

HENRY COUNTY ENTERPRISE

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The Henry County Board of Supervisors appropriated \$1 million to buy back a shell building from Schock GmbH. (By Taylor Boyd)

Board appropriates funds to buy back shell building

By Debbie Hall
The Henry County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday approved a \$1 million appropriation to buy back a shell building previously sold to Schock GmbH after the German company opted not to expand its operations into the United States.

The board made the decision after it returned from its closed session meeting, on a motion by Joe Bryant, of the Collinsville District.

Bryant's motion to appropriate \$1 million to the Industrial Development Authority (IDA) to "facilitate the purchase of land, building," and all improvements, and to authorize the IDA chairman to execute documents related to the transaction, was unanimously approved by the board.

The company purchased the building that is located at 1320 Beaver Creek Drive, in Martinsville, from the IDA in (See Board p. 2)

'A true public servant' of 46 years receives the Jack Dalton award



The Henry County Board of Supervisors presented Joel Barnes (center) with the 2023 Jack Dalton Community Service Award. Barnes is pictured (left to right) with Joe Bryant, Debra Buchanan, Jim Adams, Barnes, Travis Pruitt, Dr. Pam Cobler, and Garrett Dillard.

By Taylor Boyd
The Henry County Board of Supervisors presented the 2023 Jack Dalton Community Service Award to Joel Barnes at its January 23 meeting.

Barnes, a Horsepasture native, said, "I know Mr. Dalton played an important role in Henry County over the years, and to me classified in these certain qualifications is certainly an honor.

"I'd like to thank Henry County

for letting me be a part of fire, EMS (Emergency Medical Services), and public safety over the last 46 years," he said.

Debra Buchanan, of the Horsepasture District, read a resolution stating that Barnes has actively served his community in various roles for 46 years.

"Mr. Barnes joined the Horsepasture Volunteer Fire Department in 1977, and has served as first and second lieutenant, (See Award p. 2)

School board hears update on proposed spending plan

By Taylor Boyd
The Henry County School Board heard an update on a potential fiscal year (FY) 2024-2025 budget at its January 18 meeting.

Assistant Superintendent of Operations and Administrative Services Dr. Benjamin Boone said Gov. Glenn Youngkin's proposed FY25 budget introduced a one percent bonus for employees in FY 25 and a two percent salary increase in FY26.

"This is the Governor's proposed budget that has to go through the General Assembly. So, hopefully we're going to see an increase in terms of funding from the state for sala-

ries for teachers and staff," he said.

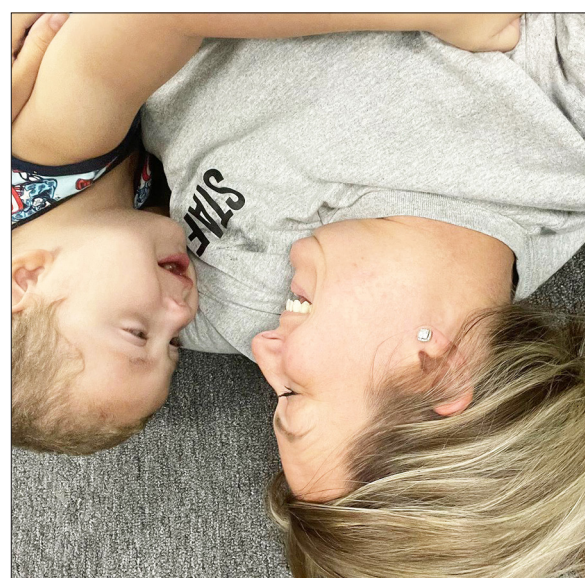
Boone said the Governor's proposed budget introduced increases in Basic Aid and Standards of Quality and reductions in Incentive Programs, State Sales Tax Revenues, and Lottery Funded Programs.

"Overall, for our Standards of Quality programs, the Governor's proposed budget would increase that overall category by about \$8.4 million, and most of that is in Basic Aid," he said.

Boone said Basic Aid funds a lot of the division's instructional positions, different maintenance staff positions, (See School Board p. 2)



Barrow Center founder Sierra Barrow works with a child who doesn't like traditional children's toys but is fascinated by stackable puzzles (Photos courtesy of the Barrow Center).



Sierra Barrow cuddles with a three-year-old autistic child that she describes as "one of the happiest kiddos I've ever met."

Barrow Center had more ups than downs in its first year of business

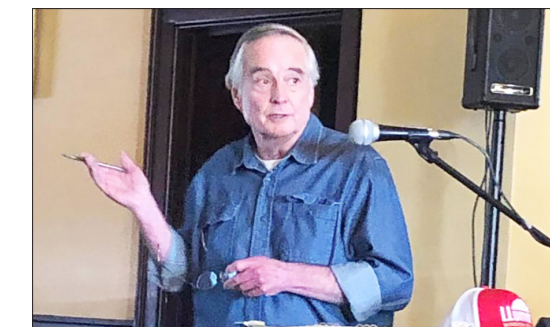
By Jeff Reid
Sierra Barrow, founder of the Barrow Center, which celebrates its first anniversary on February 6, said that the year has been filled with more ups than downs.

On the upside, she said she cannot speak enough on how generous the community has been. She said that she is also pleased with how great the staff is, and the special relationships she has made with

families and the community.

The Barrow Center is a licensed therapeutic childcare center through the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) and is classified (See Barrow Center p. 3)

Film company has long history in M-HC



Bruce Troughton, Eastman product customization and support specialist said more than one million rolls of window film are produced in Martinsville each year.

By Holly Kozelsky
The unique product in which Martinsville leads the world was celebrated Sunday during the Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society's Founders Day program.

Film production in Martinsville was started in 1956 by Julius Hermes, who originally was onto another goal: carpet fibers.

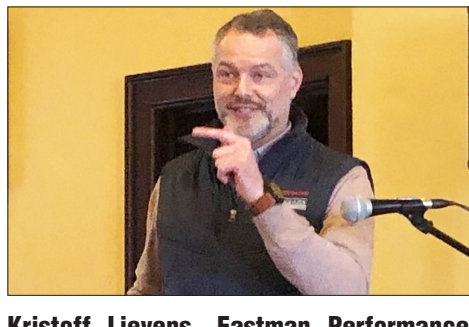


Tracy Tate, the granddaughter of Martin Processing Founder Julius Hermes, told the audience that her grandfather attributed the success of the company to his employees.

Hermes' granddaughter Tracy Tate talked about how he started the company.

Hermes and Burness Frith opened Martin Processing in Collinsville. The company specialized in dying technology for polyester yarn and other materials. In all, Hermes was granted 17 patents for his inventions.

But, according to Tate, the true value of the business



Kristoff Lievens, Eastman Performance Films site manager, said the Eastman plants in Martinsville make products that nearly every person uses, including in their cars and cell phones.

was the people involved.

"Papa Jule truly valued and appreciated all of his employees," Tate said. "He knew that there would never have been a success of Martin

(See Film p. 2)

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Board

(cont. from page 1)

2021, with plans to occupy the Lot 8 Shell Building, a 95,500-square-foot facility located on 14.7 acres in the Patriot Centre Industrial Park.

At the time, Schock announced it would invest \$85 million to establish its first U.S. manufacturing operation in phases. The first phase was to be completed over five years, during which the company would establish the manufacturing capability to produce quartz composite kitchen sinks in its new location.

“Regrettably, the recent economic downturn and subsequent financial challenges have necessitated the reduction of costs and exposures across our company,” Ivo Huhmann, Chief Financial Officer for Schock said in a later release.

Jim Adams, board chairman, said, “This is primarily a business decision on the part of the company. The county did its due diligence on this project and ensured safeguards were in place to protect the economic interests of our citizens. We hope to further our relationship with the company in the future and

Award

(cont. from page 1)

president, vice-president, assistant chief, and as chief from 1985 through 1990,” she read.

When Barnes was the department’s chief, Buchanan said he coordinated with the Ridgeway Rescue Squad to establish a substation in Horsepasture. It later became the Horsepasture Volunteer Rescue Squad.

“Whereas Mr. Barnes has mentored the youth as a coach with Henry County Parks and Recreation and has sponsored several teams each year with boys’ baseball and girls’ softball,” she read. “Barnes takes care of elderly community members by preparing meals and stands ready to assist anyone he can with groceries, fuel, or company.”

Buchanan added the board encourages county residents to emulate the good deeds of Barnes “who is a true public servant in our community.”

County Administrator Dale Wagoner said the award was established by the board in 2001.

“The award is presented annually to the Henry County resident that best exemplifies this standard for community service set by the late Mr. Dalton,” he said.

Dalton served on the Henry County Board of Supervisors for more than 24 years and was serving as its chairman at the time of his death on May 4, 2000.

In other matters, the board:

*Approved the Local Business and Employment Notice and the HUD Grievance Procedure as it relates to the Fieldale Recreation Center Interior Renovation grant.

*Awarded a contract to Haymes Brothers, Inc., in the amount of \$1,230,470 for the construction of phase 6-A2 of the Dick and Willie Passage Trail.

*Approved an additional appropriation of fiscal year

School Board

(cont. from page 1)

transportation.

“There is a reduction in Sales Tax from the state and the other reduction from this category would be in summer school. But a lot of that is because of the ALL IN funding that we’re going to be receiving,” he said.

For Incentive and Categorical Programs, Boone said there’s going to be a decrease of \$9.5 million from the state government.

“A big reason for the \$9.5 decrease is because the ALL IN funding is not included in that. For our budget though, we took that out separately like we do our ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) grants,” he said. “We were thinking ahead, and we didn’t budget for that All in money within our hard operating budget.”

Boone said the division knew it was a one-time funding, and all of that funding will go to FY26.

For Categorical Programs, Boone said there’s a decrease of about \$12,000.

“A lot of this is in our homebound instruction category. We’re trying to bring kids into the schools as much as possible. So, we report those numbers to the state, and the numbers we reported were less than the previous year,” he said.

Boone said there’s a state decrease of about \$900,000 for the Lottery Funded Programs.

“A lot of this would be in the at-risk category. Then in our Special Education Regional Tuition those numbers went down a little bit,” he said.

In comparison, Boone said for FY24 the state funds the division at \$70,449,000. For FY25, it would be around \$72,670,000.

The local share in FY24 was \$16,297,000 with the pro-

Film

(cont. from page 1)

cessing in its three divisions had it not been for his employees behind him.”

In the 1970s, she said, Hermes “had the smarts and the brains to open a manufacturing division” to get the machinery made to manufacture the yarn and film, and he also opened a textile division.

That machinery division, where Tate has worked, now is Smart Machines, and the textile division still runs in Rocky Mount as Ronile, she said. Martin Processing is now Eastman Performance Films.

She read a quote from the website of Llummar, the window film manufactured by Eastman Chemical Company: “The entrepreneurial initiative of Julius Hermes in 1956 was the historical cornerstone of the Llummar brand. Known as the father of dyed PET (polyethylene terephthalate) — the polyester now used in most window films — he was the right person, with the right product at the right time that moved the industry forward into the thriving business it is today.”

Kristoff Lievens, the site manager for Eastman Performance Films, said that Hermes’ portrait “is still in the hallway of our plant. The legacy continues as we operate today under the name of Eastman.”

Hermes’ success was “once big on carpet dyeing, which was hard hit in the 1970s, so Hermes redirected the company’s energy into plastic film products,” said Bruce Troughton, Eastman product customization and support specialist. The more than 1 million packaged rolls the Martinsville area produces are in things everyone uses, such as cars and cell phones, he said.

Locally, Eastman has 800 employees in five locations that cover a total of 1,051,727 square feet, Troughton said. They are Fieldale Plants 1 & 2, built in 1961; the Patriot Centre plant which opened in 1995; the Axton plant from 1990;

we wish them the best in their endeavors.”

The county constructed the shell building at a cost of about \$3.2 million in 2014, according to Brandon Martin, the county’s public information officer.

The release noted that funds from the original sale of the building were never spent by the county. Additionally, publicly funded incentives that were offered to the company based on performance also were not spent due to the company’s decision to halt the project.

Schock has made approximately \$750,000 in improvements to the building since the initial sale,

The primary improvements were dock levelers and electrical wiring, Martin said, adding the current value of the building is more than \$5 million.

