

## HENRY COUNTY ENTERPRISE

Saturday, February 25, 2023

(USPS-6)

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Martinsville Mayor LC Jones (left) discusses the process for appointing a new member to the Martinsville City Council to replace outgoing Chad Martin. Jones is pictured with Aaron Rawls, vice-mayor.

## Process to fill vacancy on city council outlined

Taylor Boyd  
Staff writer

Members of Martinsville City Council will dedicate a portion of their March meeting to hearing from residents who are interested in serving on the council.

Chad Martin announced earlier this month that he would resign from the city council after accepting a new Environmental Policy Strategist position in North Carolina. His final meeting as a member of the council is on February 28, and his last official payroll day is March 1.

Mayor LC Jones said the Martinsville City Council will dedicate a portion of the meeting after that to gauge interest. But during a meeting with City Manager Leon Towarnicki on February 21, Jones said he learned that Martin had not completed the paperwork necessary to affect his departure.

Aaron Rawls, vice mayor, also noted a formal resignation has not been tendered. "We are working dawn to dusk and then some on current city business, so until the resignation is formal, I am not putting any time nor thought toward the matter," Rawls said.

Contacted later, Martin said he was not aware he needed to fill out paper-

work. He added that he will complete that task before the next council meeting, which is on February 28.

Once the required papers are submitted, Jones said the city's charter gives the council 30 days following a vacancy to appoint a member. The council also must decide whether the appointee would serve the remainder of Martin's term or ask for a special election.

"If we decided to have a special election, that would be something the council would vote on," Jones said. "The reason we wanted to do it" publicly and via appointment "is because we're hoping some people will come forward that want to get involved, and we'll have a good group of people to select from," he said.

After Martin submits the paperwork, "at the following council meeting we're holding a hearing for people who are interested in the position," Jones said. Those who are interested will be asked "to come forward and state their name, and basically give some background as to why they want to be in the position," he added.

Between then and the final meeting in March, Jones said council members would select from among those who "put their name in the hat."

See **Process**, page 3

## PSA to extend service, mail surveys

By Tara Lucas

The Henry County Public Service Authority (PSA) Board approved an extension of sanitary sewer service in the Horsepasture District at its regular meeting on Monday.

Residents in those areas received survey cards to fill out and return to PSA to indicate their interest in the expansion. A current expansion project nearing completion is on Preston Road.

Navy Lane, which is located off of Preston Road, also was approved to have PSA services installed due to a 71 percent positive interest indicated by recent survey responses.

PSA board members hope to expand services

in the Leatherwood community along Virginia 57 East and Stoney Mountain Road. Surveys will be mailed in the coming week to residents of Stoney Mountain Road and Elijah Circle who have not responded to previous survey mailings.

Residents will have three weeks to respond. The survey cards are pre-stamped, and residents simply need to check a box to indicate whether they are interested in PSA water service and then mail them back to the PSA.

Responses to those surveys will dictate whether the PSA will pursue grant approval to begin expansion projects in those communities. The project was previously denied funding

due to low response.

The PSA board also approved an additional appropriation of \$785,000 for the construction of a water tank and water line along Elf Trail. The additional tank and line were deemed necessary to the current water line extension project along Preston Road and upgrades to the Philpott Water Filtration Plant.

The bulk of water main repairs will be done in March and April. Fire hydrant maintenance will begin in May. Grading is underway for the second lot at Commonwealth Crossing. Improvements to Reservoir Road are under consideration with hopes to have the project under design by the end of March.

## County and school officials to hold a joint meeting

The Henry County Board of Supervisors will meet jointly with the School Board to discuss the preparation of the FY'23-'24 School budget and the total county budget at 5 p.m. on February 28.

The meeting will be held in the

School Board's Conference room, which is located on the 3rd floor of the Henry County Administration Building.

The supervisors also meet at 3 and 6 p.m. to discuss other matters. (See related story.)

## Board to consider lifetime dog tags

Debbie Hall  
Staff writer

The Henry County Board of Supervisors will consider a proposal to create lifetime dog tags at its meeting Tuesday.

Scott Grindstaff, the Treasurer, is proposing charging \$20 per dog for a Henry County dog license. Currently, tags cost \$5 per year for fertile (unaltered) dogs or \$15 for three years. The cost for unsexed dogs is \$3 per year or a total of \$9 for three years.

The General Assembly approved the lifetime dog tags in 2017, Grindstaff said and noted that he will attend the meeting to answer questions.

A public hearing would be required if the supervisors opt to move forward with the proposal.

The board meets at 3 and 6 p.m. on Tuesday, February 28, in the Summerlin Meeting Room of the Henry County Administration Building.

In other matters at its 3 p.m. meeting, the board will:

\*Hear an update from Grindstaff on delinquent tax collection efforts.

\*Hear an update from Mark Heath, president, and CEO of the Martinsville-Henry County Economic

Development Corp.

\*Consider a resolution honoring Henry County Sheriff's Lt. Col. Steve Eanes, who plans to retire on February 28, after more than 45 years of service to the county.

\*Consider an additional appropriation of \$641,750 from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation's Land and Water Conservation Fund. The funds will be used to develop and construct phase 6A of the Dick & Willie Trail.

\*Consider an additional appropriation of \$41,788 of Vehicle Insurance Settlement Funds, as requested by Henry County Sheriff Lane Perry. The funds will be used for vehicle repairs and maintenance.

\*Consider a resolution authorizing the Blue Ridge Airport Authority to administer and oversee a funding request to the Commonwealth Transportation Board.

\*Consider a resolution to approve the county's participation in the proposed settlement of opioid-related claims.

\*Consider meeting in closed session to discuss appointees to the Industrial Development Authority, Blue Ridge Regional Library Board, and Dan

River Alcohol Safety Action Program Board; discussion of pending legal matters; the acquisition/disposal of real estate; and as-yet-

unannounced industries.

At its 6 p.m. meeting, the board will:

\*Hear a report about general highway matters from Lisa Hughes, Resident Engineer for the Virginia Department of Transportation.

\*Consider a resolution creating the "Claude A. Cobler Outstanding Volunteer EMS Officer of the Year Award." Cobler served the county as a member of the Bassett Volunteer Rescue Squad beginning in 1966.

\*Hear a presentation from Rick Ward, Director of the Blue Ridge Regional Library, reflecting recent events and activities offered through the libraries.

\*Hold a public hearing about relocating the Mountain Valley (#305) Voting Precinct, from the Mountain Valley

Leatherwood Club (MVL Club) on North Fork Road to the Granberry United Methodist Church on Granberry Road, Martinsville. General Registrar Dawn Stultz-Vaughan will attend the meeting to answer any questions. A public hearing is required before moving forward with the change to the ordinance. The public hearing has been properly advertised and also is scheduled to be held during the meeting.

\*Hear from Van Drewery, of Horsepasture, who wants to discuss noise and debris concerns on Carver Road.

## Ridgeway resident joins Reynolds Homestead staff

Taylor Boyd  
Staff writer

Melanie Gilbert was recently named Assistant Manager for Community Engagement and Educational Programs at the Reynolds Homestead in Critz.

Gilbert, 54, said her duties are primarily to back up Sarah Wray, the community engagement, partnerships, and programs manager.

