

# HENRY COUNTY ENTERPRISE

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(USPS-6)

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## Reasons for proposed rate hike outlined at council meeting

By Taylor Boyd

The Martinsville City Council received information about the financial background of a proposed electric rate increase at its December 19 meeting, after taking no action at its Dec. 12 meeting, when Durwin Joyce, utilities director, recommended a 5.2 percent hike in the Power Cost Adjustment (PCA).

At the most recent meeting, Mandy McGhee, director of finance, said there were two rate increases between the audited years of 2018 through 2023.

"We had a rate increase of 4.5 percent in July of FY 2019, followed by a 2.5 percent increase in 2020. We did not see any increases in FY 21 or FY 22, which you saw some of our expenditures exceed some of our revenue, which impacted that deficit line," she said.

The ending cash and investments for FY 2023 totaled \$343,461, McGhee said, adding the total is dwindling lower and lower. She explained that cash on hand is another calculation her department uses during its cash reserve policies.

"That gives you a little understanding of how many days you could operate given your cash on hand if there was an emergency," she said, noting the city has six days in reserve.

City Manager Aretha Ferrell-Benavides said there is a projected \$198,251 deficit at the end of the audited FY 2023, even though there was a seven percent increase.

"Which was not the amount that was recommended, so we are ending that amount and a negative \$198,000 in (See Rate Hike p. 2)



Natale Hodge (left) interviewed her mother Judy Hodge (right) on the second episode of season two of "On The Spot."

## Season two of Rudy's Girl show is now airing

By Taylor Boyd

The second season of "On the Spot," an interview-based show by Rudy's Girl Media, premiered in late November.

Rudy's Girl Media owner Natalie Hodge said the series was first created when the studio first opened as they wanted to invite the community in to not only share the new space but to hear from them in a really creative way.

"It started, we were just posting reel-style videos on social media, and we'd ask one question, and they'd provide an answer in under a minute," she said. "They didn't know the questions beforehand, so it was literally on the spot that they had to respond which creates lots of interesting tension and excitement as far as the production."

Once RGM TV was launched, Hodge said the studio wanted to have full interview segments for "On The Spot."

"So, it still starts with one question, and they have to provide that answer in under a one minute, but then it rolls into a full 20-minute interview where we talk about all sorts of things," she said.

The interview is also com-

pletely unscripted and organic as Communications and Content Development Director Dana Wilson makes the questions in secret and puts them inside a box for Hodge to draw out.

"So, we're experiencing the question for the first time together, like the guest and I. Then we just, after we do that first question, we roll into what they do and we might touch on other things related to that question, but it's very organic," she said.

Hodge said some of the season's guests reached out to her after season one aired asking how they could participate in the new season.

"Then we posted on our social media pages that we were filming a new season and asked for people to submit to be on the show. Then we rolled from there," she said.

Hodge's favorite guest this season was, of course, her mother Judy Hodge, a retired music teacher.

"My mother is a character; ok she is a character. Well first off, she kept saying, 'Well, I didn't know I wasn't prepared

(See Rudy's Girl Show p. 2)

## Program in Bassett focused on heritage



Renae "Spring Morning" Wagoner of Spencer (right) recently showed items from her Shawnee heritage during her program at the Bassett Historical Center, "We Are Still Here." She shared a message of respecting Native American heritage and connections. Her niece Alycia Carter (left) of Roanoke was among those in the audience. Wagoner is the author of "My Heart: Poems and Stories that Fulfill the Promise."

## Year In Review: A look back at 2023

JANUARY

### Community support drives success of Ridgeway business



Woody's Supermarket and Grill, a well-known market and eatery in Ridgeway, is much like the word 'y'all' in the south: It has been part of the community for as long as nearly anyone recalls. Owners Billy and Angela Wheeler both understand why. They say it is because of their loyal customers and the community as a whole.

(See Year in Review p. 2)

## Zehr reflected on board tenure, timing to step down

By Taylor Boyd

Ryan Zehr, who represented the Ridgeway District on the Henry County Board of Supervisors for eight years, recently completed his service.

Zehr opted to not seek reelection because he felt the board got a lot accomplished during the last eight years.

"Then with dad (Francis Zehr) passing away pretty recently, it just felt like it was time to take a break," he said. "My youngest is getting involved in sports and whatnot, so he's taking up a lot more of my time, especially with coaching basketball and football and other activities."

Zehr said it also seemed like a good time to step away because nothing bad is looming over the county, and reversion talks with the City of Martinsville had ceased.

"It seemed like a good time to step aside and let someone else bring some fresh ideas in," he said. During his tenure on the board, Zehr said he met a lot of good county employees as well as those in the Henry County Sheriff's Office, and volunteers.

"The county's full of great people. I'll definitely miss being directly involved with them, but I'm sure I'll see them in passing and



Ryan Zehr

maintain the friendships that I've made," he said.

His favorite memory of being on the board was being sworn in the first time with his father, who was sworn in at the same time on the Henry County School Board.

"Then obviously, all the wins over the years, there's a lot of those," he added.

Zehr said the past eight years have been the best in terms of economic development compared to any eight years.

The board made two big economic development announcements at the Commonwealth Crossing Business Centre and other areas. A pay study for the county, sheriff's department, and school system also was completed.

"I feel like as I'm leaving, we're heading in a good direction as far as everybody

getting paid what they need to get paid, economic development's going in the right direction, I mean, it's a good position that the county's in right now for sure," he said.

While Zehr assisted in accomplishing several of the county's projects, one thing he wished he could have done was the start of work on I-73.

"I don't know if we'll ever see it in our time, but that would have been one thing that would have been nice to get started. Other than that, there's always things here or there but nothing really jumps off the page," he said.

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# Rate Hike

(cont. from page 1)

that year. However, it then depletes our fund balance to \$343,000, with six days in reserve," she said.

"This is the only fund that's operating in this, and it's a hard one to swallow, but I think it's very important for us to share with the council and the public as to why we have to do this," she added.

McGhee said the request for the 5.2 percent PCA adjustment to the rate is driven by the purchase power contract that goes into effect in January.

"For example, one weather event can lead to an increased demand in generation at times costing electric funds an estimated \$500,000 in that one year. There are multiple examples of it, and

I think everyone recalls last Christmas Eve when Duke (Energy) had put some rolling outage in North Carolina."

McGhee said energy costs are increasing, and there is an estimated \$1.2 million deficit compared to the current budget.

Ferrell-Benavides said if the PCA is not increased, the city will have to take funds from another fund balance to cover the difference.

"It means it takes it from another fund balance and other projects within the city. It also could mean that we ultimately will not be able to service our citizens because if we can't pay our bills, we can't provide electricity for them," she said.

Ferrell-Benavides said the presentation at the meeting was important so that city residents would understand the proposed PCA rate hike is not easy for the city's government or the council.

The proposed electric rate increase will be returned to the council in January.

In other matters, the council:

\*Approved the October 24 meeting minutes.

\*Authorized the city manager to draft and execute a contract for the development of the West Church Street and Rives Road properties.

\*Approved requesting the General Assembly to amend the City of Martinsville's Charter.

\*Discussed information related to the city's proposed 2024 legislative agenda.

\*Heard a presentation on the Martinsville Guided Career Exploration by Natalie Hodge on behalf of the West Piedmont Workforce Development Board.

\*Heard from Ural Harris about the suitability of the Rives Road site for industry and the city's funding for education.

\*Heard from Rico Johnson, of Korner Kitchen, about the crosswalk in front of 37 Main Street and the level of traffic.

\*Heard comments from council members.

# Rudy's Girl Show

(cont. from page 1)

that I could have gotten questions.' I said 'Well, that's what unscripted is. That's what it means to be on the spot,'" she said.

At one point, Hodge said her mother was told what the end process was, and she claimed that she didn't know what she was supposed to say.

"So really, she's like a really sweet diva. She's really funny, she throws a lot of shade toward me in that episode, so I highly recommend it," she said. "It's probably the funniest episode of the season, just watching us together."

Another of Hodge's favorite guests is Shakeva Frazier, who does "powerful community development work" in Danville.

When Frazier came on, Hodge said there was not a dry eye in the studio.

"She has a life story that is so gripping, and she has turned some pretty significant challenges into a way of being that is phenomenal. She's giving back in some incredible ways in Danville, and she's doing all of this with this extremely kind heart. When you hear her story, it will bring you to tears," she said.

When she talks about "Hometown Hustle" or anything Rudy's Girl Media

does that's connected to talking to community members, Hodge said the area has a wealth of knowledge and expertise.

"We have people who are doing amazing things right in our midst, people who we can touch, and call, and bump into at the coffee shop or the grocery store, and sometimes we take that for granted," she said.

Every interview she's done this season for "On The Spot" has left Hodge feeling uplifted in a new way and inspired in a new way.

"I'm excited to continue to tell those positive, high-impact stories on our new platform and our existing platforms," she said.

Hodge is also currently preparing for season three of the show.

"So many people have reached out even as we've only rolled out two episodes so far about how they can be on the show. We're really excited to put together the next season of it, which will happen at some point in the early part of 2024," she said.

Those interested in appearing on the show can reach out to Hodge at info@rudysgirl.com. They will then be emailed a form to fill out with basic



**Natale Hodge**

questions to answer.

Season one came out in May 2023. Filming for the 14-episode season two started in August.

Hodge said the series can be viewed

on RGM TV, which is Xfinity Channel 16. New episodes are aired every Thursday at 6 p.m. The show can also be watched on the Rudy's Girl Media YouTube channel.

# Year in Review

(cont. from page 1)

**City nixes current reversion in narrow vote, creates new commission to address issues**



Members of Martinsville City Council on Tuesday adopted a resolution to terminate reversion.

Mayor LC Jones and Vice Mayor Aaron Rawls, the newest members elected to the council, joined with members Tammy Pearson to support the resolution. Chad Martin and former mayor Kathy Lawson opposed it.

**Foundation dedicated to its mission of honoring one life by investing in others**



With nearly \$75,000 already invested in scholarships and arts opportunities between Henry County, Martinsville, and Roanoke, the For Alison Foundation is only teeing up as it begins its eighth year of commitment to young people in the communities it serves.

**Martin honored with the 2022 Jack Dalton Community Service Award**



The Henry County Board of Supervisors awarded the 2022 Jack Dalton Community Service Award to Harold William Martin during its regular meeting Tuesday. Martin serves as the fire chief of Horsepasture Volunteer Fire Department and president of the Horsepasture Rescue Squad.

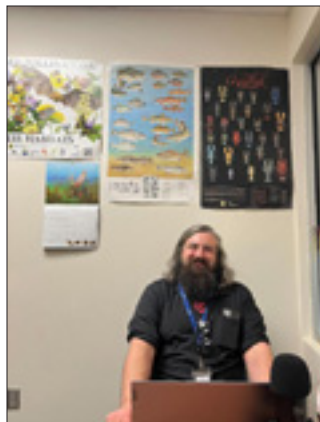
**Board considers next steps as Strayer prepares to retire in July**



Henry County Public Schools superintendent Dr. Sandy Strayer will retire in July, after 31 years as an educator. Strayer plans to focus more time on her family and to pursue avenues to continue to support her community and education.