“Henry County remains our top choice for investment,” Huhmann said. “Its strategic location, coupled with the robust support from a county known for its business prowess, makes it an ideal choice. While it is unfortunate that we are unable to proceed as planned at this time, we maintain a strong connec-

(FY) 2023 carryover funds in the amount of \$51,732 to the facilities category of the FY24 School budget.

*Approved an additional appropriation and awarded a contract of \$107,679 to Town Police Supply for the purchase of patrol rifles for the Sheriff’s Office.

*Approved an additional appropriation of \$28,975 received from the insurance settlement from a damaged tractor. The funds will go towards the replacement of the tractor for the Parks & Recreation Department.

*Heard an update on the county’s local energy efficiency action plan.

*Heard an update on the county’s housing assessment.

*Heard an update on services provided by Piedmont Community Services from Executive Director Greg Preston.

*Conducted a public hearing and approved the abandonment of 50-feet of undeveloped right-of-way along Oak Level Road.

*Conducted a public hearing and approved the abandonment of State Route 9199 in the Ridgeway District.

*Approved an additional appropriation of \$4,175,201 to the FY24 School budget, received as part of the Commonwealth’s All In Virginia Initiative.

*Approved a siting agreement with Shifting Sands Solar, LLC.

*Appointed Barry Jarrett to an unexpired term on the Industrial Development Authority, scheduled to end March 31, 2026.

*Approved the items of consent.

*Heard informational items from the board.

*Heard an update on general highway matters from

jected local share in FY25 being around \$18.3 million.

“If you look at our overall budget being a \$100 million, over 60 percent of that goes towards salaries. So, the majority of our budget is encompassed by salaries,” he said.

Boone said the budget priorities for FY25 include Step/salary increases for all full-time licensed staff, classified positions, bus drivers and bus aides, and administrative positions.

Boone said a percentage cannot be given at this point because the division doesn’t have a concrete number from the state government yet.

“We want everybody to know we are looking at salary increases on top of what the governor’s proposing,” he said. “We want to try to do the best we can, and I hope everybody knows that in past years salaries have increased and that was because the board took that as a priority.”

The board received input from several county residents as to what should be the board’s budget priorities for the upcoming fiscal year.

Kevin Underwood, of the Reed Creek District and Bassett High School Coach of track, in-door track, and cross country, said Bassett needs a new rubber track.

“I hear a lot of compliments when we go other places that we do a whole lot with a lot less, which I can attest to that,” he said.

Underwood said he is not proud of the track at Bassett because it’s getting to the point that it’s unsafe and unusable.

“The age of it is, we’re thinking around 30-years-old. They tarred it in 2005 when they repainted it. It’s been so long now the old paint has gone up. You can see the old paint from the previous time, so the lines are not correct,” he said.

Sienna Bailey, of Collinsville, also supports the rubber

track. She said American Athletic Track and Turf states that on average an outdoor track should be replaced every eight to 15 years.

“We’ve exceeded that average immensely. There are numerous cracks in our track and bits breaking off of it,” she said.

Bailey told the board to think about the effects the climate has had on the track during its more than 20 years of blazing hot summer sun and freezing winters.

“There are no doubts that it’s unsafe for our athletes,” she said. “Advanced Orthopedic Center states that asphalt can aggravate the shins more and cause stress fractures. To go into more depth about what they’re saying, running on asphalt puts strain on the runner’s body such as their feet, knees, and hips.”

Michael Foley, of Collinsville, said a new rubber track is needed because it provides the athletes more support for their body than asphalt.

“According to Abacus Sports, an athletic floor installer, running on synthetic rubber tracks is significantly more forgiving on your muscle and joints. To add on what Abacus says, a rubber track would result in a lower chance of injuries and allow a steadier transition when coming back from injuries,” he said.

Foley said a synthetic rubber track is also extremely low maintenance as an asphalt track requires more small repairs over time like filling holes and repainting lines.

“This ends up costing more in the long run, whereas a rubber one is a one-time investment,” he said.

Foley said Abacus Sports states synthetic rubber tracks are also more durable and can last 20 years or more.



Greg Preston, executive director of Piedmont Community Services, addressed the Henry County Board of Supervisors Tuesday.

Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) from regional engineer Lisa Price-Hughes.

*Appropriated \$1 million to the Industrial Development Authority (IDA) to facilitate the purchase of land, building, and all improvements thereto located at 1320 Beaver Creek Drive, and authorized the chairman to execute all documents related to this transition.

cal, he said.

The process of making window film starts with polyester dyeing, in which dyes are infused into a polyester film. Also, aluminum metal is evaporated onto raw films, for better performance and high reflectivity. Then those two are stuck together in laminating, with additional coatings on each side. The type of adhesive depends on whether the film will be used in automotive or architectural applications.

It all goes back to Julius Hermes, who in 1960 patented the deep dyeing process on polyester textile materials, which is what the Performance Films business is based on.

Learn more about the product made in Martinsville on the Llummar Films YouTube channel.

Upcoming events hosted or co-sponsored by the Historical Society include:

· Sunday Afternoon Lecture Series: “18th Century Toys” with Gail Vogler, 3 p.m. Feb. 18, Historic Henry County Courthouse

· Black History Month Concert: “Virginia State University Gospel Chorale,” 4 p.m. Feb. 24, Walker Hall at Patrick & Henry Community College, co-sponsored also by the Fayette Area Historical Initiative and P&HCC’s Fellowship of Christian Athletes

· Sunday Afternoon Lecture Series: “The Blue Ridge Regional Library: Enriching Our Communities for 100 Years” with Margaret Caldwell, 3 p.m. March 17, Historic Henry County Courthouse

The MHC Heritage Center & Museum is open with a docent for guided tours from 1-4 p.m. Tuesdays through Fridays and also most weekdays from 9-5 (call 276-403-5361 to confirm the director will be there). Holly Kozelsky is the executive director. Visit www.mhchistoricalociety.org for more information.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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

Meetings

Thursday, February 1

Henry County School Board will meet at 5:30 p.m. in the Summerlin Room, located on the 1st Floor of the Henry County Administration Building. The meeting will be followed by closed session.

Events

Saturday, January 27

Piano Bar, 7 p.m. Doors open at 6:15 p.m., at TheatreWorks Community Players, 44 Franklin Street, UPTown Martinsville. The cast, musicians and Emcees of the 6th annual Piano Bar are ready to have a great audience sing-along to a myriad of music. Our theme this year is Peace, Love and Soul! Tickets are \$10.

Friday, February 2

The Martinsville 7 Initiative and the New College Institute will present The Movement, a documentary showing, from 6 to 8 p.m., at 191 Fayette St. in Martinsville. The event is free. It includes a panel discussion. Refreshments are available. RSVP by calling (276) 734-7213 or email kphillips@newcollegeinstitute.org.

Saturday, February 3

Brunswick Stew, Figsboro Ruritan Club, 599 Hidden Valley Dr., Martinsville, 8 – 10 a.m. or until sold out, \$10 per quart, preorders accepted by contacting club member. Proceeds to benefit the club's community service and scholarship programs.

Free Estate Planning 101 with Sarah Bridwell, 10 a.m., at the Spencer Penn Centre. Call (276) 957-5757 to pre-register.

Storytime! at the Spencer Penn Centre. This monthly program will include special readers, crafts,

and other fun activities related to 'I love my Smile!' Come out and join this free program, fit for all ages! No registration needed.

Thursday, February 8

Make Some Noise: After Hours Open-Mic Series, 7 p.m. at Piedmont Arts. Grab the mic and express yourself through music, poetry, comedy or spoken word. October's event will be hosted by Monique Holland, a prolific writer from Martinsville. Performers should sign up for a five-minute (max) spot upon arrival. Free to performers and audience. Cash bar.

Friday, February 9

Music Night at the Spencer Penn Centre. Hard driving old-time string band, Nobody's Business, 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. Concessions, including the ever-popular Spencer Penn hotdogs, will be sold.

Saturday, February 10

African American Read-In and Family Day, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Piedmont Arts. The museum's annual celebration of African American artists, performers and writers with story time, a musical act, crafts, and a public read-aloud. In addition, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts' Artmobile will be set up for the public in the Piedmont Arts parking lot. Participation in Family Day and the Artmobile are both free.

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 brrl.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.

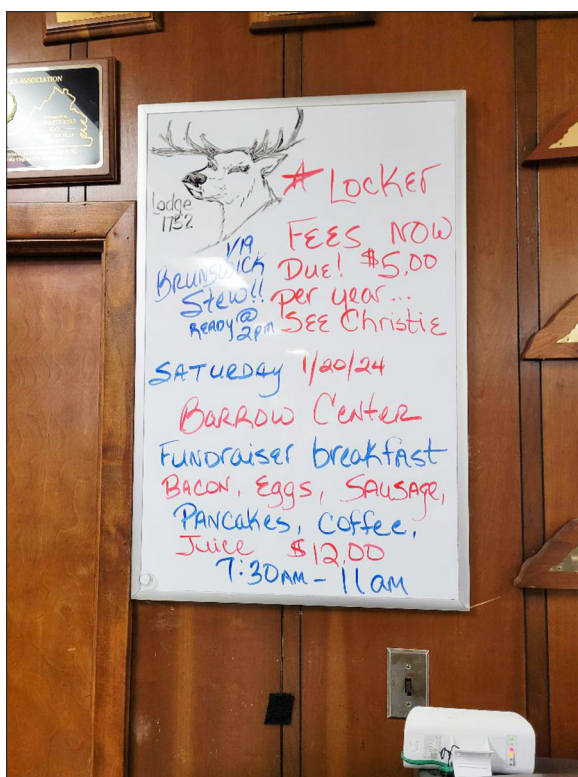
The Henry County Adult Learning Center offers free in-house and online classes to help prepare for college, career, or earn your high school equivalency or GED. Call (276) 647-9585.

Barrow Center

(cont. from page 1)



A fundraising breakfast for the center was held on Saturday, January 20, at the Martinsville Elks Lodge. Funding is a major concern, according to Sierra Barrow, founder of the Barrow Center. (Photos by Pat Delaney)



as a non-profit organization 501 (c) 3. The inspiration behind the center is Barrow's special needs niece "Lexy" who, due to the severity of her disabilities, was unable to receive daycare. Barrow said that her experiences as a nurse care manager while working in a pediatric palliative care clinic in Greensboro also inspired the idea of the center. She said that seeing the struggles of those parents who had children in that clinic was an eye-opening experience.

Barrow, who is a full-time nurse and mother of three, said the center takes babies and children up to the age of eighteen with special needs and who are medically fragile, like type 1 diabetes.

"The majority of our staff are MAT (medication administration trained), and we are also an approved childcare subsidy vendor through social services," she said. "Not only does our area not have a daycare center that takes special needs children, but being able to give meds is another service we provide that most childcare centers cannot provide."

The Barrow Center is only the third licensed therapeutic daycare center in the State of Virginia. The others are in Richmond and Norfolk.

On the downside, Barrow said finances have been the hardest.

"Most of our money comes from a social services childcare subsidy, but we still haven't broken even. It's hard but we keep going," she said.

Barrow doesn't pay herself but has eight employees on the payroll. She said that a special needs daycare provider requires more staff, so the overhead is greater.

"Making a profit is our biggest concern," Barrow said. "Not to speak poorly of our foster care system but they are 2 to 3 months behind on paying for the foster care children that come here. I've had to no longer take foster care children due to this. Not only is it unfair to them but it has hurt us tremendously as a business."

Barrow's goal for 2024 is to take in 10 more kids and make a profit. She added that she would like to find a bigger space as well. The center is currently occupying three rooms inside Freedom Baptist Church in Axton.

Barrow said she really needs the Martinsville City Council and city schools to put together a plan for afterschool transportation to the center for their special needs children.

"I've spoken to the school board, and they were very nice and receptive and told me they are brain-

storming," she said. "I've also talked to the mayor as well. We've played phone tag, but I can only hope it'll open eyes to what we really lack. Poor guy, I gave him a lot to think about. We are not even 5 minutes outside the city."

"I mean it's new to them and it'll take time. And it'll take a lot of me and the parents following up. And like all other things, it takes funding and where they will pull that money from, but I have provided this resource for MHC and surrounding areas. And we should be able to help families in the city of Martinsville year-round not just the summer," she said.