Her duties primarily include "anything basically that supports the community and brings them into the Reynolds Homestead. Like community engagement events, educational programs, the Women's Wellness Forum, and we're doing a Dr. Seuss birthday celebration," she said.

In this new position, Gilbert wants to connect with the community and have a great relationship with the diverse communities in the area.

"I also want to have the community come to the Homestead and value it and appreciate it as much as I do," she said.

Gilbert also plans to build a better relationship between the Homestead and the Blue Ridge Mountain



Melanie Gilbert, of Ridgeway, began her tenure as the new Assistant Manager for Community Engagement and Educational Programs at the Reynolds Homestead on Jan. 9.

communities.

"Sometimes I feel like maybe because we are so far from the mountain" the Homestead is "just disconnected from that group. I would like to see a more relationship built with that part of the community," she said.

While she has only been in the role for about three weeks, Gilbert said she's learned a lot about herself and her strengths

See **Ridgeway**, page 3

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# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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

## Meetings

### Thursday, March 2

The Henry County School Board's monthly meeting begins at 5:30 p.m. in the Summerlin Room, 1st floor of the Henry County Administration Building, Collinsville. Closed session to follow.

## Events

### Saturday, February 25

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

TheatreWorks Community Players present "Driving Miss Daisy," at 7 p.m., in the Blackbox Theatre, 44 Franklin St., Martinsville. Tickets are \$15 for each show and can be purchased online at [www.twcp.net](http://www.twcp.net), or at the door. Visit [www.twcp.net](http://www.twcp.net) or [info@twcp.net](mailto:info@twcp.net).

### Tuesday, February 28

Registration ends for the 2nd annual Spring Special Prom Night, free event for people over 18 with disabilities. Sponsored by Infinity Acres Ranch and partners, the prom will be held from 6 to 8 p.m. on Friday, March 3 at the Virginia Museum of Natural History. Visit [www.infinityacres.org/events.html](http://www.infinityacres.org/events.html) to register.

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-Saturday, March 2-4

TheatreWorks Community Players present "Driving Miss Daisy," at 7 p.m., in the Blackbox Theatre, 44 Franklin St., Martinsville. Tickets are \$15 for each show and can be purchased online at [www.twcp.net](http://www.twcp.net), or at the door. Visit [www.twcp.net](http://www.twcp.net) or [info@twcp.net](mailto:info@twcp.net).

### Sunday, March 5

TheatreWorks Community Players present "Driving Miss Daisy," at 2 p.m., in the Blackbox Theatre, 44 Franklin St., Martinsville. Tickets are \$15 for each show and can be purchased online at [www.twcp.net](http://www.twcp.net), or at the door. Visit [www.twcp.net](http://www.twcp.net) or [info@twcp.net](mailto:info@twcp.net).

### Wednesday, March 8

The General Joseph Martin Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) will meet at 10:30 a.m. in Hugo's Restaurant. Pam Allen is the host. Heidi Pinkston, Executive Director of Piedmont Arts, will present "The ARts in Martinsville=Henry County." Lunch to follow the meeting.

### Friday March 10

Music Night returns to Spencer Penn Centre. Long-time favorite Travis Frye and Blue Mountain will play in Alumni Hall. Gate opens at 5 p.m. with the band going on at 6:15 p.m. Admission is a \$5 donation. Concessions will be sold.

### Thursday, March 16

Riddick Dance, 6:30 p.m. at Piedmont Arts. A contemporary African American dance company featuring a broad repertory, 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](http://www.piedmontarts.org).

### Sunday March 19

Create your own barn quilt at Spencer-Penn, from noon to 4 pm. All supplies are provided. Cost varies, depending on size. Class will be filled on a first paid first served basis. Once payment is received, design choice should be sent to the instructor, Lauren, at [misslaurenbyron@gmail.com](mailto:misslaurenbyron@gmail.com). Questions may be e-mailed to Lauren at the above e-mail address or to Susan at [spc.susan@yahoo.com](mailto:spc.susan@yahoo.com).

### Saturday, March 25

The Harvest Youth Board's Books & Bunnies, which features an Easter Egg Hunt, crafts, interactive activities, food trucks and books, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Smith River Sports Complex Amphitheater, 1000 Irisburg Road, Axton.

## 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](http://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](http://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.

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

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**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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- Cholesterol numbers.** Cholesterol is raised by eating fatty foods.
- Family history.** Anyone in your family have heart disease? You may, too.

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**SOVAH HEALTH**

**Southwestern Virginia Gas**

Southwestern Virginia Gas recently completed its 2022 Public Awareness Survey to help assess the level of knowledge related to natural gas safety within the community. A prize drawing was held using the returned survey cards, and Sandra Hankins of Martinsville was awarded a \$250 Visa gift card. A similar survey was also conducted for attendees of the Henry County Fair, and participants were entered to win a Yeti cooler. Elijah Billings of Bassett was the lucky winner. We would like to thank everyone that took the time to complete the survey. Compared to results from prior survey years, it is clear the public is becoming more informed about basic natural gas safety and the important role natural gas serves in meeting our country's energy needs.

Spring is nearly upon us, and Southwestern Virginia Gas would like to remind everyone to call 811 before starting any digging project. This is a free service to get utility lines marked to help avoid accidents and possible fines for damaging an underground utility.

It is important to be able to recognize the signs of a natural gas leak. The most prominent sign of a natural gas leak is an odor similar to that of a rotten egg, which is due to a harmless but pungent-smelling gas called mercaptan that is added to make it easier to detect a leak. Anyone living or working in our area that has questions about natural gas safety or would like a free brochure that will assist in recognizing the smell of natural gas can contact 276-632-5662.

**va811.com**  
Dig With CARE

To find out more information about natural gas safety, please visit our website at [www.swvagas.com](http://www.swvagas.com).

# Ridgeway from page 1

ence thus far has been eye-opening. While the educational programs and planning events components of her job are what she's good at, Gilbert feels like marketing and budgeting are something she needs to learn and improve. "I think the whole team here has been great, and I have learned so much with women's wellness and learning as far as budgeting that event and marketing," she said. "I never really realized how much went into planning from that aspect of budgeting and marketing." Gilbert decided to apply for the post because the job description included a list of educational programs, and she felt her teaching experience and leadership skills made her a good candidate for the position. "It has been truly my honor and my

and to represent it for the community is one of my greatest honors," she said. "I just love it." Gilbert and her husband, Shannon Gilbert, live in Ridgeway. The couple has one son Austin Gilbert. A graduate of Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC), she has a liberal arts degree with a concentration in education with a concentration in history from Averett University. Gilbert taught 8th-grade English for most of her 22-year teaching career. She also worked in corporate hospitality for the Martinsville Speedway races for eight to 10 years. In her spare time, she volunteered and performed with TheaterWorks and Patrick & Henry Patriot Players. Gilbert is also a member of the Horsepasture Christian Church and enjoys baking and cooking.

# Process from page 1

He added that he currently does not have anyone in mind to fill the vacancy. Noting this is not the first time a council member resigned mid-term, Kathy Lawson, a long-term council member, and a former mayor said the council appointed someone to complete the term. "I feel certain because there are two years minus two months left on Chad's term. So, absolutely someone will have to be appointed," she said. But unlike Jones, Lawson has a potential candidate in mind. She believes the city should consider Jennifer Bowles, who lost her reelection bid last year.



