retake the driver’s license or CDL knowledge exam no longer need to wait 15 days to retest. The \$2 reexamination fee has also been removed as part of this new law. This will allow customers to retake their knowledge exam sooner, without penalty.

3 - The validity of a CDL road skills test certification has been extend-

ed from 60 days to six months, which allows customers more time to visit DMV to get their CDL after completing both their knowledge and skills tests.

Also, effective July 1, certain license holders may apply with the DMV for driver’s license extensions of up to six years for military and foreign service members serving outside of Virginia and government contractors working outside the United States; and up to two years for those showing good cause for extensions. Prior to July 1, those extensions were valid for up to three years and one year, respectively.

“We understand the challenges faced by our military, foreign service,

and government contractor customers with deployments and assignments keeping them on the move,” said Acting DMV Commissioner Linda Ford. “Similarly, we know that things like long-term medical treatment or caring for a loved one in another state can create hardships for any of us. We’re pleased to be able to work with customers in these situations to further extend driver’s licenses, giving them one less thing to worry about.”

The change stems from HB 540, introduced by Del. Danica Roem (D-Prince William), passed by the General Assembly during the 2022 session, and signed into law by Gov. Glenn Youngkin.

In all cases, customers need to complete an application process and provide supporting documentation in order to qualify for a driver’s license extension. Currently extended customers can apply for the newly enacted extensions, up to the six and two year limits, via the same application process they originally followed.

More information, including complete application instructions, is available at:

<https://www.dmv.virginia.gov/general/#outsideva/military.asp> (for military members)

<https://www.dmv.virginia.gov/general/#outsideva/diplomat.asp> (for diplomats)

<https://www.dmv.virginia.gov/general/#outsideva/contractors.asp> (for government contractors).

Customers who need information on hardship extensions may visit www.dmvNOW.com and click Contact Us.

“Our enhanced processes will allow even more customers to quickly and safely advance through the licensing process whether it be in our office or through one of our trusted testing partners,” said Acting DMV Commissioner Linda Ford. “This is particularly important for applicants in the high-demand commercial driving field, and we are pleased to be able to expand service options.”

Virginia awarded \$219.8 million to expand broadband access

The U.S. Department of the Treasury recently announced that Virginia is one of four states poised to expand access to rural high-speed internet service.

Under the American Rescue Plan’s Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund, Virginia received \$219.8 million, which represents 100% of the state’s available CPF funding. The money will pay for expansion of broadband access to an estimated 76,873 locations. Approximately 28% of Virginia locales lack access to high-quality broadband service—a reality that negatively impacts farmers and other rural residents.

Groups like Virginia Farm Bureau Federation have long

advocated for expanded connectivity statewide and are celebrating the recent announcement.

“This is music to my ears,” said VFBF President Wayne F. Pryor. “Just like farms needed electricity and phone service a century ago, rural Virginia cannot fully thrive without broadband internet. Anyone offline is missing connections to buyers, suppliers, news, educational resources and vital medical services. Rural Virginia will certainly benefit from this, and farmers too.”

Accomack County Farm Bureau member Lynn Gayle is a row crop farmer in rural Onancock on Virginia’s Eastern Shore, where it’s difficult to get

reliable internet connectivity for home use and farmwork. He’s had to invest in workarounds—installing wireless data connections within his tractors to transmit daily crop data to John Deere’s central database.

“But a lot of other devices and website designs require high data flow,” he said. “Without a high-speed connection, data loads very slowly, and it gets pretty cumbersome.”

The treasury’s broadband funding should help close that gap, but Gayle noted the Eastern Shore’s unique geography may present infrastructure challenges.

“Those are issues they’ll have to figure out, but this is encour-

aging,” he said. “It’s just like the rural electrification decades ago!”

In Virginia, local governments in partnership with internet service providers can apply for funding through a competitive grant program overseen by the Virginia Telecommunication Initiative.

Other states receiving first-round funding are Louisiana, New Hampshire and West Virginia, connecting over 200,000 homes and businesses to broadband. The first large waves of federal funding lay the groundwork for future funding provided in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

“The treasury’s broadband

funding represents a significant step in the Biden administration’s unprecedented investment to increase access to high-speed internet and reduce broadband bills for every American household and business,” said Deputy Secretary of the Treasury Wally Adeyemo.