Barrow said that if she had she could have done anything differently, she would have done more fundraising before opening the center and took some grant writing courses.

Riverside Tire in Martinsville is donating \$1 to the Barrow Center for every tire sold from Jan. 15 through Feb. 29.

For more information about the center, call 276-806-2797, email info@thebarrowcenter.org, or private message The Barrow Center Facebook page. To make a donation or become a sponsor, visit thebarrowcenter.org.

Governor's Fellows Program seeks applications

Applications are now being accepted for the 2024 Governor's Fellows Program. The Governor's Fellows Program is a prestigious opportunity for rising seniors and recent graduates to get a firsthand look at the executive branch in action. Since 1982, fellows have worked alongside the Governor's Cabinet and staff, learning about state government and assisting in essential work for the Commonwealth.

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

During their time in service to the Commonwealth, Governor's fellows have the opportunity to learn from

special guest speakers who are leaders in state government and beyond. Fellows also experience state government on the road, visiting state government agencies and historic sites that have shaped our past and are improving our future.

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

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

The deadline to apply for the

Governor's Fellows Program is Monday, March 4. Interviews will begin on Monday, March 11. Applicants will be advised on decisions beginning on April 12. The program runs from June 3 through August 2.

To apply, visit the Governor's

Fellows Program website and send the required recommendation letters to the address below:

Governor's Fellows Program
Post Office Box 2454
Richmond, Virginia 23219
Please email any questions to gov-fellows@governor.virginia.gov.

Be sure to like
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County Enterprise
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OPINION

Update on the Border: Things Are Only Getting Worse

Nearly one year ago, myself and other members of the Energy and Commerce (E&C) Committee's Oversight Subcommittee and Health Subcommittee traveled to McAllen, Texas, to hold a joint field hearing, which I chaired, on the state of our southern border. We heard from witnesses who had real-life experience dealing with the consequences of the Biden Administration's poor border policies.



Morgan Griffith

Representative

A year on (and three years since the start of the Biden Administration) not much has changed. In fact, things have only gotten worse.

Customs and Border Protection (CBP) reported an astounding 2.47 million encounters at the southwest border for fiscal year (FY) 2023. For comparison, CBP reported roughly 450,000 encounters for FY 2020.

Incredibly, November 2023 (the latest month for which we have data) has been reported as the worst November on record, according to CBP, with 242,418 encounters at the southwest border alone.

Further, the Biden Administration's border policies are so inadequate, based on information from the CBP, we are even having issues now with our northern border. Encounters there by the CBP have increased by 160% since November 2021.

I recently held a hearing in the Oversight Subcommittee of the E&C Committee to re-examine the health, safety, and educational effects of the border crisis.

Fentanyl continues to flood over our southern border, causing tens of thousands of deaths every year. On one day alone, border patrol seized 304 pounds of fentanyl in between ports of entry at our southern border.

We've seen a rise in child labor trafficking, due in large part to the exploitation of unaccompanied minors in our country. I have long called for reforms in how unaccompanied minors are looked after by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), especially after the New York Times reported that 85,000 children went missing in HHS' care.

Our nation's schools are also experiencing challenges. Many schools are facing strained resources as cities struggle to meet the educational needs of the illegal immigrants entering our country, on top of our nation's own children.

Recently, in New York City, students at one school were told they had to learn remotely, like they did during COVID, because officials moved illegal immigrants into the school due to inclement weather.

Why should our children be negatively affected by poor Biden border policies?

Some Members of Congress recently visited a hospital in Eagle Pass, Texas, which is currently providing care for illegal immigrants. According to one of my colleagues, they learned that out

of that particular hospital's five ambulances, one ambulance is solely dedicated to transporting illegal immigrants from the border. Additionally, at the hospital, illegal immigrants are prioritized over American citizens due to acuity concerns.

Another hospital in Denver, Colorado, reported that they have not been compensated for \$136 million in care due in part to 8,000 illegal immigrants in the city making 20,000 visits to the health system in 2023.

And still, the Administration does all it can to shift the blame away from their failed policies. "Border Czar" Kamala Harris recently did an interview in which she blamed Republicans for the border crisis, stating that since it's an election year Republicans are weaponizing the border situation. Meanwhile it is House Republicans who have passed a comprehensive border bill, which Democrats in the Senate refuse to take up.

Additionally, Republicans here in the House have begun impeachment proceedings against Department of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, for his inaction over the border crisis.

Need we remind the Biden Administration that we did not have this historic flood of illegal immigrants during the Trump Administration. Remember there were 450,000 encounters at the southwest border for FY 2020 vs. 2.47 million for FY 2023. That is nearly a 450% increase at the southwest border.

Americans are fed up. Unfortunately, it seems that no matter how bad things get, nothing can get the Biden Administration to act with regard to the border.

Radford Testimony

As a side note, Radford University student Meredith Page recently testified before the Innovation, Data, and Commerce Subcommittee of the E&C Committee at a hearing about protecting student athletes' dealmaking rights. She is on the NCAA's Student-Athlete Advisory Committee and did a great job testifying. I was glad to be able to ask her a few questions about college athletics, the importance of protecting athletes, and her excellent experience at Radford University.

If you have questions, concerns, or comments, call my Abingdon office at 276-525-1405, my Christiansburg office at 540-381-5671, or to reach my office via email, visit https://morgangriffith.house.gov/.

Introducing the Ford Ironclad

(Note: The following piece is excerpted from the January 2024 issue of "Road and Driver" magazine.)

With the introduction of the all-new 2024 Ford Ironclad, the blue oval has finally crafted the ultimate pickup for the American truck enthusiast.

Designed by a carefully assembled team of disgraced professors of theoretical mechanical engineering, the new Ironclad is the first automobile to ever violate two of Newton's Laws of Thermodynamics. Positioned as the vehicle for buyers who find Ford's F-450 Super Duty Crew Cab to be too small, the Ironclad boasts a curb weight of 24,000 pounds and has a 37-foot wheelbase.

Equipped with eight of Ford's new 47.5" x 20" "Asphalt-Cracker™" wheels, the Ironclad is the largest, heaviest truck to hit the market yet. But what of its power plant?

When it comes to the engine, Ford is offering three options: a turbo-charged V-12 producing 900 horsepower, the Cummins ISX15 which powers many of the finer tractor trailers you see on the highways, or the Junkers Jumo 004 Turbojet that propelled the Messerschmidt ME 262 at the tail end of World War II. While the latter option is certainly the most nimble of the three, having to fill up with aviation fuel may present a roadblock for some buyers.

From a design perspective, the exterior of the Ironclad is utilitarian, seemingly inspired by the brutalist architecture of the post-war Communist era. The front end is dominated by the massive LED headlights, which can double as an effective X-ray machine in an emergency. The front bumper offers two different factory options: a brush guard for offroading or a cowcatcher designed to the same specifications as those employed by Norfolk-Southern. We'd recommend going with the cowcatcher given that the height of the Ironclad and the length of the hood make it difficult to see any pedestrians or other vehicles within the first 40 feet of the road ahead.

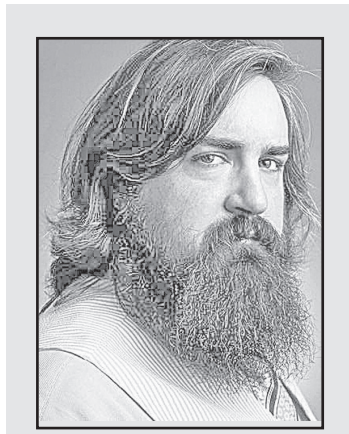
The interior of the Ironclad represents one of Ford's finest offerings yet. Once you've climbed the optional retractable ladder and seated yourself behind the wheel, you'll sink right into the leather seats. Ford claims that it takes a herd of 30

cattle to produce the leather necessary to upholster all 14 seats and an additional blue-ribbon heifer to cover the steering wheel. We believe it!

Stereo and climate controls are linked to a 70-inch capacitive touchscreen console display for ease of use. Ford has opted to go completely button and knob free on this newest offering, integrating numerous additional features into the touchscreen, such as door locks, power windows, and the brakes. The climate control system deserves to be singled out: the Ironclad's heating and air conditioning is incredibly responsive, although one reviewer did complain that the sound of the Trane heat pump kicking on could be startling.

So how does it drive? Obviously, the driver has to take into account the size of the Ironclad when asking that question, but our reviewers found it surprisingly agile given its length and weight. It measured a zero to sixty time of a brisk two minutes on our track, and the steering engages within just 90 seconds of turning the wheel. Be sure to pay a little extra for power steering, as one of our reviewers tested a model without this feature and is currently recuperating from a hernia.

With a base price of \$230,000, the Ford Ironclad is a surprisingly affordable entry into the large truck market and may well represent the ultimate expression of the modern American pickup truck. Our sole complaint is the bed length; measuring 18 inches from the back of the cab to the tailgate, this probably isn't the truck to buy if you need to haul things.



By Ben R. Williams

Hoodies are all season attire, or are they?

By Holly Kozelsky

In each generation, there's a fashion killer that no teenager would be caught dead in.

In the 1980s, kids went for the preppy look and eschewed the bell-bottoms of the decade before.

In the 1990s, clothing styles had really gone laid back, and they'd much rather wear jeans and a flannel shirt – that and a couple of pastel layered Izod shirts.

And so forth.

Now, though, the fashion killer is something near and dear to most of us, at least at this time of year: the coat.

Who wouldn't want to bundle up against the cold? As adults, for those of us whose job isn't outdoors, we're sure to button up tight in a wool or a puffy down coat just to run between vehicle and building. If we had to wait outside for a bus like kids do, we'd definitely be wearing layers of long johns under our clothes as well as a coat.

But a teenager? Nothing could be more mortifying than being appropriately dressed for the weather.

It's just a hoodie or perhaps a flannel shirt unbuttoned, flapping jauntily in the breeze, over a T-shirt.

No matter the weather.

Getting my daughter to wear a coat was a daily morning argument until I set a rule and stood by it steadfastly: If the thermometer reads 50 or below, she must wear a heavy coat.

Yes, I know; the guideline should be 60 or 65 degrees, but it's the number I threw out in the heat of passion, and we've stuck with it.

Oh but she's just going to be outside for 30 seconds as she runs from vehicle to building!, she pleads.

Oh but there are those minutes she's waiting for the bus, and also,



Holly Kozelsky

she must be prepared to be warm in case the bus breaks down and they have to wait in the cold for a new bus to arrive, I reply.

But now I just reply with "It's 50," and she just replies with an eye roll.

She might unzip it when she's out of my eyesight, but she darn well zips it up when I'm around.

She claimed it's to save her from carrying her coat around all day, because since the pandemic, schools stopped issuing lockers to students.

Feeling like a Mom of Action, I brought the matter up in a PTO meeting.

I learned from the other parents and the school staff there that, in fact, no kids wear coats. They all just wear hoodies. They could have lockers if they want them, but they don't bother using them.

My daughter confirmed that she could get a locker if she wanted, but it wouldn't be worth the walking distance to get to it.

And so kids go on out in the freezing cold without their coats, or those with really mean moms, with coats and frowns and complaints.

There will be a brief spell in spring when the hoodie is all they need, and parents and grandparents will breathe signs of relief.

Then summer will come, and we'll look at them in wonder as they suffer through our stifling hot Virginia days – wearing hoodies under the hot pounding sun.

Super Crossword

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words.

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See more at www.henrycountyenterprise.com

Jessup addresses GCV program



Patrick County native Jenn Jessup is a landscape architect with Nelson Byrd Woltz in Charlottesville, the firm that was chosen by the Garden Club of Virginia to be its landscape firm. She addressed the audience at the GCV's Restoration Maintenance program Jan. 24 in Richmond. (Contributed)

Local ag producers invited on 2-day trip

Join your local agriculture extension agent and fellow farmers on a two-day trip to Virginia State University.

The Patrick County Virginia Cooperative Extension Office is taking 10 producers to VSU to tour Randolph Farm, local farms, a brewery, a fertilizer manufacturing plant, museums and more. This tour is open to farmers, landowners, all agricultural producers and people interested in becoming producers.

Please join us on the two-day trip to Petersburg, VA to increase your knowledge of agriculture and networking with

other producers and extension specialists. Hurry and sign up today.