**Chad Martin's final meeting as a member of the Martinsville City Council is Tuesday, Feb. 28. He is resigning from the council to accept a new position in North Carolina.**

"Jennifer is a person of color, and I do think it needs to be a person of color" appointed, Lawson said. "I don't know how well that comment will be perceived in the community, but I do think that the dynamics and makeup of the council is important." Noting that Bowles is well-respected, and not a newbie to the council, Lawson said her appointment would mean "we would not have three members of council that have absolutely no experience in serving in a public office. To me, she missed being reelected by 55 votes. I think she would be the perfect person." Jones disagreed, and said appointing Bowles would be a step backward. "For us to appoint her and put her back in there when the election primarily was her representing the old guard of how things were, her and Danny Turner" while Jones and Rawls represented "change and a new guard" would be unfair to voters, Jones said. "I think it would be unfair to the voting constituents of us to go backward and want to put her back in there," Jones said. "I think if she wants to come back then, she

should run an election and win that seat to get back into the council. I don't think it should be an appointment. If there's an election and she chose to run, that's a completely different thing." Noting that Bowles was defeated in the most recent election, Tammy Pearson concurred. "I think our citizens voiced their opinion," Pearson said. "However, if she would like to be considered we can definitely talk to her and look at other possible candidates who might be interested in an interim position." Pearson does not have anyone in mind for the post, but her goal is to appoint a member who will serve Martinsville's citizens and vote in residents' best interests. "Honestly, I want someone who's really going to do their homework, their research, and get out there and talk to our citizens before casting any votes," Pearson said. Jones said he was not surprised at Martin's decision to step down, and noted that he and Martin met a week or so before the resignation was announced. Then, "he kind of told me it was on the horizon, but he wasn't sure if he

would do it at that time," Jones said. "The (job) offer he had was not a sealed deal" when the two met. Pearson said that while she appreciates Martin's work on the council, she also believes everyone must do what they believe is best for their own lives. "If he (Martin) feels that its' in his own personal best interest to leave the state and move for a new job, I wish him the best and thank him for serving on the council," Pearson said. Lawson said she was deeply saddened to learn about Martin's departure. "Chad brings to council information that a lot of us don't have knowledge about," Lawson said. Martin's "input and his observations are quite different from mine, being that he's 40 and I'm 60. That age difference has a different perspective, to say the least on how you look at things." She added that Martin will be missed in the community, and wishes him the best. "Just because I'm going to North Carolina doesn't mean that I won't be coming back to check on Martinsville," Martin said. "Trying to help people is the major thing I will miss more than anything else."

"As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands — one for helping yourself, the other for helping others." —Audrey Hepburn

**MHC**  
MARTINSVILLE-HENRY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**Be Part of History**  
American Red Cross

**BLOOD DRIVE**

Monday, March 6, 2023, 10:00 A.M.-3:00 P.M.  
Historic Henry County Courthouse, 1 East Main Street, Martinsville, Virginia

## Historical society to host blood drive

Celebrate Women's History Month with the Martinsville Henry County Historical Society at its American Red Cross "Be Part of History" Blood Drive on Monday, March 6, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., at the Historic Henry County Courthouse, 1 East Main Street, Uptown Martinsville. Walk-ins are welcome, but appointments are preferred. Schedule yours today at [www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org). If necessary, you may call or text John Phillips at (276) 806- 5022. Individuals donating for the first time and those reaching blood donor milestones are especially welcome to participate. The purpose of Women's History Month is to commemorate and encourage the study, observance, and celebration of the vital role of women in American history. International Women's Day has been commemorated across the world on March 8th since 1911, and every U. S. President has marked March as Women's History Month since 1995. While the right to vote is a common topic when examining women's history, there are many more issues, perspectives, and accomplishments that require investigation

across history, literature, and the arts to more fully appreciate and understand what women's history in the U.S. encompasses. John Phillips, Historical Society President, said, "Many people who think they aren't eligible to give blood might not be aware that some rules for donation have changed. The Red Cross notes that blood donor eligibility can change with advancements in science and testing, and because an individual was deferred in the past does not mean they aren't eligible today." 'General Guidelines for Blood Donation' include Be in good general health and feeling well; be at least 16 years old (16-17 years old require parental consent), weigh at least 110 lbs., and have not donated in the last 56 days. However, those who previously couldn't donate are encouraged to visit <https://www.redcrossblood.org/donate-blood/how-to-donate/eligibility-requirements.html> for the most up-to-date eligibility information. The Historic Henry County Courthouse is fully handicap accessible.

## VMNH staff member's work noted with award



**Dr. Nancy Moncrief, Curator of Mammals at the Virginia Museum of Natural History, was awarded with the 2023 Dr. Henry S. Mosby Professional Award, which is presented to an individual for significant professional contributions to wildlife species, their habitat, and to the citizens of Virginia. The award was provided to Dr. Moncrief by the Virginia Chapter of the Wildlife Society. Dr. Moncrief was officially recognized by Scott Klopfer (pictured), who serves as the director of the Conservation Management Institute at Virginia Tech.**

### CROSSWORD PUZZLE

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**CLUES ACROSS**

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

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has developed a simplified direct loan application to provide improved customer experience for producers applying for loans from the Farm Service Agency (FSA). The simplified direct loan application enables producers to complete a more streamlined application, reduced from 29 to 13 pages. Producers will also have the option to complete an electronic fillable form or prepare a traditional, paper application for submission to their local FSA farm loan office. The paper and electronic versions of the form will be available starting March 1, 2023.

Approximately 26,000 producers submit a direct loan application to the FSA annually, but there is a high rate of incomplete or withdrawn applications, due in part to a challenging and lengthy paper-based application process. Coupled with the Loan Assistance Tool released in October 2022, the simplified application will provide all loan applicants access to information regarding the application process and assist them with gathering the correct documents before they begin the process. This new application will help farmers and ranchers submit complete loan applications and reduce the number of incomplete, rejected, or withdrawn applications.

In October 2022, USDA launched the Loan Assistance Tool, an online step-by-step guide that provides materials to help an applicant prepare

their farm loan application in one tool. Farmers can access the Loan Assistance Tool by visiting farmers.gov/farm-loan-assistance-tool and clicking the 'Get Started' button. The tool is built to run on any modern browser like Chrome, Edge, Firefox, or the Safari browser. A version compatible with mobile devices is expected to be available by the summer. It does not work in Internet Explorer.

The simplified direct loan application and Loan Assistance Tool are the first of multiple farm loan process improvements that will be available to USDA customers on farmers.gov in the future. Other improvements that are anticipated to launch in 2023 include:

An interactive online direct loan application that gives customers a paperless and electronic signature option, along with the ability to attach supporting documents such as tax returns.

An online direct loan repayment feature that relieves borrowers from the necessity of calling, mailing, or visiting a local Service Center to pay a loan installment.

USDA provides access to credit to approximately 115,000 producers who cannot obtain sufficient commercial credit through direct and guaranteed farm loans. With the funds and direction Congress provided in Section 22006 of the Inflation Reduction Act, USDA took action in October 2022 to provide

relief to qualifying distressed borrowers while working on making transformational changes to loan servicing so that borrowers are provided the flexibility and opportunities needed to address the inherent risks and unpredictability associated with agricultural operations.

