

HENRY COUNTY ENTERPRISE

Saturday, February 11, 2023

(USPS-6)

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State funding mistake among items discussed



Director of Finance Dr. Benjamin Boone presented an update about the fiscal year 2024 budget to members of the Henry County School Board.

By Taylor Boyd

The Henry County School Board heard an update about the fiscal year 2024 budget at its meeting on Feb. 2. Director of Finance Dr. Benjamin Boone said the division expects to receive an update about the state budget around Feb. 9 from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). “As many of you already know, there was an error within the calculation tool that the Virginia Department of Education sends out to the school divisions. That error could have an impact on us this school year of about \$600,000, and next school year, that could be about \$1.5 million less in the Virginia funding,” he said. Boone said the budget for the fiscal year 2023 is a little bit over \$100 million, with the projected budget for the next fiscal year about \$300,000 more, based on level funding from the county. “That \$300,000 is pro-

jected to come from the state. It’s tied to one of the Governor’s proposed minutes for the one percent retention bonus for school staff. It’s proposed to be paid out in September,” he said. Boone said if the local funding remains level, there will be a decrease of about \$638,000 in discretionary funds going into the division’s coffers next school year. Over the summer, the General Assembly passed a five percent raise for all employees. “The state share is a little over \$4 million, the local share is about \$1.1 million, and the total funding for that is about \$5 million,” he said. Boone said while the increase in state funding will be about \$300,000, the required five percent is \$5 million. “So out of that budget, that’s pretty much remaining the same. We got an increase from the state government and local government,” but the division must find about \$5 million to pay

for the pay raises, he said. Gov. Glenn Youngkin’s proposed one percent retention bonus will be \$343,881 from the state, and a local share of \$77,600, which means there will be a total increase from the local government of about \$700,000, he said. In addition to the 5 percent increase for teachers, Boone said the school system is also looking at a 1 percent step raise for the fiscal year 2024. Classified staff will also receive the 1 percent step and 5 percent raises; transportation staff, including bus drivers and bus driver aides, are expected to receive a 7 percent pay increase, and administrators will receive a 5 percent increase, he said. Grant-funded positions also will receive increases based on their role. “We are also looking at increases for our part-time staff. The part-time staff consists of our substitute positions, our hourly paid employees, and some of our reading assistants,” he said. Boone anticipates an increase in the fuel line of the budget due to the rising cost of fuel, and a possible increase because of the results of the Evergreen Compensation Study. “Then, currently we are looking at vacant positions, we’re evaluating those positions and student numbers and certain programs, and what those additional costs may be there too,” he said. Other potential costs include utility increases and the purchase of school buses. Boone said the school

See State Funds, page 2



“Touchable Specimens:” The exhibition Dinosaur Discoveries: Ancient Fossils, New Ideas will feature a variety of touchable models, casts, and specimens. © AMNH



“Protoceratops Model:” A Protoceratops model, such as this one, is one of many exciting displays that will be found inside the exhibition Dinosaur Discoveries: Ancient Fossils, New Ideas. © AMNH

Dinosaur Discoveries: Ancient Fossils, New Ideas exhibit opens at VMNH

Staff Reports

A special exhibit, Dinosaur Discoveries: Ancient Fossils, New Ideas, is set to open at the Virginia Museum of Natural History (AMNH) and other leading paleontologists around the world. The exhibit will reveal a vivid picture of what living, breathing dinosaurs were really like, explore how current thinking

about dinosaur biology has changed over the past two decades, and highlight current research by scientists from the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) and other leading paleontologists around the world. Using a combination of fossil finds, captivating computer simulations, and provocative models, Dinosaur Discoveries: Ancient Fossils, New

Ideas introduces a dynamic vision of dinosaurs and the scientists who study them. The exhibit examines, in great detail, recent scientific sleuthing and the array of investigative tools—from bioengineering computer software to CT scans—used by modern scientists to reinterpret many of the most persistent and puzzling mysteries of dinosaurs: what they looked like, how they behaved, and how they moved. It also explores the complex and hotly debated theories of why—or

See Dinosaurs, page 5

Coffee shop, cafe to shutter this month

By Taylor Boyd

After meeting the coffee, food, and wine needs of the community for more than 10 years, the Daily Grind Coffee House & Café will close its doors in the upcoming months. The family business opened in 2011, according to Danny Heiss, who said

his parents now have decided to close the business to pursue other activities in life. “My father and mother want to pursue more ministerial travels,” Heiss said. “My dad’s a minister, so they want to do more traveling, and he also wants to write his book.” As for himself, Heiss said he wants to devote

more time to his music and pursue other sales and creative opportunities. His sister wishes to spend more time with her children and return to teaching. Operating the Daily Grind “is very demanding. It pulls you away from being able to do that,” he said of pursuing

See Coffee, page 5

Teen elected to serve on the town council

By Taylor Boyd



Maeve McCulloch, 19, is a member of the Ridgeway Town Council and is one of the youngest politicians in the country.

Maeve McCulloch is one of the youngest politicians in the country. She was appointed to fill a vacant seat on the Ridgeway Town Council when she was 18, and in November, was elected to her first four-year term as a write-in candidate. Now 19, McCulloch said she decided to seek the position because she’s been involved with the town during her entire high school career. “I was on the Mayor’s Youth Advisory Committee since my freshman year of high school,” she said. “I learned a lot about the town and about local government

through that committee led by Craig O’Der.” McCulloch said O’Der later asked if she wanted to fill the vacant seat, “and I said absolutely.” While she is new to the political arena, McCulloch also has other experience with the council. Her mother previously served on it for several years. “I went to meetings with her, so I kind of already knew how they ran and what they were like,” she said. However, she notes being an official council member is different than just attending the meetings. “It’s different, but I never feel out of place at all really. I work with really wonderful people in the town,” she said. Since joining the council, McCulloch said she has learned a lot about how government operates. “It’s been a wonderful learning opportunity, and everyone in the town is so patient with me learning everything as I’m going,” she said. “It’s wonderful because there’s so much more to our little, tiny town than I thought there was, and it’s incredible that I get to be a part of it.” For example, McCulloch



Maeve McCulloch was sworn in for her first four-year term on the Ridgeway Town Council after winning as a write-in candidate for the post last year.

did not know what a motor vehicle license was before she started. “That’s kind of showing my age there with that one,” she added, chuckling. McCulloch also wasn’t really aware of the different taxes the town collects. “I knew things existed, but I didn’t know exactly what the town could do with those things,” she said. During her tenure on the council, McCulloch said she hopes to get the town more involved in social media and boost community engagement. “I want to have more community events like events in the park and whatnot, to bring out our wonderful community and get people together and involved,” she said. She also is optimistic that her tenure on the council is only the

beginning of her budding political career. “I’m very excited and very grateful for this wonderful opportunity,” she said. McCulloch is a 2022 graduate of Magna Vista High School. She currently attends Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC) where she is a Presidential Scholar. She is also a participant in Dr. Greg Hodges’ fellowship this semester. She hopes to obtain her degree in General Studies by the end of next year. Currently, McCulloch works at Marshall’s in Martinsville. She lives in Ridgeway with her mother, father, and younger brother. In her spare time, she enjoys crocheting and spending time with her friends and cat.

Women’s Wellness Forum to feature local speakers in celebration of Black History Month

By Taylor Boyd

The first-ever Women’s Wellness Forum to be held at the Reynolds Homestead in Critz is set for Sunday, Feb. 19. Sponsored by Total Fitness, the event - HER Story: A celebration of stories from inspirational Black women - will be held from 2-4 p.m. Assistant Manager for Community Engagement and Educational Programs Melanie Gilbert said three female speakers will be featured. Each will discuss multiple aspects of women’s physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.

Ingram Land-Deans, a speech-language pathologist, North Carolina A&T State University professor, and motivational TEDx speaker is the first scheduled speaker. She is expected to kick off the program with foundational, spiritual-based words of wisdom to “inspire, deliver hope, and motivate mind-shift to experience joy amidst

the trials and challenges of life.” Other speakers include Martinsville business owners Jenise Bryson Wooten, of Body by Jenise, and Natalie Hodge, of Rudy’s Girl Media. Wooten will challenge participants to transition to a mindset that allows them to wake up each day with the thought that they will try to do a little bit more than the day

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 FOR MORE UPDATES



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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

Sunday, February 11

The Rev. Tyler Millner presents a lecture titled the Black Church & "Prophetic Black Pastor" at 1 p.m. at Morning Star Holy Church, 2939 Stoney Mountain Road, Martinsville.