Space is limited to 10 people. The registration fee is \$40, and that covers all meals for this trip. Transportation will also be provided from the Patrick County Extension Office to Petersburg, VA. You are responsible for the cost of lodging, but a block of rooms has been reserved for your convenience. Instructions for reserving your room will be provided upon registration. To register or for any questions, please call the local office at (276) 694-3341 or email at cmt26@vt.edu.

Woods and Wildlife Conference comes to Wytheville

With more than 10 million acres of Virginia's woods privately owned, the Woods and Wildlife Conference will provide information, tools, and personal contacts to help private land owners keep their woods, and the wildlife that live in them, healthy and productive.

Join Virginia Cooperative Extension in Wytheville on February 10 for the conference that will cover a variety of topics to help you get more from your land. This conference is for owners of large or small tracts of land. It is a one stop for individuals, families, and managers wanting to learn about woods, wildlife, and other natural resources.

The program provides multiple links to information, sources of assistance, and a better understanding of the natural resources around you. Come hear experts speak on Managing Hardwood Forests, Coexistence Ecology of Appalachian Carnivores, and Wild-simulated Ginseng:

An Option for Underutilized Forest Land.

Additional topics covered in concurrent sessions include:

- Forest Health Update
- Tips for Purchasing the Perfect Parcel
- Riparian-stream Connections Support
- Water Quality and Aquatic Biodiversity
- Invasive Plants: Consequences, Identification, and Management
- Conservation Options for Landowners
- Avia Influenza - Could it Be Falling from the Sky?
- Prescribed Fire as a Tool for Land Management
- Knowing When to Cut it Out
- Winter Tree ID
- Money for Management

Registration information can be found online at <https://forestupdate.frec.vt.edu/onlineregistration.html>

For more information contact Jennifer Gagnon at jgagnon@vt.edu or 540-231-6391.

GCV Restoration site workshop



The Maintenance Workshop for the Garden Club of Virginia's Historic Restoration Sites, of which there are 41, was held Wednesday at the Kent-Valentine House in Richmond. The Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society was gifted an historic restoration in 2012 for the Plaza of the Historic Henry County Courthouse. There is a lot involved in caring for a GCV Restoration Site, and managers of those sites attend maintenance workshops every two years. Pictured (from left) are Kris Carbone, GCV First Vice President and the GCV liaison for the MHC Historical Society; Debbie Lewis, GCV President and a member of the Garden Study Club of Martinsville; Holly Kozelsky, Executive Director of the MHC Historical Society and a member of Garden Study Club; and Jean Gilpin, Chair of the Restoration Committee and a former GCV President. (Contributed)

Letter To The Editor

Concerns with House Bill 56

Our free and fair elections are under attack. No, I'm not talking about ballot harvesting, non-citizens registering, or dead people voting. Rather, I'm referring to our very own Virginia legislature attempting to close our state primaries.

Virginia House Bill 56 would enable the two major private political parties to discriminate with which voters are able to participate in Virginia primary elections. Voters would be required to give a party affiliation with their official voter registration. The two major parties would then be able to require participants to be registered in their party to be able to vote. The bill would also enable those parties to exclude voters who have participated in an opposition party primary within an amount of time at their choosing, even if voters have changed their registration to reflect the primary they wish to vote in.

This bill would disenfranchise millions of self-described independent voters in Virginia. Recent polls show a 40%+ plurality of Americans identify as independents.

Select private political parties shouldn't control public taxpayer funded elections. If private parties want to have more control over who nominates their candidates, they need to hold private conventions/mass meetings to do so.

This bill is a form of indoctrination by the 2 major parties. By requiring

someone to register a party affiliation with the Department of Elections, it would lead to further division and tribalism. This would likely make voters more subconsciously inclined to support that party in the general elections as well without considering other candidates.

Voter participation in primaries is already low. Most of the time, we are talking about turnout in the teens or single digit percentage of registered voters. Why would we want to make it more convoluted and restrictive to participate?

Some legislative districts don't have an opposition party. If someone is registered with one party or independent and their district is controlled handily by the opposition party, they really don't have much of a voice under the proposed scenario. At least the current model allows them to choose the best candidate to represent the district as a whole during the primary.

Luckily, our recently elected Delegate Eric Phillips is in the House Privileges and Elections committee where this bill is currently awaiting deliberation. Surely, he will see this bill for what it really is. If you want our elections to remain free, please let him know you oppose House Bill 56 via email at DelEPhillips@house.virginia.gov.

Eric Bowling,
Axton

Vote for a Hindu?

I didn't watch a single Republican debate this year. I saw the personalities, I heard soundbites days later, but I didn't keep up. I do remember hearing the name, "Vivek Ramaswamy", and thinking "That sounds more foreign than 'Barak Hussein Obama'." Folks won't like that." However, people really seemed to like him. Possibly because he said positive things about President Trump. I don't know.

A point where I think Ramaswamy lost a lot of people was when a question of religious freedoms came up and he answered, "I am a Hindu and won't fake my identity... I won't be the best President to promote Christianity." Nope. That's it. A ton of people tuned out at that moment.

For me, personally, as a Christian, that really wasn't much of a dealbreaker. I'd be more worried about a Hindu President cutting off our beef supply than infringing on any of my religious rights (cows are sacred in Hinduism).

For anyone who would ask, "Caleb, how can you say such?" I would answer, "It wasn't a Hindu President that shut down American churches in 2020-2021, but 'Christian' Presidents." Now, Donald Trump is not a Christian by any means, but he talks a lot about God and the Bible, and it was during his administration that "two-weeks to flatten the curve" was said. Moving into President Biden's first year we saw loads of churches receiving monetary fines for not complying with mandates that broke the First Amendment. Joe Biden is a member of the Roman Papist sect, he is not a Hindu. See what I mean?

Is anyone really under the illusion that our Presidents have been "Christian"? George W. Bush campaigned against abortion and homosexuality, but where is he now? After leaving the White House his wife wrote a book, *Spoken From The Heart*, in which she states she was never opposed to abortion or homosexuality. Bush is a member of the Episcopal Sect, by the way. If Mitt Romney had won the 2012 Presidential Election he would have been the first Mormon President. Ask your pastor if he thinks Mormons are Christians. "Mormon or not, boy-howdy, Mitt was a Republican though!" (said facetiously).

I'm more critical of these lukewarm sectarians grilling Presidential hopefuls for being as lukewarm as they are. Ask any of these people grilling Ramaswamy if they read their Bible last year, or if they attend worship services on a weekly basis. Ask them how many times they have been divorced and remarried. Ask them if their grown children come home for Christmas do they get to fornicate with their boyfriend or girlfriend while under the parents' roof?

Instead of worrying about "the faith" of the President we should try living ours in the local community. "Caleb, I'm entitled to my religious opinion." Sure you are, but having an opinion doesn't mean it's an educated one.

No, I wouldn't vote for a Hindu or a Muslim, but I don't pretend that the one I will vote for is a Christian.

Caleb Robertson,
Martinsville

Utility Bill Scams

Winter is upon us and with temperatures plummeting in many areas, keeping the heat on is critical — a fact that fraud criminals try to take advantage of. Each winter, utility scams spike as scammers claiming to be from the utility company say you haven't been paying your bill and they threaten to cut off service if you don't make an immediate payment. The goal of these crooks is to create a sense of panic — when we react first with emotion, it's hard to access logical thinking, and the criminals are adept with using this tactic. Their hope is that we stay in that

state of panic long enough to complete a payment.

If you get a surprise call from the "utility company" threatening to shut off your service, hang up the phone. Contact your provider using the customer service number on a recent bill (or log into their website or app if that's an option). Chances are high you will find out your payments are up to date.

Report scams to local law enforcement. For help from AARP, call 1-877-908-3360 or visit the AARP Fraud Watch Network at www.aarp.org/fraudwatchnetwork.

New P&HCC College Board Member Named

The Patrick & Henry Community College Board welcomes its newest member, Tim Chitwood.

He serves as plant manager at Howmet Aerospace. He is a P&HCC graduate (1995) who went on to earn a BBA from Averett University, leading to a career in both textiles and plastic recycling prior to his current role.

Chitwood and his wife live in Henry County, where he enjoys fishing, camping and hiking with his children and grandchildren.



Tim Chitwood was appointed by Henry County to represent the locality on P&HCC's board for a four-year term.

Email submissions@
theenterprise.net

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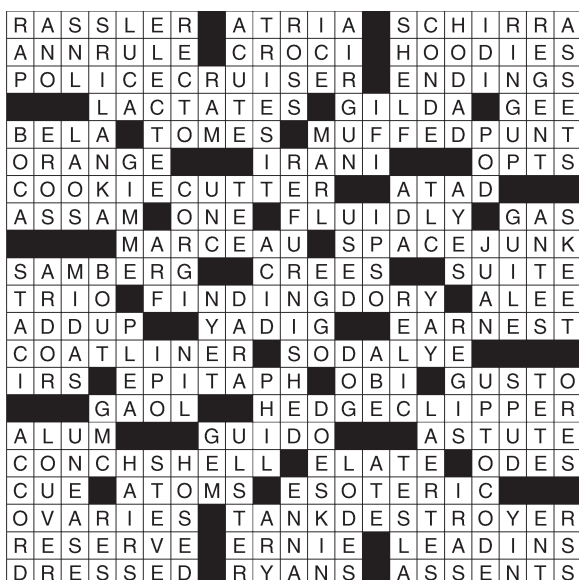
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Student Briefs

Martinsville resident graduates with honors from JMU

Caroline Cook of Martinsville graduated Summa Cum Laude with a degree(s) in Communication Sciences and Disorders - BS from James Madison University during commencement exercises in December 2023.

Cook was among more than 1,000 students who received undergraduate and graduate degrees.

Other local students who graduated during the December 2023 commencement exercises are:

Kenya Sanchez, of Ridgeway, graduated with a degree(s) in Communication Studies - BS.

Ebonie Eggleston, of Martinsville, graduated with a degree(s) in Health Sciences - BS.

Caroline Cook, of Martinsville, was named to the president's list at James Madison University for the fall 2023 semester. Students who earn president's list honors must carry at least 12 graded credit hours and earn a GPA of 3.900 or above. Cook is majoring in Communication Sciences and Disorders - BS.

Students named to the dean's list for the fall 2023 semester are:

Kenya Sanchez of Ridgeway who is majoring in Communication Studies - BS.

Sydney Witcher of Martinsville who is majoring in Engineering - BS.

Dylan Royal of Martinsville who is majoring in Music - BM.

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This notice is published pursuant to the requirements of 24 CFR Part 8, Nondiscrimination Based on Handicap in Federally Assisted Programs and Activities of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, as published in the Federal Register on June 2, 1988. 24 CFR Part 8 prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals because of their handicapped status.

The County of Henry advises the public, employees, and job applicants that it does not discriminate on the basis of handicapped status in admission or treatment or employment in, its programs and activities.

The County of Henry has designated the following as the contact to coordinate efforts to comply with this requirement.

Such inquiries should be addressed to:

Cindy Adams, Grant Administrator
P.O. Box 7, Collinsville, VA 24078
Telephone: 276-634-4620; Fax: 276-634-4599
Voice: 1-800-828-1140; TDD: 1-800-828-1120
8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.



MINORITY OWNED AND FEMALE OWNED BUSINESS NOTICE

Henry County is preparing to carry out the Fieldale Heritage Revitalization Project through the use of Virginia Community Development Block Grant Funds. In the implementation of this project the following kinds of contracts will be issued and procurements made:

- Construction Contracts: Interior Construction
- Construction subcontracts: HVAC, Carpenters, Electricians; Painters, and Plumbers, Laborers: skilled, unskilled

Henry County is soliciting the participation of minority owned and female owned businesses, contractors, and suppliers in carrying out this project. Such businesses may be included on appropriate bid and procurement lists by submitting a written request within ten (10) days of this notice. Requests should state the name, address, phone number, product or service, and how the firm qualifies as a minority owned or female owned business concern.

Such requests should be addressed to:
Cindy Adams, Grant Administrator
PO Box 7, Collinsville, VA 24078
Telephone: 276-634-4620
Voice: 1-800-828-1140; TDD: 1-800-828-1120

All above referenced procurements will be made on a competitive basis.