**FEBRUARY**

**A new podcast intends to make science light, accessible**



A podcast started by the Virginia Museum of Natural History (VMNH) hopes to make the sciences more easily accessible to the public. Hosted by VMNH Administrator of Science Ben Williams, "The VMNHcast" primarily focuses on the work being done in the museum.

**'Quiet Cup With Friends' Coffee Bar is a labor of love**



A partnership forged between the Martinsville branch of the Blue Ridge Regional Library and the Friends of the Blue Ridge Regional Library, which supports the library system, made the new 'A Quiet Cup With Friends Coffee Bar' a possibility.

**State funding mistake among items discussed**



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).

**Teen elected to serve on the town council**



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.

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



A special exhibit, Dinosaur Discoveries: Ancient Fossils, New Ideas, is set to open at the Virginia Museum of Natural History (VMNH) in Martinsville on Saturday, February 11. 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.

(See Year in Review p. 3)

Call 276-694-3101 or email submissions@theenterprise.net for more information.

Be sure to like the Henry County Enterprise on Facebook



# 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).)

## Meetings

**Thursday, January 4**  
The Henry County School Board will meet at 5:30 p.m. on the 1st Floor, in the Summerlin Room of the Henry County Administration Building in Collinsville. The board will meet in closed session after the public meeting.

## Events

**Saturday, January 6**  
Storytime, 10 a.m. at Spencer Penn Centre. The monthly program includes special readers, crafts, and other fun activities related to Let's Build It! Come out and join us for this free program, fit for all ages. No registration needed.

**Tuesday, January 9**  
Free Estate Planning 101 with Sarah Bridwell, from 6 to 7 p.m. at the Spencer-Penn Centre. Pre-register now by calling (276) 957-5757.

Chix with Sticks, 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. Advanced registration required. Free to members, \$5 for nonmembers who will pay at the door.

**Friday, January 12**  
Music Night at the Spencer-Penn Centre. Hard driving old-time string band, Gap Civil, will play in

Alumni Hall. Gate opens at 5 p.m. with the band starting at 6:15 p.m. Admission is a \$5 CASH donation. Come enjoy some great mountain music and dancing! Concessions, including our ever-popular Spencer Penn hotdogs, will be sold.

**Monday, January 15**  
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day

**Monday, January 22**  
Meet and Greet hosted by Ridgeway District Supervisor Travis Pruitt, 6-7:30 p.m. at the Ridgeway Rescue Squad, 108 Magnolia St., Ridgeway. Guest speakers will be featured, and light refreshments will be served.

**ONGOING**  
The Martinsville-Henry County Lions Club regularly meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Pacific Bay Restaurant, 530 Commonwealth Blvd, Martinsville.

AWANA meets at Blackberry Baptist Church on Sundays, from 4-6 p.m.

TOPS FIELDALE VA 0626 meets each Tuesday at 5:45 pm at the Rangeley Ruritan Building on 134 Calloway Drive, Fieldale, VA. New members are welcome. For more information, call Patti at (276) 358-0489.

The Bassett Ruritan Club hosts Rook Music & More on Fridays from 10 a.m. - noon. Play Rook, work puzzles, make a craft and listen to a mixture of bluegrass, country & gospel music by different bands each week. If you want, bring a snack to share. This event is free to the public. Any donations received will

go to the Bassett Ruritan Club to pay for electricity etc.

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 [brll.lib.va.us](http://brll.lib.va.us).

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

Book Bingo on the 4th Tuesday of the month at the Martinsville Branch of the Blue Ridge Regional Library, 11 a.m. to noon. Call (276) 403-5430 to register.

Medicaid eligibility renewals have resumed. Martinsville-Henry County Coalition for Health and Wellness (MHCCHW) offers Medicaid/FAMIS application and renewal assistance for Virginia residents from birth to 64 years of age in-person: Wednesdays 10 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. at Community Storehouse, 128 E. Church St (lower level of the old Leggett Building) in Martinsville, or by phone, Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. MHCCHW's specially trained Medicaid/FAMIS Outreach Advocate is available to help. Call or text Ann Walker at (276) 732-0509 to learn more or for an appointment.

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. Call (276) 647-9585.

## Year in Review

(cont. from page 2)

### Fire safety trailer returns to service after restoration project



The Martinsville-Henry County Firefighter's Association's Fire Safety Trailer is back in service after a lengthy restoration process. Lee Cooley, president of the association, said the trailer is used as a prop when teaching children and adults fire safety.

## MARCH

### Apartments in former school now available to rent



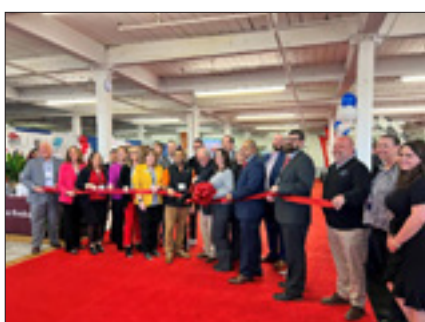
The inauguration of the Fieldale School Apartments was celebrated with a February 28 ribbon cutting that was attended by several county officials and others. Debra Buchanan, of the Horsepasture District on the Henry County Board of Supervisors, said the 23-apartment complex in the former Fieldale School building will help address housing issues.

### Eanes presented with resolution



Henry County Sheriff's Lt. Col. Steve Eanes was presented with a resolution honoring his years of service at the Henry County Board of Supervisors meeting. Eanes retired on February 28.

### Fast Track opens with VIP Night



The Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce kicked off the 27th year of its Fast Track trade show with VIP night on Tuesday. The first night was a ticketed event open to chamber members. Held at the Commonwealth Center, which is commonly referred to as the Clocktower, the event included 100 exhibitors from various sectors, including healthcare, manufacturing, and local restaurants.

### Bell encourages students to "stand tall" against bullying



The tallest man in America, George Bell, visited Albert Harris Elementary School on Tuesday morning to discuss bullying and give students some pointers about how to deal with the impact. "Bullying has become a big issue in our schools. A lot of the children have no idea how to handle it," said Bell.

### Thomas named president of M-HC Chamber



The Martinsville - Henry County Chamber of Commerce, a membership-based association whose mission is to promote and protect the interests of the business community, welcomed Brenell Thomas as its president. She also will serve as the Executive Director of the Chamber's Partnership for Economic Growth (C-PEG).

## APRIL

### Mitchell sworn in as new council member



Lawrence Mitchell was sworn in as the newest member of Martinsville City Council at a regular meeting Tuesday. Mitchell was appointed to replace former council member Chad Martin. "I look forward to serving the citizens of Martinsville," Mitchell said, thanking the council members for the opportunity.

### Harvest Foundation Aids in library Expansion



The Bassett Library Steering Committee and the Blue Ridge Regional Library system today launched a \$2.25 million capital campaign supporting an extensive renovation and expansion of the Bassett Library. The Harvest Foundation will invest \$396,184 toward the renovation project.

### Class inspires youngsters to develop a knack for crafts



Children are inspired to hone and develop their skills when making age-appropriate themed crafts at Piedmont Arts' Wee Create! The next class meeting is set for Tuesday, May 16, at 3 p.m. (Contributed photo. See inside for more information or visit [PiedmontArts.org](http://PiedmontArts.org).)

### Carver Road residents hear update on concerns



Residents of the Carver Road and John Spencer Court communities held a community meeting Monday for an update about issues related to Teal-Jones Pine Products, a nearby company. During the April 10 meeting, Van Drewery noted the company is a multi-million lumber operation and purchased the property in 2021.

### Historical Society breaks ground on a new addition



The Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society recently broke ground on a 12,250-square-foot addition to the Heritage Center & Museum, which is located in the Historic Henry County Courthouse. The addition, which will be three stories and located at the rear of the current facility, will house a massive collection of artifacts and antiques curated by Dr. Mervyn King.

### VCCS Chancellor David Doré Visits P&HCC



Patrick & Henry Community College welcomed Virginia Community College System's (VCCS) Chancellor, Dr. David Doré, to campus on Thursday, April 14 as part of his statewide listening tour.

(See Year in Review p. 5)

See more at [www.henrycountyenterprise.com](http://www.henrycountyenterprise.com)



# OPINION

## Betwixt and between the old and new

We are in the no-man's-land of time. Between Christmas and New Year's, life is just different. We float along easily, cheerfully, lightly in this period of rest or fun. There are no obligations and very little markers of time.

Oh yes, we may go to work, but for many jobs, the days are easier. There aren't a whole lot of expectations for the last week of December.

Even if there were hopes of accomplishing something in the office, there's hardly a leg to stand on to do so, since so many employees are out on vacation anyway, or juggling their schedules to accommodate their kids off school.

We do the bare minimum to get by. A lot of what there is to do was done ahead anyway, and for the rest, customers aren't so picky this week. They can wait until next week, or even the week after, for what they need. Customers and clients far more cheerfully accept the excuse that it can't be done this week

than they would at any other time of the year.

Of course, this ease doesn't apply to those who work in retail. Working in a store must feel like being in a madhouse at this time. First, there's the mad rush to get rid of the Christmas merchandise, whether by storing it away somewhere else, throwing it away ('tis the season for dumpster-diving behind stores - just don't get caught! That would be embarrassing) or, perhaps more commonly, immediately rushing out with the 50% off and 75% off stickers.

And our sympathies are extended to those who work taking customer returns on those gifts that weren't what they were hoping for.

But even if your job is quite busy this time of year, your nights are more than likely free.

No organization dares schedule an after-work meeting this time of year. For once, we can go straight home to our

families each weeknight and make a proper dinner without rushing about.

For those with kids, blissfully, there are no dance classes, no band practices, no music lessons, no club meetings to rush off to. Your nights that normally end at 9 p.m. (perhaps with hungry kids still demanding a hot dinner) are both a mere memory, and a burden being more and more dreaded as we get used to this rare free time, knowing we'll lose this comparable comfort in the second week of January.

And unlike Christmas, New Year's is fairly free of obligation. Sure, there may be a party to go to, and you may even be hosting that party.

But it is not nearly as involved as everything Christmas demands - a constant whirlwind of shopping and wrap-



Holly Kozelsky

ping and decorating and cooking and hosting and serving.

Of course, all that decorating needs to be undone and stored away, but whether you waste the glory of a three-day empty weekend on that or not is up to you!

Hats off to the three-day weekend that stretches ahead, our last taste of the otherworldliness that marks the holiday season.

## Regarding Mabry Mill

When I was a kid, one of my favorite cartoons was "A Pup Named Scooby Doo." It was a Scooby Doo spin-off where Scooby was still a puppy and the gang was in elementary school.