The \$10 billion in project funding aims to deliver internet service that meets or exceeds speeds of 100 megabits per second. All service providers are required to participate in the Federal Communications Commission’s new Affordable Connectivity Program, which helps ensure households can afford broadband, with a discount of up to \$30 per month.

Behavioral Health Inpatient Data Dashboard launched

With the support of member hospitals and health systems, the Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association (VHHA) is launching a new public-facing Behavioral Health Inpatient Data Dashboard to provide insight and transparency regarding the volume of inpatient psychiatric hospital care being provided in the Commonwealth.

The dashboard leverages data from the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) as well as VHHA inpatient data to show inpatient psychiatric admissions at both state-run and private sector hospitals on an annualized basis from state fiscal year (SFY) 2015 through the most currently available data for SFY 2022.

The presentation of this information is color-coded to differentiate between voluntary admissions at private hospitals, temporary detention order (TDO) admissions at private hospitals, forensic TDO

admissions at state government hospitals, other forensic admissions to state government hospitals, civil admissions to state government hospitals, and civil TDO admissions to state government hospitals. The data shows that in recent years, private hospitals have admitted around 90 percent of all behavioral health inpatients. This includes voluntary patients, who account for about 60 percent of annual behavioral health admissions, and court ordered TDO patients who represent about 30 percent of private hospital admissions.

The dashboard displays data in interactive bar graph form so users accessing it can view the overall share of each type of admission per year, per facility type, as well as the total number of admissions in each category by hovering their cursor over different parts of the dashboard.

The dashboard, which will be updated quarterly, will be used to filter the data by admission type

and to evaluate data in a single state fiscal year or a series of years. These admission trends are occurring at a time when more Virginians and Americans indicate their mental health has been compromised since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Concurrently, many health care providers have seen increased demand for behavioral health treatment services while also confronting workforce staff shortages that impact treatment capacity. VHHA and its members present this dashboard as a public service in conjunction with continuing effort to work with state government partners, advocates, stakeholders, patients, and families engaged with the behavioral health system to support meaningful investment and reform to enhance the care delivery system for all those who make use of it during their hour of need.

“As we work to strengthen and enhance the behavioral health care system, while also confront-

ing workforce shortages and strong demand for psychiatric treatment services being experienced by public and private Virginia hospitals, having verified and reliable data is critical to the process of evaluating potential policy solutions and next steps,” said VHHA President and CEO Sean T. Connaughton. “With the publication of the Virginia Hospital Behavioral Health Inpatient Data Dashboard, VHHA and its members hope to provide important context that will help all stakeholders as we work together to address our shared challenges.”

VHHA Vice President of Data Analytics David Vaamonde said, “Data driven decision making is informed decision making. We experienced that firsthand during the COVID-19 pandemic when the daily hospitalization data we collected and analyzed proved invaluable in helping chart key aspects of the state-

level response strategy. Our latest data dashboard can likewise be an important information resource that can be consulted by multiple stakeholders beyond the hospital community as part of the deliberations that will shape behavioral health care strategy in Virginia for years to come.”

The Behavioral Health Inpatient Data Dashboard is the latest interactive tool published by the VHHA Data Analytics Team to help enhance public understanding of the health care delivery system in the Commonwealth. Other VHHA data dashboards include the Virginia Hospital COVID-19 Data Dashboard that was first published in April 2020 and has now been viewed more than 7.1 million times, the Social Determinants of Health Data Dashboard, the Virginia Hospital Patient Experience Data Dashboard, and the Community Health Legislative Dashboards.

Wagoner

from page 1

“My parents were hard-working, everyday folks ... I didn’t know it at the time, but we definitely grew up poor. I commend my mother tremendously on how she raised seven children (six boys and one girl) on the income that we had.”

His mother, Wagoner said, ran a beauty shop in her home. “That’s where I learned a lot about the world growing up,” he said.

In fact, Wagoner said, looking back on his childhood, he realized, “you learn a lot about life, and you don’t even know it at the time.”

He learned from his father too. “My dad worked in a grocery store just up the street. He was the butcher, delivered groceries, and I got to ride in the truck with him,” meeting people in the community of various ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds.