Equal Employment Opportunity

Sports Schedule

Following are the dates and times of local high school teams and their games for the week of Jan. /29-Feb. 3:

1/29 7pm Girls Basketball Tunstall at Magna Vista
7pm Boys Basketball Bassett at Chatham
7pm Boys Basketball Martinsville at George Washington

1/30 6pm Girls Basketball New Covenant at Carlisle
7pm Girls Basketball Tunstall at Bassett
7pm Girls Basketball Mecklenburg County at Magna Vista

7pm Girls Basketball Halifax County at Martinsville 2/2
7pm Boys Basketball Bassett at Tunstall
7pm Boys Basketball Magna Vista at Mecklenburg County
7pm Boys Basketball Martinsville at Halifax County
7:30p Boys Basketball New Covenant at Carlisle 2/3
6pm Boys Basketball Carlisle at Fishburne Military

6pm Girls Basketball Carlisle at The Covenant
4:30p Girls Basketball North Cross at Carlisle
7pm Girls Basketball Magna Vista at George Washington (at Bonner M.S.)
7pm Boys Basketball Halifax County at Bassett
7pm Boys Basketball George Washington at Magna Vista
9am Indoor Track Bassett – Meet at Roanoke College
2:30p Boys Basketball Eastern Mennonite at Carlisle

Cook Out joins forces with Martinsville Speedway

Martinsville Speedway announced that Cook Out will serve as entitlement partner for the NASCAR Cup Series Spring race, the Cook Out 400, on Sunday, April 7 at 3 p.m. ET.

This is familiar territory for the beloved fast-food chain as they previously sponsored Cup Series races at both Richmond Raceway and Darlington Raceway.

“Cook Out has quickly become a premier partner in NASCAR and we certainly look forward to welcoming them to our spring race weekend this year,” said Martinsville Speedway President Clay Campbell. “Cook Out has provided their customers with a high-quality and enjoyable product for decades, and that’s something we pride ourselves in doing as well. Plus, we know a thing or two about signature menu items here at Martinsville Speedway, so it’s safe to say we have a lot in common with the newest member of our team.”

Cook Out, founded in 1989, has always been known for their fresh burgers, hot dogs, chicken sandwiches, barbecue and over 40 flavors of milkshakes. The “Cook Out Tray” is a signature menu selection which includes your choice of a combination of entrees, sides, and a drink or milkshake. The fast-growing chain now has over 300 locations operating across 10 different states (Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia).

“NASCAR has always been a driving force in our family for many generations, starting with fond memories of attending races at Daytona with my Dad, Uncle Doug, and Granddaddy. Now Dad and I bring my own sons, Max and Roo, to the races,” said Cook Out President & CEO Jeremy Reaves. “Because of that, we are thrilled to once again partner with Martinsville Speedway and look forward to bringing families together, including ours, at the

Cook Out 400 on April 7.”

The Cook Out 400 is part of a thrilling triple-header race weekend taking place at Martinsville Speedway in the spring.

The NASCAR CRAFTSMAN Truck Series kicks off the weekend of racing on Friday, April 5 at 7:30 p.m. ET, and the excitement continues Saturday, April 6 with the NASCAR Xfinity Series race at 7:30 p.m. ET. The weekend comes to a close on Sunday, April 7 at 3:00 p.m., with the Cook Out 400, all at the historic half-mile venue known to bring the action.

Tickets for the upcoming race weekend are available for purchase via phone at 877-RACE-TIX or online at www.martinsvillespeedway.com.

Fans can stay connected to Martinsville Speedway on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and the NASCAR Tracks App.

Franklin County uses second half surge to push past Magna Vista in boys' basketball

By Jeff Reid

Franklin County came back from a 15-point deficit to defeat Magna Vista 58-56 Saturday afternoon in boys' basketball action in Rocky Mount.

The Warriors beat the Eagles convincingly at home the first week of December and it looked like they might sweep the series early in the contest. Magna Vista's Landon Hall hit a three-pointer with 2:17 on the clock in the second quarter to give the Magna Vista their largest lead of the game, 32-17. However, the Eagles clawed back. Franklin County's Kendal Mattox sank two free throws at the 1:42 mark, and Eagles forward David Kasey made a layup on a fast break just before the half to cut the lead to 11. Magna Vista led at the half, 32-21.

Franklin County freshman forward Jalontae Edmunds, who was playing in just his third varsity game after moving up from the JV squad, hit a clutch basket with 12 seconds left on the clock in the third quarter to make it a 40-39 game. However, Hall answered back with another trey just before the buzzer, to extend the Warriors lead, 43-39. Franklin County outscored Magna Vista 18-11 in the third quarter.

The Warriors led by as many as six in the fourth quarter before Franklin County shooting guard Tucker Harvey got a hot hand and tied the game 47-47 on two consecutive three-pointers with just under 6 minutes left in

the game. Harvey scored a deuce at the 5:10 mark to give the Eagles their first lead of the game, 49-47. Franklin County's Kendal Mattox hit two free throws after a technical was called on Magna Vista's Jaken Ford to give the Eagles their biggest lead of the game, 51-47. Magna Vista's Simeon Moore cut the lead to one on a three-point play after being fouled by Franklin County's David Kasey, 51-50. Moore hit another big basket at the 3-minute mark to put the Warriors back on top, 52-51. Kasey tied the score again with a free throw and Kendal Mattox added another basket to put the Eagles back on top, 54-52. Ford hit a clutch jumper with 1:48 left in the game to tie the score, 54-54. With 58 seconds left on the clock, Franklin County's Kendal Mattox answered back with a basket to put the Eagles up again, 56-54. Magna Vista center Vance Perry knotted the score again, 56-56 with a turnaround jumper at the 38 second mark. Mattox added another basket for Franklin County as time ran out to clinch the win, 58-56.

Sophomore guard Landon Hall paced Magna Vista (5-10) with 16 points including four three-pointers. Simeon Moore tallied 15 points while Vance Perry and Jaken Ford added nine points apiece for the Warriors.

Kendal Mattox and Tucker Harvey scored a team-high 14 points each to lead Franklin County (5-8), while David Kasey added 11.

Franklin County boys' basketball coach Brandon Smith said he was happy with the win but not satisfied.

“I think we’re still a little inconsistent as times,” he said. “I have said from the beginning that the heart is there, and they fight hard. We have to limit the turnovers and continue to manage the game.”

Franklin County has now won three of their last four games after a four-game losing skid. They have home games with Blue Ridge District rival Staunton River on Fri. Jan. 26 at

7:00 p.m. and Lord Botetourt on Sat. Jan. 27 at 3:30 p.m. They have away games with district foe William Byrd on Mon. Jan. 30, and Halifax County on Wed. Jan. 31. Both games start at 7 p.m.

Magna Vista has home games with Piedmont District rival Bassett on Tues. Jan. 23 and Morehead on Thurs. Jan. 25 before hitting the road for contests with district foe Tunstall on Fri. Jan. 26 and a non-district game at Mecklenburg County on Tues. Jan. 30. All games start at 7 p.m.



Magna Vista's Jaken Ford puts his head in a towel after being benched for a technical foul with 4:30 minutes left in the fourth quarter. Ford scored nine points for the Warriors.



Franklin County's David Kasey (2) swats away a shot by Magna Vista's Simeon Moore (1) early in the first quarter Saturday afternoon in Rocky Mount.



Magna Vista's Simeon Moore is double-teamed by Franklin County's Jeffrey Hairston (14) and David Kasey (2) as he pushes the ball up court Saturday afternoon in Rocky Mount.



Magna Vista's Landon Hall unleashes a jump shot Saturday afternoon against Franklin County in a non-district makeup game. Hall scored a team high 16 points including four three-pointers.



Jaken Ford puts up a shot against Franklin County's Jack Gillespie (5) and David Kasey (2).

See more at www.henrycountyenterprise.com

Council recognizes former employees



City Manager Mrs. Aretha Ferrell-Benavides and Finance Director Mandy McGhee addressing City Council.



Members of Martinsville City Council prepare for meeting.



Charisse Hairston, the new executive director of FAHI, receives a Proclamation recognizing February Black History Month from Mayor LC Jones. (Photos by Barbara Waldron)

By Staff Reports

Martinsville City Council members recognized city employees who retired in 2023 at its meeting Tuesday.

Mayor LC Jones noted the combined total experience of the retirees is nearly 500 years, which indicates dedication and deep institutional knowledge.

The retired employees and their years of service are David Collie 8; John Kahle 15; Michael McPeck 18; Darla Crigger 19; Richard Ratcliffe 21; Kristopher Shrader 24; Teddy Anderson 26; Kevin Turner 26; Kathryn Washington 31; Coretha Gravely 33; Lisa Holiday 37; Ashby Pritchett 38; Guy Cassidy 38; Kathy Reed 38; Hattie Adams-Artis 39; James Minter 40; and Leon Towarnicki 41.

In other matters:

*Mandy McGhee, Martinsville's Director of Finance, said a recent audit was complete, and the financial reporting form had been modified so that everyone should be able to understand it.

Vice Mayor Aaron Rawls said revenue-seeking streams need to focus on growing rather than cutting services, staff, or budgets.

"What are we missing," asked City Manager Aretha Ferrell-Benavides. "What are other cities and towns doing that aren't always tax-based? These are avenues that should be explored to increase revenue streams for the city."

Following the presentation, she noted the city will

have to remain cautious due to inflation.

Ferrell-Benavides suggested future budgets should include a true Enterprise Fund and strong financial policies.

*Jones noted that February is quickly approaching, and with it, the celebration of African American History.

This year's theme is African Americans and the Arts, Jones said, adding the council "would like to present a proclamation to our very own FAHI – the Fayette Area Historical Initiative."

After council member Lawrence Mitchell read the formal proclamation recognizing February as African American History in Martinsville, Charisse Hairston, FAHI's new executive director, addressed council members.

Noting that the organization is now in its' 20th year, Hairston said the organization will organize a gala this year. FAHI also is working collaboratively with other local organizations, such as Piedmont Arts and the Virginia Museum of Natural History. The FAHI staff are planning new exhibits, will host the Juneteenth event, and are happy to provide tours or discuss Martinsville's history with interested citizens. The organization also plans to work on educational outreach, as well as a potential trip to Alabama to tour the Civil Rights tour.

"I want people to understand that this is not just African American history, it is our history as a whole," Hairston said. "I want to have as many people as pos-

sible become members of FAHI," visit for a tour and otherwise interact with the organization.

*Bobby Price, chairman of the newly formed Citizens Advisory Board and owner of American Patriot Liquidation, said the new board "provides judicious advice, ideas and feedback from a citizen perspective related to both present and further matters and plans of the city."

Representatives are still needed for Southside, West End, Druid Hills, and the Uptown Business District to fill the board's roster. Meetings are currently held on the second Thursday of each month at 6 p.m.

*Council member Tammy Pearson congratulated Del. Eric Phillips, R-Martinsville, who was sworn in this past Saturday.

Pearson also noted that she has received numerous calls inquiring about surveying on Fayette Street, and questioned the purpose of the surveys, which are not being conducted by city employees.

Ferrell-Benavides also did not know, but she said the activity would be investigated and an update posted on the website.

* Council member Kathy Lawson offered condolences to the family of Frank Draper, retired fire department employee, who passed away.

Additionally, Lawson said she has received a number of calls regarding the reduction of the speed limit on Spruce Street, from 45 to 35 mph. The change is in preparation of installing a crosswalk as part of the next part of the Dick & Willie Trail head.

Museum seeks items for new exhibits



After a few hours of work, Jack Stewart got most of the keys of this typewriter operational.



MHC Heritage Center & Museum volunteer Jack Stewart spent an afternoon getting this 1913 White Rotary portable sewing machine in what appears to be working order. The cord, which is broken in three places, has yet to be replaced, and then the machine will be tested.

Do you have interesting old, vintage or antique items you think others may enjoy seeing?

The Martinsville-Henry County Heritage Center & Museum is planning three new short-term exhibits and seeks to borrow items from local residents. Any items lent to the museum will be well taken care of and returned after six months.

The exhibits will be:

Local media – seeking copies of community newspapers, especially older ones no longer in publication; recording devices; film reels and 8-track tapes and playing machines; old media microphones; old radio program schedules, TV Guides and the like; other items that would have been used to produce local news; and old radios and small old televisions. Local media companies are participating.