Monday, February 13

The Friends of the Blue Ridge Regional Library will hold their monthly meeting at 10:30 a.m., in the Bassett Historical Center, 3964 Fairystone Park Hwy., Bassett. Interested in joining? Everyone is welcome.

Tuesday, February 14

Chix with Stix, 10:30 a.m. at Piedmont Arts. Knitters are invited to work together in the Piedmont Arts classroom on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month. Sessions are self-guided and provide a space to socialize while creating. Bring your own supplies. Free to members. \$5 for non-members (pay at the door). Advanced registration required.

Friday, February 17-Saturday, February 18

The Friends of the Blue Ridge Regional Library are hosting a book sale in the basement of the main branch, 310 E. Church St., Martinsville. Friday's sale, from 2-5 p.m., is "Members only," and you can join at the door. Saturday's sale is open to the public from 9:30 a.m.-2 p.m. Egypt, westerns, & regular and Religious fiction will be highlighted, and there are lots of "new to us" books in young adult, children's, cookbooks, & many more great finds. ALL paperback books are .50 cents & ALL hardback books are \$1, unless otherwise marked. All proceeds go back into the library system. Snow dates are February 24 & 25.

Saturday, February 18

Yoga in the Galleries, 10:30 a.m. at Piedmont Arts. Enjoy a relaxing yoga session with instructor Ally Snead. Bring your own mat and equipment. This is an event for all ages. This event will be \$5 for members and \$10 for non-members. Please bring cash to pay the instructor.

Artful Mending, 1 p.m. at Piedmont Arts. Give your clothes some love and a new life at Artful Mending with instructor Jennifer Reis. Participants will learn to use creative patching, embroidery, needle felting, and embellishing to repair and refresh personal articles of clothing. All supplies to repair will be provided; participants are invited to bring jeans, shirts, jackets, and wool sweaters. Advanced registration required and can be completed at www.piedmontarts.org. Tickets are \$55 for members and \$60 for non-members.

The Martinsville Henry County SPCA's wellness clinic, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Call (276) 638-7297 to schedule an appointment.

Wednesday, February 22

The Martinsville Henry County SPCA's wellness clinic, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Call (276) 638-7297 to schedule an appointment.

Thursday, February 23

Longwood Small Business Center offers Building the Foundation for Your Business with Brandon Hennessey, the center's Director of Innovation, Research and Entrepreneurship, from 9 to 10 a.m. The event will provide free start-up assistance to businesses via Zoom. The event includes prepare to start a successful business, evaluate your entrepreneurial abilities, marketing strategies, financial resources, legal form of organization, tips to prepare & present your business plan, and cybersecurity tips. To register, visit <https://clients.virginiasbdc.org/workshop.aspx?ekey=90430001>.

Sunday, February 25

Dr. King in Virginia & the Virginia Martin Luther King Holiday Narrative, at 1 p.m. will be presented by the Rev. Tyler Millner at Morning Star Holy Church, 2939 Stoney Mountain Road, Martinsville.

Tuesday, February 28

Chix with Stix, 10:30 a.m. at Piedmont Arts. Knitters are invited to work together in the Piedmont Arts classroom on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month. Sessions are self-guided and provide a space to socialize while creating. Bring your own supplies. Free to members. \$5 for non-members (pay at the door). Advanced registration required.

Thursday, March 16

Riddick Dance, 6:30 p.m. at Piedmont Arts. A contemporary African American dance company featuring a broad repertoire, expressive movement and a fusion of dance styles. Riddick will perform three pieces: Limerick of Our Souls, a dance-theater assortment including love stories, poems, and speeches; ONE, a mixed media piece dealing with love, loss, forgiveness, and conflict resolution through the enlightening, meditative music of Alice Coltrane; and The King Project, improvisational dance theater laced in visual projections based on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speeches, "I Have a Dream" and "I've Been to the Mountain Top," and his "Letter from Birmingham Jail." A reception will begin at 6:30 p.m. with the performance starting at 7 p.m. Tickets are available for purchase from www.piedmontarts.org.

ONGOING

The Briarpatch Amateur Radio Club will hold an in-person at the First Christian Church in Galax. Elections will be held at the BARC meeting, membership dues will be collected, an auction of analog gear is anticipated, and the 2023 events calendar will be discussed. All amateur radio operators

and interested non-hams are welcome to attend. Find important test prerequisites and other club activities on our *new* webpage, www.briarpatcharc.com, and our BARC Facebook page. And join us on air each Tuesday, 8 p.m. on 147.090+ with 103.5 Tone."

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 brrl.lib.va.us.

The Fontaine Ruritan Club hosts Bingo every Tuesday at 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 (MHCCHW) offers "no-touch" Medicaid/FAMIS application assistance for Virginia residents from birth to 64 years of age. No sign-up fees, no premiums, no deductibles. In-person application help is available on Wednesdays at Community Storehouse's new location UPTOWN at 128 East Church Street LOWER LEVEL from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Call or text Ann Walker today at (276) 732-0509 to see if you may qualify and get help applying.

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.

State Funds

from page 1



Clarissa Tye, Nolan Popperowitz, Jenny Castro, and Keira Kennedy were named to the All-District Concert Band.



Dakota Carter and Lakin Cochran were named to the All-District Scholastic Bowl.



Students named to the All-District Level Symphonic Band are (first row, left to right) Alex Hester, Christian Sarabia, Brendon Easley, Asjah Taylor, Isaac McKissick; (second row left to right) Breanna Boyd, Cole Wilkinson, Ricky Hall, Dylan Mabry, Matthew Gray, Gavin Whitlow.

division also receives \$3 million from the state in capital funding for a school construction grant, but "that \$3 million will not be there for facilities next year. Our current facilities budget is \$3,593,000." Barring any increases

in state and local funding, the budget will remain the same going into next year.

"Our budget next year would actually absorb this \$3 million that's dispersed to various categories. If the budget is absorbing that \$3 million, you still have to find about \$2 million in order to provide the raises within the existing budget," he said.

In other matters, the board:

- Recognized students who were named to the first- and second-team All-District Scholastic Bowl.
- Recognized the students named to the All-District Level Symphonic Band.
- Recognized students named to the All-District Level Concert Band.
- Recognized the third week of February as School Board Clerk Appreciation week.
- Recognized February as School Board Appreciation Month, Black History Month, and Career and Technical Education Month.
- Heard from members of Magna Vista High School Future Farmers of America (FFA).
- Approved the consent agenda as presented.

Get to know your heart better!

February is Heart Month

Heart month is the perfect time to check in on your heart health. Ask your provider about these factors that can affect your heart:

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- Blood pressure.** Blood pressure can be high without proper diet or exercise.
- Cholesterol numbers.** Cholesterol is raised by eating fatty foods.
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Band lineup for Rooster Walk 13 set with 19 new additions

Internationally touring purveyors of psychedelic funk, Pigeons Playing Ping Pong, top a list of 19 bands added to the 13th annual Rooster Walk Music & Arts Festival lineup, festival organizers announced. These additions finalize the band lineup for the multi-genre, family-friendly festival which will take place May 25-28, at Pop's Farm in Martinsville, Va.

Also joining Pigeons Playing Ping Pong in Rooster Walk's third, and final, band announcement are Black Joe Lewis & The Honeybears (blues/funk/soul), The Lil Smokies (progressive bluegrass), Orgone (funk), Dangermuffin (beach roots rock), Kelsey Waldon (vintage country), Erin & The Wildfire (rock), The Judy Chops (roots rock), Songs From The Road Band (bluegrass), Dave Eggar Band (jazz/folk), The Jared Stout Band (southern rock), Cristina Vane (Americana), Empire Strikes Brass (brass band), Into The Fog (bluegrass), Blue Cactus (Americana), Rob Cheatham and Co. (rock), Oh, Christopher (singer songwriter), P&HCC Jazz (jazz band), and the Junior Appalachian Musicians (youth bluegrass consortium), which will bring some of the region's most talented young bluegrass pickers to the stages of RW13.