“We were delivering groceries to some of the most affluent people in Bassett and the ones who were paying with food stamps. I learned a lot,” Wagoner said.

Even as he was accumulating life lessons from a young age, so too did the young Wagoner begin developing a strong work ethic. He started working for his father at the age of 9 while he was a student at Bassett Middle School, walking across a field to bag groceries at the store after school rather than catching the bus to go home.

At the age of 13, Wagoner got his first paying job working at a gas station owned by a friend of his uncle.

“It was in the middle of winter, it was freezing cold, and somebody didn’t come in that day. He needed somebody to pump kerosene, and I said yes. I worked every day after school and got off the bus there. And sometimes I’d go in at 5:30 in the morning and catch the bus there to go to Bassett High School.”

Wagoner’s education continued at the gas station, he said, as he met and interacted with a variety of people, particularly those who would come into the store following the local evening news.

“They would watch WDBJ-7 News at 6 and then, at 6:45 when they got tired of national news, they would come down and tell us all their life lessons for the evening. We called them the loafers, so I always say I learned a lot about life from the loafers,” he laughed.

An early childhood accident inadvertently set Wagoner down the path toward becoming the new County Administrator. At the age of 4, he was struck by a vehicle, hospitalized for several weeks, and confined to a wheelchair for some time after that.

Because his mother could not get her young son into the car to drive to church on Sundays,

they began attending First Baptist Church of Bassett nearer their home, a church Wagoner said he still attends today.

It was there, 12-years later, that 16-year-old Wagoner saw an insert in the church bulletin about volunteering for the Bassett Rescue Squad. He filled out the form and dropped it into the church offering plate.

“That’s how I got started in Bassett’s Rescue Squad as a volunteer, which was my introduction to public service,” Wagoner said.

Over the next several years, Wagoner continued to volunteer with the rescue squad, which allowed him to receive much of his EMS training at no cost to him. That training continued into his adult life, where he eventually earned the credentials necessary to be a paramedic.

The next stage in Wagoner’s service to the county came during his junior year at Ferrum College, where he was majoring in computer science (he would go on to earn a Master’s in Public Administration from Virginia Tech.) He applied for an internship with Henry County, which he planned to complete the summer between his junior and senior years.

That internship began in May 1992 under then Public Safety Director Benny Summerlin. Within a few weeks, an employee with the department quit and Wagoner applied for the full-time position of EMS Training Coordinator for Henry County Public Safety. He got the job.

He began work in July of that year, while also completing his final year of college.

“As soon as I got in it, it was almost an immediate attraction (to EMS) because there was never a point I didn’t want to learn something else. I would run one call and realize if I’d taken one more class, I could have done something more to help this person,” Wagoner recalled.

As he continued to learn, he said he kept thinking, “I can do more, I can learn more, I can help more people,” until finally he reached the level of paramedic.

“I wanted to avoid that sense of helplessness” that came with not knowing how he could have better helped someone in need, he said.

Wagoner said he was initially drawn to the work in part because of the satisfaction derived from helping others.

“I saw that all the time in my parents and others,” Wagoner said. “They were always helping each other out with family and other things, so that wasn’t anything new. Growing up in the church, you help other people, you do what you’re supposed to do.”

In 1996, Wagoner became the EMS Coordinator and, later,

Deputy Director of Public Safety, then Public Safety Director.

“I don’t think there was ever a goal in my mind to become the county administrator,” he reflected. “I wanted to learn as much as I could, and I took every opportunity to go to every meeting I could go to when Benny Summerlin was Public Safety Director. I just wanted to soak it all up.”

His desire to “soak it all up” earned him a brief stint at the county’s Human Resources Director after the termination of former County Administrator and PSA General Manager Sid Clower, following the discovery of a long-term embezzlement scheme.

Summerlin was appointed County Administrator and Hall, who at the time was the county’s public information officer, became Summerlin’s deputy.

The county’s HR Director was involved in the scheme as well, Wagoner explained, and was fired along with Clower. Wagoner was asked to step into the role, while also continuing to serve as Deputy Director of Public Safety.