Home sewing – seeking old sewing notions, such as wooden spools of thread and rolls of trim,

rick-rack and lace; clothing patterns; home-sewn garments, curtains and other cloth items; feed-sack dresses; quilts (new and old); patterns; sewing tools and the like. The foundation of this exhibit is from five sewing machines that span the years, donated by Tiffany Hayworth of Martinsville, and patterns donated by Myrna Ferguson of Collinsville.

Prom dresses – seeking prom gowns through the decades. The foundation of this exhibit is an assortment of gowns and dresses from the collection of the late Virginia Windle, local historian.

Anyone with ideas or artistic flair is invited to help plan and set up the exhibits and to give suggestions.

These exhibits are expected to open in February and run through early summer. Museum volunteers Michael Sanguedolce and Jack Stewart have been getting the sewing machines and two typewriters

(for the media exhibit) in working order and conducting research. MHC Historical Society Executive Director Holly Kozelsky is coordinating the exhibits.

The museum also seeks donations of other items that illustrate life in years gone by, and also needs old pictures (it could take copies and return the originals) from around the community, for general purposes.

Items may be dropped off at the museum, 1 E. Main St., Martinsville, between 1-4 p.m. Tuesdays through Fridays, through Feb. 9. To make other arrangements, including pick-up, call 276-403-5361 or email mhchistoricalociety@gmail.com.

The MHC Heritage Center & Museum is open from 1-4 p.m. Tuesdays through Thursdays with a volunteer docent for guided tours and also most times between 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays. Its website is mhchistoricalociety.org.

Phillips sworn in as 48th delegate



House of Delegates Clerk G Paul Nardo administers the oath of office to Del. Eric Phillips, as Phillips' wife, Rebecca, holds the Bible. The two were joined by about 50 family members and friends to celebrate.

Del. Eric Phillips, of Martinsville, took his oath of office last week from House of Delegates Clerk G Paul Nardo. Phillips, R-Martinsville, won a special election for the 48th District House seat after Del. Les Adams, of Chatham, stepped down.

Phillips patroned four proposals so far, House Bill 1445, 1451, 1511 and 1512.

HB 1445 would require the New College Institute to design and implement workforce development programs necessary to support the initiatives of the Office of the Governor, including adult education and workforce training programs, in collaboration with the Department of Labor and Industry, the Virginia Community College System, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, the Virginia Board of Workforce Development, and other relevant agencies and organizations.



Two former mayors of Martinsville – Dr. Mark Crabtree and Danny Turner – presented Phillips with a Martinsville flag to hang in his office. Aaron Rawls, current vice mayor, and Pam Cobler, of the Reed Creek District on the Henry County Board of Supervisors, were among those attending Saturday's events.

HB 1451 would mandate the Board of Education to develop policies to establish that any student in grades three through 12 who scores in the 375 to 399 range on a Standards of Learning assessment would be eligible to retake such assessment on an expedited basis.

HB 1511 proposes amending the City of Martinsville's charter to require the circuit court first require an election to be held on the following question: "Shall the City of Martinsville become a town," before notifying the Supreme Court of the city's adoption of an ordinance and petition for an order granting town status. The bill provides that if a majority of the qualified voters in Martinsville voting on the



W. C. Fowlkes presented a clock from Arrington Engines to Del. Eric Phillips. (Photos by Danny Turner)

question are in favor of the transition from city to town status, the special court shall enter the order granting town status in accordance with the procedures, requirements, and provisions of general law.

HB 1512 also would amend the city's charter by allowing notice of special meetings to council members to be given by electronic mail, text message, or telephone call; providing for compensation to members of the city council to be in accordance with general law; providing for action by resolution of the city council to make appropriations or contract indebtedness; and requiring the city manager to become a resident of the city or live within a certain distance of the city. The bill also would make numerous technical changes and repeal several outdated sections.

Growth assessment reports released last week

The Virginia Department of Education released the new Parent Report covering the results of this year's Winter Virginia Growth Assessments. Designed to provide parents additional insight into their child's individual performance at this point in the school year, the report is available to parents whose children have already taken the Winter VGA in school divisions statewide, with other students scheduled to take the assessments in the weeks ahead.

"It is extremely important that parents have an accurate understanding of where their child stands at this point of the school year," said Superintendent of Public Instruction Lisa Coons. "As I have listened to parents across the com-

monwealth, I have heard their desire to have more understandable information on how their child is performing in school. I want to make sure parents have the information they need, and that they are empowered to work with their child's teacher to help their child meet or exceed their grade-level expectations."

"By providing an easy-to-read performance graphic along with resources families can use at home, the new VGA Parent Report empowers parents and students to understand academic performance, set goals together, and track progress over time," said Jenna Alexander, President of the Virginia PTA.

An example of the new Parent

Report as well as additional resources for parents can be found on the Parent & Caregiver Resources for Assessments webpage on the VDOE website.

Designed to provide a snapshot of their child's progress at this point in the year, the Parent Report ties together the child's Fall Growth Assessment score and the current winter results to show the current trend in the child's academic progress this year. The Parent Report also clearly informs parents if their child's test scores show that the child needs additional support, is considered at-risk of falling behind, or if the child is generally well prepared at this point of the school year.

The Winter VGA testing began November 27, 2023, and continues

through February 16, 2024, with local school divisions choosing the dates to administer the assessments to their students. After a school division has completed the assessments, Parent Reports will be available to parents of children who are enrolled in Grades 3-8 mathematics and Grades 3-8 reading classes.

All school divisions already completing the Winter VGA currently have access to Parent Reports. Remaining school divisions will receive the reports after their students have completed the assessments. Parents in school divisions which provide access to the State Parent Portal, and which have completed the assessments will have access to their child's Parent Report as of Friday, January 19.

New area code comes to Virginia's 804 region

Virginia's 804 area code region will soon have an additional area code — 686. Customers requesting new service or additional phone lines in the 804 area code region could be assigned the new 686 area code as soon as February 1, 2024, but not until all available phone numbers in the 804 area code have run out. That is expected to happen during the third quarter of 2024.

In November 2022, the State Corporation Commission (SCC) approved the implementation of the new 686 area code to be superimposed over the same geographic region covered by the existing 804 area code. This area includes the central por-

tion of Virginia including Richmond, Ashland, Charles City, Chesterfield, Henrico, New Kent and Petersburg, as well as the Northern Neck.

The new 686 area code addresses the exhaustion of phone numbers in the 804 area code caused by increasing demand for phone lines. The relief provided by the new 686 area code is expected to last approximately 32 years.

Existing customers will keep their 804 area code and seven-digit telephone number. Customers in the 804 area code already transitioned to mandatory 10-digit dialing (three-digit area code plus seven-digit phone

number) for local calls in July 2022 as a result of the national implementation of 988, the three-digit abbreviated dialing code for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Ten-digit dialing for local calls will also be required for customers in the new 686 area code. Thus, customers in the 804 and 686 area codes will dial 10 digits for local calls within and between the overlay area codes, and 1+10 digits for long distance calls.

Under the 804/686 area code overlay, what is a local call now will remain a local call. In addition, the price of a call, coverage area or other rates and services will not change due to the 686

area code overlay. Customers can still dial just three digits to reach 911 and 988, as well as 211, 311, 411, 511, 611, 711, and 811.

The SCC encourages consumers in the 804 area code region to ensure that all services, automatic dialing equipment or other types of equipment recognize the new 686 area code as a valid area code and continue to store or program telephone numbers as 10-digit numbers.

For more information, please contact your local telephone service provider or visit the SCC website at scc.virginia.gov/pages/Area-Code-Overlays.

Revenues in line with forecast halfway through fiscal year

General fund revenues for December 2023 remain in line with updated revisions to the official revenue forecast, Gov. Glenn Youngkin announced last week. Total general fund revenues grew by 0.2 percent for the month versus the same period last year and are up 7.1 percent year-to-date.

"Through the first half of the fiscal year, our forecast continues to correctly reflect the economic risks and uncertainty on the horizon," said Youngkin. "As we laid out in

our Unleashing Opportunity budget, lowering the cost of living for all Virginians and empowering an economic environment for our companies to compete and win to drive job growth across the Commonwealth remains a top priority."

"Revenue collections are slightly ahead of plan through the first half of the fiscal year," said Secretary of Finance Stephen Cummings. "December fiscal year-to-date, general fund revenues are ahead of the revised forecast by \$363

million, but given broad economic risks and uncertainty around refunds and nonwithholding collections, a cautious outlook is warranted."

Among the major revenue sources, payroll withholding taxes were 3.8 percent higher for the month on an unadjusted basis, compared to last year, and up 2.1 percent year-to-date through December. Sales tax collections are 1.3 percent lower year-to-date, and corporate income tax revenues are up 14.8 percent year-to-date

versus last year.

In comparison to the revenue forecast assumed in the Governor's amendments to the Fiscal Year 2024 budget and accounting for monthly variations in tax collections, year-to-date total general fund revenues are ahead of projections by \$363.2 million. Excluding nonwithholding and refunds, which continue to be distorted due to the recently enacted Pass-Through Entity Tax, collections are ahead of the forecast by \$85.8 million.

Two charges issued in connection with pursuit

A Bassett man is being held with no bond on several charges, including two that were in connection with an alleged pursuit, according to a release from Henry County Sheriff Wayne Davis.

The incident began, Davis said, when a Henry County Sheriff's deputy was on patrol on Fairystone Park Hwy. in Stanleytown around 5:44 p.m. on Jan. 21, and observed a gray Nissan Sentra sedan driven by someone with outstanding warrants from Henry County.

The deputy initiated a traffic stop on the sedan at the Getty Mart store in Stanleytown. The driver of the sedan allegedly circled through parking and fled back onto Fairystone Park Hwy., towards Bassett, according to Davis.

The driver of the sedan allegedly led deputies on a 10-mile-long pursuit, Davis said.

County authorities and the Martinsville Police Department successfully utilized spike strips to deflate the tires on the vehicle, and the pursuit ended at the intersection of Appalachian Dr. and Koehler Road after a P.I.T. maneuver was executed by a deputy, Davis said.

Brian Patrick O'Leary, 27, of Bassett, was arrested on two charges stemming from the pursuit - felony elude and possession of ammunition by a convicted felon.

Additionally, O'Leary was arrested on six counts of felony probation violation -- Henry County Circuit Court; five counts of felony capias - Henry



Brian Patrick O'Leary

County General District Court; two counts felony probation violation -- Carroll County Circuit Court, and one count contempt of court, a capias -- Henry County General District Court.

O'Leary is currently being held at the Henry County Adult Detention Center without bond.

Anyone having information pertaining to this incident is asked to contact the Henry County Sheriff's Office at (276) 638-8751 or the Crimestoppers Program at 63-CRIME (632-7463). The Crimestoppers Program offers rewards up to \$2,500 for information related to crime. The nature of the crime and the substance of the information determine the amount of reward paid.

Fast Track to feature 'Milestones' theme as chamber celebrates 65 years

The Martinsville Henry County Chamber of Commerce is hosting Fast Track 2024 on March 5 and 6. Billed as the region's premier business trade show, the theme for this year's event is 'Milestones.' To coincide with the chamber's 65th-anniversary celebration.

The milestone marks "a considerable journey, filled with memories, achievements, and a treasure trove of experiences that have shaped the organization as it is today," a release stated, and encouraged the business community to "share your milestones with the community by highlighting examples of your longevity, perseverance and achievements" in displays at Fast Track.

The showcase will include more than 128 exhibitor spaces when it is held in the Clock Tower at the Commonwealth Centre on Franklin Street.

VIP Business Night will be held when the show opens on Tuesday, March 5, from 4 to 8 p.m. Attendance is by invitation only, which promotes networking among business-to-business contacts.

Fast Track opens to the public on Wednesday, March 6, from 4 to 7 p.m., to allow for business-to-consumer contacts. Admission is \$2 or two nonperishable food items. Children under 6 are admitted free.

For more information, contact the chamber.



U.S. Sen. Mark R. Warner is pictured during a December press conference at Virginia Tech. Gov. Glenn Youngkin is shown in the background.