Those nineteen artists will meld with the 24 acts that have already been announced as part of Rooster Walk's lineup, including overall festival headliner Greensky Bluegrass (progressive bluegrass), St. Paul & The Broken Bones (soul), The Marshall Tucker Band (southern rock icons), Neal Francis (neo soul), Kitchen Dwellers (progressive bluegrass), Doom Flamingo (a six-piece synthwave beast), Trouble No More (all-star collective paying tribute to The Allman Brothers Band), Daniel Donato's Cosmic Country, Brandon "Taz" Niederauer (rock/blues), Yarn (roots rock), Neighbor (jam), Mike & The Moonpies (neotraditional country), The Stews (southern rock), Crawford & Power (red-clay country), Jon Stickley Trio (jazzgrass), Sol Driven Train (rock), Sneezey

(R&B/Soul/Jam), The Wilson Springs Hotel (country/western/swing/bluegrass), Isaac Hadden Organ Trio (rock/funk), TC Carter Band (blues/rock), Sanctum Sully (rock), Big Fat Gap (bluegrass), Jules & The Agreeables (rock), and Pirates of the Piedmont (musical marauders).

In addition, the festival recently unveiled its roster of Artists at Large, among them are Ron Holloway (saxophone, Dizzy Gillespie/Allman Bros.), Jeff Sipe (drums, Apt. Q258/Aquarium Rescue Unit), Josh Shilling (vocals/keys/organ, Mountain Heart), Erin Lunsford (vocals/guitar, Erin & The Wildfire), Wallace Mullinax (guitar, Dead 27s), Robby Carden (harmonica, Jared Stout Band), and Jake Dempsey (bass, The Dead Reckoning). These seven artists will form the "Rooster Walk House Band" for one set of improv magic on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, while also sitting in as guest musicians with different bands at the festival all weekend.

Tickets for Rooster Walk 13 are now on sale at the newly redesigned website, www.roosterwalk.com, which also features all the information needed to plan for an amazing experience: band bios and music, ticket descriptions, festival experiences, frequently asked questions, a venue map and more.

The festival will take place Thursday-Sunday of Memorial Day weekend in the rolling foothills surrounding Martinsville, Va. Rooster Walk is a 4-day festival celebrating music, art, and the great outdoors at the idyllic Pop's Farm venue. With roughly 50 acts performing on 6 different stages, an amazing roster of stellar music steers the Rooster Walk experience.

In addition to approximately 80 sets of live music, the family-friendly Rooster Walk will offer a wide variety of kids' activities, craft beer, great food, arts and numerous opportunities to enjoy Virginia's great outdoors with kayak river floats, bike rides, yoga, a disc golf course and beautiful on-site camping.



Rooster Walk has been named one of the Top 5 festivals in the state by the Richmond-Times Dispatch. It also was voted the region's Most Creative Charitable Event by readers of Virginia Living Magazine for three consecutive years. The festival was created in memory of late Martinsville natives Edwin "The Rooster" Penn and Walker Shank, who graduated from Martinsville High School in 2000.

A portion of proceeds from the festival will be donated to local and regional charities, including Rooster Walk's own Penn-Shank Memorial Endowment Scholarship Fund for students at Martinsville High School, and the Rooster Walk Music Instrument Program for public band programs in the local city and county school systems.

The festival is produced by Rooster Walk Inc., a 501c3 nonprofit dedicated to promoting music, arts and education in its home of Martinsville-Henry County. Since 2009, Rooster Walk Inc. has donated more than \$270,000 to local and regional charities.



Rooster Walk 13
MAY 25-28, 2023
MARTINSVILLE, VA

African American Legacies: Artistic contributions honored with Black History Month events and exhibits

All month long, exhibits and programs will take place at Piedmont Arts to celebrate Black History Month.

"Hanging Tree Guitars" is an exhibit by Freeman Vines, a musician and artist who creates guitars out of found objects, notably a Steinway piano, the wood of a tobacco barn, and a tree where a man was once lynched. Rooted in a deep spirituality and quest for answers, Vines' work reveals the hidden stories of the American South. In addition to Vines' haunting sculptures, this exhibit also includes a number of tintype photographs by

Timothy Duffy that capture scenes from Vines' life and artistic process.

"Hanging Tree Guitars" is on loan from Music Maker Foundation.

"Rupe" Dalton Retrospective" remembers beloved local artist, Rodney Scott "Rupe" Dalton, whose passed away in 2022. Rupe's airbrush paintings depict scenes from the everyday lives of his friends, family, and neighbors and speak to the traditions of many Black Southern families. Often called a renaissance man, Rupe was a barber by trade, a comedian at heart and a born

artist who used airbrush to create works with depth and soul. His work elevated airbrush to new heights and his powerful subject matter invites memory to play an intimate roll in viewing his work.

These admission-free exhibits will be on display through March 18.

The African American Read-In and Family Day will take place on Saturday, Feb. 25 from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. at Piedmont Arts. This annual celebration of African American artists, performers, and writers includes story time, crafts, an interactive musical instrument display,

and a public read-aloud. Amy Stuart will lead a sing/play along with traditional instruments and history songs/games. This event is held in conjunction with the National African American Read-In, established in 1990 by the Black Caucus of the National Council of Teachers of English to make literacy a significant part of Black History Month. African American Read-In and Family Day is sponsored by Sovah Health and Carter Bank & Trust.

Riddick Dance will perform contemporary ballet on Thursday, March

16 at Piedmont Arts. The group brings a broad repertoire, expressive movement and a fusion of dance styles to the stage. The performance will include three works, including a dance-theatre piece, a mixed media piece, and an improvisational dance-theatre piece based on speeches and writings of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This event is partially supported by funding from the Virginia Commission for the Arts and the National Endowment of the Arts.

In addition to these galleries and events, the Discovery Room at

Piedmont Arts is free and open to the public and will have free crafts to learn about Black History all month. There is also a collection of books on loan from Joyce Staples and Imogene Draper that show the vast, incredible spectrum of African American stories, creators, and innovators for perusal by museum patrons.



BHS Senior signs with VT



Bassett High School senior Ja'Ricous Hairston will be playing football at Virginia Tech in the fall. Pictured are (seated left to right), Tamara Hairston, mother; Ja'Ricous Hairston, Curtis Hairston, father; (standing left to right), Jay Gilbert, activities coordinator, Tyler Cotner, assistant coach, Brandon Johnson, head coach, Bill Parks, assistant coach, Tiffany Gravely, principal.



Piedmont Arts is seeking nominations for the 2023 Clyde Hooker Award. Nominees should be businesses or individuals that are involved in and support Piedmont Arts and other arts and cultural organizations in Martinsville-Henry County.

The Clyde Hooker Award was established in 2003 and is named in honor of J. Clyde

Nominations for 2023 Clyde Hooker Award now being accepted

Hooker, Jr. for his generous support of the arts. To nominate a busi-

ness or individual, complete a nomination form and return it to Piedmont Arts by Friday, March 10, 2023. Nomination

forms are available at Piedmont Arts and online at PiedmontArts.org. Learn more at PiedmontArts.org.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