This show contains what is to this day one of my favorite running gags in television history. In every single episode, when the gang would learn that some variety of ghost or goblin was terrorizing somebody, team leader Fred would always announce that he knew the true identity of the spook: it was none other than neighborhood bully Red Herring.

Of course, it was never Red Herring, except for the one time that Fred didn't accuse him of the crime. It was a few years before I understood the joke behind the bully's name, but I was endlessly amused by Fred continually accusing this poor kid of crimes he did not - and in many cases could not - commit.

I think about this gag a lot, usually in the context of Barack Obama and Joe Biden.

During his tenure as President, Obama was blamed for so many things that "Thanks, Obama" became a running joke I still hear quoted to this day. Joe Biden has picked up the mantle since becoming President and is routinely blamed for everything from gas prices to county-level political decisions to, in all likelihood, particularly bad hangnails.

Most recently, I've heard him blamed for the situation at Mabry Mill.

For those who haven't heard the sad news about this 100+ year old institution located on the Blue Ridge Parkway in Meadows of Dan, the folks who run Mabry Mill have reached the end of their ten year operating contract and will not be renewing in 2024. The National Park Service is going to begin seeking a new operator for the restaurant portion in 2024 with hope that the restaurant will reopen in 2025. In the meantime, a company called America's National Parks will maintain operation of the gift shop and the mill itself when the site reopens in the spring.

Let me be the first to say that I'm very disappointed I won't be able to eat any Mabry Mill buckwheat pancakes in the coming year. I've been a regular visitor to Mabry Mill since I was a tiny child. I'll admit that I felt some charm was lost when they got rid of the lunch counter and the old-timers who used to sit there, but it's still a cherished landmark.

No one knows why the operators decided not to renew their contract. The operators have declined to comment publicly and the National Park Service has not issued an explanation either. With no answers forthcoming, I've seen many social media users point their fingers squarely at the one evil mastermind who would surely delight in a rural restaurant depriving the public of pancakes for a year: Joe Biden!

The theory is that when Biden set the federal minimum wage at \$15 an hour in 2022, it made it unprofitable

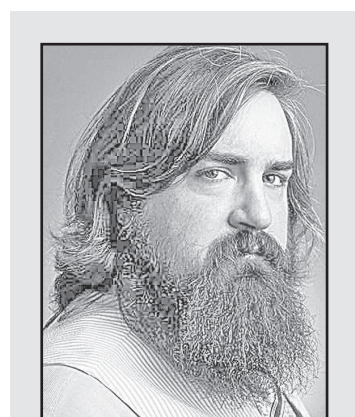
to operate the restaurant. I doubt that's the case, and it would also require us to ignore the fact that unions have been fighting for a \$15 minimum wage for so long that after inflation, minimum wage should now be \$24 per hour.

I've also heard social media users comment that the National Park Service should take over the restaurant, but unfortunately, they're simply not set up to do that. It would be like the Henry County Board of Supervisors deciding to open a taxpayer-funded sports bar, an idea I mention only because I literally heard a dude make that suggestion during the public comment segment of a Board of Supervisors meeting some years ago. Additionally, the National Park Service can't just make the restaurant stay open. A federal agency compelling someone to operate a restaurant against their will would, at the very least, be an example of government overreach, not to mention a pretty entertaining Supreme Court case.

I want to preface what comes next by saying that I have absolutely no idea why the Mabry Mill operators have chosen not to renew their contract, nor do I even know who the operators are. However, I can tell you why I personally would not renew that contract.

The first reason is that it's a seasonal business and only operates between late spring and fall. It's hard to make a steady income when your business is shuttered for nearly half the year.

Secondly, the dining area at Mabry Mill only seats 65 people. It's consistently busy when it's open - I can't remember a time when I haven't had to



By Ben R. Williams

wait for a table - but if you can only seat 65 people, you NEED to be running full-tilt. That's a very small number of seats for a restaurant that isn't offering fine dining and the associated high prices.

But the final reason is the biggest one. If I decided to go into the restaurant business, I would never want to operate a restaurant within the confines of the National Park Service or any other federal agency.

That's because if the federal government shuts down, your restaurant shuts down too, and there isn't a thing you can do about it.

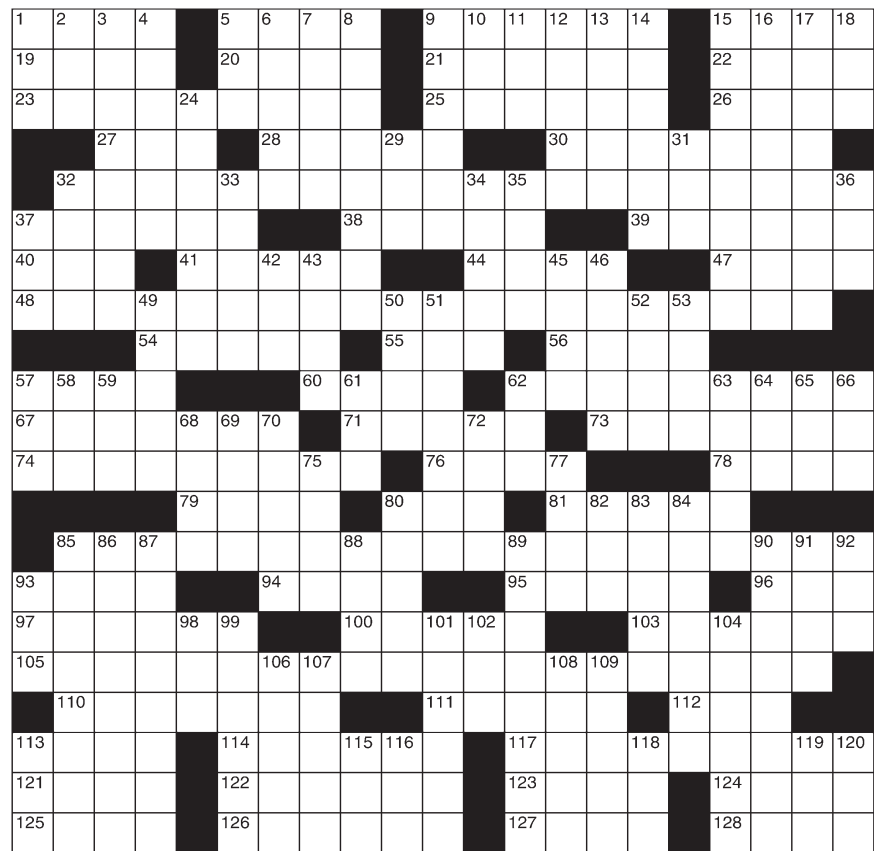
But have there been any recent politicians who seem untroubled by the prospect of a government shutdown, or perhaps even seem eager for it?

I can think of a few, and they ain't Red Herring or Joe Biden.

### Super Crossword

MAKING 20 OUT OF 9

- |  |  |   |                              |
|--|--|---|------------------------------|
| <b>ACROSS</b>  | <b>DOWN</b>  | <b>ACROSS</b>   | <b>DOWN</b>                  |
| 1 Pueblo dweller   | 40 Stephen of "Angie"  | 94 Words of woe   | 2 Bobby in the Hockey 1-Down |
| 5 Sound of an "air kiss"   | 41 Humongous   | 95 Desert haven   | 3 Leguminous side dish       |
| 9 Forensic facility in Quantico, for short                         | 44 Foot, in verse  | 96 Sch. founded by Thomas Jefferson                       | 4 Low pelvic bones           |
| 15 Gig hookups   | 47 Tattered  | 97 December mail temps                                    | 5 Hosp. test in a big tube   |
| 19 Refined finds   | 48 Novel whose name consists entirely of the letters in          | 100 Consumer  | 6 "Mrs. Dalloway" novelist   |
| 20 Civil rights leader Parks                                       | 62-Across  | 103 Very talented   | 7 Ed of "Lou Grant"          |
| 21 In an uncivil way   | 54 Others, in Oviedo   | 105 Setups whose name consists entirely of the letters in | 8 Is trustful                |
| 22 Lawn mower brand  | 55 Last letter, in Leeds   | 117-Across  | 9 Citrusy diet soft drink    |
| 23 Parts of wholes   | 56 Trig function   | 110 Some legumes  | 10 Idling type               |
| 25 Key related to G major  | 57 Arab nation   | 111 Lindsay of "Liz & Dick"                               | 11 Cruel Amin                |
| 26 "Jurassic Park" dino  | 60 Titanic sinker  | 112 Be in debt to   | 12 Slower than andante       |
| 27 "Billions" channel, in brief                                    | 62 Didn't type or text, perhaps                                  | 113 Imp Simpson   | 13 Socially distant          |
| 28 Some boxing blows   | 67 Relating to an eye layer                                      | 114 Throat tissue   | 14 Side street               |
| 30 Horn blowers  | 71 Corn, to a Brit   | 117 Lawbreaker  | 15 Give proof of             |
| 32 Person whose name consists entirely of the letters in 23-Across | 73 Neighbor of Latvia  | 121 - fixe  | 16 Novelist Toni             |
| 37 Los Angeles neighborhood  | 74 Relatives of terraces   | 122 Menu offering   | 17 Strong-arm                |
| 38 "I knew - along!"   | 76 Silent performer  | 123 In - (stuck)  | 18 Boston Red -              |
| 39 Old Nissan brand  | 78 Consumer  | 124 Lasting mark  | 24 This evening              |
|  | 79 Coup d'—  | 125 Betting info  | 29 Building-blasting         |
|  | 80 Attain  | 126 "Mad" Carroll character                               | 31 Bag-screening org.        |
|  | 81 Exit  | 127 Some votes in Congress                                | 32 Gotten sight of           |
|  | 85 Film whose name consists entirely of the letters in 74-Across | 128 Those folks   | 33 Attempter                 |
|  | 93 Verve   |   | 34 Fibber's admission        |



## 6 Reasons Why You Should Take Your Mental Health Seriously

By Stan Popovich

Many people underestimate the impact that mental illness can have on an individual or family. It can be difficult to admit that you have a mental health problem in your life. Secondly, it can be just as difficult in getting the people you know to understand your situation without making any kinds of judgments.

As a result, here are six reasons why you should make your mental health an important priority in your life.

1. Your situation will improve if you get help: Your anxieties and fears can be challenging to manage and more than likely you will need some help. Just as you talk to your doctor about your regular health, you should not be hesitant in seeking help for your mental health. If left untreated, your anxieties and fears may not go away.

2. Drugs and alcohol are not the answer: Drugs and alcohol can make your problems more complicated. Many people have said that drugs and alcohol will only add more problems to your situation. Be smart and learn how to cope with your mental health issues by talking to a qualified professional. There are many health professionals in your area that can give you some ideas on where you can go for assistance.