Warner among those pushing to curb fentanyl influx at border

U.S. Sen. Mark R. Warner last week joined others in introducing the Stop Fentanyl at the Border Act. The proposal would increase staffing capacity and technology to bolster security and detect illicit drugs and other contraband being smuggled through ports of entry along the border.

"Families and communities across the Commonwealth have been devastated by the spread of fentanyl," said Warner, D-Alexandria. "This legislation will help our law enforcement officers at the border stop the flow of fentanyl into this country by providing personnel and equipment needed secure our border."

The Stop Fentanyl at the Border Act would enable U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to hire more Officers and Border Patrol Agents to increase capacity to stop illicit smuggling over the border. The bill also provides funding to purchase Non-Intrusive

Inspection systems, which scan vehicles and cargo at the border to provide detailed images of their interiors, which leads to the detection of fentanyl and other illicit drugs. Additionally, the bill would create an inspection program to increase seizure of firearms being exported from the United States to Mexico, which criminal organizations frequently purchase in the United States and smuggle into Mexico to support their fentanyl production operations and other violent criminal enterprises.

This legislation comes following the senators' call to President Biden to prioritize additional resources to strengthen security at the Southwest border in order to stop the flow of illicit drugs like fentanyl through ports of entry. Warner has led numerous efforts to curb fentanyl trafficking, and last week participated in a Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee hearing on the topic.

Salthouse Branch Park to receive funds for repairs

Ninth District U.S. Rep. Morgan Griffith announced that the Department of Transportation has awarded the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers \$200,000 for road repairs at the Salthouse Branch Park, located in Henry, Virginia. The grant money was made available through the fiscal year 2024 Federal Highway Administration

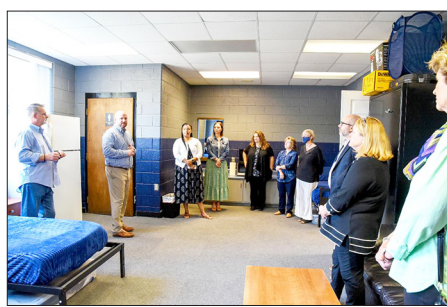
Emergency Relief Program.

"I am pleased the Department of Transportation has awarded this grant money, which will be used to repair Salthouse Branch Park access roads and parking area at the US Army Corps of Engineers Philpott Lake project, damaged by major flooding in May of 2020," said Griffith, R-Salem.

Results from 2023 Grantee Perception Survey released by foundation



Representatives from Region 1 of the Virginia Aviation Board and Blue Ridge Airport met with staff from The Harvest Foundation in January of 2023.



Members of The Harvest Foundation's staff and Board of Directors met at Hope Center Ministries for a site visit in May of 2023.



The second cohort of Project Hope grant recipients met in November 2023 at The Harvest Foundation to receive help with their grant projects.



Linda Adams (center), a member of First United Methodist Church in Martinsville, is the lead volunteer for several ministries at her church, including responding to CarePortal requests. She is pictured with Sheryl Agee (right), senior operating officer at The Harvest Foundation, and April Evans (left), assistant director of services at Henry-Martinsville Department of Social Services, following the announcement of a CarePortal PUP grant from Harvest to support the program.

The Harvest Foundation released results from its 2023 Grantee Perception Report, conducted by The Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP).

The survey, conducted over May and June of 2023, was sent to all organizations that applied for funding from The Harvest Foundation throughout 2021 and 2022. A total of 36 surveys were sent with 29 responses received for a total survey response rate of 81 percent.

CEP did not report or share individual results or identifying characteristics with Harvest. The names of survey respondents were omitted and all comments were edited to remove potentially identifying details so the results remain anonymous.

"Receiving candid feedback from our grant applicants is a valuable

tool that we use to continually assess our effectiveness and build processes that not only work for Harvest but work for our grantee partners," said Kate Keller, president of The Harvest Foundation.

The survey included themes that evaluated the foundation's:

Impact on the grantees' fields, communities, and organizations;

Understanding of intended beneficiaries and challenges;

Interactions and communications with grantees;

Application, reporting, and evaluation processes;

Assistance beyond the grant;

Diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies.

Compared to CEP's overall cohort of peer funders, Harvest grantees rated the foundation higher than

typical funders in most areas of the report. A major strength of The Harvest Foundation, as concluded by the report, is external engagement. Harvest's understanding of the grantees' local community and the communities they serve received a high rating.

Harvest also received ratings in the top five percent of CEP's cohort for its relationships with grantees, including responsiveness, candor, and openness to ideas from grantees about programs and strategies. The foundation provides a higher than typical amount of non-monetary assistance to grantees, nearly 80 percent compared to 58 percent at a typical funder.

While Harvest is rated higher than typical for many measures related to grantee relationships, ratings for relevance, adaptability, and straightforwardness of its reporting process are

less positive.

"These survey results are a great indicator of what we're doing well and where we can make improvements," Keller said. "It helps us expand our reach and build better relationships to achieve the vision of a Martinsville-Henry County where everyone shares in the promise of a healthy, prosperous, and vibrant community."

Visit theharvestfoundation.org to view the report's executive summary prepared by CEP.

Layoffs in Va. decrease in November

A decrease in layoffs were reported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' November 2023 Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS).

The Department of Workforce Development and Advancement (DWD) said that according to the most recent BLS JOLTS survey data, the number of November 2023 layoffs in Virginia fell by seventeen percent over the month and by 4,000, or ten percent, over the year. BLS JOLTS data provides information on all the pieces that go into the net change in the number of jobs. These components include job openings, hires, layoffs, voluntary quits, and other job separations (which includes retirements and worker deaths). Putting those components together reveals the overall change in payroll employment. JOLTS data is seasonally adjusted and describes

conditions on the last business day of the month. Current month's data are preliminary and the previous month's data have been revised.

On the last business day in November, there were 249,000 job openings in Virginia, seasonally adjusted, a 10,000 decrease from October's 2023's revised 259,000 job openings. Nationwide, the number of job openings changed little at 8.8 million; this measure is down from a series high of 12.0 million in March 2022. Over the month, job openings decreased in transportation, warehousing, and utilities (-128,000) and in federal government (-58,000). Job openings increased in wholesale trade (+63,000). The largest decreases in the job openings level occurred in Florida (-66,000), Georgia (-36,000), and Tennessee (-22,000). The largest

increases occurred in Texas (+67,000), Illinois (+65,000), and Colorado (+21,000).

In Virginia, the November job openings rate was 5.6%, down 0.3 points from October. The U.S. job openings rate was unchanged at 5.3 percent in November 2023. The U.S. rate was 2.1 percentage points lower than its peak of 7.4 percent in March 2022 and the lowest since the rate was 5.1 percent in February 2021. The largest decreases in job openings rates occurred in Mississippi (-1.3 percentage points), and in Florida, Georgia, and Tennessee (-0.6 point each). The increases occurred in Illinois (+1.0 point) and Colorado (+0.7 point).

The number of hires in Virginia edged down to 165,000 in November, a decrease of 2,000 over the month and by 1,000 from five years earlier in

November 2018. JOLTS defines hires as all additions to the payroll during the month. The number of hires was over double the series low of 81,000 in April 2020. Nationwide in November, the number of hires decreased to 5.5 million (-363,000). The number of hires decreased in professional and business services (-163,000). The largest decreases in the hires level occurred in California (-117,000), Arizona (-21,000), and Oregon (-16,000). A large increase occurred in Alaska (+3,000). In Virginia, the hires rate was unchanged from October's revised four percent rate. In November, the U.S. was little changed at 3.5 percent. The largest decreases in the hires rate occurred in Montana (-1.0 percentage point), as well as in Arizona and Oregon (-0.7 point each). The increase occurred in Alaska (+0.9 point).

Early voting for March 5 primary is now underway

Early voting for the Virginia Presidential Primary on March 5 began Friday, January 19. Virginia will have a dual presidential primary election, which means both the Democratic Party and the Republican Party will have primaries on the same day.

In a dual primary, officers of election will ask voters if they want to cast their ballot in the Democratic Party Primary or the Republican Party Primary. All qualified voters may vote in either primary, but voters may not vote in both primaries.

The choice to vote in a party's primary does not mean that the voter will be "registered" with that party. Virginia does not have party registration. Six candidates will appear on the Republican primary ballot: Chris Christie, Ryan L. Binkley, Vivek Ramaswamy, Donald J. Trump, Ron D. DeSantis, and Nikki R. Haley.

Three candidates will appear on the Democratic primary ballot: Marianne Williamson, Joseph R. Biden Jr and Dean Benson Phillips.

In-person early voting for the March 5, 2024, presidential primary election begins Friday, Jan. 19 and will continue through Saturday, March 2. To vote early in-person, registered voters should go to the general registrar's office for the jurisdiction in which they are registered, present their ID, and cast their ballot. The location of the general registrar's office for all jurisdictions can be found on the Virginia Department of Elections' website (<https://vote.elections.virginia.gov/VoterInformation/PublicContactLookup>) as well as a list of acceptable forms of identification at (<https://www.elections.virginia.gov/registration/voterid/index.html>).

Some jurisdictions may offer early

in-person voting at both the general registrar's office and satellite locations. Curbside voting is also available for those with disabilities and anyone over 65. Contact your general registrar's office for more information regarding voting hours and additional locations.

Requested absentee ballots will be mailed beginning Jan. 19, including ballots to registered military and overseas voters. Any registered voter can request an absentee ballot either in-person, by mail, online (<https://vote.elections.virginia.gov/VoterInformation/Lookup/absentee>) or by contacting your general registrar's office. Registered voters do not need a reason to request an absentee ballot.

In order to return a voted ballot, voters can drop off their absentee ballot at the general registrar's office or polling location on Election Day.

Absentee ballots returned by mail must be postmarked on or before March 5 and received by the general registrar before noon Friday, March 8.

Anyone with visual or manual dexterity impairment has the option to vote an absentee ballot using an electronic marking tool. The deadline to register to vote and cast a regular ballot is Feb. 12. After that date, voters will have to use same-day registration and vote a provisional ballot. The deadline to apply for a mailed ballot is Feb. 23.

Voters with questions about absentee and early in-person voting should contact their general registrar's office or the Virginia Department of Elections by phone at 1-800-552-9745 or by email at info@elections.virginia.gov. For more information, voters are encouraged to visit the Virginia Department of Elections website at www.elections.virginia.gov.

Rule changes may make college more expensive for farm families, small business owners

In an industry that already contends with slim margins, volatile commodity prices and high input costs, the thought of losing out on a child's college financial aid is a bitter pill to swallow.

That could be the reality for many farm families as a result of the FAFSA Simplification Act, which goes into effect for the 2024-2025 school year. Included in an omnibus bill passed in late 2023, the act's goal is to shorten the Free Application for Federal Student Aid form, making it easier for students to qualify for college financial aid.

But in doing so, a longtime exemption was removed—one that many farm families and small business owners relied on to help fund their children's higher education.

"Previously, there was an exemption

in place for families who owned farms or small businesses, so that there was no asset test when those kids were applying for financial aid," explained Dustin Sherer, government affairs director for the American Farm Bureau Federation. "But that changed with the FAFSA Simplification Act, which got rid of the exemption."

Now families with an adjusted gross income of over \$60,000 will be subject to the asset test, making it more expensive for farm families and small business owners to send their children to college.

Under the old rules, Sherer said, if a family owns a farm valued around \$1 million, they would have been expected to pay about \$7,600 toward a child's education.

"Under the new rules, that same

family would be responsible for more than \$41,000, which essentially would take you out of the Pell Grant and federal and state aid programs and force most people to take out student loans," he explained.

Trying to reinstate the exemption, members of Congress introduced The Family Farm and Small Business Exemption Act in both the House and Senate.

"Virginia Farm Bureau supports this bipartisan legislation that would ensure that students coming from family farms or small businesses would not be unfairly penalized in the FAFSA process," said Ben Rowe, VFBB director of national affairs. "For 30 years, the FAFSA procedure recognized that family farmers and small business owners pour their livelihoods into building

up their businesses but often live with limited financial resources. Restoring this 30-year-old standard is about fairness and supporting families who continue the entrepreneurial spirit of our country."