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- CLUES ACROSS
- 1. Functions
- 5. Records electric currents associated with contractions of the heart
- 8. Trigonometric function (abbr.)
- 11. Secret political clique
- 13. Type of gibbon
- 14. Nocturnal S. American rodent
- 15. Famed American playwright
- 16. Mesopotamian goddess
- 17. Abba __, Israeli politician
- 18. Long ridge of gravel and sediment
- 20. A place to stay
- 21. Actor Idris
- 22. One who behaves in a rebellious way
- 25. A way to measure movement
- 30. Distinguish oneself
- 31. Type of drug (abbr.)
- 32. Basketball great Baylor
- 33. Masses of salivary matter
- 38. Calls balls and strikes
- 41. Plant that grows along the ground
- 43. A recreational activity in the air
- 45. Consumes too much
- 47. Island nation
- 49. Pistol
- 50. Mixtures of soul and calypso
- 55. Ancient Greek City
- 56. Similar
- 57. Roughly trimmed tree trunk used in a Scottish game
- 59. Semitic fertility god
- 60. Frog, toad
- 61. Frogs, toads, tree toads
- 62. School in the northeast (abbr.)
- 63. Soviet Socialist Republic
- 64. " __ the Man" Musical, baseball player
- CLUES DOWN
- 1. Fiddler crabs
- 2. Discourt
- 3. Partner to "flows"
- 4. Ethnic group of Laos
- 5. Beloved "Seinfeld" character
- 6. Book of tickets
- 7. The last name of "Hermione"
- 8. Type of TV package
- 9. Helps to heal a cut
- 10. Town in Galilee
- 12. Actor Horsley
- 14. "Hocus Pocus 2" actor
- 19. Bird-loving group (abbr.)
- 23. They respond when someone is sick
- 24. Emerged
- 25. Midway between south and southeast
- 26. Monetary unit of Afghanistan
- 27. Unit of work or energy
- 28. Indicates near
- 29. Famed river
- 34. For each
- 35. News organization
- 36. CNN's founder
- 37. They __
- 39. Areas off to the side
- 40. Satisfies
- 41. A spare bed
- 42. Legendary singer Diana
- 44. Frothy mass of bubbles
- 45. A kind of sorcery
- 46. River in South Africa
- 47. Philippine Island
- 48. County in China
- 51. S. American plant
- 52. Beverage containers
- 53. Edge
- 54. Protein-rich liquids
- 58. Moved quickly on foot

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OPINION

Nothing, Forever

I have become mildly obsessed with “Nothing, Forever.”

The short explanation of “Nothing, Forever” is that it’s an endless, procedurally-generated episode of the sitcom “Seinfeld” that is available to stream on the internet. This description does not do it justice.

Available on the streaming service Twitch, “Nothing, Forever” is almost entirely driven by artificial intelligence. The main exception is the graphics; the computer-generated polygonal characters and sets were designed by actual people, and they look a bit like a cross between an old Nintendo 64 game and the Dire Straits “Money for Nothing” music video.

Everything else, however, is dictated by artificial intelligence. The dialogue is generated by AI, and the voices that deliver it are halting, slightly robotic AI voices. The movements of the characters, the timing of the laugh track, and even the camera angles are generated by AI.

The show switches between two different “sets.” Most of the scenes take place in a digital facsimile of the apartment from “Seinfeld.” The other “set” is the comedy club that opened every episode of “Seinfeld,” and we routinely cut to the Jerry character delivering a computer’s interpretation of a stand-up set.

The character names

are all different, likely to avoid a copyright strike; Jerry is “Larry,” Elaine is “Yvonne,” and so forth. Despite that, anyone who’s watched “Seinfeld” will instantly recognize what the creators were attempting to mimic.

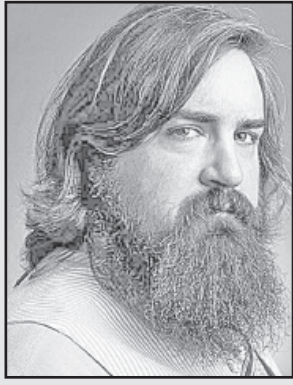
“Nothing, Forever” has been streaming on Twitch nonstop, 24/7, since Dec. 14, 2022.

(A LATE NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR: On Feb. 6, the day after I wrote this column, “Nothing, Forever” received a 14-day suspension from Twitch because the AI dialogue decided to descend into hate speech and violated Twitch’s terms of service. The show will presumably return after the suspension ends, hopefully with better content moderation.)

Does this endless, procedurally-generated sitcom actually work?

Not really, which is part of the reason I’m fascinated by it.

For the most part, the AI-generated conversations that these blocky Seinfeld-imitators engage in are mundane and meandering. Sometimes they’re largely incoherent. Characters hitch and shuffle their way across the set, sometimes clipping through one another, often having long conversations while facing away from each other. Unlike an actual “Seinfeld” episode, no plot lines ever emerge or resurface and the characters aren’t ter-



By Ben R. Williams

ribly distinct from one another (although I did catch a scene in which the Kramer character suggested that he was going to open a store that only sells toasters, which seems fairly on-brand).

The best scenes are the ones where polygon Jerry delivers AI-written stand-up in front of the brick wall of the comedy club. Sometimes, the algorithm manages to tell actual (albeit lame) jokes that have presumably been pulled from the internet; for example, “What did the fish say when it swam into a wall? Dam!”

More often, CG Jerry delivers long, rambling anecdotes that FEEL like stand-up despite going nowhere. My favorites include a story about throwing a cabbage at an old woman in the grocery store because his grandpa told him to never trust someone without a hat, or the time he was abducted by aliens and brought to the planet Slug World to watch the annual Slug Migration. Sometimes, Jerry asks the audience to tell their own jokes,

which is not how stand-up generally works.

The bizarre charm of “Nothing, Forever” is that if you watch it long enough, SOMETHING interesting will happen. It’s the ultimate expression of the old saw about a million monkeys at a million typewriters; every so often amidst all the nonsense, the show coalesces into something approaching competence.

“Nothing, Forever,” is, at its best, a curiosity. But speaking as a writer, it is also fairly disturbing.

Over the last year, AI has broken new ground. People are using AI to generate legitimately impressive art. It’s mainly impressive because unscrupulous programmers are feeding the AI algorithm art that has been stolen from actual talented artists, but nonetheless, a lack of artistic talent is no longer a barrier to creating art.

Procedurally-generated books are even beginning to pop up on Amazon. I recently read an article about an “author” who’s taken a lot of heat because he used AI to create not only the art, but the story for a children’s book.

And while one glimpse of “Nothing, Forever” makes it clear that the technology isn’t there yet, it’s not hard to imagine a time five or ten years from now when you could tune into a procedurally-generated sitcom that never ends. No offense to fans of the show, but I can’t imagine it would be that difficult to teach a computer to crank out the script for the average episode of “Two and a Half Men.”

In fact, that very concept is the hideous dream that inspired “Nothing, Forever,” according to one of the creators.

“As generative media gets better, we have this notion that at any point, you’re going to be able to turn on the future equivalent of Netflix and watch a show perpetually, nonstop as much as you want,” said “Nothing, Forever” co-creator Skyler Hartle in an interview with Motherboard. “You don’t just have seven seasons of a show, you have seven hundred or infinite seasons of a show that has fresh content whenever you want it. ... Our goal with the next iterations or next shows that we release is to actually (create) a show that is like Netflix-level quality.”

Speaking as someone who enjoys creating stuff, why are we using artificial intelligence for this purpose?

For most of my life, the selling point of AI was that it would do the jobs that humans hate. AI could fill out spreadsheets or run through checklists or diagnose complex problems, leaving mankind free to pursue loftier interests.

Now we’re rapidly heading toward a world where humans are still doing grunt work while AI creates our art and literature and music. Not to chastise the tech experts who are making this happen, but guys, the art is the FUN part.

I can’t help but think that this endless, janky, Seinfeld episode is more than just a novelty; one day, we may look back on the title “Nothing, Forever” as a dark promise of what’s to come.

Report from Richmond

Del. Les R. Adams
16th House District

At the time of this writing, the Virginia House of Delegates is finishing the initial stage on the legislative calendar prior to “crossover,” the date by which all successful bills must pass before crossing over to the Senate. While a few of the bills I sponsored are currently calendared for votes on the floor this week, most have already passed out and await Senate action. I mentioned two of those in my column last week, namely the ones dealing with fraudulent unemployment claims that interfere with legitimate awards. This week I will address another proposal that has thus far had success.

In late January the House voted to pass my

bill to prohibit interference with the administration of justice, or the intimidation of judges, jurors, witnesses and other court officials, by picketing or parading at the homes of such persons. The same conduct would also be prohibited at the homes of court officials’ children or other immediate family members. I introduced this bill at the request of the Governor and the Attorney General who, like me, are concerned about the rise, particularly on the left, of angry mob responses to controversial public policy matters that involve litigation in court.

Readers will recall the events of last summer when, in the wake of the unprecedented leak out of the United States Supreme

Court of the draft of an opinion to reverse the Roe v. Wade decision, protesters assembled outside the residence of Justice Kavanaugh in apparent attempt to influence his duties as a jurist in that case. The situation became particularly concerning and eventually an armed man was apprehended for attempting to break into the home to kidnap or murder the justice and his family. Protesters also revealed the home addresses of two other conservative justices during that time, leading to extensive and ongoing demonstrations at those residences.