3. You will save time and money: Eventually, you will have to confront your fears and mental health issues. Save yourself the time and heartache and confront your problems now rather than later. You will save months of struggling by getting help right away. The sooner you get assistance the faster you will start getting some relief.

4. You are not alone: Everyone deals with fear, stress, and anxiety in one's life whether your friends and others care to admit it. In addition, do not be embarrassed that you are getting help. We all learn new things from others on a daily basis and learning how to manage your anxieties is no different. In addition, your goal is to get your life back on track and not to get everyone's approval. If people start asking you questions, just say your dealing with stress. Most people can relate to dealing with stress and anxiety!

5. Do not make the mistake of doing nothing: There are many people who struggled with anxiety and other mental health related issues, and they tried to ignore their problems. As a result, some of these people struggled on a daily basis and eventually things became more difficult. It can be scary asking for assistance, but the key is to take things one day at a time.

6. You have a variety of options: There are many mental health support groups, organizations, and counselors in your area that can help get your life back on track. Talk to your doctor to get more details on where you can go for some assistance. Help is available but you must be willing to make the choice of getting better. Remember that every problem has a solution. You just have to make the effort to find the answers.

Stan is the author of "A Layman's Guide to Managing Fear" which covers a variety of techniques that can drastically improve your mental health. For more information, please visit Stan's website at <http://www.managingfear.com>.

See more at [www.henrycountyenterprise.com](http://www.henrycountyenterprise.com)



# Year in Review

(cont. from page 3)

## MAY

TheatreWorks Community Players present "The Play That



### Goes Wrong"

"The Play That Goes Wrong," technically is a play within a play in which the Cornley Polytechnic Drama Society present their production of 'Murder at Haversham Manor.' Everything that could go wrong does go wrong in this production. The set is unfinished, but the play starts anyway and there is no time to complete it.

Former Collinsville YMCA finds new life as Henry County



### Recreation Center

A former YMCA facility had a facelift and now is the new Henry County Recreation Center - the first indoor facility for activities in the county. Located at 395 W. John Redd Blvd., the building that previously housed the Collinsville YMCA has been fully remodeled with new paint, flooring, and lighting.

Draper, Hodge recipients



of Clyde Hooker Awards Natalie Hodge, of Rudy's Girl Media, and Draper Flowers & Gifts were the 2023 recipients of the Clyde Hooker Awards. The winners were announced during the 21st Annual Clyde Hooker Awards Ceremony recently held at Piedmont Arts Association.

Six receive awards at C-PEG 2023 Start-Up



### celebration

Martinsville-Henry County Chamber's Partnership for Economic Growth (C-PEG) recognized its 2023 Startup Martinsville-Henry County graduates who recently completed the Success Mindset, an intensive eight-week entrepreneurial boot-camp program for startups.

Hodges presides over first



### graduation in new role

Dr. Greg Hodges, president of Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC) has served in various roles during graduations. This year marked his first since his official inauguration as president.

Call 276-694-3101 or email [submissions@theenterprise.net](mailto:submissions@theenterprise.net) for more information.

Roark still makes the rounds at farmers' markets



Retirement does not agree with Grover Roark. The 95-year-old farmer devotes much of his time to selling his homemade fried apple pies, honey, and other fresh produce at weekly farmers' markets.

## JUNE

DRBA celebrates past, looks forward at annual event



Nearly 100 people from both Virginia and North Carolina attended the Dan River Basin Association (DRBA)'s Annual Celebration last week to mark the organization's accomplishments, honor those receiving annual volunteer awards, and hear from guest speaker, Spencer Tassone.

School Board recognizes "Odyssey of the Mind" participants



Students from Martinsville Middle School recently participated in the Odyssey of The Mind competition. The team participated in regional and state competitions and advanced to the world finals, and placed 7th overall for their skit. They also placed 2nd in a spontaneous competition. Members of the team are Niema Merritt, Sarah Green, Veronica Johnson, Noah Wright, Cristofer Santiago, and Nykira Johnson. The students were coached by middle school teacher Greg Hackenberg.

## JULY

Davis vows to begin each day on bended knee



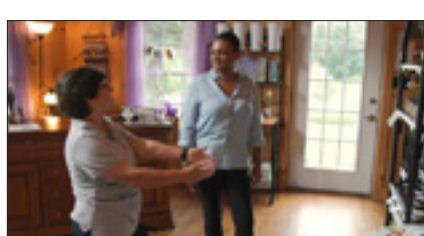
Wayne Davis, who took the oath of office Monday in preparation for becoming the next sheriff of Henry County, beginning at midnight Saturday, July 1, said he "will begin every day serving this community from bended knee." His term commences as the term of long-time Sheriff Lane Perry ends at 11:59 p.m. on Friday, June 30. Perry, who retired after serving as sheriff for nearly 17 of his 30 years in law enforcement, was also honored.

Renovation project at Hooker Field nears completion



Work on the nearly \$3 million renovation project at Hooker Field is nearing completion. Once finished, the fan experience will be noticeably improved. Martinsville City Manager Leon Towarnicki said feedback from fans was the impetus for the improvements.

Hometown Hustle's second season highlights local businesses



Local businesses were featured in the second season of "Hometown Hustle," a web series that highlights the entrepreneurial spirit of local small businesses in Southwest Virginia. Episodes focused on the Collinsville Scuffle Hill Brewing Company, Martinsville's Ground Floor, Meadows of Dan's High Country Lavender Farm & Shop, Poor Farmers Market, and Concord Corner Store, and other businesses in nine other localities.

Revised revenue sharing agreement inked Tuesday



The Henry County Board of Supervisors, the Martinsville City Council and the county's Industrial Development Authority (IDA) approved a revised revenue sharing agreement on the Commonwealth Crossing Business Centre (CCBC) during a joint meeting held at the Harvest Foundation on July 11.

The atmosphere at the meeting was jovial as county and city officials met around a long table, with other participants, including Harvest staff and board members, and observers seated around the edges of the room.

Review, investigation launched after 'concerning use of force' incident



Four Henry County deputies have been suspended without pay from their duties at the Henry County Adult Detention Center following what Sheriff Wayne Davis called "a concerning use-of-force incident" which resulted in injuries to an inmate. The Virginia State Police are investigating the incident, and the sheriff's office also is conducting an internal review, Davis said.

Hotel project at former National Guard Armory gains city's support



Martinsville City Council and the Martinsville Land Bank Authority passed a resolution on July 11 to support plans for an 80-unit Holiday Inn Express that will be built at the former National Guard Armory. The property, located at 315 W. Commonwealth Boulevard, was deeded to the city in October after being declared surplus by the state. Since then, several inquiries have been made about its potential use.

Towarnicki honored by city and county



Martinsville City Manager Leon Towarnicki (third from left) was presented with a key to the city by members of the Martinsville City Council at his final meeting Tuesday. He is flanked (left to right) by council members Tammy Pearson, Kathy Lawson, Mayor LC Jones, Vice Mayor Aaron Rawls, and Lawrence Mitchell. Towarnicki will retire on July 31, after 41 years of service to the city and its residents.

Operations at the sports complex remain the same - for now



Henry County Administrator Dale Wagoner on Wednesday said no immediate changes are planned in the current operations of the Monogram Foods Smith River Sports Complex. "Our Parks & Recreation Department hasn't been involved in the day-to-day operations of the complex. For now, the complex will continue as it is to allow us to evaluate the most effective and efficient organizational structure and operations," Wagoner said.

## AUGUST

Local celebration of national event attracts hundreds



Law enforcement and first responders got together with a few hundred friends from the community Tuesday to enjoy an evening of fun and food at the National Night Out event, held August 1 at Compassion Church in Axton. Henry County Sheriff Wayne Davis took his turn in a dunk tank.

Mural 'beautiful and remarkable' addition



The Broad Street parking lot shines brighter now in uptown Martinsville with the new "Rooting for the Same Hope" mural. The 300-foot-long mural on a low wall facing the Big Chair, along the former American of Martinsville showroom which now houses Community Storehouse, is a vibrant bluish teal with flowers and reaching hands.

City landmark to be demolished



The historic Paradise Inn, a Fayette Street building that played a vital role in the social and cultural fabric of Martinsville's African American community, is scheduled to be demolished on Friday, August 11, two days after a ceremony to celebrate the Inn's history and provide a time for residents to remember and voice their memories of the landmark.

Towarnicki reflects on more than 40 years with the city



After 41 years of service to the City of Martinsville, City Manager Leon Towarnicki officially retired on Monday, July 31. He started his career as the city's engineer in 1982.

(See Year in Review p. 7)



# CLASSIFIED

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## ADVERTISE!

# First Cohort of Power Line Graduates Recognized



**Pictured are P&HCC president Dr. Greg Hodges, Michael Morrison (instructor), Hunter Amos, Noah Brumfield, Camden Bryant, Cameron Hagwood, Dylan Thompson, Nathan Rorrer, Tommy Jessup (instructor), and Danny Williams (instructor) celebrate the completion of P&HCC's initial Power Line Worker cohort. Not pictured: Power Line graduate Skyler Thomas.**

The first cohort of Patrick & Henry Community College's (P&HCC's) powerline students were recognized on Thursday, December 14 in Patrick County with a graduation ceremony. Graduates were joined by family, friends and employers from Elliott and the City of Martinsville to celebrate their completion of the three month course.

"We are very proud of these students who recently completed the inaugural cohort of the Power Line Worker training program in Patrick County. Through this innovative partnership with Wytheville Community College, P&HCC continues to expand training opportunities for career pathways that pay well and lead to economic mobility," said Rhonda Hodges, P&HCC vice president of workforce, economic and community development.

Instructor Michael Morrison encouraged graduates to remember that their work in the program has been foundational for future cohorts as members of the class not only came to learn, but worked to help set up the pole yard that they and future students will use for training during the course.

Using curriculum from the National Center for Construction Education and Research, the Power Line Worker curriculum addresses the fundamental aspects of power line work to ensure workers maintain safety for both the public and electrical crews. Power line workers install, remove, maintain, and repair high voltage and low-voltage distribution lines and associated equipment and facilities. Training topics include truck driving, safety, electrical theory, climbing techniques, aerial framing, rigging, and operating utility service equipment.

P&HCC's second Power Line cohort will begin February 5. Those interested in participating in the program should call 276-656-0260.

## Four state correctional facilities to close in July

The director of the Virginia Department of Corrections (VADOC) announced several actions that are designed to enhance public safety and increase operational efficiency within the department's facilities.

Chad Dotson, VADOC director, said the Augusta Correctional Center, Sussex II State Prison, Haynesville Correctional Unit #17 and Stafford Community Corrections Alternative Program (CCAP) will close, effective July 1, 2024.

These decisions were made to enhance employee, inmate, and probationer safety, to address longstanding staffing challenges, and in consideration of significant ongoing maintenance costs.

The VADOC has already started the process of working with staff to identify job placement opportunities within the agency to ensure the opportunity for continuous employment and career advancement. The department will work diligently to ensure that all employees who wish to remain employed with VADOC will be able to stay with the agency.