“It was because of always listening, always trying to go to meetings, that I was recruited to do the job,” Wagoner said. Though the post came with a steep learning curve, Wagoner said, “I don’t regret any of it. It makes it a lot easier to do what I’m doing today, to have that experience back then.”

Wagoner recognized that the aftershocks of the Clower chapter are still felt to this day. The episode, he said, “changed the public’s perception of Henry County and I don’t know that we’ve fully recovered from that. It’s been a very concerted effort since then to be fiscally sound. I think we go above and beyond to make sure we’re doing accounting principles and practices that are in excess of what’s required of us to make sure the public can see that we’re doing everything above board.”

Then, in 2012, the Deputy County Administrator position became available, years earlier than Wagoner ever anticipated.

Wagoner recalled discussions with Summerlin about his plans for his retirement. “He was going to buy an RV and travel. He passed away before that happened.”

Following Summerlin’s death, Hall stepped into the County Administrator role and, about a month later, Wagoner was chosen to serve as Deputy County Administrator.

Moving into that role, Wagoner said, “I missed the comradery. I missed the family environment you get in Fire/EMS and law enforcement that you really don’t get anywhere else. But that’s okay. This is a good place to work. People look

out for each other, we care about each other.”

Because of his long career in Public Safety, Wagoner was well-versed and accomplished in the field, even serving on several governor’s panels. In fact, in 2012, he received the Governor’s Award for Excellence in Emergency Medical Services, Virginia’s most prestigious EMS award.

“When I came over here, I was no longer an expert,” Wagoner said. “The reality is (the department heads) were experts and I just had to trust them and roll with it, and for the most part that has really worked for me.”

Just days before he moved into his next role with the county, Wagoner said that he believed the collaborative relationship and trust he enjoyed with Hall would help ease his transition.

“They (the jobs) are so overlapped. If Tim goes on vacation, I don’t need to wait to do anything. I have full authority.” He said that relationship worked both ways.

“There are no egos when it comes to a situation. Our goal aligns. We want what’s best for our citizens.”

Wagoner said he intends to continue that relationship with the new Deputy County Administrator, J.R. Powell.

Though Wagoner noted the goals for the county are set by the Board of Supervisors, and “my goals align with their wishes.” However, he does have some things he would like to see the county achieve during his tenure.

One thing he would like to see is the creation of an adaptive park for people with special needs. Wagoner credits his daughter for the idea (following an internship with the Center for Pediatric Therapies, she wrote about the community’s need for one in her college admissions essay) and said he’s been “talking it up for several years. If I have anything to do with it, it’s going to be part of Riverview Park (a planned park adjacent to the Smith River Sports Complex) when we develop that.”

Expanding broadband throughout the county is a passion project for Wagoner.

“I want to see that happen,” he said. “We’re going to make that happen. It’s going to be a big undertaking, but it’s going to be transformative for our community.”

“Tim has done a tremendous job with economic development. I think we’re at a point now ... we’ve got to look for those economic development opportunities that strengthen the resiliency of our community and raises the wealth of our community,” including providing better-paying jobs for residents.

Part of that will be continuing to push for-

ward the development of Commonwealth Crossing and the Patriot Centre to attract diverse industries to the area who are willing to make a significant capital investment.

In addition to the local economy, “of course, reversion is on the horizon,” Wagoner said. “The board has set the standard that they want to fight reversion and I take my cues on that from them. We’ll fight reversion and do what’s in the best interests of the citizens to the extent that we’re allowed to by law. In the event that city residents don’t make the wise decision in deciding not to revert, then we’ll do what we have to do to make us one community.”

Even with the growing tensions between the city and county as the reversion issue lingers, Wagoner thinks the two communities can put differences aside and become one should the need arise.

The county is “at a disadvantage and the state created that,” he said. “It’s the state’s fault that we’re even in this situation. The Commonwealth of Virginia can do more to make it more palatable for counties to accept cities that revert. On the administrative level, we do work well with the City of Martinsville. We have so many successful programs,” including the Martinsville-Henry County 911 Center.

“Ultimately, if we’re forced to do it, then I think the people in the community will make it successful,” Wagoner said.