Soon, all direct loan borrowers will receive a letter from USDA describing the circumstances under which additional payments will be made to distressed borrowers and how they can work with their FSA local office to discuss these options. Producers can explore all available options on all FSA loan options at fsa.usda.gov or by contacting their local USDA Service Center.

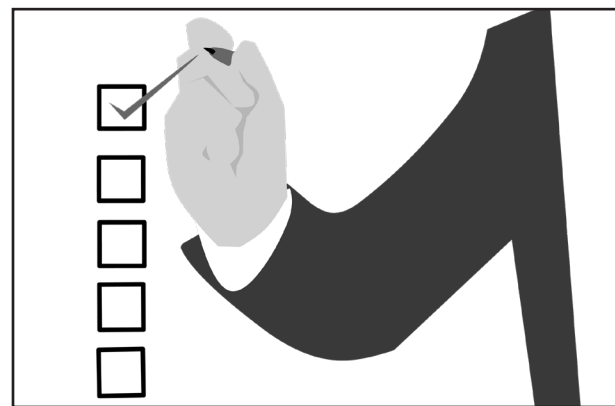


PHOTO COURTESY OF PIXABAY

## OPINION

# What they do in Washington

On Feb. 3, a Norfolk Southern freight train loaded with chemicals derailed in East Palestine, Ohio. You probably heard about it.

Chief among the chemicals being hauled were more than 100,000 gallons of vinyl chloride, which breaks down into hydrochloric acid. As an added bonus, vinyl chloride is a carcinogen linked to a rare type of liver cancer. This generally isn't the kind of stuff you want dumped all over your town.

By Feb. 6, a portion of the town closest to the derailment was evacuated so that Norfolk Southern emergency crews could drain a large amount of the vinyl chloride from un-ruptured tankers into a ditch and burn it. By Feb. 8, the evacuation had been lifted and residents were told it was safe to return to their homes.

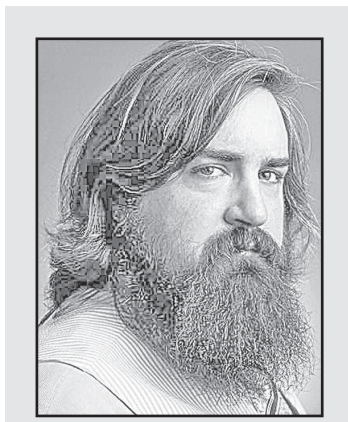
Maybe the post-disaster cleanup in East Palestine was a complete success, but for whatever reason, I tend not to trust a massive corporation when it announces that the disaster it caused is now all fixed up and A-OK.

The most immediate impact of the derailment was on the local wildlife. The Ohio Department of Natural

Resources reported that about 3,500 fish across 7.5 miles of streams went belly-up. It's safe to say that there's nothing living in those streams anymore. I'd be willing to bet that you wouldn't find a single aquatic bug.

I've read reports of hundreds of frogs dying; amphibians like frogs, toads, and salamanders are always hit hard in chemical spills. There's a report from a nearby dairy that their captive foxes fell ill after the disaster and one has since died. I've also read that beekeepers in the region were advised to destroy any hives within about five miles of the derailment, since any honey or wax produced would likely be toxic.

And of course, aside from the toll on the local wildlife, there's the human toll. It will be years before we know how this derailment is going to affect the people of East Palestine. If they do get sick or develop rare cancers, is anybody going to step in and help them? It took years of fighting and a literal act of Congress to pass the 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund reauthorization bill, which benefitted 9/11 first responders who had developed cancer and other health issues



By Ben R. Williams

directly linked to their work saving lives and cleaning up following the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. If the heroes of 9/11 had to fight to get their medical bills paid, there isn't much hope for the rest of us.

Of course, train derailments are nothing new. On average, about 1,700 trains have derailed per year since 1990; most of these accidents don't cause a major impact on the populace, but some create even worse impacts. In 2005, two Norfolk Southern trains collided in Graniteville, South Carolina, exposing hundreds of people to toxic chlorine gas and killing nine people outright.

Why does this keep happening? Why is our rail infrastructure so bad? What could have prevented the situation in East Palestine?

As always, it all comes back to money.

Train companies aren't big on the whole "maintenance" thing; they much prefer conducting stock buybacks and distributing the cash to shareholders. As a matter of fact, Norfolk Southern announced a \$10 billion stock buyback in March of last year.

What could that money have gone towards instead? Back in 2014, the Obama administration proposed that trains carrying hazardous materials be equipped with electronically-controlled pneumatic brakes, which cut stopping distance by 60 percent over traditional railway air brakes. Of course, these better brakes are pretty expensive, so the railway industry lobbied hard against the change, and the Trump administration finalized the rollback of the requirement for electronic brakes in late 2018.

Would more modern brakes have prevented the East Palestine disaster? No one can say for certain, but they sure wouldn't have made it worse.

Meanwhile, rail unions have been in negotiations with railway companies since 2019 because modern rail methods designed to maximize profit have resulted in massive burnout. Resources have been cut to the bone and staffing cuts are so severe that railway workers are forced to be on-call for weeks at a time. It's hard to operate at the peak of your abilities when you're constantly being pushed to the limit.

As the situation rapidly began to approach a strike, Congress intervened and proposed a bill that would require the railway labor unions to agree to terms proposed by the White House; President Joe Biden eventually signed the agreement into law in December 2022, essentially using the government's might to prevent railway workers from striking and force them to agree to terms that were only the merest outline of what they had initially asked for. More than 500 labor historians condemned the move in an open letter to Biden and Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh.

The disaster in East Palestine — not to mention the inevitable disasters that will follow — probably could have been prevented if corporate greed and political lobbying hadn't gotten in the way. I have to imagine that the folks at Norfolk Southern and the folks in the last two Presidential administrations had all hoped it would be at least a couple of years before their actions directly resulted in a highly public man-made cataclysm.

The situation reminds me, as so many things do, of my favorite portion of the late great Frank Zappa's song "The Meek Shall Inherit Nothing:"

"What they do in Washington They just takes care of Number One And Number One ain't you. You ain't even Number Two."

## Richmond Reports

**Del. Les R. Adams**  
16th House District

The 2023 regular session of the Virginia General Assembly is now in its final days of the legislative calendar. All committee work is complete and the bills that have reported out are to be passed, defeated, amended, or reconciled with a different version of similar legislation. The bills that ultimately pass both houses are to be enrolled as Acts of Assembly and then delivered to Governor Youngkin who may endorse, veto, or further amend the legislation. Such amendments will be addressed at the constitutionally prescribed "reconvened session" where lawmakers may accept or reject gubernatorial amendments, and in the case of a veto, potentially seek to overturn that action upon convening in April.

One of the main activ-

ities for Delegates and Senators during these final hours of the session is the pursuit of conference reports on differing versions of corresponding House and Senate bills. In those situations, the Speaker of the House will appoint the bill patron, and other select members, to meet with Senate counterparts "in conference" to seek a resolution to the differing provisions. When an agreement is reached, a report of agreed legislative terms is prepared and presented to the body of each house where they may be adopted or potentially, although rarely, rejected. Differing versions of legislation that is "left in conference" fails to be enrolled as an Act of Assembly.

My expectation is to serve on several conference committees during these final days, as I have in the past few years. Divided governing

majorities between the House (Republican) and Senate (Democrat), tend to produce more frequent occasions where a conference report is necessary. In my case, the House passed all 13 bills I introduced. Many of these will survive the Senate, it appears, but some were amended with provisions I intend to reject and thereafter seek compromise in conference. The Speaker of the House may also see fit to appoint me to serve on conference committees for bills I did not sponsor, but where my familiarity from earlier committee work on the underlying matter would be helpful to crafting a final product.

One of the most visible conference committees will be that assigned to resolve the differences in the state budget bills produced by the House and Senate. Because this is the second year of the two-year legislative term, the budget bills represent amendments to the

biennial budget that was passed last year. As such, an ultimate impasse in negotiations would not result in a cessation of government services. Nevertheless, there are numerous provisions contained within the budget bills that are significant to many members of the General Assembly, and to the Governor.

This fact provides an important incentive for budget conferees to reach an agreement, despite differences in priorities.

Primary among those differences are the Governor's proposals to lower the individual income tax rate and increase the standard deduction. These were included in the House budget, but not the Senate. Fortunately, the record surplus enjoyed by the Commonwealth would allow this tax relief without sacrificing adequate funding of services. Hopefully, the Senate conferees will soon move in that direction.

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**Michael Showell, Publisher**

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

**Randy Thompson, Advertising Manager**

advertise@mainstreetnewspapers.com  
(540) 230-1129

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# Piedmont Arts showcases local talent through March

By Tara Lucas

The late Rodney Scott “Rupe” Dalton and his unique artwork are not strangers to Piedmont Arts.

Dalton, who was a barber by trade as well as a comedian, passed away last year.

His timeless artwork depicts scenes from southern life in Black American families. Scenes displaying blues musicians, family gatherings, and children playing were com-

mon in his work. Dalton was an airbrush artist whose detailed work could easily be mistaken for oil painting or oil pastel on canvas.

Lauren Ellis, Programs and Public Relations Coordinator at Piedmont Arts, referred to Dalton as an amazing, beloved local artist.

“All of the other artists would get kind of upset when they found out that Rupe was entering Expressions, because when Rupe entered, they

knew they were not going to win Best In Show,” Ellis said. “Rupe won Best In Show almost every time he submitted.”

Expressions is an annual local competition open to all artists living within a 100-mile radius of Martinsville, Virginia.

An exhibit to honor Dalton, entitled “Rupe Dalton Retrospective,” is currently on display until March 18.

“Hanging Tree Guitars,” which features the work of luthier and

artist Freeman Vines, also is on display. Vines has built guitars for over 50 years by transforming materials such as radio parts, wood from tobacco barns, and other items into distinctive hand crafted pieces.

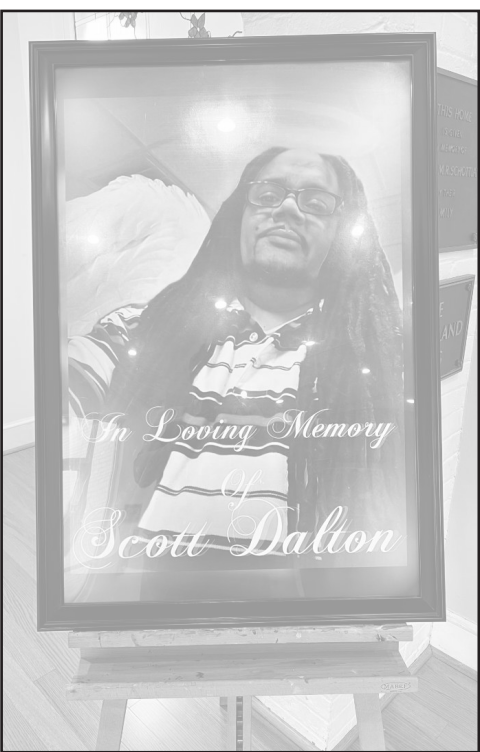
Vines was born in 1942 in Greene County, North Carolina. He met photographer and folklorist Tim Duffy in 2015. Duffy is the founder of the Music Maker Relief Foundation, a nonprofit that provides assistance

and grants to senior and vulnerable artists. The foundation focuses on southern music such as blues, gospel, folk, and Native American music and the artists. The foundation has served over 500 artists since 1994 with Vines being one of those artists.

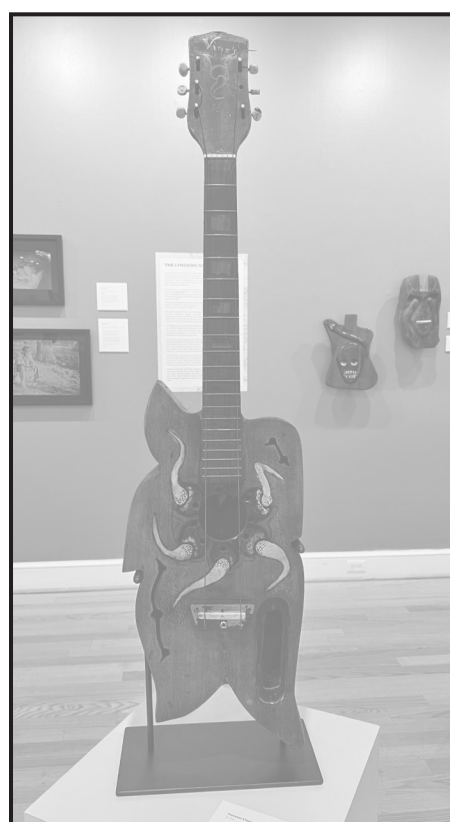
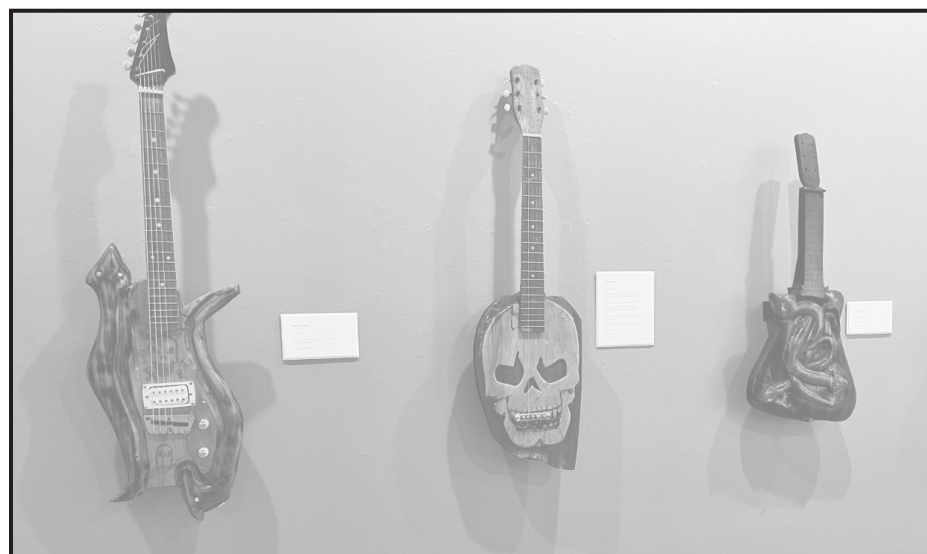
Freeman Vines spoke of his pieces in his exhibit, “I felt the wood was trying to talk to me, trying to tell me something.” Vines acquired wood in 2015 from the tree in

which Oliver Moore was lynched in the 1930s. His work takes wood from the traumatic past of people in Eastern North Carolina and shapes it into something that speaks against the story of that ordeal. Vines work will be on display until March 18 as well.

In accordance with Black History Month, Piedmont Arts will host an African American Read-In and Family Day on February 25 at 10 a.m. Admission is free.



The late Rodney Scott “Rupe” Dalton’s artwork is on display at Piedmont Arts.



“Hanging Tree Guitars,” by artist Freeman Vines, is among the exhibits currently at Piedmont Arts in Martinsville.



## Job Quits Decrease By 5,000 in December

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics’ December 2022 Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS) reports Virginia job separations slowed from the year before, the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) reported.

According to the newest data available, the most recent BLS JOLTS survey indicated the Great Resignation lessened as job separations, especially quits, were down compared to the series high set in December 2021. BLS JOLTS data provides information on all the 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 over-

all 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 December 2022 job openings in Virginia rose from November’s 320,000 level to 330,000. There was a 25,000 upward revision to November’s estimate. Nationwide, on the last business day of December, the number of job openings increased to 11.0 million. The largest increases in job openings were in accommodation and food services (+409,000), retail trade (+134,000), and construction (+82,000). The number of job openings decreased information (-107,000). The largest increases in the job openings level occurred in Texas (+116,000), as well as

in Illinois and Michigan (+64,000 each). The decrease in the job openings level occurred in Georgia (-35,000). The Virginia job openings rate (job openings as a percentage of payroll employment) rose by 0.3 percentage points to 7.5 percent from November’s 7.2 percent rate, which was subject to a significant revision. The U.S. rate rose to 6.7% in December. The job openings rate increased in establishments with 50 to 249 employees but decreased in establishments with 5,000 or more employees. The largest increases in job openings rates occurred in North Dakota (+1.6 percentage points), as well as in Michigan and Minnesota (+1.3 points each). The decrease occurred in Georgia (-0.6 point).

The number of hires in Virginia held steady at 173,000 in

See **Jobs**, page 6

## Foster Gallery at Piedmont Arts to showcase art from three local elementary schools

Artwork by students from Carlisle Lower School, Mt. Olivet Elementary, and G.W. Carver Elementary will be on display through March 3 in Piedmont Arts’ Foster Gallery. A reception will be held for exhibiting students and their families, Tuesday, Feb. 28 from 4-6 p.m. at the museum. Piedmont Arts is open to the public Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Piedmont Arts is known for hosting amazing and innovative exhibits. Nowhere is that truer than in the Foster Gallery. Exhibits are curated every six to eight weeks, allowing

work by students from all 19 schools in Martinsville-Henry County to be displayed during the year.

Curated by Charity League of Martinsville and Henry County, the Foster Gallery is an important part of Piedmont Arts’ community programming, encouraging young people to participate in the arts and giving the public the opportunity to experience the wealth of talent in the area. Piedmont Arts and Charity League believe that the arts are a vital part of an excellent education, and both are pleased to take an active role in arts education in the community.

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# OBITUARIES

## Rettia Morgan

Rettia Morgan, age 91, passed away on February 12, 2023, at the Forest Ridge Senior Living Center, in Woodland Park, CO.

She was born in 1931 in Yancey CO N.C. to John and Minnie Gardner.

She was preceded in death by her: father and mother, 3 sisters and 2 brothers, and her Husband of 61 years, Don Morgan.

After growing up in N.C., Rettia lived in Martinsville, Ridgeway and



Fredericksburg VA before moving to live with her son in Colorado.

The most important thing in her life was her Christian faith and her love for her son and daughter, her 5 grandchildren and 5 great grandchildren.

A graveside service will be held on Saturday February 25, 2023, at 2 p.m. at Mountain View Cemetery in Ridgeway, VA.

McKee-Stone Funeral Home is serving the family.

## Religious Freedom Bill Sails Through Senate

On Wednesday, HB2171, which was introduced by Del. Wren Williams, R-Stuart, to protect churches and other places of worship from being discriminately shut down passed the Democrat-controlled Virginia Senate 35-5.

Williams introduced the bill in response to former Gov. Ralph Northam shutting down churches and

places of worship during the Covid-19 pandemic while leaving other businesses open. The bill will prevent a governor from using the Emergency Services and Disaster Law from shutting down churches while leaving other businesses open.

“Freedom to gather and worship has been a bedrock freedom here in America since the days of our founders,”

he said. “I was honored to carry this bill and I am grateful it passed the Senate Judiciary Committee so that our churches will no longer be discriminated against. I will always stand for religious liberty and freedom of worship.”

HB2171, which already passed the House on February 7th, will now go to the Governor’s desk.

## ValleyStar Credit Union makes \$10,000 donation to Virginia Credit Union League in Martinsville

ValleyStar Credit Union CEO Mike Warrell and representatives from the Board of Directors presented a \$10,000 donation to the Virginia Credit Union League (VACUL) in Richmond, Virginia on Credit Union Day to help fund the League’s efforts to advocate on behalf of Virginia’s credit unions.

The VACUL works to build a supportive network of lawmakers who can create a positive legislative and regulatory environment for Virginia’s credit unions. The VACUL counts on credit union advocates, such as ValleyStar employees, to help educate state lawmakers about the “Credit Union Difference” and fight for credit union-backed legislation.

“President of the Virginia Credit Union League, Carrie Hunt, has made a significant impact in her two years with the league by getting important bills passed with State legislators,” Mike Warrell said. “Our donation will help strengthen their dedication to shape and protect credit unions throughout the Commonwealth.”

ValleyStar employees will also join Carrie Hunt and the Virginia Credit Union League in February at the Governmental Affairs Conference in Washington, D.C., to help educate Federal lawmakers about the “Credit Union Difference” and our impact on their constituents throughout Virginia.



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## Top Diversity Influencer Offers Career Advice to Ferrum College Students



Fields Jackson, Jr., offered career advice to Ferrum College students.

Ferrum College hosted one of the nation’s top diversity, equity, and inclusion social influencers, Fields Jackson, Jr., as part of its celebration of Black History Month. Fields, who is president of the College Diversity Network and CEO of Racing to Diversity Magazine, offered career advice and business connections to students attending his February 13 presentation during the college’s daily Community Hour in Franklin Hall as well as a number of business classes.

Jackson—who is recognized by Onalytica in London, England, as #13 of the top 100 global influencers focusing on gender equality and diversity—founded the College Diversity Network to connect organizations that want to diversify their workforces with leading colleges and universities with diverse student bodies.

“These are free for the school. When companies say that they can’t find anyone, we post it on [a school’s College Diversity Network] job board,” said Jackson, who explained that jobs showcased in the network are exposed to students from all of the participating schools, which often generates hundreds of applications for a single job posting.

Jackson also emphasized the importance of utilizing LinkedIn as a networking and job search tool, and he highlighted a number of best practices students should use on the platform in

order to best represent themselves and their personal brand. “How do you want to come across when I look at your LinkedIn profile,” he said, highlighting the importance of including a good headshot and other photographs in an individual profile.

“You want to have a head shot where if you were to walk into the room, you can tell who it is. It doesn’t have to be professional, it can be a selfie,” said Jackson, who also suggested students include photos of themselves with their teammates or in clubs and organizations to show how well they can work in a team setting. “If there’s a picture of you with your teammates or in the band, it shows you are a team player.”

Students enjoyed Jackson’s presentation and appreciated the advice he offered. “I thought the presentation was excellent, and it really opened my eyes to all of the opportunities out there. I’m super excited to get connected with him and see where that takes me,” said graduate student Braxton Hughes.

Freshman Jordan Wilson also found the presentation informative, though she hopes the job boards will eventually expand from the mostly business and corporate type positions currently offered to include a wider variety of jobs. “I’m a very hands-on person. I love getting down and dirty [with] carpentry or firefighting type jobs. I’m hoping that there’s more opportunities for trades like that,” she said.

## Jobs from page 1

December, down a thousand over the month and down by over four percent year over year. The 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. In December, the number of hires nationwide changed little at 6.2 million.

Hires changed little in all industries. The largest increases in the hires level occurred in Missouri (+46,000), Illinois (+34,000), and Michigan (+28,000). In Virginia, the hires rate was unchanged from November’s revised 4.2 percent rate. The national hires rate of 4.0% was little changed over the month. In December, hires rates increased in 4 states and were little changed in 46 states and the District of Columbia.

In December 2022, the ‘annual fill’ rate (the ratio of ‘this month’ hires to ‘last month’ job

openings, over the year) remained at the level of 0.9 after bumping up to 1.0 in October. The U.S. annual fill rate also edged slightly upward to 1.0. This indicates a trend in recent months 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.

On the last business day of December 2022, the number and rate of job quits in Virginia decreased but most other JOLTS indicators showed less change. Job quits as a percentage of total separations remained at around 70 percent. At the same time, the relationship between the number of hires and separations in Virginia remained greater than one. Together, these were additional indicators of continued confidence on the part of job seekers in the ability to seek and find another, better position as employers sought to attract and retain staff.

### CROSSWORD ANSWERS

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## COUNTY OF HENRY REZONING PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Pursuant to Section 15.2-2204 of the Code of Virginia, a series of public hearings have been scheduled for **March 15, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.** in the Summerlin Meeting Room of the County Administration Building, Kings Mountain Rd, Collinsville, Virginia. Following these public hearings, the Planning Commission will make a recommendation on each application to the Board of Supervisors.

The Henry County Board of Supervisors will conduct public hearings on the following applications on **March 28, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.** in the Summerlin Meeting Room of the County Administration Building, Kings Mountain Rd., Collinsville, Virginia.

The purpose of these public hearings is to receive input into the possible rezoning of property. Following are the specifics of the public hearings.

### Case R-23-04 William W. Hitt

The property is located on the south side of Ward Rd, between the addresses of 178 and 400 Ward Rd, in the Iriswood District. The Tax Map is 43.2(61)A/1. The applicant is requesting the rezoning of 8.1-acres from Suburban Residential District S-R to Agricultural District A-1. The applicant wishes to build a home on the property and use the land for agricultural purposes, including the keeping of animals.

### Case R-23-05 Everything Outdoors, LLC / Travis Crouch

The property is located in the south west corner of the intersection of Virginia Ave and Camilla Dr, in the Reed Creek District. The Tax Map is 16.8/126A. The applicant is requesting the rezoning of approximately 1-acre from Agricultural District A-1 to Commercial District B-1. The applicant wishes to potentially construct a billboard on the property. This particular use would also require the issuance of a Special Use Permit by the Board of Zoning Appeals.

### Case R-23-06 Everything Outdoors, LLC / Travis Crouch

The property is located in the north east corner of the intersection of Camilla Dr. and Thornwood Dr., in the Reed Creek District. The Tax Map is a portion of 16.8/124. The applicant is requesting the rezoning of approximately 5-acres from Suburban Residential District S-R to Agricultural District A-1. The applicant wishes to construct a large storage shelter on the property.

The application 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



## The Virginia Small Business Financing Authority (VSBFA) has approved a \$2 million loan

Economic Development Loan Fund (EDLF) that will contribute to the creation of Southwest Virginia's first comprehensive residential treatment facility, the Wildwood Recovery Center.

This state-of-the-art facility will allow for simultaneous treatment of up to 96 individuals, using two 7,000-square foot administrative buildings and six 1,900-square foot dormitories.

"Comprehensive treatment services should be readily accessible to all Virginians. I am pleased to see that this need is being fulfilled in the Southwestern part of the state. This new facility will provide necessary treatments for Virginians for years to come. This is another step forward for our "Right Help, Right Now" initiative goals," said Gov. Glenn Youngkin.

VSBFA's funding for this project was critical to fill the gap in financing that facilitated the project's

overall approval to move forward. A \$4 million loan awarded by the Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority (VCEDA) will also contribute to the overall funding, in addition to backing from the Dickenson County Board of Supervisors, Town of Clintwood, and other County entities.

"The Wildwood Center will greatly impact those struggling with the battle of addiction while jump-starting the economy in Southwest Virginia. This newfound resource will heal families and create dozens of new jobs. Projects like this one truly support the heart of our mission and aspirations for Virginia communities," said Secretary of Commerce and Trade Caren Merrick.

A top provider of comprehensive treatment services for those with substance use disorder (SUD), the Addiction Recovery Care (ARC), is working in

partnership with the Dickenson County Industrial Development Authority to bring this facility to fruition. Near the Town of Clintwood, this vital facility will be located at 230 Chip Mill Road on a portion of the parcel purchased by the Dickenson County Industrial Development Authority in 2021. With the final required funding being fulfilled by VSBFA, construction for the center is scheduled to begin this year.

VSBFA considers the Wildwood Recovery Center to be a crucial project, expected to have substantial impact to both the economy and quality of life for individuals and families struggling to survive the disease of addiction. Not only will this project serve those struggling with addiction, but it is also expected to create 52 new full-time Virginia jobs with benefits.

The recovery center intends to hold its grand opening in September.

## Deadline announced for 2023 Governor's Fellows Program

Applications are now being accepted for the 2023 Governor's Fellows Program. The Governor's Fellows Program is a prestigious opportunity for rising seniors and recent graduates to get a firsthand look at the executive branch in action. Since 1982, fellows have worked alongside the Governor's Cabinet and staff, learning about state government and assisting in essential work for the Commonwealth.

"We are excited to welcome the next generation of leaders to kick off their careers with our administration," said Gov. Glenn Youngkin. "The Governor's Fellows Program is a unique opportunity for Virginia students to experience public service first-hand and gain essential work skills for their future."

During their time in service to the Commonwealth, Governor's fellows have the opportunity to learn from special guest speakers who are leaders in state government and beyond. Fellows also experience state government on the road, visiting state government agencies and historic sites that have shaped our past and are improving our future.