Regrettably, although not surprisingly, the response by the Biden administration’s Justice Department during this time was lacking, at best. However, the concern for judicial safety reaches beyond the cultural flashpoint of those involved in what is now known as the Dobbs decision. Since 2016, threats against judges have report-

edly increased by a margin of 400%. While the safety and security of those who carry out their duties in cases and controversies brought before them is obviously an important concern for their sakes, the implications for a society when such intimidation is tolerated is far reaching for our system of government that is based on the consent of the governed and the rule of law.

Unfortunately, not a single Democrat in the House supported the bill that we passed, and in the Senate where Democrats hold the majority, the cognate to my bill apparently did not report out of the committee to which it was assigned. Nevertheless, I remain hopeful for this legislation following crossover and will make the case for living in a society where civic decisions are made based upon debate and good reason, not threats and coercion.

To schedule a visit at my Richmond office, call (804) 698-1016.

Elizondo-Eastridge named VP of commercial lending



Katy Elizondo-Eastridge was named ValleyStar Credit Union’s vice president of commercial lending.

ValleyStar Credit Union announced Katy Elizondo-Eastridge is its vice president of commercial lending to develop and execute strategic plans for commercial lending that minimize risk and ensure that policies align with company objectives.

Elizondo-Eastridge began her career as a member service officer

at ValleyStar six years ago. She was promoted to business development specialist in 2019, then to commercial lender in 2021. She played a critical role in the success of the commercial lending department, increasing the commercial portfolio to over \$100 million and illustrating exemplary member service.

“Katy has had an exceptional career, and we’re confident that her expertise and dedication to our goals will help us accomplish our vision of being the best in service and convenience,” said Mike Warrell, ValleyStar CEO. “We know that we can count on her to ensure lending satisfaction to our members while prioritizing the wellbeing of her team members. She is a great asset to ValleyStar Credit Union.” Elizondo-Eastridge is active in the community, serving as a member of the Danville After Hours Rotary and WeLead a women’s organization within the Danville Chamber of Commerce. When she’s not working, you can find her kayaking, going to concerts or at the local coffee shop with her son on Sunday mornings.

Celebrate Black History Month at NCI with series of events

This month, the New College Institute (NCI) will present a series of events in celebration of Black History Month. NCI’s goal is to educate and inspire the community by honoring the achievements and contributions of local Black Americans in history. The month-long celebration will feature a variety of events, all held in the Baldwin Building on Fayette Street, including:

Month long poster display for The Martinsville 7. Presentation provided in partnership with The Martinsville 7 Initiative.

Dine and Discover - February 21 at 6 p.m. - Dinner and an educational presenta-

tion followed by a showing of the movie “Once Upon a Time: A Village on Fayette.” Presentation provided in partnership with FAHI (Fayette Area Historical initiative).

Dine and Discover - February 24 at 6 p.m. - Dinner and an educational presentation about the Martinsville 7 entitled, “Pardoned but Not Forgotten.” Presentation provided in partnership with The Martinsville 7 Initiative.

“During Black History Month, we take the opportunity to contemplate the history of the Baldwin Block neighborhood in Martinsville and to educate our community about it,” said Christina Reed,

NCI’s Interim Executive Director. “We’re thrilled to bring the community together to learn, grow, and celebrate together.”

All events are free, open to the public for all ages, and are designed to educate, inspire, and bring the local community together. The Dine & Discover events are free to attend but require an RSVP.

For more information on the events and to register, visit newcollegeinstitute.org.

For more information on FAHI, visit fahimuseum.org.

For more information on The Martinsville 7 Initiative, visit martinsville7initiative.org.

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

See more at www.henrycountyenterprise.com

Dinosaurs from page 1

even whether—they became extinct. “This exhibition illustrates how scientists are using new ideas, new discoveries, and new technologies to revolutionize our understanding of dinosaurs,” says Mark A. Norell, curator of Dinosaur Discoveries and curator emeritus in the Division of Paleontology at the American Museum of Natural History. “Our work reaches across many disciplines involving paleontologists, biomechanical engineers, paleobotanists, and others to showcase how we go about reconstructing the mysterious life of dinosaurs.”

Dinosaur Discoveries: Ancient Fossils, New Ideas is divided into several major themes, including: How Dinosaurs Moved

In this section, biomechanical studies on dinosaur movement spring dramatically to life. Highlights include:

A video on T. rex depicting how experts in biomechanics and paleontology are teaming up to estimate the typical speed and gait of a rampaging tyrannosaurus.

A full-size cast skeleton leg of a Tyrannosaurus rex.

A stunning model of an Apatosaurus skeleton neck, whose construction has been based on computer drawings used to investigate the full range of vertebral movements of this huge, long-necked creature.

A high-definition video array on the wall directly behind the Apatosaurus neck displays a computer animation of the steel robo-dinosaur skeleton that morphs into a realistic fossil skeleton and then gradually adds layers of muscle and skin until a full-fledged Apatosaurus is moving on the screens.

The Liaoning Forest
This portion of the exhibit includes a diorama depicting a section of a 130-million-year-old forest that existed in what is now Liaoning Province, China. Fossil discoveries from Liaoning have shed light on the origins of birds, mammals, feathers, flight, and flowering plants.

How Dinosaurs Behaved
This section demonstrates how scientists are reinterpreting old fossil evidence using new approaches and new technologies to unlock the secrets of dinosaur behavior. Life-size models and skeleton casts illustrate theories on the purposes of the unusual horns, frills, crests, and domes found on many dinosaur skulls. Were they used for defense,

mate recognition, or display? Highlights include:

A case featuring various skulls, plates, and other armor.

Twin life-size models of Protoceratops – one skeleton, the other fully fleshed out.

A life-size three-horned Triceratops skull.

Extinction
In this section, visitors can explore the hard evidence for theories on the possible events that ended the Age of Dinosaurs, including an asteroid impact, global climate change, and massive volcanic eruptions, as well as the descendants of dinosaurs that walk among us today.

“The museum constantly strives to provide our visitors with new and unique experiences,” said VMNH Deputy Director Ryan Barber. “Working with the American Museum of Natural History to bring such an immersive, dinosaur-themed exhibit to VMNH will give visitors another memorable experience that compliments the many dinosaur displays that the museum already exhibits on a permanent basis.”

Dinosaur Discoveries: Ancient Fossils, New Ideas is exhibited at the Virginia Museum of Natural History from February 11 through January 20, 2024.

Admission to the special exhibit is included in the price of general museum admission. Museum admission is \$10 per adult ages 18-59 and \$5 for children and youth ages 3-17, seniors ages 60+, and college students. Admission is free for children under 3, museum members, and members of museums and science centers that participate in the ASTC Passport program.

The museum also participates in the Institute for Museum and Library Services Museums for All initiative, offering discounted admission to EBT cardholders. Through this program and additional funding provided by Hooker Furnishings, visitors who present their EBT card and accompanying ID at the museum's box office receive free museum admission.

Dinosaur Discoveries: Ancient Fossils, New Ideas is organized by the American Museum of Natural History, New York (www.amnh.org), in collaboration with the California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco; The Field Museum, Chicago; the Houston Museum of Natural Science; and the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, Raleigh.

To learn more about VMNH, visit www.vmnh.net.

To learn more about the American Museum of Natural History, visit amnh.org.

Coffee from page 1



Open since 2011, the Daily Grind Coffee House & Café plans to close its doors to allow the family which owns and operates the business time to pursue other activities.

ing other activities. While there is no firm closing date, Heiss said the family will shutter the eatery sometime this month. Until then, the café will remain open and operate as usual. Heiss said there is already a potential buyer interested in purchasing the building. While the sale will most likely go through, Heiss said that while he doesn't know what type of eatery will be housed in the building, he knows “it's going to be a restaurant.” While there are many things he will miss about the Daily Grind, Heiss said he will miss customers the most.

“I've become really close with a lot of our customers” and became friends with many, while some are “as close as family. Being able to see them and touch base with them on a regular basis has been really fulfilling,” he said. Overall, his time with the Daily Grind has been an overall positive experience. “Sometimes they want to put a negative spin on a restaurant closing, but we've been successful here since we've been opened,” he said. “We're closing because we don't want to do this anymore, not because we feel like we're being forced to” close.