Employees from Sussex II State Prison and Haynesville Correctional Unit #17 have already been temporarily reassigned, primarily to the neighboring Sussex I State Prison and Haynesville Correctional Center.

The VADOC will also assume control of Lawrenceville Correctional Center, the only privately operated prison in Virginia, at the end of the current contract term, August 1, 2024.

The department has been notified that Gov. Glenn

Youngkin plans to introduce a budget with additional funding needed for the agency to safely assume control of that facility next year.

The VADOC intends to work with the GEO Group at Lawrenceville Correctional Center to ensure that current employees are afforded the opportunity to apply for state employment.

"Governor Youngkin's budget enhances public safety and increases efficiency inside Virginia's prisons for staff members, inmates and everyone who lives and works in Virginia," said Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security Terrance "Terry" Cole. "I believe these steps will help the VADOC further its mission of public safety and operational excellence."

"I am deeply appreciative of Governor Youngkin's support to help the Department gain additional efficiency and promote the security and safety of the employees and inmates at the VADOC, especially our security staff," said Dotson.

"I am committed to ensuring that those individuals impacted by facility closures will be able to maintain continuous employment within VADOC if they choose to do so," Dotson added. "Members of the department's leadership and I met with affected staff at their facilities today and will continue to meet with them in the coming days. Our dedicated employees work every day to create long-term public safety in the Commonwealth of Virginia. I value them, and our leadership and human resources staff are here to answer their questions and hear their feedback as we support them during this transition."

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ORDER OF PUBLICATION Case No. CL23001315-00

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
VA. CODE §§ 1-211.1; 8.01-316, -317, 20-104  
HENRY CIRCUIT COURT  
3160 KINGS MOUNTAIN RD, 3RD FL, MARTINSVILLE, VA 24112  
JAVIER SARABIA LOPEZ v. ELIA PEREZ GARCIA  
AV. BORDO DO XOCHIACA,  
MEXICAN IO LOTE 35  
Esado de Mexico 56353

The object of this suit is to:  
TO OBTAIN A DIVORCE A VINCULO MATRIMONII  
It is ORDERED that ELIA PEREZ GARCIA appear at the above-named court and protect her interests on or before FEBRUARY 11, 2024  
DECEMBER 13, 2023

*Jennifer Adams*  
[ ] JUDGE [X] CLERK

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# Sports Schedule

Following are the dates and times of local high school teams and their games for the week of Jan. 1-6:

1/2 7pm Boys Basketball Tunstall at Magna Vista  
7pm Girls Basketball Martinsville at Bassett  
7pm Boys Basketball Bassett at Martinsville

1/3 9am Wrestling Martinsville (Tournament at Radford HS)  
5pm Wrestling Bassett vs multiple schools (at Halifax HS)  
5:45p Girls Basketball MSA at Carlisle  
7pm Girls Basketball Magna Vista at Liberty  
7pm Girls Basketball Altavista at Bassett

7pm Boys Basketball Magna Vista at Morehead  
7pm Boys Basketball Bassett at Martinsville  
7pm Boys Basketball MSA at Carlisle

1/4 6pm Wrestling Magna Vista vs Mecklenburg County (at Martinsville MS)  
6pm Wrestling Martinsville vs TBA (at Martinsville)  
8pm Wrestling Magna Vista vs Martinsville (at Martinsville MS)

1/5 5pm Swim & Dive George Washington at Bassett (Martinsville YMCA)  
5pm Swim & Dive Martinsville at Halifax

County  
7pm Girls Basketball Magna Vista at Mecklenburg County  
7pm Girls Basketball Bassett at Tunstall  
7pm Girls Basketball Martinsville at Halifax County  
7pm Boys Basketball Mecklenburg County at Magna Vista  
7pm Boys Basketball Tunstall at Bassett  
7pm Boys Basketball Halifax at Martinsville  
TBA Indoor Track Magna Vista at Liberty  
9am Indoor Track Bassett (Track Meet at VMI)

## Year in Review

(cont. from page 5)

### Housing federal inmates will increase revenues in the county



Revenue from housing federal inmates will help make up for any future revenue shortfalls and in the future could help pay down the debt of the new Henry County Adult Detention Center.

### Local athlete competing in Kung Fu World championships



Ayla Gordon, a local martial artist, has traveled to Emeishan, China to compete in the 9th World Kung Fu Championships, August 23-28. A member of Team USA, Gordon will put nearly a lifetime of hard work and training up against the best in the world. Gordon, now 20, works and trains in Martinsville.

### SEPTEMBER

#### Announcement represents 'promise to build a better future'



State and local representatives and others gathered Wednesday along with officials from Press Glass Inc., the largest independent glass fabricator in Europe, will invest \$155.2 million to expand at the Commonwealth Crossing Industrial Park in Henry County. Gov. Glenn Youngkin said the company will construct a 360,000-square-foot addition to its existing facility to expand its U.S. presence and manufacture glass for the commercial construction industry. The project will create 335 new jobs.

#### Drug Court program celebrates first graduate



Jessica Dudley, the first graduate of Piedmont Adult Drug Treatment Court (PADTC), is approaching 400 days free of substance abuse. "I came into the program at my lowest," Dudley said. "I had decided the world would be better off without me... I'm proud of the woman I've become thanks to my support system. They picked me up, encouraged me... I will be forever grateful. It's a daily battle but worth it."

### Indictments issued in 2016 death investigation



In what is hailed as a "relentless pursuit of justice," one man has been indicted in connection with the 2016 death of Everett Odell Bivins, Jr. At a press conference held Tuesday, September 12, Henry County Sheriff Wayne Davis and Commonwealth's Attorney Andrew Nester announced that Kenneth Edward Gearheart was indicted by grand jurors in Henry County on one count each aggravated murder of a witness, use of a firearm in the commission of a felony and possession of a firearm by a violent felon in connection with the incident. An indictment is not an indication of guilt, but rather a grand jury's finding that enough evidence exists to warrant a trial.

### IDA approves sale of Bryant property



The Henry County Industrial Development Authority (IDA) approved a purchase and sale agreement for the Bryant property to an undisclosed buyer at its September 13 meeting. If the sale moves forward, the buyer will pay \$10,000 per acre, or an estimated \$7.9 million, for Tract "A," which includes 795.78 acres.

### OCTOBER

#### Family seeks answers in decade-old case



Ten years ago, "Ricky Dodson left my mom's house in Bassett with an 'I love you Mom and I'll see you later.' Later never came," said Frances Hylton who like her mother, Polly Dodson, has been waiting 10 years for closure in the deaths of her brother, Ricky Dodson, and his girlfriend, Vicky Purdy. Both Purdy, 53, and Dodson, 53, lived in the Bassett area of Henry County. The two went missing on October 3, 2013.

#### The Kennel, a new café, opens at Martinsville Middle School



"When you need a break, The Kennel is always awake" is the motto of The Kennel, a café operated by Martinsville High School (MHS) students at Martinsville Middle School. The Kennel, which caters to teachers, officially opened on Thursday, October 12 as part of the entrepreneurial program through the MHS Career & Technical Education (CTE).

### NOVEMBER

#### Racing legends featured during program at NCI



More than 250 filled the Martin-Lacy Lecture Hall at New College Institute, and many more watched from big screens in other parts of the building, when Richard Petty and Frank Scott had a "Legendary Conversation." The Legendary Conversation program, hosted by Warrick Scott, was a joint presentation by NCI and the Wendell Scott Foundation on Oct. 25.

#### Tricks and Treats Uptown



The Martinsville-Henry County Heritage Center & Museum in Uptown Martinsville hosted agencies, organizations and others who set up on Halloween to hand out treats.

#### Davis sweeps county precincts in Tuesday's vote



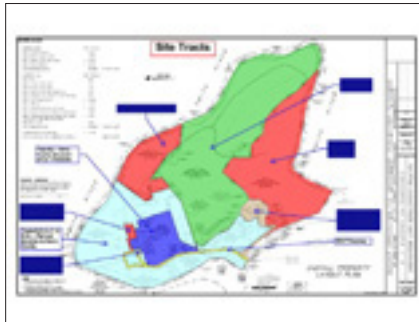
Wayne Davis won every precinct in his bid for Henry County Sheriff. He won the most votes overall among candidates in races with opposition, garnering 73.86 percent of the vote, according to unofficial results. In his contest against Del Mills, Davis picked up 9,971 votes to the 3,495, or 25.89 percent, cast for his opponent. Retired Henry County Sheriff Lane Perry and Davis are pictured.

#### Local Pastor Looking Forward to Retirement



Pastor Tyler Millner, fondly called "The Rev," is looking forward to retirement after more than 50 years in the ministry. Although he toyed with the idea of going to law school earlier in life, Millner explains he was primarily positioned to enter the ministry. His mother, Reverend Almeda F. Millner, pastored their church for 39 years, and he tagged along with her his whole life.

### County welcomes proposed land donation



A proposed land donation of approximately 124 acres from EIDP, Inc., formerly known as E. I. Du Pont de Nemours and Company, to Henry County was approved at the October 24 Board of Supervisors' meeting.

### Apartments in a former school available for rent



The inauguration of the School Drive Apartments in the former John Redd Smith School was celebrated with a November 16 ribbon cutting that was attended by several county officials, community members, former students, and tenants.

### DECEMBER

#### MHS student wins mascot contest



Spencer Koger (left), director of the Uptown Partnership, presented a T-shirt to Brook Sneed, winner of the Mascot Contest, during a ceremony this week. Sneed is a Martinsville High School student. Her design, 'Marty' was selected as the city's mascot. Pictured beside Sneed are Anne Agee and Kirsten Blankenbaker, who also entered the contest.

#### Ohev Zion Synagogue adjusts to meet challenges



Over its nearly 100 years, the Ohev Zion Synagogue in Martinsville has gone through the stages of growth, strength, and decline – and appears to be on the rise once again. Dicky Globman, a member of the congregation and grandson of two of its founders, talked about Martinsville's synagogue recently during a Sunday Afternoon Lecture at the Martinsville-Henry County Heritage Center & Museum, sponsored by the MHC Historical Society.

(See Year in Review p. 8)

*Be sure to like the Henry County Enterprise on Facebook*



# Year in Review

(cont. from page 7)

## P&HCC celebrates the official opening of MET II with a 50 percent enrollment increase



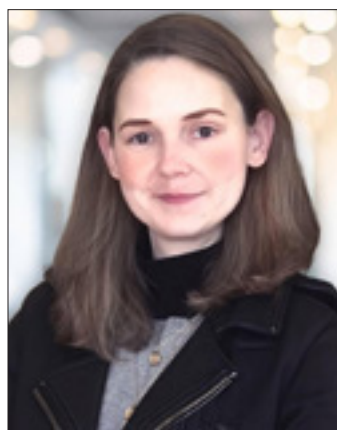
Local and state representatives, as well as those from various organizations and agencies, gathered on November 30 to celebrate the grand opening of the MET II lab at Patrick & Henry Community College, which currently boasts 165 students. “The grand opening has been years in the making,” Dr. Greg Hodges, president of P&HCC, said at the event.

## School board honors Flanagan for 20 years of service



The Henry County School Board honored Terri Flanagan, of the Horsepasture District, for her 20 years of service on the board at its December 7 meeting.

## Long-time director steps down from PA post



Bernadette Moore, the director of exhibitions and marketing at Piedmont Arts is leaving the position, after 17 years of dedicated service.

## Wade honored with state flag



After 41 years of service to the Henry County Circuit Court Clerk’s Office, Frances Wade, the Master Chief Deputy Clerk, has officially retired. To celebrate, Sen. Bill Stanley, R-Glade Hill, presented Wade with a flag of Virginia on behalf of the Senate.

# Helpline calls spike with Virginia gambling expansion

By Kaitlyn McMahon/Capital News Service

More money is being funneled into Virginia’s problem gambling services, but advocates say increased gambling demands more resources for help.

Virginia ranked near the bottom of all states in the amount of money directed toward problem gambling before casino and sports betting were legalized. The Problem Gambling Treatment and Support fund was created in 2020 when gambling expanded in Virginia. Collection of revenues into the fund began in January 2021.

Before 2021, the Virginia Lottery directed approximately \$75,000 annually to the fund, according to VPM. Casinos are now required to put .8% of a statutory tax into casino adjusted gross revenue, the money left after winning bets are paid, into the gambling help fund. Sports wagering sends 2.5% of taxed AGR to the fund.

Fifteen states increased their budget 5% or more between 2021 and 2022, according to the National Association of Administrators for Disordered Gambling Services.

Virginia significantly bumped up its support in 2022, and gave around \$2 million to problem gambling services, according to numbers from NAADGS.

A report prepared for the General Assembly in 2019 estimated that effective problem gambling prevention and treatment could cost \$2 million to \$6 million annually.

Sports bettors are setting record breaking amounts of wagers. The state is collecting more tax revenue than was forecast four years ago, according to the Virginia Mercury.

Bettors used mobile apps to wager \$565.56 million on sports in October, according to the most recent Virginia Lottery report. They wagered over \$5.78 million through a casino sportsbook.

That left \$56.36 million combined sports betting AGR for the state to tax.

The taxable amount from slots and table games at all three casinos combined in October was \$49.56 million.

The AGR is similar but sports wagering sends more money to the problem gambling fund. Casino play contributed \$72,887 toward the fund in October and sports betting contributed \$213,754.

The majority of gamblers are not using casinos to access Virginia’s 16 legal sports books.

Caesars Casino in Danville holds the highest share of casino sports betting at almost 6.5%. FanDuel is the state’s No. 1 sportsbook with 40% of the market share, according to the state lottery October gaming compliance report. DraftKings is No. 2 with 28%.

### Views on sports betting

Northern Virginia resident Cristian Lazo, age 21, began sports betting in May. He places weekly bets using DraftKings. Lazo uses online sports betting as opposed to in-person due to convenience.

Lazo was already a sports fan, and decided to earn some money.

“Betting on it can make watching the sport better sometimes,” Lazo said.

Sports betting isn’t uncommon among Lazo’s friends. He mostly bets on football and soccer games, and he’s won “a good amount of bets.”

“I think the total amount of money I’ve won is somewhere around \$350 to \$400,” Lazo said.

Lazo said he “technically” hasn’t lost any money because of the rewards program that he takes advantage of. He puts some of his winnings toward other wagers.

Brendan Dwyer is the director of research and distance learning at the Center for Sports Leadership at Virginia Commonwealth University. An associate professor, he has degrees in economics and sports administration.

“Sports betting is something that makes the sports industry more attractive,” Dwyer said. “It’s better for games and it’s better for the consumer.”

About 19% of Americans, or 1 in 5, reported sports betting in a 12-month period, the Pew Research Center reported last year. That includes online, with a friend or at a casino. Most people who bet are under the age of 50.

A majority see sports gambling as neither bad nor good for society. Only 8% saw it as a good thing for society, and a slightly higher amount saw it as good for sports.

About a third of people surveyed view gambling as bad for society and sports.

There are more positives than negatives, according to Dwyer, who does not think sports betting is going away “any time soon.”

“As long as we identify who the major groups are that need to be aware of the challenges, I think it is something that should be supported by the leagues, the teams, by state legislatures because of the revenue that they get from it,” Dwyer said.

### Sports betting shifts younger

Gambling age demographics have shifted nationwide due to the recent legalization in many states.

Lia Nower is director of the Center for Gambling Studies at Rutgers University.

“Overall, men have the highest rates of gambling problems as well as emerging adults, ages 21 to 25, followed by ages 26 to 44,” stated Nower.

In-person gambling trends older while online casinos and sports betting trends younger, according to Nower.

The state helpline has seen a shift in the age of callers, which used to be older individuals who had been gambling for years before developing a problem, according to Carolyn Hawley.

Hawley works with the Virginia Lottery-funded problem gambling helpline as president of the Virginia Council on Problem Gambling. She is also an associate professor in the department of rehabilitation counseling at VCU.

“We’ve seen a huge shift, and this has been seen nationwide with also the onset of sports betting legalization, is a much younger demographic,” Hawley said. “People who are starting to develop problems really quick ... it’s that speed, that repetitive nature, that works with dopamine and just you know, accelerates that addictive process.”

Roughly 2% of Virginia’s population could be impacted by problem gambling, the state’s Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services commissioner said earlier this year.

Substance use disorders in the U.S. are 3.8 times more common than gambling disorders, according to the VCPG. But public funding for substance abuse treatment is about 334 times greater than public funding for all problem gambling services, or \$24.4 billion versus \$73 million, respectively, according to the VCPG.

### Spike in helpline calls

The state problem gambling helpline has seen a 788% increase in total calls between 2019 and 2022, in part due to increased advertising of the services, according to Hawley.

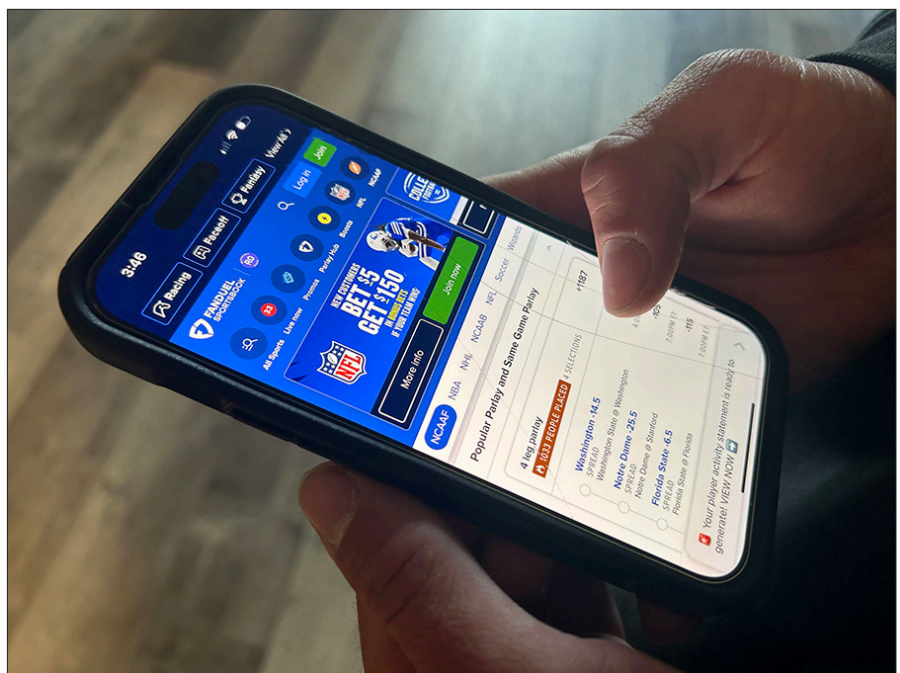
“Since launching treatment and recovery services for Virginians last year, the need for these services is outpacing our resources,” Hawley said.

Helpline operations are covered by Virginia Lottery funds. But the education, prevention and other activities of the Virginia Council on Problem Gambling are covered by membership fees, according to Hawley, and are not guaranteed from year to year.

Virginia used to be a “conservative” gambling state, Hawley said.

“We had our three main forms of gambling which was lottery, horse wagering and charitable, and since 2019 we just exploded with the forms of gambling that are now available and legal,” Hawley said.

Substance abuse disorder and gambling disorder share a lot of the same characteristics, according to Hawley.



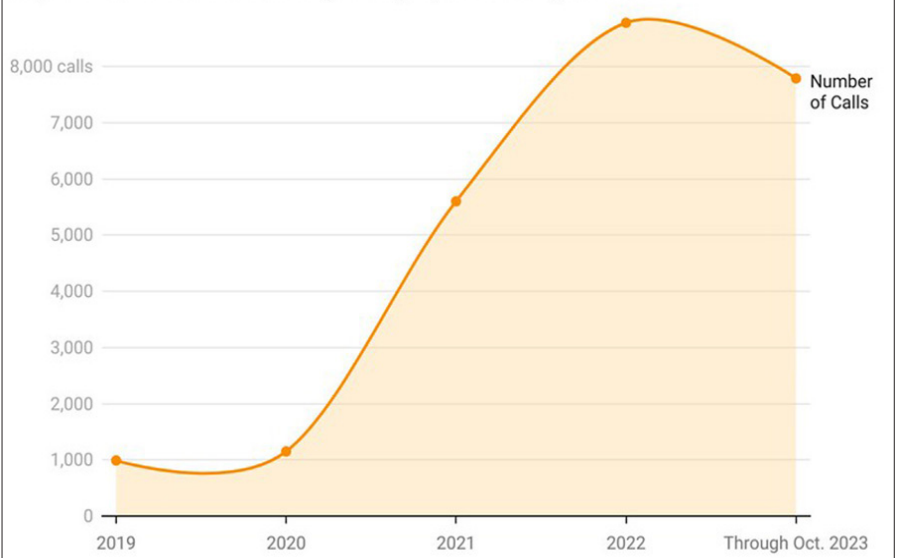
Players can bet on multiple sports using the Fan Duel app. (Photo by Kaitlyn McMahon)



Virginia Lottery, the company responsible for regulating internet sports betting, had a tent on Virginia Commonwealth University’s campus in order to reach out to college students. (Kaitlyn Fulmore photo)

## Spike in calls to Virginia problem gambling helpline

Helpline calls have increased since gambling expanded in Virginia in 2021.



The calls include Virginia residents actively seeking help, in addition to help seekers from other states, those trying to reach the Virginia Lottery, a casino or mobile betting apps.