Another possible speedbump is the question of whether to raise county taxes. During his last budget presentation, Hall indicated that real estate taxes may need to be increased in the coming years. Wagoner, however, seems hesitant.

“The county is very conservative when it comes to taxes,” Wagoner said. “We have some of the lowest tax rates anywhere in the commonwealth of Virginia, but we should have. A lot of our citizens have the least ability to pay taxes. There won’t be a tax increase unless it’s an absolute necessity, and you won’t see a recommendation coming from me unless I know that we can’t mitigate it some other way.”

Yet another issue is the issue of pay for county law enforcement, which has been the subject of several meetings of the Board of Supervisors.

Wagoner said he believes the most recent issue was primarily one of communication, and one he believes he can resolve.

“To my knowledge, I have a good, solid, working relationship with the sheriff and most all the employees there. I got to know many of those folks

with the jail project and I communicated with them on a daily basis. I think I see their issues, I think we can mitigate them, talk to them, work through them, so I don’t anticipate any problems,” he said.

In addition to working with law enforcement on the new jail, Wagoner noted that he was a medic for the SWAT team for more than 10 years.

“I went through SWAT training, and I’ve had their back. I didn’t work patrol every weekend but I have been in a few precarious situations,” he said, and recalled one instance where he arrived at the scene of a hostage situation—a man was holding his girlfriend at knifepoint. As negotiations progressed, the SWAT team stacked up at the front door, Wagoner among them, ready to intervene.

“We heard the woman screaming at the top of her lungs, so they knocked the door down, we went in, and he’s stabbing her in the chest. My role at that point was to provide medical care, but she died,” he recalled.

While many officers may not be aware of his experience with law enforcement, “those that have been there for a while do, so I think that helps. I know what they’ve been through, I’ve seen it, I know what impact it has on their families because my brother is a sheriff’s deputy.”

Despite all the challenges that lay ahead, Wagoner said he is not nervous about leading the county.

“I am excited to take on some new challenges. I feel like I’m ready,” he said. “I feel like the county has invested in me. They got me ready—my coworkers, my supervisor, the citizens, the elected officials, they all got me ready for this. They challenged me along the way, corrected me when I needed to be corrected. I feel like they have gotten me ready for what’s coming.”

Wagoner has certainly invested in the county over years; growing, serving, and constantly learning, digging his roots deeper and deeper into the place that he has always called home.

“I think the biggest strength of Henry County is its people, and we have tremendous people in our community that go above and beyond to help others, whether it be their service in volunteer rescue squads or fire departments, or what they do at their church or Kiwanis Club or Rotary Club, there are just so many selfless people here, so it makes it easy to want to see it succeed and grow,” Wagoner said with a smile. “I always want to be a part of it.”

Clean Water

from page 1

Uptown,” said Lawson. “Storms drains work by diverting rainwater and melting snow into nearby bodies of water. Every time it rains, water runs off of roofs and into the street, unfortunately bringing oil, litter, debris and toxins with it. This water then flows into storm drains and then through a system of pipes directly into waterways such as streams and rivers. It is important that nothing but water ever enters a storm drain.”

“Storm drain pollution is actually the number one pollution in Virginia,” said DRBA Virginia Programs Manager Brian Williams. “You don’t think about it, and that’s the whole reason for this campaign, to bring awareness that what goes into the storm drains eventually goes into the Smith River.”

He said the purpose of the campaign was not only to make adults aware of where storm water goes, but to educate youth

on the issue from an early age.

The first event of the Inspired Clean Water project, held in Oct. 2021, inspired people to understand how storm drains work when Rotarians and teens from the Boys & Girls Club painted twelve drains in Uptown Martinsville with the inscription “No Dumping, Drains to River.”

The second event was completed this spring, when three winners from the Rotary-sponsored elementary, middle and high school art contests painted their creations on three storm drains in Uptown.

Irene Jewell, a 13-year-old homeschool student from Kernersville, was the winner of the middle school-level art contest. In April, she painted a storm drain on Oakdale Street across from J. Frank Wilson Park in Martinsville.

As she worked to lay down background layers of yellow sand and blue-green water,

Jewell remarked that working on her art for the contest was an educational experience. Her initial idea of incorporating a dolphin into her piece morphed into a trout because they are native to the local waterways. Ultimately, she said she decided on a brook trout because they’re native and “because they’re prettier than rainbow trout.”

Additionally, she said, she learned just how large the Dan River Basin truly is.

“We live in Kernersville, and the Dan River Basin stretches from here to there, so it’s a really big basin,” she said.

Last week’s storm drain marking was the final event of the Inspire Clean Water initiative, completing the project with more than a dozen permanent medallions in Uptown reminding people that the storm drains empty into the Smith River.

Lawson remarked that the painted drains would not only bring “the beauty of artwork

to Uptown, but will be a long-lasting reminder for each of us to be responsible in protecting our water resources.”

She noted that keeping local water clean was doubly important, not only because of environmental concerns, but for financial reason. In other localities, she said, “their water has to go through so many processes, you pay a lot more for it. We’re very fortunate that we have the resources that we do and folks like (DRBA) to make sure we keep it that way.”

Williams agreed.

“We’re very fortunate to have an abundance of water supply here in Henry County. We get it right out of the Smith River and it’s clean because Philpott Lake acts like a big settling pond, so we have super clean water already. Fresh water is going to become more and more scarce, and it’s a human right. Everybody needs access to fresh, clean water. We can’t live

without it.”

“Storm drain marking is a tangible way to actively engage and motivate citizens to learn more about the connection between storm water and the quality of our rivers,” said Rotarian Dennis Reeves. “We hope this dedication of permanent markers will not only make people think twice about littering, but will also improve the health of our amazing Smith River.”

Rotary Club President Joe Keiper said that one of the newest tenants of Rotary International is protecting the environment and told those gathered last Thursday that it was important to help “put that message out there that we are responsible for our own backyard. We all live downstream.”

Visit www.danriver.org to learn more about storm drain marking and how you can support and protect waterways in your community.

Storehouse from page 1

Serving the community primarily means providing food to those who need it.

“Our mission is to feed those in need, reduce food waste, and to educate the community on the issues of hunger and nutrition,” Adkins said.

That work, of course, takes money. “The main way we go about that is our thrift store,” Adkins said. Items sold through the store provide all of the overhead for the agency, as well as the bulk of the funding for several of the organization’s food programs, he explained.

“When people donate \$5 to us, we’re the rare place that can say that \$5 goes right into the food we provide because our overhead is covered by people donating items they don’t want anymore.”

The day of the ribbon cutting, the ground floor of the new Storehouse space was neatly organized for shoppers, a handful of whom lined up outside the door before the noon ribbon cutting, clinging close to the walls for a bit of shade. Once inside, they immediately began to browse racks of clothing, glass cases holding jewelry, and other displays of home décor, electronics including DVDs and VHS tapes, and other accessories. One may settle into a chair by a wall of shelves and began perusing one of the many books available for sale.

Adkins said it took 2-months to finalize the move into the new location, moving the equivalent of 14 standard-sized houses worth of items with a bare-bones group of staff and volunteers.

And the work is not yet complete.

“We already have plans to expand upstairs,” he said. Part of the expansion will be to house more food, but the front part, which faces Church Street, will be devoted to consentment items and furniture, which they do not currently offer.

“Within a year’s time, we

will be on both floors,” he said.

Adkins showcased one of the current spaces devoted to storing the food that is central to the Storehouse’s mission. In one corner, a glass-doored freezer held a display of frozen meats and other items.

Shelves lined the walls, stocked with things like pasta, sauces, canned vegetables, dried beans, and even boxes of cornbread mix.

In the entryway, visitors are greeted by a hydroponic tower, sponsored by Bassett Office Supply, growing lettuces and other fresh food to provide even more fresh produce to shoppers.

Adkins explained that, for a long time, the standard for food pantries was simply to hand out pre-packed boxes, but the Community Storehouse has been working toward allowing recipients to have an experience more akin to a visit to a grocery store, where shoppers pick their own food.

The shift began at the Ridgeway location, but the agency was not able to house refrigerated or frozen items there, Adkins said. But that is not the case in the new location.

“When people come to us for food, they get everything that we would pick out at the grocery store,” he said. “They come in here and they pick out all their own food, everything from frozen meats, fresh produce,” and more.

For those who are not able or do not wish to come into the Storehouse, Adkins said food boxes can be delivered through a partnership with the food delivery app DoorDash, which allows the organization to do up to 2,000 free deliveries each week.

“Seniors and people who struggle with transportation, they don’t have to come here at all if they don’t want to,” Adkins said.

However, he noted that, in many cases, the Community Storehouse is not a long-term food source for everyone.

“We’re short-term help for able-bodied people. We don’t want to enable bad habits,” he said. “But if you were in a crisis, you’re looking for a job or something like that, we would help you out for about 3-months. But somebody who is a senior or mentally or physically disabled, we pledge to help them from now until they don’t need it anymore. We’ve got some elderly clients who have been coming to us for the whole 20-years we’ve been open.”

The organization also offers a Food for Kids program through local schools in which school staff hand-pick children “who are too heavily relying on their free breakfast and lunch so that we can be a stop-gap for the weekend” by delivering backpack bags of food each Friday during the school year “which will replace what they’re not getting because they’re not in school Saturday or Sunday,” Adkins said.

The agency often helps those who earn just a little too much to be eligible for SNAP benefits or otherwise cannot receive help from the government, he said. The basic formula to determine whether someone qualifies for help from the nonprofit is based on the total income of the household versus the number of people in that household, though he notes “the human factor” also is taken into account.

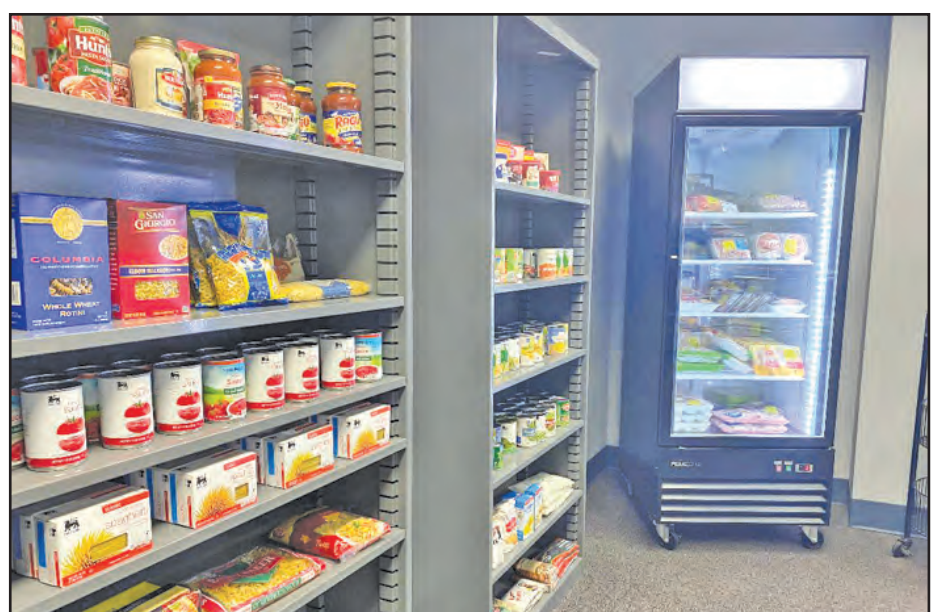
Standing in one of the food storage areas in the new space, looking around at the wide selection of food as shoppers browsed through thrift items just a few yards away, Adkins took a deep breath, seeming to finally realize that the move was done, and the new facility was open and running.

“I can’t believe we pulled it off, but we did it,” he said, happily.

The Community Storehouse is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. For more information, visit hungerfreemhc.org.



A shopper browses the racks of pants available at the Community Storehouse.



One of the food storage spaces at the Community Storehouse. Executive Director Travis Adkins said that once the organization expands to the upper floor of the building, there will be additional space for food storage.



A hydroponic tower, sponsored by Bassett Office Supply, stands at the front entryway of the new location for the Community Storehouse. Towers such as these provide an abundance of fresh herbs and greens grown in a relatively small space.



In addition to clothing, DVDs, VHS tapes, and other electronics are available for sale at the Community Storehouse.



A shopper browses items on display at the jewelry counter on the opening day for the Community Storehouse’s new Uptown Martinsville location.

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