Women from page 1

prior. Her remarks will encourage attendees to take small steps towards a more health-focused lifestyle.

Hodge will lead a “Guts over Buts” session, exploring how negative self-talk, doubt, past trauma, and negativity can be an unfortunate barrier to success. In this session, she will share simple yet powerful tools to move past excuses and into a space of optimal results in all areas of personal and professional life.

Gilbert said the forum “was created in the hopes of not only honoring and celebrating Black history month but also in the hopes of building lifelong relationships with all the diverse and amazing women in and around the Reynolds Homestead community.”

In addition to celebrating, Gilbert said the forum's mission is to empower women to take the time to pause for a wellness check and those who attend to leave with practical tools for making

wellbeing a priority.

“Our hope is all women leave feeling affirmed in the value they bring to their families and communities,” she said.

Gilbert said the idea for the forum came about when she was talking to Kristin Hylton, communication and program support assistant at the Homestead.

“We were sitting in a meeting, and she said, ‘wouldn't it be great to have a TED talk speaker come to the Homestead and do a talk.’ Gilbert

said she replied, “I know one.”

When speaking to Land-Deans, Gilbert said she shared the history of the Reynolds Homestead as a historical plantation.

Gilbert said Land-Deans responded “‘Oh my gosh yes. How powerful is it going to be to have African American women empowering other women at this place.’”

Then, Gilbert said she thought about turning the event into a forum and having two other female

speakers that would embody the well-being of the spirit, mind, and body.

Wooten “is our second speaker,” Gilbert said and added that Wooten is from Martinsville and has her own company called Body by Jenise. “She's a personal trainer and she is so into caring about people and the health of women and sharing her story of what she went through.”

Hodge is the scheduled third speaker, Gilbert said, adding that each of

the three women brings something different to the table in terms of content and experience.

The Martinsville & Henry County Jazz Quartet will kick off the event.

Tickets are \$10 per person and can be purchased at the door or online at www.reynoldshomestead.vt.edu.

For additional information, call Gilbert at (276) 694-7181 ext. 22, or email her at mtgilbert68@vt.edu.

Barker named director of Victim Witness Assistance Program



Shannon Barker is the new director of Henry County's Victim Witness Assistance Program.

Shannon Barker has been selected as the next director of the Victim Witness Assistance Program in Henry County. The federally funded program, which works in conjunction with the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office, was previously headed by Robin Byrd, who recently retired after 47 years of service to the community.

“I am blessed and honored to have the opportunity to serve as the director of the Victim-Witness Assistance

Program,” Barker said. “Helping people is my passion and I want our crime victims and witnesses to know they have a voice, to feel supported as they navigate the criminal justice system, and to be empowered to overcome their trauma. I look forward to continuing the great work that is already being done and finding new and exciting ways to enhance the program.”

Barker began working at the Henry County Commonwealth's

Attorney's Office in September 2007 as a legal secretary. In July 2014, she became the Assistant Office Administrator. Her previous work experience includes five years of victim advocacy for Citizens Against Family Violence and two years as a Case Management Supervisor for the same organization. Barker graduated from Virginia Tech in 2002 with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and a minor in Sociology. She is also certified to teach courses

on domestic violence and sexual assault prevention.

“I look forward to working with Shannon in her new role as the director of the Victim-Witness Assistance Program,” said Commonwealth's Attorney Andrew Nester. “She's developed a deep understanding of the criminal justice system during her time in my office and she exhibits the compassion and drive to help people that will serve her well in her new position. She has big shoes to fill but I'm confident that she will excel at it.”

The Henry County Victim-Witness Assistance Program has been in existence since

1985. The purpose of this program is to assist

both crime victims and witnesses through the criminal justice system and to provide services required by Virginia's Crime Victim and Witness Rights Act. Examples of services provided through the program include explanation of victims' rights, assistance in obtaining protective orders, helping victims obtain restitution, completing notification forms for various authorities, and connecting victims with counseling and support groups. For more information, visit www.henrycountyva.gov/292/Victim-Witness-Program.

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"The History & Legacy of African-American Churches"

Sunday, February 26, 2023, 3:00 P.M.
Walker Theatre, Patrick & Henry Community College
645 Patriot Avenue, Martinsville, Virginia

Reverend Matthew Brown
St. Paul High Street Baptist Church
Martinsville, Virginia

Sponsored by
Fayette Area Historical Initiative
Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society
Patrick & Henry Community College

Program will detail history, legacy of African American churches

"The History & Legacy of African American Churches" will be presented by the Rev. Matthew Brown on Sunday, February 26, at 3 p.m., in the Walker Theatre of Patrick & Henry Community College, 645 Patriot Avenue, Martinsville, Virginia. Gospel music will be part of the presentation.

African American churches rose among the horrors of slavery to allow African Americans a safe place of spiritual equality and self-expression. The African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church was the first African American denomination organized in the United States (1816) and, unlike most other American denominations, was formed because of racial issues rather than theological differences.

In Martinsville, Grace United Presbyterian Church began with a meeting in 1882 at the home of Peggy Redd. Her home would also be the starting point for High Street Baptist Church in 1885.

Brown has been Pastor of St. Paul High Street Baptist Church since 2016. He received his formal education through Liberty University and Shaw University Divinity School, earning his Master of Divinity degree. He currently serves as second vice president of the Young



Ministers and Pastors Ministry of the Virginia Baptist State Convention. He also serves on the Grace Network Board of Directors and as Chaplain of the Tau Omicron Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity. He and his wife, India, have one daughter.

Honoring Black History Month, this free event is sponsored by the Fayette Area Historical Initiative, Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society, and Patrick & Henry Community College. Visit <https://fb.me/e/2rCg4ftpE> for more information.

MVHS senior to play at Sweet Briar College

Magna Vista High School senior Kailei Minter has signed to play golf at Sweet Briar College in the fall. Attached are video and photo for your use as desired.

Pictured (seated L to R) are Beth Minter (mother), Kailei Minter, Mike Minter (father) and (standing L to R), John Gibbs (MVHS activities coordinator), Duane Whittaker, (MVHS principal), Billy Wheeler (MVHS golf coach), Scott Gardner (MVHS golf coach). (Contributed)



Administrative Support, Waste Management Leading Industry for Claims

Data from the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) indicates that the number of initial claims edged slightly lower in the latest filing week to 1,920, and remained at levels typically seen over the last twelve months.

For the filing week ending January 28, the figure for seasonally unadjusted initial claims in Virginia was 1,920, which is a decrease of 28 claimants from the previous week. Over half of initial claims with a self-reported industry were from administrative and support and waste management; construction, professional, scientific, and technical services; retail trade; and health care and social assistance. Continued weeks claimed totaled 11,624, which was an increase of 253 claims from the previous week and an increase of 56% from the 7,439 continued claims from the comparable week last year.

Eligibility for benefits is determined on a weekly basis, and so not all weekly claims filed result in a benefit payment. This is because the initial claims numbers

represent claim applications; claims are then reviewed for eligibility and legitimacy.

In the week ending January 28, the advance U.S. figure for seasonally adjusted initial claims was 1,830,000, a decrease of 3,000 from the previous week's unrevised level of 1,860,000. The advance number of actual initial claims under state programs, unadjusted, totaled 224,356 in the week ending January 28, a decrease of 872 (or -0.4 percent) from the previous week. There were 257,583 initial claims in the comparable week in 2022. Looking at preliminary data, most U.S. states reported increases on a seasonally unadjusted basis. Georgia's preliminary weekly change (+1,885) was the largest increase. New York's weekly change (+1,195) was the second largest increase. Oregon's preliminary weekly change (+736) was the third largest increase. Wisconsin's weekly change (+697) was the fourth largest increase. Virginia's preliminary weekly change (+215) was the 14th largest decrease.

New door-to-door scam reported

Residents in the New River Health District are warned to be on alert about an apparent door-to-door scam that may be targeting people in the New River Valley. Local law enforcement officers in Pulaski County have been made aware of people knocking on doors during evening hours in several Dublin neighborhoods.

The individuals claim to be from the Virginia Department

of Health and Human Services. In at least one instance, a solicitor was allowed to enter a home while other members of the group waited in a parked car. The visitor was equipped with an iPad and asked the resident to participate in a health survey being conducted by the Virginia Department of Health.