"I can't say enough good things about the Governor's Fellow Program. It was transformative for both my personal development and professional career post-graduation," said Ciara Rascona, 2022 Governor's Fellow. "I would highly recommend it to anyone looking for the opportunity to learn, collaborate, and grow. I gained life-long friends while having the opportunity to work across various secretariats that gave me valuable insights into Virginia's government."  
"It was the best thing I did after

graduation. I worked with Cabinet members to hone in on my academic skills and apply them in an arena that had real implications, connecting theory to practice. I felt valued as a learner and I'm grateful for everyone involved for teaching me about the nuances of Virginia's government, turning me into a leader and policy expert who is now in the administration full time," said Calvin Hogg, 2022 Governor's Fellow.

Qualified applicants must be rising college seniors, graduating seniors, or graduate students. All Virginia college and university students are eligible to apply. Virginia residents who attend out-of-state colleges and universities are also eligible. Both public and private college and university students are encouraged to apply.

The selection of fellows is based solely on merit. The Fellows Program does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, age, disability, or veteran status.

The deadline to apply for the Governor's Fellows Program is Sunday, March 5. Interviews will begin on March 13. Applicants will be advised on decisions beginning on April 14. The program runs from June 1 through July 28.

To apply, visit the Governor's Fellows Program website at <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/fellows/> and send the required recommendation letters to Governor's Fellows Program, Post Office Box 2454, Richmond, Virginia 23219.

Email any questions to [govfellows@governor.virginia.gov](mailto:govfellows@governor.virginia.gov).



A visually stunning moment in a contemporary dance piece created by Riddick Dance.

## Riddick Dance to present a new contemporary dance performance at Piedmont Arts

Riddick Dance, a contemporary African American dance company, will be performing in the Frith Performance Hall at Piedmont Arts on Mar. 16, 2023. There will be a reception beginning at 6:30 p.m. and the performance will start at 7:00 p.m. Tickets are on sale now and are \$20 for general admission. This performance is partially funded by the

Virginia Commission for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Riddick Dance is a dance company based out of Hampton, Virginia who features a broad repertory, expressive movement, and a fusion of dance styles. Riddick Dance 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."

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

# Patrick & Henry Community College and Wytheville Community College Receive G3 Grant to Expand Power Line Training Program into Patrick County

Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC) and Wytheville Community College (WCC) have been awarded a \$750,000 Virginia G3 (Get a Skill, Get a Job, Get Ahead) Innovation grant to expand WCC's highly successful Power Line Worker Training program into Patrick County.

"We're excited to continue and expand our collaboration with Wytheville Community College. We began our partnership with WCC several years ago with our CDL and Electrical Groundworker programs, but were delayed due to the pandemic," said Rhonda Hodges, Vice-President of Workforce, Economic, and Community Development at P&HCC. "This short-term training program will provide students with the skills needed for family-sustaining careers with a lot of potential for growth in our area."

Virginia's Fast Forward programs - such as the Power Line Worker Training Program - help students pay for short-term training that leads to industry-recognized certifications, licenses, and ultimately, high-paying jobs.

Students enrolled in the Power Line Worker program train for 14 weeks to gain certifications and the skills to become successful power line workers. Skills that these students learn include electrical theory, aerial framing, rigging, safety, commercial truck driving, and the use of utility service equipment.

The Stuart Rotary Club approved the use of Rotary Field in Stuart last week.

The Patrick County Board of Supervisors currently leases the Rotary Field facilities, and the board approved the field to be used as the training site for the training.

Electrical poles and related equipment will be placed on the site to provide students with a realistic learning environment. Funds from the G3 Innovation grant will be used to purchase needed equipment and for other training costs.

Perry Hughes, WCC Vice-President of Workforce and Occupational Programs, oversees the Wytheville power line program. He said, "WCC is excited to partner with Patrick & Henry Community College to

expand the Power Line Worker Training program currently offered at WCC into Patrick County. We appreciate Patrick & Henry Community College, the Rotary Club of Stuart, Virginia, the Patrick County Board of Supervisors, and American Electric Power (AEP) for their support. Upon completion of this project, WCC and P&HCC will be increasing the number of graduates who will be trained to enter into the high wage, high demand field of power line workers."

Since WCC's Power Line Worker Training program's inception in 2017, eleven groups of students have completed the program and received the training and certifications necessary to become successful power line workers.

The first class to be trained in Patrick County is tentatively scheduled to begin in the fall of 2023. For more information about enrolling in the program, contact Perry Hughes (WCC) at [phughes@wcc.vccs.edu](mailto:phughes@wcc.vccs.edu) or Rhonda Hodges (P&HCC) at [rhodges@patrickhenry.edu](mailto:rhodges@patrickhenry.edu).

# Backyard bird owners urged to increase biosecurity measures against avian influenza

A strain of highly pathogenic avian influenza has been found in two commercial poultry flocks in Virginia, and officials are urging bird owners to stay vigilant against the virus.

The two cases were discovered in January in commercial turkey flocks in Rockingham County. The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and state officials have quarantined the affected areas and are performing additional testing and monitoring in a 6.2-mile radi-

us around the impacted flocks.

As a result of the recent cases, officials are ramping up biosecurity measures on poultry farms and encouraging backyard poultry owners to do the same.

"This virus strain is spread predominantly by wild birds," said Tony Banks, senior assistant director of agriculture, development and innovation for Virginia Farm Bureau Federation. "To the extent possible, backyard flock owners should do everything they can

to prevent their poultry's direct contact with all wild birds, predators and rodents."

Backyard poultry owners can help mitigate exposure by repairing any holes in fencing, structures, screens and roosting areas that may attract wild birds and animals. Additionally, they should limit visitor contact, wear personal protective equipment, change clothes before and after entering poultry areas, disinfect tools and equipment, and provide disposable boot covers or disinfectant footbaths for

anyone in contact with poultry.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that at least 85% of HPAI cases in U.S. poultry flocks can be attributed to exposure to wild birds carrying the virus. The airborne respiratory virus is transmitted through nasal and eye secretions and manure, and can be spread between domestic and wild birds, flock to flock, through equipment and on clothing and shoes.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention considers the risk to the

public from HPAI infections low. Proper handling of eggs and poultry and cooking them to an internal temperature of 165° kills bacteria and viruses, including HPAI.

While the virus poses little risk to humans, "it is a serious threat to poultry farms and owners of backyard flocks," Banks explained. The virus leads to high mortality in domestic poultry and potential depopulation of commercial flocks.

Though these are the first cases found in commercial poultry flocks in

Virginia, VDACS reports that HPAI has been detected in six non-commercial backyard flocks since the outbreak began in January 2022. Other cases have been found in hunter-harvested wild waterfowl.

Virginia bird owners should report poultry illnesses or unusual deaths to the state veterinarian's office at 804-692-0601 or [vastatevet@vdacs.virginia.gov](mailto:vastatevet@vdacs.virginia.gov). Learn more flock biosecurity tips at USDA's Defend the Flock Resource Center at [bit.ly/3AJm8FX](https://bit.ly/3AJm8FX).

Be sure to like the Henry County Enterprise on Facebook



## Be Winter-Wise.

## And COVID/flu Smart.

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



**West Piedmont HEALTH DISTRICT** **VDH** VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

[www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus)

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