Chart: Kaitlyn McMahon | VCU Capital News Service • Source: Virginia Council on Problem Gambling • Created with Datawrapper

## Helpline calls have increased since gambling expanded in Virginia in 2021. (Infographic by Kaitlyn McMahon | VCU Capital News Service.)

“Gambling can often be more insidious because you can’t smell it, you can’t see it, people are very good at hiding it,” Hawley said.

There are also high rates of suicide among people with a gambling addiction, according to Hawley.

Approximately 16% of individuals with problem gambling will attempt suicide, compared to 0.7% of the population, according to research published this year in the Journal of Gambling Studies. A very high number of people with problem gambling meet criteria for other mental illnesses, according to the nonprofit Health Resources in Action.

### How to get started with help

Some signs that could indicate an individual has a gambling addiction, according to Hawley:

Gambling is interfering with life and

causing problems.

A lot of time is spent thinking about gambling and planning the next gambling activity.

More time spent gambling than other activities the individual used to enjoy.

It takes more to get that same level of excitement.

It is hard to cut back or stop.

The VCPG helpline 1-888-532-3500.

VCU InSight journalist Mario Navarro contributed to this report.

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. VCU InSight is the capstone broadcast news program.



# Patrick & Henry to Pilot Childcare Apprenticeship Program

Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC) has been awarded \$31,000 from an anonymous donor to support piloting a model for Early Childhood Education apprenticeships with local childcare providers. The grant will supplement employer salaries to reach a \$15/hr salary for all apprenticeships. With this generous funding, P&HCC will build a comprehensive career model that benefits students as well as youth, employees, and employers, all while Early Childhood Development students are also earning their associate degree.

In the pilot program, 8 students will commit to a 5 month apprenticeship of 340 working hours while also completing their associate degree in early childhood development. P&HCC plans to

use this model to create a federally registered apprenticeship program for Early Childhood Development students, who would all commit to working 2,000 hours over two years with local childcare providers, coinciding with the length of time needed to complete the Early Childhood Development program.

P&HCC's long-term vision is that the program will grow in future years to include more cohorts of P&HCC students participating in the apprenticeship model, with the potential to expand to other colleges. If successful, P&HCC's Early Childhood Apprenticeship Program could be replicated throughout the state to address early childhood center staff shortages. This model will provide a valuable,

hands-on learning experience for students while supporting economic development through addressing the childcare needs of regional employers whose employees depend on reliable, quality childcare.

"We believe that opportunities should be available to employees to upskill and earn family-sustaining annual salaries in order to retain and sustain top-tier educational opportunities for the children in our community," said P&HCC president Dr. Greg Hodges, adding, "We are so grateful to the donors who are supporting our pilot program so that we can work to make this a reality for our region's childcare facilities."

Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC) offers an Early

Childhood Education Certificate and the Early Childhood Development Associate of Applied Science degree. The certificate program is a 31-credit program designed to improve the quality of education provided in early childhood programs. The Early Childhood Development Associate Degree program is designed to prepare early childhood professionals with the knowledge and skills needed to successfully manage a classroom and teach students from diverse backgrounds with varied academic and developmental needs. Graduates are prepared to work with students in a variety of educational environments including childcare centers, family day homes, Head Start, and public or private schools.

## New health campaign aims to provide education about health care law reforms

State and federal policymakers, with support from the hospital community, have passed a series of laws protecting patients and families from surprise medical bills, promoting health insurance and hospital price transparency, and enabling people to get good faith price estimates prior to scheduled hospital procedures.

Yet the vast majority of Virginians don't know these consumer-friendly reforms exist to benefit them, according to statewide polling and focus group research conducted this year by the Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association (VHHA). To address that information gap, VHHA is launching the "Control Your Care" public awareness campaign to ensure patients and families know their rights to help them make informed medical decisions.

"Patients are at the center of everything we do at hospitals. Their well-being is our utmost priority," said Eric Deaton, Ballad Health Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, who serves as Chair of the VHHA Board of Directors. "We strive to make patients active participants in their care through open dialogue and sharing information. The 'Control Your Care' campaign is a natural extension of that approach and an investment in helping equip Virginians with information they can use in personal health care decision making."

"The commitment Virginia hospitals make to patients extends beyond providing high quality care, improving public health, and saving lives. It also involves helping people better understand the health care delivery system," added VHHA President and CEO Sean T. Connaughton. "Just as hospitals have taken a leading role in expanding access to care through funding Medicaid expansion and protecting community health during emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic, we are now investing resources to inform

Virginians about health care reform laws that benefit patients by launching the 'Control Your Care' campaign."

The campaign includes a website, ControlYourCare.com, with easy-to-understand information about consumer-focused health care reforms, links to state and federal laws and descriptions of what the laws do, and other tools to serve the public. This campaign will be supported with statewide digital and broadcast advertising to help raise public awareness about the availability of these resources.

In recent years, the Virginia General Assembly and the U.S. Congress have enacted several patient-focused health care reforms including:

A law passed in 2016 requiring hospitals to provide a good faith price estimate to patients undergoing an elective procedure or test at a hospital upon request at least three days prior to the service.

A law passed in 2020 that protects patients from surprise medical bills when they get care from an out-of-network doctor at an in-network facility during emergencies and some non-emergencies. The law established a process between health care providers and health insurers to resolve the billing issue, removing patients from the dispute.

A federal regulation finalized in 2021 that requires group health plans and health insurance issuers to disclose cost-sharing information to members and to post files online containing all negotiated payment rates.

A law from 2022 that requires hospitals to post price information about medical items and services online for the public to see and comparison shop if they choose. To serve the public, VHHA has created a searchable listing of links to this price information for hospitals across Virginia.

A 2002 law that requires hospitals to post information about charity care

policies, advise uninsured patients about financial assistance policies and payment plan options, report annually on the amount of charity care and financial assistance provided, and places limits on hospitals' ability to aggressively collect medical debts.

Although these laws and regulations are on the books, statewide polling of Virginia voters shows the vast majority of people don't know about them. For instance, poll results show that:

80 percent of people are not aware that Virginia passed a law protecting patients from surprise medical bills for out-of-network emergency care and some non-emergency care.

73 percent of people are not aware that federal and state law requires hospitals to publicly post price information online about standard charges for medical care.

61 percent of people say they have not heard about a law enabling patients to receive a good faith price estimate from hospitals upon request at least three days in advance of a scheduled elective procedure or test.

Despite the existence of these laws and the availability of related consumer resources, polling also shows that 86 percent of Virginia households have not used health care pricing tools such as an online list of prices or an estimator in making health care decisions, 85 percent of Virginians indicate they have not price shopped or compared prices prior to seeking hospital care, 77 percent have not compared prices for doctors or other health care providers prior to seeking care, and 64 percent have not asked for a health care cost estimate from a health insurer or provider prior to receiving medical care.

Participant feedback from focus groups aligns with results from the poll of 800 registered Virginia voters conducted August 16-20, 2023 by Public Opinion Strategies. Additional research conducted in a series of focus

groups held in Richmond, Roanoke, and Virginia Beach also showed low awareness of consumer-focused health care reform laws. The majority of focus group participants expressed a desire for more public education on existing laws and said that education, rather than new laws, is what is needed at this time.

While views vary about who among health insurance companies, the government, and health care providers bears responsibility for performing this education, a plurality of voters (47 percent) believe health insurers should be most responsible for helping people better understand their health care costs. Under federal rules, insurers are required to provide cost information to the public. Even so, VHHA and the hospital community are stepping up to invest in this public education effort as a service to Virginia patients and families.

In other poll findings, a plurality of Virginia voters (41 percent) identified out-of-pocket costs like co-pays and deductibles not paid by health insurance as their top concern about health care costs, followed by monthly premium costs (19 percent). A plurality (33 percent) also believes health insurance companies are most responsible for rising health care costs.

Data shows that what Virginians perceive about the role of insurance in increasing health care costs is accurate: A study by the non-partisan Altarum Institute found that from 2008-2021 "single annual premiums have increased 74.3%, and family premiums have increased 78.9%" and the "combined totals of average premiums and deductibles have risen even faster, 89.1% for single coverage and 91.3% for family coverage" in Virginia.

The "Control Your Care" campaign is a continuation of efforts by VHHA and the hospital community to educate and inform the public about the health care delivery system and its role in community health and the economy.

## VDACS Launches Centralized New and Beginning Farmer Resources' Webpage

The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) has curated a centralized list of valuable Resources for New and Beginning Farmers. This new website is designed to provide new and beginning agricultural producers with a list of available public resources to assist them in planning and starting their operations.

The list of resources includes financial information, farm planning, training programs, technical assistance, conservation information, farm safety, and farm stress. The site also contains links to videos from a recent seminar, hosted by the Virginia Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry and Virginia State University. These seminar videos allow viewers to hear directly from subject matter experts, gain insight into public and private financing options, and hear questions asked by other prospective farmers.

"After speaking with numerous begin-

ning and prospective farmers, financing is their number one challenge," said Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Matthew Lohr. "Being able to centralize content from our partners and video recordings of our recent seminar is extremely valuable to those just starting down this road. We hope those that couldn't make it to the seminar will watch the videos and take away important information to help their venture thrive."

"Anyone who is in agriculture or starting a new business knows, time is valuable and having these resources in one place is essential," said VDACS Commissioner Joseph Guthrie. "I encourage new and beginning farmers to check this new resource website often, as it will be updated with new information as it becomes available."

To learn about upcoming financial seminars in other areas of the state, follow VDACS on Facebook and X (formerly Twitter).

## Initial unemployment claims trend downward

The number of initial unemployment insurance claims decreased in the latest filing week to 1,669 but remained slightly below typical pre-pandemic volumes experienced in 2019, according to the Virginia Department of Workforce Development and Advancement (DWDVA).

For the filing week ending December 9, the figure for seasonally unadjusted initial claims for unemployment insurance in Virginia was 1,669, which was a decrease of 276 claimants from the previous week. Continued weeks claimed totaled 12,007, which was little changed from the previous week but an increase of 39% from the 8,620 continued claims from the comparable week last year. An industry was reported for ninety-three percent of continued claims. Of those, over half (51 percent) of continued claims were from professional, scientific, and technical services (1,759), administrative and support and waste management (1,701), manufacturing (1,172), and health care and social assistance (1,071). 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 December 9, the advance U.S. figure for seasonally adjusted initial claims was 202,000, a decrease of 19,000 from the previous week's revised level. The previous week's level was revised up by 1,000 from 220,000 to 221,000. The advance number of actual initial claims under state programs, unadjusted, totaled 248,299 in the week ending December 9, a decrease of 46,316 (or -15.7 percent) from the previous week. There were 250,038 initial claims in the comparable week in 2022. Looking at

preliminary data, most U.S. states reported decreases on a seasonally unadjusted basis. New York's preliminary weekly change (-6,581) was the largest decrease. Pennsylvania's preliminary weekly change (-4,362) was the second largest decrease. Texas's preliminary weekly change (-4,333) was the third largest decrease. Oregon's preliminary weekly change (-3,750) was the fourth largest decrease. Virginia had the 18th largest decrease (-527).