"No employee affiliated with the New River Health District will ever make personal visits to homes in our communities without proper

credentials, including a photo ID and a health department business card," said New River Valley Health District Health Director Noelle Bissell, MD. "Anyone claiming to be with the Virginia Department of Health without official identification should never be allowed to enter a home."

Anyone who has been approached by these solicitors on behalf of the Virginia Department of Health should contact local law enforcement.

New center offers child care alternatives



The Barrow Center is a new child-care facility that will provide support for families of children with special needs. It's mission is to make a difference in "our clients, community, and of our staff members lives by inspiring happiness and ensuring equality, inclusion and dignity are provided with the utmost respect." Located at 3300 Kings Mountain Road, Martinsville, Henry County and surrounding areas. Visit www.thebarrowcenter.org for more information.

Franklin County educator named AITC Teacher of the Year

Jennifer Hatch, a seventh-grade teacher at Benjamin Franklin Middle School in Rocky Mount, has been named the Virginia Agriculture in the Classroom 2023 Teacher of the Year.

The award recognizes a Virginia educator for incorporating agriculture into his or her core curriculum.

Hatch is a mathematics teacher whose goal is to educate her students on the importance of understanding where their food comes from and to demonstrate real-life applications of math in farming. She and her students established a hydroponics garden in their classroom, where they grew lettuce, basil and cilantro year-round.

Applying their math skills, Hatch's students gathered data, recorded plant measurements and growth rates, and performed data analysis throughout the growing process.

They also received farm-to-table experiences by preparing their classroom-grown produce into meals. They budgeted and shopped for additional ingredients and calculated recipe proportions for the number of servings needed.

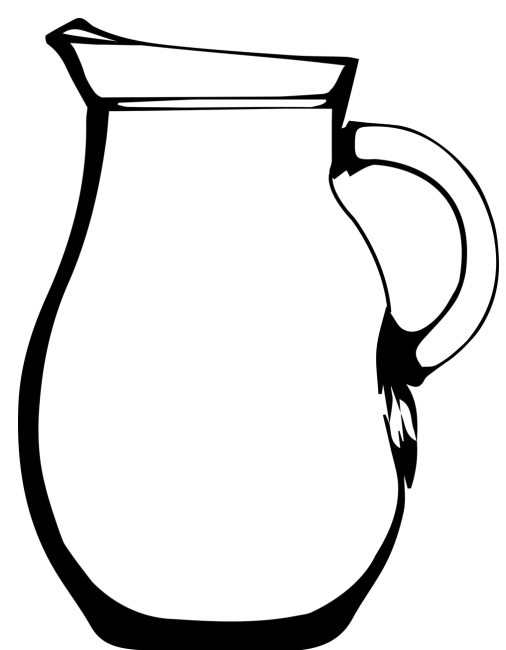
"Jennifer is truly dedicated to integrating agriculture into her classroom, and the fact that she teaches middle school mathematics makes this even more remarkable," said Tammy Maxey, Virginia AITC executive director. "She recognizes that agriculture forms the backbone for our daily lives, and the way she infuses it into her

math lessons is an effective way to bring it to life for her students. Additionally, rather than being a single unit within the year, it's continued throughout the year, leaving a lasting positive impression."

As Virginia AITC Teacher of the Year, Hatch will receive a scholarship to the 2023 National AITC Conference in June in Orlando, Florida, and a \$500 cash award.

For more information on the Teacher of the Year recognition, visit AgInTheClass.org.

The Virginia Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom is a 501c3 nonprofit organization that promotes a greater understanding and appreciation of agriculture through education and outreach activities. To learn more and support, visit AgInTheClass.org.



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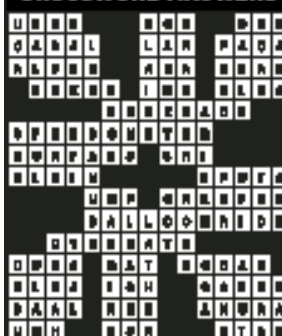
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COUNTY OF HENRY BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Pursuant to Section 15.2-2204 of the Code of Virginia, a series of public hearings has been scheduled for **March 2, 2023, at 1:00 p.m.** in the Summerlin Meeting Room of the County Administration Building, Kings Mountain Rd., Collinsville, Virginia. The purpose of these public hearings is to receive citizen input into the possible issuance of a Variance and a Special Use Permit for the following cases.
Case S-23-02 Patrick Henry Saddle Club, c/o Mary Knight
A request for a Special Use Permit was received under Section 21-302 of the Henry County Zoning Ordinance to allow for the establishment of a campground facility to accommodate up to 22 sites on approximately 8-acres. The property is located at 394 Saddleridge Road, in the Blackberry District, is zoned Agricultural District A-1, as shown on Tax Map 24.3/2,2A,2B.
Case S-23-03 Kasey Lucas
A request for a Special Use Permit has been received under Section 21-902 of the Zoning Ordinance to allow for the operation of an event center with a dance hall permit. The property is located at 1960 Virginia Ave, in the Collinsville District and shown on Tax Map 41.1(32)/2,3A-3C,ABC. The property is zoned Commercial District B-1.
Case S-23-04 Charles Edward Long, III
A request for a Special Use Permit has been received under Section 21-302 of the Zoning Ordinance to allow for the construction of an approximately 40'x70' building to be used as an event center with a dance hall permit. The property is located behind 3531 Dillons Fork Rd, in the Blackberry District and shown on Tax Map 39.1/57. The property is zoned Agricultural District A-1. The applications for these requests may be viewed in the Department of Planning, Zoning & Inspection between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.
Lee H. Clark, AICP
Director of Planning, Zoning & Inspection



Pharmaceutical engineering, manufacturing company locates in Danville

Engineered BioPharmaceuticals, Inc., a pharmaceutical engineering and manufacturing company dedicated to advancing cost effective, state-of-the-art medicine, will invest \$6.1 million to expand in the City of Danville. The company will expand from its current lab space in the Dan River Business Development Center into its first standalone manufacturing facility at 1 Ecomnets Way.

The new facility will allow for Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) manufacturing of the company's innovative oral pharmaceutical dosing platforms, designed to enhance patient compliance and therapeutic efficacy. Virginia successfully competed with California, New York, and Texas for the project, which will create 34 new jobs.

"Thanks to innovators like Engineered BioPharmaceuticals, our Commonwealth is advancing as a hub for cutting-edge technology and research in the life sciences industry," said Gov. Glenn Youngkin. "The company's start in a Virginia business incubator shines a spotlight on the importance of fostering an environment that supports start-ups and small businesses. I commend the region's forward-thinking economic development leaders and partners and look forward to Engineered BioPharmaceuticals' continued success in Danville."

"The company chose to expand in Virginia due to the Commonwealth's overall business-friendly environment and its preeminent biotechnology presence," said Engineered BioPharmaceuticals CEO Carl Sahi. "We also found Pittsylvania County and the City of Danville to be an ideal location because of their people, their economic development efforts, and their support and commitment to workforce development."

Established in 2011 in the Dan River Business Development Center, Engineered BioPharmaceuticals, Inc. develops enhanced delivery and shelf-life stability technologies for pharmaceuticals, vaccines, nutraceuticals, food, and beverage products. The company has been dedicated to partnering with strategic partners and pharmaceutical clients to lower the cost of healthcare and make critical therapeutic drugs more accessible and user friendly. In addition to developing technologies for customers, Engineered BioPharmaceuticals has also developed novel delivery enhancing technologies that the company can formulate into its own therapeutic products. Expansion into the new manufacturing facility will assist the company with the commercialization of these novel therapeutic products, including its first product, a plant-based, zero-calorie chewable gel (gummy). Once launched, this prescription pharmaceutical product will offer diabetic individuals an improved 'user-friendly' oral therapeutic to help combat hyperglycemia, associated with early stages of diabetes.

The Virginia Economic Development Partnership worked with the City of Danville and Southern Virginia Regional Alliance to secure the project for Virginia. Governor Youngkin approved a \$150,000 grant from the Commonwealth's Opportunity Fund to assist Danville with the project. Engineered BioPharmaceuticals is eligible to receive state benefits from the Virginia Enterprise Zone Program, administered by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development. Funding and services to support the company's employee training activities will be provided through the Virginia Jobs Investment Program.