Not qualifying for financial aid is another barrier that could impede college access for rural families—a population that already experiences low rates of higher education. According to the Lumina Foundation, while rural students graduate from high school at rates higher than the national average, they're less likely to attend college than their suburban and urban peers.

Families concerned about the FAFSA changes can contact their legislators and encourage them to support The Family Farm and Small Business Exemption Act.

Submit your community news and photos to dhall@theenterprise.net

Investigation of fatal crash continues

The Virginia State Police are continuing their investigation of a single-vehicle crash, which resulted in a fatality. The crash occurred on Saturday, Jan 20, at 11:01 p.m. on Virginia 684, four tenths of a mile south of Virginia 1163 in Henry County.

A 2016 Audi Q5 was traveling north on

Virginia 684, when the vehicle ran off the left side of the roadway and struck the concrete pillars.

The driver of the vehicle was identified as Maurice O'Neal Washington, 56, of Bassett, Va. Mr. O'Neal was wearing his seatbelt and died at the scene.

Community center at Reynolds Homestead closes for upgrades

The Reynolds Homestead Community Engagement Center will be closed from January 22 through mid to late February for facilities upgrades. The center's staff will be working remotely to continue to bring the engaging programming and content expected.

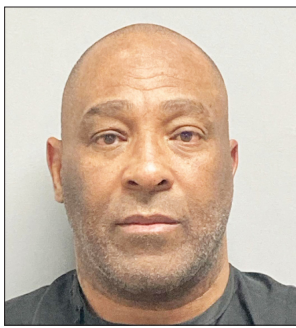
Although the center is closed, the grounds are open daily from dawn until dusk. Enjoy the LEAF trail, friendship garden, and self-guided outdoor historic tour. To schedule a tour of the historic home during this time, please call the center at (276) 694-7181.

Firearms, illegal drugs seized from Axton home

The Henry County Sheriff's Office SWAT Team executed a narcotics search warrant at 109 Mars Drive, Axton, on January 24, according to a release from Henry County Sheriff Wayne Davis.

During the execution of the search warrant, suspected cocaine, marijuana, nine illegally possessed firearms, ammunition, and an undisclosed amount of U.S. currency were seized.

Timothy Lee Smith, 56, of the Axton home, was taken into custody on an outstanding indictment for distribution of a Schedule II controlled substance (third or subsequent



Timothy Lee Smith

offense) and charged with the following additional charges.

- Possession of Schedule I or II Drug with the intent to distribute (cocaine)
- Possession of a firearm by a violent convicted felon
- Possession of a firearm

while in possession of a scheduled I/II substance

Smith is currently held without bond at the Henry County Adult Detention Center.

Anyone having information about narcotic trafficking operations is asked to contact the Henry County Sheriff's Office at (276) 638-8751 or Crimestoppers at 63-CRIME (632-7463). The Crimestoppers Program offers rewards of up to \$2,500 for information related to a crime. The nature of the crime and the substance of the information provided determine the amount of reward paid.

Spencer man charged with attempted murder

A Spencer man has been charged with two counts of attempted murder in connection with a domestic disturbance on Monday, Jan. 15, according to Patrick County Sheriff Dan Smith.

A call from a woman alleging that a man shot into a vehicle at a Trent Store Lane home was received in the 911 center at 2:24 a.m. Monday, Smith said.

Senior deputies Matt Hodges, Andrew Kinney and Robbie Haynes all responded to the scene, and allegedly encountered a man in front of the residence wearing body armor. The man surrendered when confronted by the deputies.

Deputies learned that the man's girlfriend was trying to leave with her 5 year old child when multiple rounds were allegedly fired



Dustin Lee Lawson

into her vehicle from both a rifle and a handgun in an attempt to keep them from leaving.

The woman sustained a gunshot wound to the head. She was airlifted to Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center in Winston-Salem, N.C. with non-life threatening injuries. The child was uninjured.

Multiple firearms were seized following the execu-

tion of a search warrant at the residence.

Dustin Lee Lawson, 23, of 504 Trent Store Lane, Spencer, was charged with two counts of attempted first degree murder, two counts of shooting into an occupied vehicle, two counts of use of a firearm in the commission of a felony, malicious wounding, felony child endangerment, wearing body armor while committing a violent offense, and carrying a concealed weapon.

Sheriff's Lt. Steve Austin and Investigator Linda Martin are leading the investigation. Special Agent Matt Wade with the Virginia State Police processed the crime scene.

Lawson is being held without bond in the Patrick County Jail.

Virginia farm leaders and agriculturalists visit D.C. to learn industry developments, see newest crop report

As Virginia farmers advocate for their livelihoods on the grassroots level, interactions with national farm leaders and economists impart perspectives that bring the big picture into focus.

This was evidenced when a group of about 20 farmers, Virginia Farm Bureau Federation leaders, students and other stakeholders recently met with industry experts in Washington.

They toured the highly secure U.S. Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service headquarters where the "market-moving" 2023 crop production report was released.

U.S. soybean and cotton production dropped a bit in 2023, while winter wheats, dry hay and alfalfa showed gains.

But corn was king at record highs. A total of 15.3 billion bushels of corn were harvested in 2023, up 12% from 2022.

"It was a surprise the average corn yield increased significantly from the November report," noted Robert Harper, VFBF grain manager.

Peanut production estimates also were strong in Virginia, but the national average yield was down 270 pounds from 2022.

The Virginia delegation also visited American Farm Bureau Federation offices.

Ryan Yates, AFBF managing direc-

tor of government affairs, cited findings of a recent poll that indicate Americans overwhelmingly trust farmers, but fewer people trust farming practices.

"That tells us people want to know more about where their food comes from, how it's produced and the ways we do what we do," Yates continued.

Joe Gilson, an AFBF government affairs director, shared a farm bill update. The omnibus spending package that funds food assistance and other crucial programs is debated and passed every five years and is currently delayed in Congress.

"The farm bill will be kicked back a few weeks," Gilson said. "But the chairman thinks he can find some extra money for the safety nets like crop insurance. And I think our Farm Bureaus can get these folks to come together by saying, 'Hey, we need a farm bill, we need it this year, and we need it to be bipartisan.'"

A farm bill is needed by mid-year, Gilson said. After that, lawmakers head back to home districts for campaign season.

A delayed farm bill is nothing new, added AFBF senior director of government affairs David Salmonsen, reminding the group that the 2012 Farm Bill finally passed in 2014.

OBITUARIES

Dennie Robert Worrel

Dennie Robert Worrell, 84, of Collinsville, Virginia passed away Thursday, January 18, 2024. He was born February 5, 1939, in Carroll County, Virginia, to the late Charlie Ray Worrell and Mintoria Jane Horton Worrell.

Dennie came to know the Lord at Vision Assembly of God in Collinsville. He was a dedicated employee of DuPont where he was one of the operators in the powerhouse for over 45 years. He enjoyed working in his yard. His yard was always in pristine condition. In his free



time, he enjoyed watching NASCAR and wrestling. He loved his family and dear to his heart were his grandchildren.

He is survived by his daughter, Deborah

"Debbie" Linkous (Henry); son, Nathan "Danny" Worrell (Barbara); sister, Wanda Worrell Harmon; grandchildren Brian Jay Mabe (Susan), Whitney Mabe Hall (Clint); great grandchildren; Ella Santoemma, Keagan Hall, and Hudson Hall.

A graveside service will be held Thursday, January 25, 2024, at 2:00 PM at Fair Haven Memorial Park in Spencer, Virginia.

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

Virginians encouraged to review insurance ahead of severe winter weather

With severe winter weather here, now is the time to protect your home, business, vehicles and other property from the elements.

Every year, winter weather causes billions of dollars in losses on homes, businesses, vehicles and other property.

The State Corporation Commission's (SCC) Bureau of Insurance (Bureau) encourages Virginians to give their insurance coverage a thorough review and get their homes and vehicles ready for harsh winter conditions. Knowing and understanding the limits of your insurance coverage, as well as any deductibles you may have to pay in the event of a claim, is essential.

Winter weather events are often responsible for tree limbs breaking and falling on homes, vehicles and power lines. Flooding of property and interior damage to structures can occur as snow and ice melt after a winter storm ends. Sub-freezing temperatures can lead to broken pipes inside and outside your home.

"Plan ahead for seasonal and other hazards," said Virginia Insurance Commissioner Scott A. White. "Homeowners, renters and commercial-property policies can protect you against many types of winter weather threats, but there are exceptions. Contact your insurance agent or company or the SCC's Bureau of Insurance to learn more."

To help reduce the risk of damage to your home and property this winter, the Bureau suggests the following:

*Remove dead, dying, diseased or broken tree limbs near your home and property.

*Remove debris from your gutters to help prevent ice dams and allow melting water to drain freely away from your home.

*Inspect your attic insulation and ventilation to ensure warm air stays in the living areas of your home and out of the attic. Keeping attic air cold can help minimize the freeze/thaw cycle that causes ice dams, which may cause interior water damage to your home. Proper insulation of your home has the added advantage of helping save energy and may reduce your heating costs.

*Protect your pipes from freezing. Detach garden hoses from your home before temperatures drop below freezing and properly winterize pipes and irrigation systems around your home. To protect interior pipes, leave your faucet running slightly to allow water to trickle through the pipes, reducing the chance that standing water will freeze. Opening the cabinet doors under your

sink allows warm air to circulate around your pipes and to help keep them from freezing.

*Make sure fireplaces, wood stoves and electric heaters work properly. Additionally, keep combustible items away from heat sources.

Damages to property due to wind, snow, cold and freezing rain are often covered under standard homeowners, renters and commercial-property insurance policies. Property damage caused by flooding typically is not covered, but separate flood insurance is available through the National Flood Insurance Program at floodsmart.gov and may be available through your insurance carrier.

It's important to contact your insurance agent or company as soon as possible in the event your home or property suffers damage from severe winter weather. When safe to do so, make any necessary emergency repairs and take reasonable steps to prevent further damage. Record all damage to your property and include photographs, notes and repair-related receipts.

Your homeowners policy may also cover certain incidents where someone slips and falls on slick sidewalks or other surfaces on your property. Review your policy or contact your agent or company to check for this coverage under the liability and medical payments portion of the policy.

In the event of an auto accident between two or more vehicles due to snowy and slippery road conditions, or if your vehicle crashes into an object affixed along a roadway (such as a street-light) due to those conditions, standard auto insurance policies generally provide collision coverage. Checking to see whether your auto insurance covers damage to your vehicle caused by ice, snow and falling tree limbs is also helpful. Damages of this nature usually fall under other-than-collision (or comprehensive) coverage on your vehicle, which protects against damage to a vehicle from such things as fire, water, hail, vandalism, glass breakage, wind and falling objects.

The bureau offers consumer guides regarding homeowners, renters, commercial and auto insurance and disaster-related property insurance claims. For copies of these and other publications, or for answers to your insurance questions, contact the Bureau's Property and Casualty Consumer Services Section at 804-371-9185 in Richmond or toll-free at 1-877-310-6560. Copies of the consumer insurance guides are also available online at scc.virginia.gov/pages/Insurance.

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City schools select Teacher of the Year

An 11th grade English teacher was selected as Martinsville City Schools' overall district Teacher of the Year last week.

Aaroa Thomas-Hairston was awarded the distinction. In addition to a bouquet of flowers and a certi-

ficate recognizing her honor, she also received a 2023 Kia EV6, courtesy of Autos By Nelson, to drive for part of the school year.

District administrators visited each school to recognize and celebrate each of the Teachers of the Year.



Aaroa Thomas-Hairston, (with bouquet), is pictured with administrators throughout the Martinsville School district, including Schools Superintendent Dr. Zeb Talley to her right.



Jamie Earnest, Patrick Henry Elementary



Domica Ortiz, Clearview Early Learning Center



Melissa Alverson, Albert Harris Elementary



Robert Ashby, Martinsville Middle School

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Dr. Ruberte Thiele initially pursued a career as a biomedical engineer in the medical device industry and academia. Interested in directly impacting patients' quality of life, he applied to medical school with the singular goal of becoming an orthopedic surgeon. After completing additional training in robotics and navigation for partial and total joint replacement as well as revision arthroplasty, returns to the area eager to help patients get back to doing what makes them happy. When not attending one of his kid's swim meets or soccer games, he enjoys outdoor activities like biking and hiking as well as recreational basketball.
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