See more at [www.henrycountyenterprise.com](http://www.henrycountyenterprise.com)



# Youth Mental Health Strategy unveiled on anniversary of initiative

Behavioral health leaders, community partners and families who have struggled with behavioral health challenges joined with Gov. Glenn Youngkin in Richmond last week to mark the accomplishments of the first year of the Right Help, Right Now (RHRN) behavioral health transformation plan in Virginia, outline next steps and funding for RHRN, and announce his Youth Mental Health Strategy.

On the one-year anniversary of the Right Help, Right Now plan, the Governor announced \$500 million in new funding for the continued transformation of our behavioral health system, including the expansion of school-based mental health services. Additionally, the Governor outlined a Youth Mental Health Strategy and legislative package that would limit the addictive elements of social media platforms to protect children and empower parents with information and resources to best care for their children.

"After a year of implementing critical changes in our mental and behavioral health system through my Right Help, Right Now plan, we are forging ahead with additional RHRN funding and a Youth Mental Health strategy to assist and support our next generation of Virginians," said Youngkin. It's clear that young Virginians face a myriad of challenges ranging from addictive social media platforms to an increasingly dangerous opioid epidemic to mental health challenges and we need to offer support. Our new Youth Mental Health Strategy will work to protect and support our young people from predatory practices online while also empowering families with new tools to support their children's mental health.

"The goal of Right Help, Right Now is to support Virginians before, during, and after a behavioral health crisis occurs. During the first year of this initiative, we have advanced key elements of the infrastructure needed to ensure that there is someone to call, someone to respond and somewhere to go in a mental health or substance use crisis," said Secretary

of Health and Human Resources John Littel. "Year two of this transformation aims to ensure that families have more information about threats to children's mental health as well as tools to support their children."

After a year of the Right Help, Right Now plan, some of the incredible progress includes: the continued growth of the 988 suicide and crisis lifeline system through a marketing campaign, the launch of a behavioral health reserve corps of volunteers, awarded funding to build emergency room alternatives, expanded waiver slots for individuals with developmental disabilities on the priority one waitlist, and additional compensation for targeted state hospital staff.

"This is just the start of the work we are doing to transform our behavioral health care system," said Nelson Smith, Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services. "We've seen tremendous progress over the last year as we have continued to build our crisis continuum of care, expand community-based services, strengthen our workforce, and modernize our systems. This was the result of a lot of hard work and creative and collaborative thinking by staff from across our system and state government."

## Youth Mental Health Strategy

To better equip parents and support our young people, Governor Youngkin is taking immediate action in year two of Right Help, Right Now. In 2023, according to Mental Health America, Virginia ranked 48th in the nation for youth mental health, which demands a collective and comprehensive approach to prioritize the health of the Commonwealth's youngest and most vulnerable citizens. Children spend on average nearly five hours daily on social media; recent studies have suggested that children who spend more than a few hours per day on social media have double the risk of poor mental health. Through budget proposals, legislation and executive action the youth mental health strategy will address critical

components and harmful aspects of social media on our youth.

*To address addictive and harmful aspects of social media on youth:*

\*We will protect minors from TikTok's predatory influence in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

\*We will protect the privacy of all children under 18 years of age from social media companies by banning targeted advertising to children, selling children's data, or creating a marketing profile of a child without parental consent.

\*We will prohibit social media companies from using addictive practices, designs, or features, such as auto-playing videos, gamification, and virtual gifts, on children.

\*We will give parents the ability to implement guardrails on minor's social media use and limit social media companies from disrupting teens' sleep by knowingly or intentionally keeping children on their phones.

*Inside our schools:*

\*We will expand eligibility for school-based mental health services to students across Virginia using a waiver and provide technical assistance and support to localities that provide matching funds and wish to utilize these services.

\*We will require school divisions who monitor student Internet use to disclose what activity is tracked and monitored, obtain parental consent, and notify parents when a safety alert is issued.

\*We will expand the behavioral health workforce in schools and other community settings.

\*We will increase access to care by providing funds for tele-behavioral health for children in grades 6-12, with their parents' permission, as well as in our public colleges.

*In behavioral health care settings:*

\*We will ensure that Virginia families have the right to be in close physical proximity to a relative during a medical, mental health or substance use emergency and provide the relative with previously prescribed medications.

\*We will empower parents with the right to consent for their child to receive inpatient psychiatric care and choose where their child receives inpatient psychiatric care, and exclude minors from code-mandated state psychiatric treatment.

*Year 2 Right Help, Right Now Budget Priorities*

Youngkin proposed \$500 million in new funding for his biennium budget. This is a giant step forward when combined with the funding appropriated in the last budget—bringing the commitment to nearly \$1.4 billion, including:

\*\$307 million to provide 3,440 waiver slots, a slot per person on the Priority 1 Waitlist

\*\$23 million to expand access to school-based mental health services for children, including telehealth

\*\$46 million to meet the three-year target of emergency room alternatives, such as crisis receiving centers and crisis stabilization units, and publicly funded mobile crisis response teams to ensure that people have someone to respond and somewhere to go in a crisis

\*\$10 million for partnerships with hospitals to build specialized emergency rooms for psychiatric patients called comprehensive psychiatric emergency programs

\*\$23 million to ease law enforcement burden, including expanding alternative transportation

\*\$58 million for building a best-in-class behavioral health workforce through salary increases in state hospitals, behavioral health loan repayment, and more clinical training sites and residency slots

\*\$28 million in opioid abatement and response initiatives including a campaign to reduce youth fentanyl poisoning, wastewater monitoring, naloxone availability, and services for those with substance use disorder

The Youngkin administration is committed to doing its part to make Virginia an even better place to live, work and raise a healthy family.

## One charged in a December crash that injured two teens

Oscar Eduardo Vidrio, 30, was charged in connection with the December 16 crash that injured two teens, according to a release from Patrick County Sheriff Dan Smith.

Vidrio, who was born in Mexico, was charged with felony counts of permanent maiming another while driving while intoxicated and driving while intoxicated maiming serious injury, misdemeanor charges of reckless driving, driving while suspended/revoked, driving while intoxicated – first offense and he received two traffic summonses, according to the release.

The case was investigated by Trooper Joe Hylton.

Worley, a Patrick County High School student, and Underwood, a Floyd County High School student, were airlifted to a trauma center in Roanoke.

Underwood has since been released, according to reports on social media.

Worley remains hospitalized and has undergone numerous procedures, including a 5-hour surgery.

A GoFundMe campaign is underway to help with her medical expenses.

Online information stated that Worley was on her way home around 9:35 p.m. on December 16, with her boyfriend Micah Underwood when their vehicle was "struck head on by what now appears to be a drunk driver."

"Our lives are forever changed. Both were airlifted to Roanoke Memorial" hospital, the information stated. "Lauren's side of the car was so mangled the jaws of life had to remove her."

Her parents were "on the horrific scene because of Life 360," a family locator and safety app, according to



Oscar Eduardo Vidrio

online information.

"The first responders from Patrick County were incredible," the online information stated. They "got her out stabilized her and got her on the helicopter to Roanoke trauma center."

Her parents were told it would be a "the long road ahead," the online information states.

"Lauren is still critical and will be here for many weeks, possibly months of hospital stay," the information stated. "We have been overwhelmed by the prayers and support from our friends and family from the Floyd and Patrick communities and Facebook friends all over us."

Mail cards with words of encouragement or even your favorite Bible verse to Carilion Hospital, Lauren Worley, Room 1069, 1906 Belleview Ave., Roanoke, VA 24014.

To support the fundraiser, visit [https://www.gofundme.com/f/lauren-worley-medical-expenses?utm\\_campaign=pcpsshare-sheet&utm\\_content=facebook\\_cta\\_shiant&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=facebook](https://www.gofundme.com/f/lauren-worley-medical-expenses?utm_campaign=pcpsshare-sheet&utm_content=facebook_cta_shiant&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook).

## Virtual Visitation Capabilities Expanding at Two VADOC Facilities

The Virginia Department of Corrections (VADOC) and partners Viapath and Assisting Families of Inmates (AFOI) are expanding virtual visitation at two Department facilities.

Green Rock Correctional Center and River North Correctional Center's virtual visitation officially expanded at 9 a.m. Wednesday, December 13.

Every living area at the two facilities will be equipped with virtual visitation equipment, allowing inmates to conduct visits from their own living areas.

To accommodate the expansion of services, new operating hours for virtual visits will be in place. Hours of operation for the general population will be 9 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and 7 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. on weekends. Any previously scheduled visit outside of those hours will need to be rescheduled once the new hours are in effect.

Additionally, if two inmates in the same living area are scheduled for a visit at the same date and time, one visit will remain in the schedule and the other will be canceled at random. For the canceled visit, the visitor can reschedule using the Visitation Scheduler.

Video visitation will not be operational when the facilities are operating on a lockdown status.

"This is a very exciting development for both Green Rock and River North," said VADOC Director Chad Dotson. "Visitation is a very important piece of the re-entry process and adding more virtual visitation capabilities for these facilities is a great step for the inmates at these facilities, their loved ones, and the VADOC as a whole."

Additional information about visitation is available on the Visiting an Inmate section of the VADOC website.

## AI For Good AND Bad

The holidays are a time when friends and family of all ages gather together, share updates on their lives and recount cherished memories. One thing to add to that list this year: a conversation on how to stay safe from fraud.

We know that scammers target people of all ages. Last year 40% of all scams reported to the Federal Trade Commission were from people under the age of 40, and victims over the age of 60 lose the most money to scams on average. So we are all vulnerable to these criminals, and we could all use a little help and guidance. Here are two fraud topics to talk about with your family this holiday season.

What is a question, story or phrase that no one other than your close family would know? Scams targeting parents and grandparents are only becoming more believable with the adoption of Artificial Intelligence, but no matter how realistic a voice may sound it won't know this

private memory or password. Passwords are another critical topic. We all have so many passwords that it's hard to keep straight. This leads many to choose simple passwords or use the same one repeatedly. A quick chat about how you choose and protect your passwords could save someone you love a lot of money.

Lastly, be willing to share. Too many victims of fraud suffer in silence because they are ashamed to admit what happened to them. The truth is that scammers are sophisticated criminals and for victims sharing their story is the best way to protect others and get the support they need.

Visit the AARP Fraud Watch Network at [aarp.org/fraudwatchnetwork](http://aarp.org/fraudwatchnetwork) or call the AARP Fraud Watch Helpline at 1-877-908-3360.

To learn more about AARP Virginia, like us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/aarpvirginia](http://www.facebook.com/aarpvirginia) and follow @AARPVa on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/aarpva](http://www.twitter.com/aarpva).

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