Voting Begins in annual Black History Month Art Contest

Voting is now open in UScellular's 8th Annual Black History Month Art Contest with Boys & Girls Clubs of Blue Ridge. Voting is available online, and the Martinsville community can go to newsroom.uscellular.com/2023-bhmac-vote-now to vote for their favorite piece of original art.

Boys & Girls Club members created original pieces of artwork representing influential Black STEM icons. These included historical figures, world leaders, scientists and educators who have made vital contributions to the world of science, technology, engineering and math.

Ten finalists from Boys & Girls Club of Blue Ridge were chosen by Club representatives based on creativity, quality, interpretation, clarity of theme and

overall impression. Voting will remain open until February 28, and anyone 18 or older can vote for their favorite. The finalists' artwork is also digitally displayed at the UScellular at 820 Commonwealth Blvd. Ste 20, Martinsville, Va.

The top three vote-getters will be announced in March and prizes include gift cards in the following amounts:

- \$250 for 1st Place
- \$150 for 2nd Place
- \$100 for 3rd Place

To vote for your favorite artwork, visit newsroom.uscellular.com.

Since 2009, UScellular has donated more than \$22.6 million along with countless experiences and technology items to nonprofit organizations across the country. For more information about UScellular's corporate social responsibility initiatives, visit <https://newsroom.uscellular.com/community/>.

Applications now accepted for grant programs

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service will offer \$41 million through the 2023 Wood Innovations Grant and 2023 Community Wood Grant programs to spark innovation and create new markets for wood products and renewable wood energy.

Made possible in part by President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act, these grants expand wood products use and strengthen emerging wood energy markets, supporting sustainable forest management - particularly in areas of high wildfire risk.

"With the support of the Inflation Reduction Act and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, USDA is carrying out the Biden-Harris Administration's mission to support rural, forest-dependent communities while fighting climate change and protecting our natural resources," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack.

"These grant programs

provide opportunities for communities and businesses to develop innovative uses and markets for wood, a renewable and economical resource," said Forest Service Chief Randy Moore. "Previous Wood Innovations Grants are making a difference across the country, and we are pleased to continue supporting wood use ingenuity that helps our communities and forests."

The application deadline for both grant programs is Thursday, March 23, at 5 p.m. local time. Applications may be submitted via email to the Forest Service Regional Wood Innovations coordinator listed in the application instructions.

Not only are these grants helping support local economies by expanding the potential of wood products and wood energy, but they are also helping address critical issues like climate change. By finding new uses and expanding current and energy with products removed from unhealthy,

overgrown forests, we can restore forests to health, reduce wildfire risk while fighting climate change, and sustain local economies.

The Wood Innovations Grant Program makes funding available to expand traditional wood use projects, advance wood energy markets, and promote wood use in commercial building construction. This Request for Proposals focuses on the program's market development goals to reduce hazardous fuels and improve forest health on national forests and other forest lands, reduce the costs of forest management, and promote economically strong and environmentally healthy communities.

Eligible project examples include:

Architectural and engineering designs, cost analyses, and permitting to secure financing for commercial wood construction or wood energy projects development.

Establishing or increasing wood products manu-

facturing to support forest restoration.

Showcasing environmental and economic benefits of wood as a sustainable commercial building material to encourage growth in the industry.

Establishing statewide wood use teams or wood energy teams.

Developing wood energy projects that use residues from wood products or woody biomass.

Developing commercial woody biomass and wood product industrial parks.

Overcoming market barriers to stimulate wood energy expansion.

Purchasing wood processing equipment to create markets supporting forest management.

The Community Wood Grant Program funds shovel-ready projects to install thermally led community wood energy systems or build innovative wood product facilities to support healthy forests and stimulate local economies by expanding renewable wood energy and innovative wood products manu-



The USDA Forest Service is now accepting applications for the Community Wood Grant and Wood Innovation Grant programs at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/science-technology/energy-forest-products/wood-innovation>. (USDA Photo by Lance Cheung)

facturing capacity.

Eligible project examples include:

Community wood heating, cooling, or electricity systems that replace fossil fuels.

Purchase and installation of manufacturing equipment at a mass timber production facility.

Expanding sawmills with innovative technologies, cost cutting measures and higher value production lines.

Equipment purchase and installation at new facilities producing forest products biofuels.

To apply for either

grant, applicants must be registered with the System for Award Management (SAM). Applications should show a clear benefit to underserved or historically marginalized people, communities, and the forests they value. For-profit entities, state and local governments, Indian Tribes, school districts, non-profit organizations, higher education institutions, public utilities, and fire and conservation districts are eligible to apply.

More information is available at the Forest Service Wood Innovations website or at grants.gov.

Animal welfare advocates disappointed in bill to declaw cats failed

Cassandra Loper
Capital News Service

A proposal to outlaw the declawing of cats, a procedure that animal rights advocates call cruel and unnecessary, failed to advance from a House subcommittee last month.

House Bill 1382 would have made cat declawing a \$500 civil penalty for the first violation, \$1,000 for the second violation and \$2,500 for the third or any subsequent violation. The bill was tabled by a 6-4 vote in a House Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources subcommittee.

The bill is important because cats' claws are natural and used for stretching, marking territory, balance and more, according to Molly Armus, Virginia state director of the Humane Society of the United States.

Declawing cats is actually an "incredibly painful procedure," according to Armus.

"I think it's up to us, as people who are taking these cats into our homes, to learn more humane and less invasive ways to manage scratching," Armus said.

An onychectomy, or declawing, is a surgery that includes 10 separate amputations, according

to People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, or PETA. PETA is the largest animal rights organization in the world, according to its website.

Declawing is typically performed for convenience, according to the Animal League Defense Fund. Many people declaw their cats to prevent scratching, its website states.

"Localities around the nation, a couple of states, including our neighbor Maryland, have passed a declawing ban," said bill sponsor Del. Gwendolyn Gooditis, D-Clarke, in the committee meeting.

New York and Maryland are the only U.S. states that have outlawed declawing. Multiple U.S. cities have passed declawing laws, with the most located in California, according to PETA.

"Declawing cats means, look at your hands, it would be the equivalent of your fingers and your toes being chopped off at the first knuckle," Gooditis said.

The procedure can cause impaired balance, as much as a person would after losing his or her toes, according to PETA. Declawed cats may have to relearn how to walk.

"It's a removal of that last bone," Gooditis said.



Susan Seward, a lobbyist for the Virginia Veterinary Medical Association, or VVMA, testified against the bill in the committee meeting. The VVMA strongly opposed the bill, Seward said.

"I think one of the unintended consequences would be setting up a really unpleasant and adversarial relationship between animal control and veterinarians, and that is certainly not a relationship we want to diminish," Seward said to the committee panel.

Alice Burton, program director for nonprofit animal welfare organization Alley Cat Allies, said the organization was disap-

pointed the bill failed.

Alley Cat Allies' mission is to protect and improve the lives of cats, according to its website. The organization operates a trap-neuter-return program to help stabilize the cat population. A cat is transported to a veterinarian, spayed and returned to its original location.

It's an act of cruelty to declaw cats, according to Burton, who was an animal control officer for 15 years.

"They no longer have their nails as a defense, so their first instinct is to bite," Burton said. "So all of a sudden they've got these bites on their record, which obviously

does not bode well for them."

Declawed cats also struggle to use the litter box because the litter hurts their paws, she said. Many cats who have been declawed will stop using the litter box and soil where they aren't supposed to, Burton said.

"I would say most of the time these negative effects lead to these cats being surrendered to the shelters or rescue groups," Burton said. "They would, in most cases, be deemed unadoptable and they would be euthanized."

There are many other humane options out there, according to Burton.

Humane alternatives to

declawing include trimming a cat's claws regularly, using deterrents such as double-sided tape on furniture, rubber caps for the nails and providing a variety of scratching options, according to Alley Cat Allies.

"We're not giving up," Burton said. "We're going to come back and keep fighting."

Capital News Service is a program of Virginia Commonwealth University's Robertson School of Media and Culture. Students in the program provide state government coverage for a variety of media outlets in Virginia.

By VCU Capital News Service



Wash hands. Mask when needed. Circulate the air. Vaccinate. Stay home when sick!



www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus