

HENRY COUNTY ENTERPRISE

Saturday, April 6, 2024

(USPS-6)

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Dale Wagoner addressing the Henry County Board of Supervisors on the proposed FY 2025 budget.

Proposed spending plan boosts education, public safety

By Jessica Dillon

The Henry County Board of Supervisors had a first glimpse of the proposed \$207,741,852 fiscal year 24-25 budget at a special meeting Tuesday. The proposal represents an increase over last year's proposal, but includes no tax increase.

Under the plan, county employees would receive a 3 percent pay hike starting July 1. The proposal also includes a 10 percent reduction in the cost of health insurance for employees with dependents.

The county anticipates several increases in revenue, with an estimated \$200,000 from recreation fees and concessions at the Smith

River Sports Complex. Revenue from the current business license tax is expected to increase by 8.33 percent, and the transient occupancy tax is expected to increase by 166 percent. Permits, fees, and licenses are expected to bring in 28 percent more revenue. Housing federal inmates is estimated to provide an additional \$380,000 in revenue, and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) fees are expected to bring in an additional \$250,000. A small increase will come from the recordation fee, which would increase from \$2 to \$4 to maintain the law library.

When presenting the proposal, (See Spending Plan p. 2)

Hines and Davis reunite to fight crime in county



Henry County Sheriff Wayne Davis said he is "blessed" with Capt. Sandy Hines' decision to join the Henry County Sheriff's Office team.



Sandy Hines is the newest member of the Henry County Sheriff's Office. He will serve as Captain of Investigations.

By Debbie Hall and Barbara Waldron

After more than two decades, friends Wayne Davis and Sandy Hines are working together again for the same agency.

Hines, a nearly 24-year veteran with the Martinsville City Police Department, began his tenure Monday with the Henry County Sheriff's Office.

"The city has been my home for almost 24 years," Hines said, but after the position became open, and

Davis offered him the job, Hines said he felt it was time for a change.

"I really thought about it. I talked to my wife about it, and after that, I decided to make that change," Hines said. "It was just time for a change."

As the newest member of Sheriff Davis's administrative team, Hines will serve as the Captain of Investigations, with duties which will include Criminal Investigations, VICE Investigations, School Re- (See County Crime p. 2)

Inaugural Henry County Memorial Day Ruck set to honor fallen veterans



The Bataan Memorial Death March in New Mexico. (Contributed)



Patrick Rodgers, Careen Rodgers, and Katie Schneider at the Bataan Memorial Death March in New Mexico.



The Bataan Memorial Death March in New Mexico.

By Jessica Dillon

The first ever Henry County Memorial Day Ruck 22 will be held on May 27 to honor the memory of fallen veterans.

"To our knowledge, there has never been a rucking event like this in Henry County or the

surrounding area," organizers Patrick and Careen Rodgers said of the event in which veterans, family members, active duty military, and other supporters will carry funeral flags throughout the 22-mile course.

"A ruck is a military reference to carrying a

load from one location to another, often with many pounds of gear and weight in the rucksack. We will be carrying rucksacks full of cemetery flags - American, branches of services, and POW/MIA - to honor, remember, and signify car- (See Memorial Day Ruck p. 3)

Lollipops are being used to support reading in 'Lollies for Dolly' fundraiser

By Jessica Dillon

The United Way of Henry County and Martinsville is busy decorating lawns with lollipops to raise funds for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.

The agency's 'Lollies For Dolly' program helps support Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, which mails a free book to children up to five years of age every month. At the end of the program, participants will receive a final book to prepare them for kindergarten. That book includes a message from Dolly Parton. Expectant parents can sign up for the program to start receiving books as soon as their child is born. The program aims to help foster a love of reading from a young age. (See Lollipops p. 3)



Lollipops are decorating homes and businesses to support reading efforts of local youngsters.

City project slated to receive Industrial Revitalization Funds

By Debbie Hall

Last week, Gov. Glenn Youngkin announced more than \$10 million for seven Industrial Revitalization Fund (IRF) grants for the cities of Buena Vista, Martinsville and Petersburg, and the towns of Blackstone, Halifax, Lawrenceville and Wytheville. The seven awarded projects will create over 330 jobs and 87 new housing units, as well as leverage an additional \$49 million in private investment.

Martinsville will receive \$2.8 million for the former BB&T building, known as One Ellsworth, which is slated to be transformed into 69 one- and two-bedroom apartment homes, commercial space dedicated to food and entertainment, and a new mountain-view rooftop event space.

"The transformation of unused, dilapidated or blighted structures into productive, vibrant sources of community pride is paramount to catalyzing economic growth and fostering strong local economies," said Youngkin. "Strategic and targeted investments like these are critical to ensuring that

(See Industrial Revitalization p. 4)

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Spending Plan

(cont. from page 1)

County Administrator Dale Wagoner said the expenses are closely aligned “with our three core pillars,” which are education, public safety/law enforcement and economic development.

“More than 60 percent of the budget has been allocated to education,” Wagoner said in the proposal. Additionally, “we have taken action by dedicating significant resources to public safety and law enforcement.”

He added that “our commitment to fostering growth and prosperity is unwavering. By supporting economic development initiatives, we aim to create a vibrant and thriving community for all residents.”

The school year budget is expected to be \$107 million, a 4.2 percent increase from the current fiscal year. The local portion of the funding will be \$21.6 million, which is nearly a \$2.3 million increase from last year. The total local contribution also is a 10 percent increase in discretionary funds.

“The local share of the increase is more than the state’s increase,” Wagoner said. “This is somewhat counterintuitive, considering that

Virginia is constitutionally required to fund education.”

The proposed total doesn’t include the one percent sales tax for school construction and renovation projects.

The Sheriff’s Office is the second largest expense, with a proposed budget of \$24.2 million, or a 9.5 percent increase from last year.

Two additional officer positions are included in the proposed budget for the Sheriff’s Office drug interdiction team. A significant portion of this increase is for inmate health care for those incarcerated in the Adult Detention Center. This expense is projected to increase by 65 percent this year.

Currently, there are 208 sworn officers and 24 civilian positions, with an additional eight part-time officers who work in the Henry County Public School system. The department’s Animal Control division will change its name to Animal Services.

“This better reflects the services and essence of all that department does in the community,” Wagoner said of the name change.

The proposed budget also calls

for additional investments in public safety, with allocations to volunteer fire and rescue to increase 14.1 percent, with \$80,000 for each volunteer fire department to cover expenses, and \$562,199 allocated to cover the operation costs of all eight volunteer departments.

Four new paramedic/firefighter positions are included for the Department of Public Safety to improve response times for emergency medical services calls, at a total cost of about \$250,000.

“Currently, the county provides 100 percent of the fire program money,” Wagoner said of the purchase of a new fire apparatus, which accounts for part of the department’s increase. This will allow for one more worker on each shift and will help to improve emergency response times.

Other services and programs that are funded by the county also would receive increased funding, including a \$29,141 increase for the Department of Social Services and \$313,250 to the Child Services Act, as well as an inter-fund transfer to the IDA of \$1.1 million.

Another large increase is from

the newly acquired Smith River Sports Complex, which will cost \$546,813 to run, and represents a 47 percent increase.

Some outside organizations also would receive an increase, such as Piedmont Community Services with an additional \$5,700.

The final part of the meeting presented some changes to the FY 2024 budget, with the largest adjustments going towards purchasing a new garbage truck for \$350,000 and a master plan for the public safety complex estimated to cost \$750,000.

There were several projects not included in the budget that could be funded by a possible one cent increase to real estate, personal property, and machinery and tools taxes. If the board decides to grant the increase, an extra \$418,000 of revenue could be added to the budget.

A public hearing on the proposal is scheduled for April 15 at 7 p.m., in the Summerlin Room of the Administration Building.

To view a copy of the entire proposed FY25 budget, visit <https://tinyurl.com/3rjxxju8>.

County Crime

(cont. from page 1)

source and Internal Affairs Investigations.

Hines said he expects to be busier in his new post “just for the simple fact that there’s more land” area and a bigger population in the county than in the city.

But “I’m looking forward to a new challenge and a change,” said Hines.

Both Hines and Davis said they have been friends for decades.

“We have been friends for over 25 years. We started this career together, and went to the police academy together,” Davis said. “We actually worked together at the One Stop Cellular store in Liberty Fair Mall” before either of them embarked on their respective law enforcement careers.

“Sheriff Davis got me interested in law enforcement,” Hines recalled, and added that Davis participated in a ride-along program offered at the time at the Henry County Sheriff’s Office.

“On Friday and Saturday nights, when a lot of people were out partying,” Davis rode-along with a Henry

County deputy, “and I said, let me try that too,” Hines said.

Davis put Hines in touch with then-Henry County Sheriff’s Capt. Wayne Dodson, who oversaw the ride-along program, Hines said.

“You’d ride along with a deputy all night,” as the officers responded to calls for service. “I really enjoyed that. It was interesting to me,” Hines said, adding that he later, in 2000, was hired at the city police department.

During his career in public service with the police department, Hines served in multiple positions, including Patrol, Patrol Sergeant, Patrol Lieutenant, Criminal Investigations, Criminal Investigations Lieutenant, ATF Task Force Officer, Captain of the Patrol Division, and Captain of the Investigations Division. He also served as the SWAT Team Commander and Honor Guard Commander.

Hines earned a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice from Liberty University and an Associate of Applied Science Degree in Administration of Justice from Patrick and

Henry Community College. He has also achieved the FBI LEEDA Trilogy: Supervisory, Command, and Executive Leadership, The (VACP) Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police: Institute for Leadership in Changing Times, and the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF): Senior Management Institute for Police.

“He’s a good fit,” Davis said of Hines. “I’m blessed to have him” working in the sheriff’s office.

Davis, who is serving his first term as sheriff, began as a patrol officer with the county, then served a couple of years as general assignment investigator, continued on to Virginia Forensic Science Academy School for Crime Scene Technology, focusing on major cases and violent crimes.

In 2009, he transferred back to patrol as a sergeant and in 2013 was promoted to lieutenant. In 2014, he began serving as lieutenant of criminal investigations – a post he held for two years. His next promotion was in 2016, to captain of criminal investigations, which oversees criminal and vice investigations units, street crimes unit, and the school resource unit.

Davis spent 21 years on the SWAT team, up until the day he became sheriff. He also led the search and recover dive team as captain, serving on the team for more than a decade.

Since taking office as interim sheriff, “our number one priority has been and still is focusing on removing drug dealers from our community. Most Henry County citizens would probably agree the sales of narcotics have affected the quality of life here for a number of years,” said Davis.

“Enforcement of stopping drug dealers has been stepped up, priority one, since Day One,” he said. “I feel that we have been successful, but with the understanding that there’s still a long way to go. I feel safe in saying most communities in the Commonwealth, and the entire country, have been dealing with the same thing we have. My role is to make it very uncomfortable for those who chose criminal acts and to make Henry County a safe place to live.

“It’s a very lengthy process to build a culture in which citizens feel safe,” Davis said. “We use a variety of methods, such as communication

with the sheriff’s office so they feel heard and see action.

The sheriff’s office maintains an active social media presence to keep the community informed, and “recently, we’ve partnered with Henry County Senior Services Department” to hold ‘Coffee with the Sheriff’s Office’ events held at the center in Collinsville, Davis said.

“We’re also holding K-9 demonstrations for senior citizens, and we try to support other county entities and civic organizations in the county,” he added.

The sheriff’s office has “a strong community policing presence and offers all sorts of activities and informational sessions,” Davis said of neighborhood watch programs, active shooter presentations, and participating in “as many community events as possible to build those strong community relationships. This has opened up communications, especially with neighbors that now feel comfortable calling us to report suspicious activities.”

His office is working to revise the neighborhood watch program, with deputy Jeff Jones, a certified crime prevention specialist, named coordinator. The programs are “voluntary for any neighborhood that is interested,” Davis said.

“Pre-covid, we had many active neighborhood programs, and now we’re trying very hard to bring them back, with one successfully reactivated in the last several months,” Davis said.

Anyone interested in establishing a program in their neighborhood may call Jones at (276) 638-8751.

The sheriff’s office employs 243 personnel, including part-time School Resources Officers (SROs) and animal control workers.

“This office is blessed to have great employees in every division here,” Davis said, and attributed the success to “their hard work, day in and day out” as well as residents’ willingness to work with the office.

“I want to give credit to their dedication, hard work, and willingness to take the safety of this community seriously,” said Davis. “When we talk about our efforts to remove drug dealers from our community, that’s my vision, but it’s their hard work that makes it happen.”

Whether it’s Hines, Jones or another officer, “they’re as enthusiastic and as passionate about it as I am,” Davis said.

Celebrity Scams in the Age of AI

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the new shiny object that has captured the world’s attention. It’s also captured the attention of criminal scammers who are using it to make their fraudulent schemes more realistic than ever. One area where AI scams are particularly dangerous is celebrity impostor scams.

For many years criminals have been impersonating celebrities online to steal from fans. Fake celebrity profiles offer fans personal connection, VIP access, investment opportunities or the chance to support favorite charities. These criminals attempt to create a bond through messaging or even a phone call from their “rep.” With the power of AI, these scams can

move from messaging to deepfake videos. Recent fake celebrity product endorsements impersonating Dolly Parton, Elon Musk and Tom Hanks demonstrate just how convincing these schemes can be.

Posting on a celebrity’s social media account might be exciting, but it could put you at risk of this impostor scam. In whatever way you choose to enjoy your favorite celebs, do so recognizing that an opportunity to personally connect with them is likely a scam.

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.

ONLINE AUCTION

Recreational Tracts for Sale in City of Danville VA
Online Auction Ends Wednesday, April 24th, at 3 PM
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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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

Meetings

Monday, April 7

Martinsville School Board Meeting, 6 p.m., MCPS Central Office CLC Room, 746 Indian Trail, Martinsville.

Wednesday, April 10

Community Advisory Board Meeting, 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., Municipal Building Room 32, 55 W Church St, Martinsville.

Friday, April 12

Art and Cultural Committee Meeting, 1 to 2 p.m., Municipal Building Room 32, 55 W Church St, Martinsville.

Tuesday, April 16

The Town of Ridgeway will hold a called budget workshop. 6:30 p.m. in the Mayor of Ridgeway's office.

Events

Saturday, April 6

Free Shred Day, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., ValleyStar Credit Union, 41 Wheeler Ave, Collinsville.

Board Game Day, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., Blue Ridge Regional Library, 310 Church St E, Martinsville.

Tuesday, April 9

DIY Freezer Jam, 2:30 p.m., Ridgeway Branch Library, 900 Vista View Ln, Ridgeway.

Wednesday, April 10

DIY Freezer Jam, 2:30 p.m., Collinsville Branch Library, 2540 Virginia Ave, Collinsville.

Thursday, April 11

An Evening With Lucian Simmons, Piedmont Arts. Simmons is vice chairman and worldwide head of Sotheby's Restitution Department and senior specialist, Impressionist and Modern Art Department, Sotheby's New York. Reception at 6:30 p.m. Talk at 7 p.m.

DIY Freezer Jam, 2:30 p.m., Patrick County Branch Library, 116 W Blue Ridge St, Stuart.

Friday, April 12

DIY Freezer Jam, 2:30 p.m., Bassett Branch

Library, 3969 Fairystone Park Hwy, Bassett.

April Music Night at Spencer-Penn Center, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., Spencer-Penn Centre, 102 Spencer Penn School Road, Spencer.

Saturday, April 13

DIY Freezer Jam, 2:30 p.m., Martinsville Branch Library, 310 Church St E, Martinsville.

Friday, April 19

Bee Flight Festival, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., Virginia Museum of Natural History, 21 Starling Ave, Martinsville.

Saturday, April 20

Spring Craft Show, 9 to 5 at Bassett High School, 85 Riverside Drive, Bassett. Tickets are \$5. Children 5 and under are admitted free.

Bee Flight Festival, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., Virginia Museum of Natural History, 21 Starling Ave, Martinsville.

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.

The Bassett Ruritan Club hosts breakfast on the 2nd Saturday of each month from 6 - 10 a.m. The cost is \$8 for adults and \$4 for children under 12. All you can eat sausage, fried bologna, eggs, cooked apples, sausage gravy, made from scratch biscuits, made to order pancakes, coffee and juice. Dine in or carry out.

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

TOPS FIELDVALE VA 0626 meets each Tuesday at 5:45 pm at the Rangeley Ruritan Building on 134 Calloway Drive, Fielddale, 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.

Neighbors in the Know. Join staff and volunteers in the Hylton Library at the Spencer Penn Centre for activities and socializing on the first and third Monday of each month. A different presentation and activity weekly, followed by a way to get you moving. The program is an hour long and activities for children will be provided. Every third Monday, 10-11 a.m., a music program will be provided. This free program is perfect for all ages. No registration is required.

Mondays - March 11, March 25, and April 11, at 11 a.m., Holly Kozelsky, executive director of MHC Historical Society, will teach others how to use microfilm to read old newspaper articles at the Martinsville branch of the Blue Ridge Regional Library.

Memorial Day Ruck

(cont. from page 1)

rying the burden that our military often does," Careen Rodgers said.

Patrick Rodgers, a Marine Corps veteran, said the event is to raise awareness of the true meaning of the day – honoring the fallen.

"We feel that patriotism is not what it should be, and we feel that Memorial Day gets overlooked," he said.

Additionally, it is to set "an example to others by showing our support and dedication by rucking 22 miles around the county, encourage physical fitness in community members by inviting them to help us finish the ruck, and encourage the community to attend the Roselawn Memorial Day Ceremony held each year," Careen Rodgers said.

A local veteran family in need will benefit from the event, with a donation from the sales of flags and T-shirts. Participants will carry rucksacks with the purchased flags displayed throughout the event

"The flags in our rucksacks are part of an ongoing fundraiser we are conducting for a local veteran family in need, where anyone can purchase a flag in remembrance and in honor of a military member or perhaps someone they do not know, such as an MIA/POW," Careen Rodgers said.

The family to receive the proceeds will be selected in a meeting before the event takes place.

An estimated 300 memorial flags are expected to be carried throughout the ruck.

"The flags we carry will be displayed at the Roselawn Memorial Day Ceremony when we complete our 22-mile ruck around the county,"

Lollipops

(cont. from page 1)

The program has been helping youngsters develop reading skills since 1995, and the local United Way has been helping to enroll children in this program since 2015.

"It's something that is so needed in our community, and it helps children to have a first experience of books at home. They get something that's personalized to them. They get to start their own library when they go to school. They get to fall in love with books before they even go to school," Erica James, MHC Partners for Children and early literacy coordinator.

'Lollies for Dolly' allows donors to send a group of lollipops to a yard of their choice. Staff of the United Way transport the lollipops to their new locations, place them in the yard, and then pick them up when it's time for the 'lollies' to move to the next address.

Both businesses and individual residents can receive the lollipops. The minimum donation for securing the lollipops is \$27, with the option to donate more. Interested donors who don't have anywhere to send the lollies, or want to donate under

she said.

A group of 12 to 13 participants are expected to participate in the full 22-mile ruck that begins at Roselawn Cemetery. One team will start early, following the route to the Dick and Willie Trail entrance, located below the El Parral Mexican Restaurant in Martinsville.

There, "we have an open community invite to help us 'Finish the Ruck,' Careen Rodgers said. "We are inviting everyone to join us for the last 1.5 miles, which will be at the Dick and Willie trailhead near El Parral restaurant, at 10 a.m. on Memorial Day."

Those who wish to participate are asked to congregate in the parking lot and join the ruck when the rucking team arrives.

"Our rucking team will meet community members and walk the last miles to the" Memorial Day Ceremony at Roselawn Cemetery, she added.

"We know that there are a lot of people that can't walk 22 miles; more can't than can, but a lot of people can walk a mile and a half," Patrick Rodgers said. "We've planned our route so that the last mile and a half is on the Dick and Willie Trail" so that those with disabilities who wish to participate in the final leg of the run can be supported by the group.

The route will lead participants back to Roselawn Cemetery, where flags will be displayed during the Roselawn Memorial Day Ceremony.

The Henry County Sheriff's Office will provide an escort during the ruck to keep participants safe, and anyone who is interested is invited to participate.

"The invitation to come is open to anyone,"

organizers said, adding that they hope to have a large turnout.

The couple have hosted several fitness-related events over the years and, along with county resident Katie Schneider, participated in the Bataan Memorial Death March in New Mexico.

"If you are unfamiliar with the Bataan Death March, this took place during WWII on the peninsula of Bataan in the Philippines," Careen Rodgers said. "This tragic event is where over 70,000 American and Philippine soldiers were marched for over 100 miles by the Japanese as POWs with no food/water and often shoes/clothes."

"Each year at White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico, a memorial march takes place to remember and honor," she said. "This is no ordinary event, with over 6,000 participants from all over the world taking on a grueling 26.2-mile march."

The event, she said, "was humbling and perhaps one of the most physically and emotionally challenging events we have ever participated in. Our grueling 26.2 miles was nothing in comparison to what the POWs went through, but it is a small way never to forget."

To support the local event, American flags can be purchased for \$10 and T-shirts for \$25. by messaging the Henry County Memorial Day Ruck 22 on its Facebook page, at <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61555683066732>, or call Rodgers at (276) 340-1538.

Flags placed at the Roselawn Memorial Day Ceremony can be taken home or placed on graves after the event.

the minimum are allowed to do so.

Due to local success, a second group of lollies were assembled so that two yards could be decorated at once. All of the funds raised go towards Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.

Some local businesses that have participated are Pocahontas Bassett Baptist Church's Little Angels Early Learning Center and the Clearview Early Learning Center. The Lollies have also made their way to a few local homes, and pictures of the traveling lollipops can be viewed on the United Way of Martinsville Henry County's Facebook page. Many other requests for lollipop locations can be seen in the comments on the campaign page, with some residents asking to 'lolly' local schools.

Currently, the Imagination Library states that there are 1,675 local children presently enrolled in the program, and 3,985 local children have already graduated from the program. Signs to promote the fundraiser were made by MarKii Custom Prints, and each have a scannable QR code to link interested participants to the donation page.

James said several of the books in the program

were a surprise, and ones that she may not have thought to pick up herself.

For instance, "King Jack and the Dragon," by Peter Bently, was a book sent by the Imagination Library that James said her daughters fell in love with.

Outreach efforts in the community are ongoing, and geared to connect young children and mothers to the opportunity. Diane Smith, who is MHC Partners for Children and family navigator, checks in at the W.I.C. center twice a week to let mothers know about the program.

The Imagination Library is open to local children. Parents interested in enrolling may fill out a form online or send a form by mail.

If you need help setting your child up for the program or have additional questions, call James at 276-638-3946, ext. 113. Those interested in donating to the Lollies for Dolly campaign can do so by visiting the Martinsville Henry County United Ways website.

The local campaign runs until the end of April, and the agency is working towards its \$1,500 goal.

Sports Schedule

Following are the dates and times of local high school teams and their games for the week of April 8-13:

4/8	4:30p	Boys Tennis Virginia Episcopal School at Carlisle	4/10	4:30p	Girls Tennis Magna Vista at Bassett	Washington		
	5pm	Baseball George Washington at Carlisle		4:30p	Girls Tennis Martinsville at Halifax County	5pm	Track Martinsville at George Washington	
	6:15p	Baseball Chatham at Magna Vista		4:30p	Boys Tennis Halifax County at Martinsville	6pm	Girls Soccer Martinsville at Bassett	
4/9	4:30p	Girls Tennis Bassett at Martinsville		4:30p	Boys Soccer Bassett at Magna Vista	7pm	Boys Soccer Bassett at Martinsville	
	4:30p	Boys Tennis Martinsville at Bassett		5pm	Baseball Radford at Martinsville (@ Hooker Field)	4/12	4:30p	Girls Tennis Magna Vista at Patrick County
	4:30p	Girls Soccer WCA at Carlisle		5:30p	Girls Soccer Dan River at Martinsville		4:30p	Boys Soccer Patrick County at Magna Vista
	5pm	Baseball Magna Vista at Bassett		7pm	Boys Soccer Dan River at Martinsville		5pm	Baseball Tunstall at Magna Vista
	5pm	Softball Magna Vista at Bassett	4/11	4pm	Boys Tennis Carlisle at The Covenant		5pm	Softball Tunstall at Magna Vista
	6pm	Girls Soccer Martinsville at George Washington		4:30p	Girls Soccer Carlisle at Eastern Mennonite		6pm	Girls Soccer Magna Vista at Tunstall
	7pm	Girls Soccer Bassett at Magna Vista (@ Smith River Complex)		5pm	Baseball Bassett at Martinsville (@ Hooker Field)	4/13	7pm	Boys Soccer Tunstall at Magna Vista (@ Smith River Complex)
	7pm	Boys Soccer Magna Vista at Bassett		5pm	Track Bassett at George Washington		10am	Softball Mecklenburg County at Magna Vista
	7pm	Boys Soccer George Washington at Martinsville		5pm	Track Magna Vista at George Washington		11am	Girls Soccer Carlisle at The Covenant
	7pm	Baseball George Washington at Martinsville (@ Hooker Field)					2pm	Softball Brunswick Academy at Magna Vista

OPINION

Special days and treasured experiences

A lot of special experiences make up childhood with grandparents, and undoubtedly, winching trees tops the list.

"You will treasure this day for the rest of your life," my father proclaimed from his easy chair to the rest

of us plopped around the living room of the cottage he had built himself, with help from family and friends. "Just think about it: How many families can say they winched trees together?"

It was the day after my 14-year-old had used the log splitter for the first time. We were on the family property in the Adirondacks Mountains, where days of leisure and adventure are occasionally interspersed with hearty work. Grandma and I and Grandpa and I hefted impossibly heavy sections of tree trunks onto the powerful machine that was manned by my precious delicate little teenager adorned in heavy leather gloves and safety glasses. With the push of a button, she would start the strong wedge moving toward the massive pieces of wood. It would slowly force its way in, and the creaking and cracking would begin. We'd wait with bated breath until the loud "pop" that finally splinted the wood in two as they fell off each side.

That work was tiring and left us short of breath and covered in tiny slivers of wood, and we rested well afterward.

The following day was our last full day at the cottage.

When we arrive there each June, a full week stretches endlessly ahead. There is no agenda, no work or school to go to, no normal household chores, no meetings, no dates. We are suspended in time – back, there in heaven, as if we had never left it. The only way to mark difference is that the child is a little taller and there are a few more gray hairs on the rest of us or perhaps a few fewer hairs, and often, as we joke with our father, there is yet another new cabin or outbuilding he'd built. But the rest is the same, as if the intervening year hadn't existed - the camaraderie, the pancake breakfasts, the woodland hikes, the gentle greeting of the rising sun in the morning, the warmth and cackle of the campfire at night.

But suddenly, somehow, with intense shock we are stunned to realize we are on the final full day.

That morning, I decided to take out the little trees that soon would be blocking my parents' view down the fern-covered hill to the pond. We all loved sitting out on that deck, gazing down to the pond, cradling a hot mug of coffee in the mornings or a glass of wine or gin and tonic in the evenings.



Holly Kozelsky



Enjoying the view to the pond is part of the family's special experiences, but so is the work to keep that view clear.

After the coffee, I put on my sturdy boots and old clothes and made my way down with a few tools. Some of those saplings which had looked so small from up on the deck were some almost as tall as I was and put up quite a struggle before they released their roots from the rich black soil. My dog occasionally ran down into the water then would run back up to sit companionably near where I was working.

My sister followed soon after, with warnings that this wasn't her idea of a good time, and she wouldn't last for long.

Then came Grandma and my daughter, and just after they arrived, my father had circled around down a rudimentary dirt road with his tractor. Things were getting serious; the saplings now didn't stand a chance, and the view again would be protected for another year or two before this would have to happen again.

While I kept to my shovel and ax, the others tackled with winches. They would attach a strap to a small tree, and anchor the other end to a large tree, and flip, flip, flip the tab of the winch which clicked more and more and more along the strap until it was tight, then tighter, and finally, the smaller tree would give up and pull out.

Hours later, we made our way back up the hill, covered in dirt and hot and sweaty and ready for a cool drink and a break.

There are many special ways a family has of spending time together. Family life is a fabric of threads of luxury and of work, of parties and of projects. And they are all rich in their various ways.

A bridge too far

Early on the morning of March 26, I watched the video of Baltimore's Francis Scott Key Bridge collapsing.

I somehow did not anticipate what would follow in the days after the disaster, even though I should know better by now.

If you missed it, early in the morning on March 26, the massive Singaporean container ship MV Dali was leaving the Port of Baltimore, piloted by two local American harbor pilots. At 1:24 a.m., the ship suffered a complete power blackout and began to drift. A backup generator kicked on, and while it could power the ship's electrical systems, it couldn't power the ship's propulsion. At 1:27 a.m., the pilots issued a mayday call and asked the Maryland Transportation Authority Police to stop all bridge traffic as there was a chance of a collision.

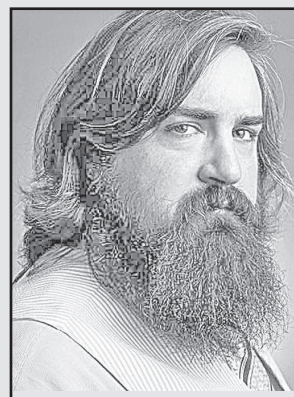
As part of its emergency procedures, the ship dropped anchor, but it was unable to find purchase in the silty bottom of the Patapsco River. At 1:28 a.m., the Dali struck the southwest pier of the bridge's central truss arch span while moving at about eight knots. This caused a massive section of the bridge to simply break apart and collapse. Six people, all part of a maintenance crew, were reported missing; two bodies were recovered and the other four are presumed dead. It's a terrible tragedy, but given the scope of the disaster, it's frankly remarkable that more people weren't killed.

Watching the video, the whole thing seemed pretty straightforward to me. I didn't know at the time how much momentum a container ship of that size has, but I assumed it was an inconceivable amount (it turns out the ship's impact force with the pier is currently estimated at between 120 million and 230 million newtons; by comparison, a Saturn V rocket generates 35 million newtons of thrust at launch). I figured that if a very large and heavy thing runs full-force into a bridge, it's pretty likely the bridge will collapse.

However, I was unaware that social media is filled with people who secretly possess degrees in structural engineering.

Almost immediately, I began seeing conspiracy theories all over the internet regarding the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge. This was no accident, they claimed; this was an intentional act of terrorism, and foreigners were probably behind it!

These theories, of course, were brought to us by the same brain geniuses who gave us such hits as "jet fuel can't melt steel beams" and "school shootings are false flag operations" and "COVID was genetically engineered and inten-



By Ben R. Williams

tionally released." These are the people who see conspiracies everywhere they look, and a lack of evidence for their theories only serves to make them more convinced.

I wonder about these people quite a bit. Some of them are harmless kooks, but others become so emboldened by their certainty that they commit terrible acts, like harassing the parents of murdered children because they believe they're really "crisis actors" working for the government.

What makes people like this? Why do some people see conspiracies everywhere they go?

I have a theory of my own. Conspiracy theorists are terrified by the idea that there might not be any order to the universe.

It's frightening to think that you could be driving across a bridge and have it suddenly collapse because a container ship randomly lost power and plowed into it. It's terrifying to think that you or someone you love could be shot to death because a mentally ill person bought a gun and decided to use it to settle an imagined grievance on a random crowd of people.

It's more comforting to believe that someone is in charge, that someone has a steady hand on the tiller, even if you believe that hand belongs to a shadowy government organization devoted to perpetrating evil. To paraphrase Walter Sobchak in "The Big Lebowski," say what you will about the tenets of the sinister shadow government, but at least it's an ethos.

The truth — which is either chilling or comforting depending on your perspective — is that sometimes terrible things just happen for no apparent reason. Sometimes everything just goes perfectly wrong and it leads to a bridge collapsing. Sometimes we just can't predict when and where a tragedy will take place. Sometimes Robin Williams gets a terrible disease while Henry Kissinger lives to be 100.

We don't have to like it when these things happen, but we shouldn't use tragedy as an excuse to retreat into a world of fantasy.

See more at www.henrycountyenterprise.com

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PUBLISHER'S NOTICE

All real estate advertised in this newspaper is subject to the Federal Fair Housing Act of 1968, which makes it illegal to advertise "any preference, limitations or discrimination based on race, color, sex or national origin," or an intention to make any such preferences, limitation or discrimination. Our readers are informed that all dwellings advertised in this paper are available on an equal opportunity basis. This newspaper will not knowingly accept any advertising for real estate or employment which is in violation of the law.

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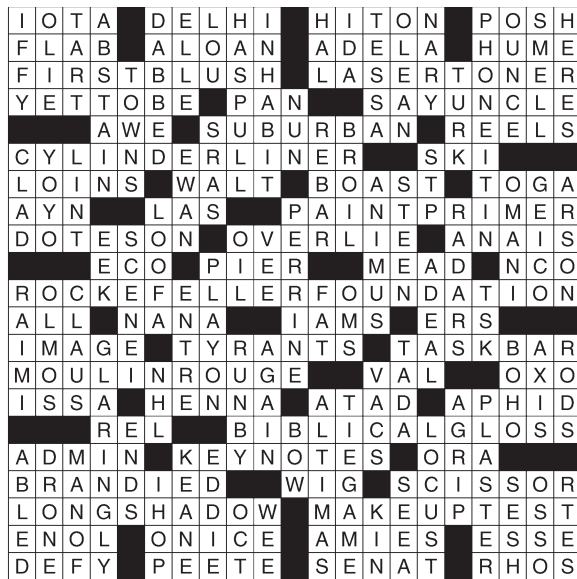
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ADVERTISE!

Class gave seniors real-world experience



Members of the United Way manned the charity table.

By Jessica Dillon

Local high school seniors learned about real-world finances during the annual Dollars and Sense event recently held at the New College Institute (NCI), and sponsored by the United Way of Martinsville Henry County.

Bassett, Magna Vista and Martinsville high school seniors participated in the event that organizers hope will help prepare them to make better financial decisions.

Houston Stultz, director of operations and marketing at the Smith River Sports Complex, said he wanted to work in sports and ended up coming back to the area to fulfill his dream job. He advised students to stay in contact with their classmates and keep a strong network of connections.

"Become a Swiss army knife. You may not know what that means, but a Swiss army knife does a little bit of everything," he said. Statistically speaking, many adults will change from their career trajectories later in life, and Houston advised students to keep a multitude of talents in their portfolio.

Students heeded that advice as they navigated the program, selecting a dream career and an accurate salary that reflected their choice. Students then received paperwork which reflected withheld taxes to aid in preparing a



Henry County Sheriff's Investigator Scott Barnes and 1st Lt. Reynolds talked to students who were interested in a law enforcement career.

monthly budget. Among the careers selected, health and trade-related fields were the top picks.

The room was lined with volunteers at different stations for rent, utilities, food, vehicles, banking, and temptations. Visiting each booth, students had to decide how they wanted to spend their money. Each booth had several different choices, adjusted according to the student's household needs.

The event included a station that doled out randomized life events, ranging from something as simple as getting a speeding ticket to a costly hospital stay which would cost hundreds of dollars. Students were given various options, from eating out to paying for a more expensive grocery budget.

A variety of cars were presented with a mix of affordability options - from low-cost used cars to more expensive autos and trucks. The prices directly impacted student's assigned credit ratings.

Temptation Island was the final station for many, offering luxuries like a vacation to Disney World. Students would calculate their budgets at the end of the exercise to determine whether they were over, under or on target.

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HENRY COUNTY ENTERPRISE
henrycountyenterprise.com
Weekly Publication
Published Each Saturday
Michael Showell, Publisher
Debbie Hall, Editor
dhall@theenterprise.net
(276) 694-3101
Wendi Craig, Advertising Manager
advertise@mainstreetnewspapers.com
(276) 340-2445

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The Henry County Enterprise encourages letters from our readers on topics of general interest to the community and responses to our articles and columns. Letters must be signed and have a telephone number where you can be reached to be considered for publication. All letters will be verified before publication. The Henry County Enterprise reserves the right to deny publication of any letter and edit letters for length, content and style.
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Dollars and Sense, a program aimed at preparing students for real-world finances, recently was held at the New College Institute.

While some only needed to cut down on fun spending to have a comfortable budget, other students learned that their career choices couldn't make ends meet, even with severe cutbacks. Students could make additional money by donating their time to a charity or getting a part-time job.

Students who participated in the event said it helped them make decisions in terms of career choices, and several teachers, who chaperoned the event and actively engaged with students, said the event was successful in helping to prepare students.

"I think this is a very important opportunity to give our students the chance to see what exactly lies ahead from a budgeting standpoint, from a preparing for the future standpoint," James Law, who teaches government at Bassett High School, said. "My hope is that the students get an idea of what it's like to put together a budget. I hope it puts some thoughts in their minds about some of the things that they need to prepare for."

The basics of a solar eclipse

Millions of people will get a chance to experience a solar eclipse on Monday, April 8, when a total eclipse will be visible from Texas to Maine, according to the National Park Service. In anticipation of the eclipse, readers can learn about these unique events.

What is a solar eclipse?

According to NASA, a solar eclipse occurs when the sun, the moon and Earth line up, either fully or partially. During a solar eclipse, the moon passes between the sun and Earth, casting a shadow on the planet. That shadow either fully or partially blocks the sun's light in certain areas.

How frequently do solar eclipses occur?

NASA reports that solar eclipses happen only occasionally. That's because the moon does not orbit in the exact same path as the sun and Earth.

Are all solar eclipses the same?

Not all solar eclipses are the same. When a solar eclipse occurs, it may be categorized as a total so-

lar eclipse, an annular solar eclipse, a partial solar eclipse, or a hybrid solar eclipse.

• Total solar eclipse: A total solar eclipse occurs when the moon passes between the sun and Earth and the face of the sun is completely blocked. According to NASA, the sky darkens during a total solar eclipse, just as if it is dawn or dusk. The outer atmosphere of the sun, also known as its corona, is typically invisible because the sun is so bright. However, the corona is visible during an eclipse.

• Annular solar eclipse: An annular solar eclipse happens when the moon passes between the sun and Earth when the moon is at or near its farthest point from the planet. That distance is why the moon does not completely cover the sun. NASA notes an annular solar eclipse makes the moon appear as a dark disk on top of a larger, bright disk. This creates the awe-inspiring impression that there is a ring around the moon.

• Partial solar eclipse: During a partial solar

eclipse, the moon passes between the sun and Earth at a time when all three are not perfectly lined up. NASA notes that the visual effect of this is that only part of the sun appears to be covered, giving it a crescent shape.

• Hybrid solar eclipse: As its name suggests, a hybrid solar eclipse features characteristics of two different types of eclipses. NASA notes that the curved surface of Earth helps to create a hybrid solar eclipse, during which a shift between annular and total eclipse occurs.

NASA urges all individuals who intend to witness this awe-inspiring phenomenon for themselves to wear eclipse glasses or to utilize an alternative safe solar viewing method, such as a pinhole projector. More information about solar eclipses and how to view them safely can be found at science.nasa.gov.

The next eclipse is projected to be in August 2026.

Second Chance Month marked with video series launch

The Virginia Department of Corrections is celebrating National Second Chance Month throughout April, highlighting former inmates and supervisees who have made a positive return to society.

Second Chance Month recognizes the importance of successful re-entry into the community. The VADOC provides evidence-based re-entry services to its inmates and supervisees through programs, educational services, and

many other re-entry resources.

This year, the VADOC launched a video series, "Second Chance Stories," allowing people to share their re-entry stories in their own words. These videos can be viewed on the VADOC's YouTube channel.

Additionally, the "Second Chance Stories" series will be made available for current inmates to watch and hear these uplifting re-entry stories.

"At the Virginia Department of Corrections, re-entry begins at sentencing," said VADOC Director Chad Dotson. "Virginia's consistently low recidivism rates demonstrate our commitment to evidence-based re-entry. We want everyone in our custody and under our supervision to make the best possible return to society."

"I urge the public to view the 'Second Chance Stories' video series," said VADOC Deputy Direc-

tor of Programs, Education, and Re-entry Scott Richeson. "These stories will inspire anyone who watches. We greatly appreciate all who took the time to tell their story. We hope it will resonate with current inmates on their own re-entry journeys."

The VADOC is also committed to second chance hiring. Two videos released in late 2023 discuss the second chance hiring process and the job application process.

LEGAL

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE - COUNTY OF HENRY, VA

FY 2024-25 SCHOOL BOARD BUDGET, TOTAL COUNTY BUDGET AND TAX LEVIES
Pursuant to Section 15.2-2506 of the Code of Virginia, a public hearing will be held on April 15, 2024 at 7:00 P.M. in the Summerlin Boardroom of the Henry County Administration Building, 3300 King's Mountain Rd, Collinsville, VA, to RECEIVE CITIZEN COMMENTS REGARDING THE CONTEMPLATED SCHOOL BOARD BUDGET AND THE TOTAL COUNTY BUDGET COLLECTIVELY TOTALING \$207,741,852, INCLUDING THE SETTING OF A REAL ESTATE TAX RATE OF NOT MORE THAN \$.555 PER \$100 ASSESSED VALUATION, SETTING A PERSONAL PROPERTY TAX RATE OF NOT MORE THAN \$1.55 PER \$100 ASSESSED VALUATION, and SETTING MACHINERY AND TOOLS TAX RATE OF NOT MORE \$1.55 PER \$100 ASSESSED VALUATION. Citizens may view the Proposed FY 2024-25 Budget on the County's website at www.henrycountyva.gov or the Henry County Administration building. The Board of Supervisors may consider any public input received prior to taking final action on the budget.

COUNTY OF HENRY, VIRGINIA SUMMARY OF REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES PROPOSED FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025

General Fund:	
General Property Taxes	\$ 34,927,854
Other Local Taxes	23,499,500
Permits, Fees & Licenses	84,000
Fines and Forfeitures	133,000
Revenue from Use of Property	3,294,500
Charges for Services	475,354
Miscellaneous Revenue	80,000
Recovered Cost	4,172,991
Non-Categorical Aid State	3,615,828
Shared Expenses (Categorical)	13,780,860
Categorical Aid State	111,083
Payments in Lieu of Taxes	4,000
Categorical Aid Federal	210,479
Non-Revenue Receipts	25,000
Reserve Funds	0
Total General Fund Revenue	\$ 84,414,449

Special Funds:	
Law Library	19,600
Central Dispatch	2,418,227
HCO/MTSV Industrial Site Project	0
Special Construction Grants	0
Industrial Development Authority	2,850,125
Children's Services Act	6,465,965
Marina	208,400
Self-Insurance Fund	14,538,800
Henry-Martinsville Social Services	11,222,203
School Fund	107,018,865
School Textbook	870,000
School Cafeteria	7,204,841
TOTAL, ALL BUDGETED REVENUES	\$ 237,231,475
Less: Interfund Transfers	(29,489,623)
NET REVENUES	\$ 207,741,852

EXPENDITURES

General Fund:	
General Government Administration	\$ 4,713,769
Judicial Administration	4,031,343
Public Safety	28,660,842
Public Works	5,126,205
Health and Welfare	979,966
Education	62,414
Parks, Recreation & Cultural	3,046,665
Community Development	2,693,765
Nondepartmental	580,296
Capital Projects	105,000
School Capital - 1% Sales Tax	5,500,000
Debt Service	241,952
Operating Transfers Out	28,672,232
Total General Fund Expenditures	\$ 84,414,449

Special Funds:	
Law Library	19,600
Central Dispatch	2,418,227
HCO/MTSV Industrial Site Project	0
Special Construction Grants	0
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TOTAL, ALL BUDGETED EXPENDITURES	\$ 237,231,475
Less: Interfund Transfers	(29,489,623)
NET EXPENDITURES	\$ 207,741,852

COUNTY OF HENRY, VIRGINIA CONTEMPLATED TAX LEVIES For Year Ending June 30, 2025

FY '22-'23 General Fund	Tax Levies (Per \$100 of assessed value)					
	Mobile Homes Real Estate	Other Personal Property	Machinery/Tools Business Equipment	Motor Vehicle License Fee	Cars	Motorcycles Trailers
General Fund Levy	\$0.555	\$1.55	\$1.55	\$20.75	\$12.00	\$12.00
Proposed FY '23-'24						
General Fund Levy	\$0.555	\$1.55	\$1.55	\$20.75	\$12.00	\$12.00

The effective reimbursement rate for the Personal Property Relief Act on a quality vehicle is 29.00%. The State Law requires that property be assessed at fair market value, which is defined for the purpose of motor vehicles as loan value and business equipment and machinery & tools as the following percentage of original cost:

Year 1	97%
Year 2	87%
Year 3	77%
Year 4	67%
Year 5 til Disposed	57%

Copies of the proposed budget are one file in the office of the County Administrator, King's Mountain Road, Collinsville, VA, on the website at www.henrycountyva.gov, and at Blue Ridge Regional Library in Martinsville, Bassett, Collinsville, and Ridgeway.

Dale Wagoner
County Administrator

HENRY COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD CONTEMPLATED BUDGET FOR YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2025

In compliance with Section 15.2-2503 of the 1950 Code of Virginia, as amended, the following budget synopsis is prepared and published for information and fiscal planning purposes only. The inclusion of any item in the budget does not constitute an obligation or commitment on the part of the Board of Supervisors to appropriate funds for the item or purpose. The budget has been prepared by the County Administrator based on estimates and requests to the Board of Supervisors from various agencies and County departments. Final approval and release of funds for any item is the responsibility of the Board of Supervisors.

Pursuant to Section 15.2-2506 of the 1950 Code of Virginia, as amended, a public hearing will be held by the Board of Supervisors on the school budget to receive citizen comments and suggestions on April 15th at 7:00 P.M. in the Summerlin Meeting Room of the Henry County Administration Building on King's Mountain Road in Collinsville, Virginia. All citizens are invited to attend and offer any comments or suggestions. The Board of Supervisors will consider any public input received prior to taking final action on the budget.

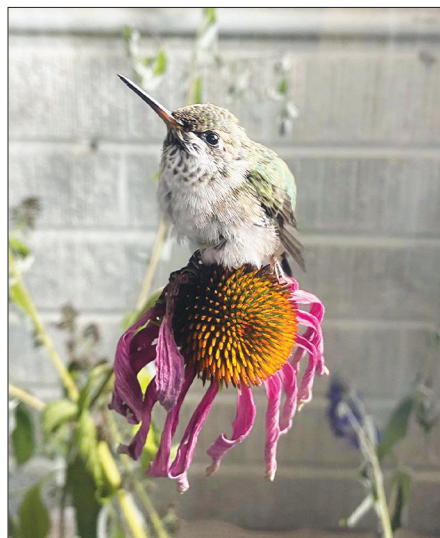
Proposed FY 2024-2025 School Budget

Revenues:	
State Funds	\$ 72,670,916
County Funds	21,635,583
Federal / State Grants	11,000,000
Other Funds	1,712,366
Total Revenues	\$ 107,018,865
Expenditures:	
Instruction	\$ 67,548,227
Administration/Attendance and Health	4,984,493
Transportation	8,696,918
Operation & Maintenance	8,671,064
Facilities	1,400,000
Debt Service/Transfers	3,467,747
Technology	3,552,450
Federal / State Grants	11,000,000
Contingency Reserves	50,000
Less Reduction in Requested Local Funds	(2,352,034)
Total Expenditures	\$ 107,018,865

Copies of the proposed budget are on file in the office of the County Administrator, King's Mountain Road, Collinsville, Virginia, on the Henry County website, www.henrycountyva.gov, and at Blue Ridge Regional Library in Martinsville, Bassett, Collinsville, and Ridgeway.

Dale Wagoner
County Administrator

Wildlife center says hummingbirds are on the way



Hummingbirds that have been cared for by staff at the Southwest Virginia Wildlife Center of Roanoke.

Hummingbird migration is underway, and they'll be coming

LEGAL

ABC NOTICE

Shri Santram Inc trading as Meadowgreen Market, 9531 Virginia Ave, Bassett, VA 24055.

The above establishment is applying to the VIRGINIA ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) AUTHORITY for a Beer and Wine - Off Premises Retail License to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages.

Chiragkumar Patel, Owner
NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 days from the publishing date of the first of two required newspaper legal notices. Objections should be registered at www.abc.virginia.gov or (800) 552-3200.

to feeders in our area soon, according to the Southwest Virginia Wildlife Center of Roanoke.

These amazing birds will expend an extraordinary amount of time and energy to get here. Some will fly all the way across the Gulf of Mexico in one flight. Of the 350 different species of hummingbirds, the United States is only home to 15 breeding species. The most common in our area is the Ruby-throated Hummingbird. If you're really

lucky, you might get a glimpse of a seldom seen Rufous or an Allen's Hummingbird. Although not common in this area, they are sometimes blown off their migratory routes giving local birders a rare treat.

Below are some important guidelines for hummingbird feeder maintenance:

-Clean feeders every 3-5 days with a mixture of 1 part bleach to 10 parts water; be sure to clean the inside thoroughly too.

-The proper water to sugar ratio is 1/4 cup of sugar to 1 cup of water. Bring the solution to a boil and then let it cool before setting out. Leftover sugar water can be refrigerated for up to a week.

-Dirty feeders can develop a fungus that causes a hummingbird's tongue to swell which prevents them from being able to withdraw their tongue. This condition called, Hummers Candidiasis, means they can't eat, and they will slowly starve to death.

-DO NOT use dyes, honey, molasses, or raw sugar. If the syrup looks cloudy after being stored for a long time, do not use it.

-Avoid placing the feeder in direct sunlight as this will make the water go bad even faster.

The center is a non-profit which relies on donations to continue our mission. In 2023, it admitted 2,752 wildlife patients and has seen more than 260 species in our 20 year history. To donate, visit <https://swva.wildlifecenter.org/make-a-donation/>.

LEGAL

Notice of Public Hearing

A public hearing for the City of Martinsville Planning Commission will be held on April 17, 2024, at 4:00 p.m. in Council Chambers at the City of Martinsville Municipal Building located at 55 W. Church Street, Martinsville, VA 24112, for those parties in interest to the following request:

APPLICATION for SPECIAL USE PERMIT - Application of Tony Williams, Applicant and Owner, requesting a Special Use Permit with possible conditions, to allow for a live-work residence on property located at 1048 Independence Drive and currently zoned R-C, City Residential District. Live-work residences are permitted uses in R-C zoning districts by issuance of a Special Use Permit by Martinsville City Council.

Any comments or questions can be directed to Hannah Powell, Community Development Specialist, at (276) 403-5156 or hpowell@ci.martinsville.va.us
Notice Submitte By:
Hannah L. Powell, CZA
Community Development Specialist

LEGAL

COUNTY OF HENRY REZONING PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Pursuant to Section 15.2-2204 of the Code of Virginia, a series of public hearings has been scheduled for **April 10, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.** in the Summerlin Meeting Room of the County Administration Building, Kings Mountain Rd, Collinsville, Virginia. Following these public hearings, the Planning Commission will make a recommendation on the applications to the Board of Supervisors.

The Henry County Board of Supervisors will conduct public hearings on the following applications on **April 23, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.** in the Summerlin Meeting Room of the County Administration Building, Kings Mountain Rd, Collinsville, Virginia.

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

Case R-24-05 Janice M. Crowe

The property is located at 109 Mapleridge Rd, in the Blackberry District, and shown on Tax Map 25.1/84,84D. The applicant is requesting the rezoning of 2 lots, totaling approximately 1.68-acres from Suburban Residential District S-R to Mixed Residential District M-R. The applicant wishes to place a double wide manufactured home on the property.

Case R-24-06 Danny Kendrick

The property is located at 1181 Boxwood Ln, in the Blackberry District. The property is shown on Tax Map number 25.4/72,73A. The applicant is requesting the rezoning of 2 lots, totaling approximately 0.344-acres from Suburban Residential District S-R to Rural Residential District R-R. The applicant wishes to place a manufactured home on the property.

Case R-24-07 Ernest Carter (Carver Memorial Gardens)

The property is located in the north east corner of the intersection of Carver Rd and Parkway Dr, in the Horsepasture District. The property is shown on Tax Map number 40.8(49)/B. The applicant is requesting the rezoning of approximately 0.366-acres from Suburban Residential District S-R to Commercial District B-1. The applicant wishes to place an office on the property.

Case R-24-08 Randy Allen Smith

The property is located on the south west side of Lee Ford Camp Rd, approximately 1 mile west of Greensboro Rd, and across from the address of 1094 Lee Ford Camp Rd. The property is in the Ridgeway District and is shown on Tax Map number 71.3(1)/38-48. The applicant is requesting the rezoning of approximately 6-acres from Suburban Residential District S-R to Agricultural District A-1. The applicant will combine this property with the adjoining property, to create a 54 acre tract. The intention is to apply for the required Special Use Permit to develop a campground.

Case R-24-09 Kenneth R. Patterson

The property is located on the south side of Irisburg Rd, between Patrick Henry Ave and Independence Dr, in the Iriswood District. The property is shown on Tax Map 53.5(8)/1E. The applicant is requesting the rezoning of approximately 0.989-acres from Suburban Residential District S-R to Mixed Residential District M-R. The applicant wishes to sell the property for the placement of a double wide manufactured home. The applications for these requests may be viewed in the Department of Planning, Zoning & Inspection between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.
Lee H. Clark, AICP
Director of Planning, Zoning & Inspection

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

Martinsville school students recognized in third nine weeks

Albert Harris Elementary

3rd Grade Principal's List

Connor Brecht, Kaleb Burgess, Markai Durham, Julio Gonzalez, Sam Hairston, Grayson Hawks, Carmela Nakhle, Nathan Santana, Abby Santiago, Ka'Myrah Stockton, Oscar Telles, Mackenzie Tellez, Callie Torres.

3rd Grade Honor Roll

Cherish Calloway, Heaven Dillard, Hayden Elliott, Timothy Giles Jr., Jakatilyn Grant, Josiah Harris, Tiffani Hernandez, Miyana Hunt, Kacie Hylton, Litzi Lopez, Tayion Martin, Dennis Moore, Paris Richardson, Daniel Soto Mata, Maliyah Sessions, Myles Stockton, Willie Walker, Elijah Woody.

4th Grade Principal's List

London Bervine, Miriam Carter, Semaiya Craighead, Nevaeh Daniels, Kyndall Gravely, Sofia Marcial Rania Womack.

4th Grade Honor Roll

Micah Barton, Sariah Kelly, Amara Hemphill, Adorian Hodge, Na'Layah Martin, Antonella Rodrigues, Jayce Stockton, Derontae Turner, Taevon Turner.

5th Grade Principal's List

Jackson Branch, Fernando Carrillo, Victor Dominguez-Machuca, Kendrick Floyd, Jaidence Hairston, Arie Lewis, Leonel Reyes, Nylah Kay Scott, DeCoyia Smith, Yetzael Ramos-Tellez.

5th Grade Honor Roll

Harmony Coles, Maccabeus Daniels, Hayilaa Hairston, Jasmine Hairston, Aria Lewis, Shaurya Mahjan, Khamari McRae, Christian Millner, Mariah Mose, Yahya Rodriguez.

Patrick Henry Elementary

3rd Grade Principal's List

Emilia Blankenbaker, Allison Chavez-Dominguez, Adrielle Dickerson, Aalaysia Dillard, Gabriella Gravely, Aiden Kirby, Allan Meyers, Amreen Narula, DaMari Perkins, Emmanuel Ray, Espen Troncoso, Paris Turner, Jade Venable, Ashton Wells, Kaidance Williamson.

3rd Grade Honor Roll

Ashley Bayoumy, Jeremiah Hairston, Matthew Hernandez-Sanchez, Brantley Janey, Serenity King, Sebastian LaPrade, Dantonio Penn, Solomon Ray, Jacob Ratliff, Matteo Rodriguez, Geoffrey Ruschak, Keri Scales.

4th Grade Principal's List

Winter Bethany, Aiden Boaz, Adelaide Brent, Aubree Carter, O'Derion DeShazo, Amyrah Dillard, Kavany Flores, Holden Hylton, Aubrey Kirby, Adelyn McKenzie, Shania McPherson, Mercy Moore, Phoenix Moore, Christian Newsome, Sophia Odberg, Aiden Richardson, Daniel Robinson, Margot Sharp, Emery Taylor, Hailey Turner, Soulionia Walker, Wesley Walker.

4th Grade Honor Roll

Elena Alvarez-Lozano, Brazen Bradner, Zefrina Capulong, Kenyon Jones, Dawayne Lawson, Jayona Moore, Jesmari Morales, Khwaja Sediqi, Lilyann Stallard, Emmie Steward, Aubrey Stone, Lillian Torres, Naryah Williams, Lillith Wilson.

5th Grade Principal's List

Abbas Bayani, Remington Crockett, Archer Deatherage, Lily DeJesus, Brooklyn DeShazo, Andrew Dillard, Deontre Fitzgerald, Jade Holland-Dallas, Wyatt Hoyer, Ayden Jones, Josiah Law, J'Amira Lockett, Kennedy Martin, Taylor Moore, Virgil Moore, Samuel Olivares-Rosas, Asma Sediqi, Katherine Wall, Dillon Wilson, Mason Wright.

5th Grade Honor Roll

Takeria Beal, Demetri Broadnax, Tamare Davis, Mi'Kayla Eccles, Alania Ferguson, Alanna Gerlach, Jadyn Gravely, Ka'Naisia Hairston, Justin Hodge, Aubree Mahan, JaZai Moore, Jycere Moorman, Kei'Yauni Morrison, Kendrick Moyer, King Ray, Bradley Richardson, Eli Rueda Balcazar, Kaydien Valentin.

Martinsville Middle School

6th Grade Principal's List

Zariyah Bouldin, Janette Carillo-Llamas, Elaina Hairston, Jairo Mata, Daniya Penn.

6th Grade Honor Roll

Kevin Avila-Santiago, Alan Carrillo-Tamayo, Ethan Christopher, Reginald Cobbs, Litzy Contreras Rosas, Jeffery Cousins, Skyla Euceda, Layce Everhart, D'annah Fitzgerald, James Hall, Jewel-Armani Martin, Freddy Munoz, Quandel Richards, Kyla Steward, Akaysha Thompson, Ma'Kiya Walton, Lamerius Woods.

6th Grade Counselor's List

Mickeal Belcher, G'yanni Benitez, Gannon Blackwell, Cassidy Boden, Mariyah Brandon, TKari Breedlove, Jaydah Burnette, Hailey Coleman, Ja'Veona Coles, Damarion Davis, Princeton Dillard, Maia Eccles, Janae Eggleston, Dania Fields, Nina Giles, Appalania Gravely, Jaymi Henriquez Ramos, Alondra Hernandez Hernandez, Luis Hernandez, Kaylee Hightower, Asonti Hodge, Fredy Jimenez Romero, Kamira Johnson, Shanyia Kelly, Sara Lopez Reyes, Taimir Manns, Amare Martin, Issac McIntosh, Eduin Mendoza Sanchez, Lixmar Mendoza, Tonydia Millner-Moore, Allison Mooney, Gabriel Morton, Zaylee Myers-Wells, Imani Newsome, Isabella Palmer, Bryson Penn, Kyra Penn, Zion Powell, Kendall Price, Joanneliz Reyes Dennis, Ny'Asia Richardson, Selena Stultz, Jordyn Thomas, Elijah Wertz, Maya Williams, Michelle Yanes-Videoa.

7th Grade Principal's List

Joshua Branch, Bridgette Brent, Olivia Campbell, Christopher Carpio Yanez, Nadia Dominguez Gonzalez, Marisol Garcia-Macias, Renisha Millner, Hazel Moore, Ana Nunez-Torres, America Ramos Tellez, Samson Ray, Adreal Stultz.

7th Grade Honor Roll

Tylyric Barbour, Edward Brown, Kayleigh Cristobal, Jahvion Dawson, Ty'Layah Dillard, Keira Frazier, Zoey Hannans, Zachary Harter, Kirsten Henderson, Zanaysia Jones, Nathaly Morales, KaVaughn Muse, Jeremiah Porter, London Preston, Ja'nasiah Richardson, Ayden Roberts, Maheva Simon, Dayanna Torres-Jose, Jasaan Turner, Kailyn Venable, Arianna Ybarra.

7th Grade Counselor's List

Emely Amaya Turcios, Zyad Bayoumy, Christian Branch, Kaleb Briscoe, Jeysson Cabrera Guillen, Harmoni Carter, Maliyah Carter, Mahcori Chapman, Anthony Chavez Dominguez, Mackenzie Church, Fabian Devora Guerrero, Zamauri Durant, Na'Ziah Flemming, Kaleb Floyd, TaLeah Giles, Marcus Hairston Jr., Dre'dyn Hairston, Kendra Handy, Amelia Humphrey, Rachiyah Hunt, Kamarii Johnson Clark, Anthony Kinder, Isaias Lopez Valentin, Jayren Marchorro-Macias, NyJurrian Martin, Zy'Jerryah Martin, Amarriyah Matthews, Yarel Mendoza-Martinez, KaMoriya Moore, Mason Newsome, Ayane' Pharr, Josiah Porter, Aurora Rankin, Diairion Turner, Nathaniel Villasenor, Malik Waller, NyShawn Walton, Nevaeh Wilson, Nathaniel Yarbrough.

8th Grade Principal's List

William Bela, Jaryus Brim, Abbigail Campbell, Brennan Coleman, Kira Compton, Cordell Daniels, Keyara Dillard, Christopher Floyd, Ny'Kerion France, Hudson Grant, Leeayla Hairston, Benjamin Haley, McKenna Mahan, Abraham Michael, Aileen Nolasco, Zion Perkins, Camarion Plunkett, Erzart Shahini, Veronica Smith, Symphony Talley, Zaina Talley, Ja'Corian Turner, Lilly Wall, William Wall, Paris Waller, Addison Williamson, Noah Wright.

8th Grade Honor Roll

David Argueta, Cristofer Avila-Santiago, Eland Blankenbaker, Zhedrick Capulong, Chanity Chism, J'Kobe Covington, Kyisere Eggleston, Ja'Da Eggleston-Wade, Jayden Farris, D'Anna Fields, Brandon Gearheart, Leonardo Hernandez Mata, Aubrey Hill, Jonathan Hudson, Isabella Hurd, Demetria Johns, NyKira Johnson, Faith Pack, Kaden Paitzel, Jayden Penn, Colby Robertson, Xavier Rodriguez, Phyllis Thompson.

8th Grade Counselor's List

Mekhi Akins, Walter Amador Rios, Latoya Bradner, Keimani Brandyburg, Maine Brown, Carson Cole, JKyah Daniel, Nicholas Davis, Tahli Draper, Harmony Galloway, Harmoni Hairston, Jayvion Harris, Tatyana Holland, Navaih Hood, Timiyah Jones, Jamir Leftwich, Trinity Martin, Niema Merritt, Rickia Smith, Viet Vo, A'Vari Waller, Baisley White, Gabrielle Wilson.

Martinsville High School

9th Grade A

Kyndall Benton, Kayra Carr, Fernanda Dominguez-Machuca, Angeliah Eccles, Carrie Hudson, Aniyah Millner, Jazmin Mota-Ocampo, Julie Nguyen, Ariyana Nowlin, Jaden Porter, Jayce Prillaman, Trinitee Prunty, Dulce Romero-Jimenez, Tyrese Smith, JaVonna Stubblefield, NaSir Turner, Karter Winbush.

9th Grade AB

Jaden Ayoub, Elijah Betts, Serenity Bradshaw, Kavia Brim, Qa'Sani Calhoun-Davis, Jose Coca Romero, Sherman Dillard, Sarah Greene, Abigail Hairston, MyKiya Hairston,

Ky'Asia Keen, Sariah Little, Caden Martin, Gabriella Michael, Sariah Millner, Jonathan Nordin, Erikka Ortiz-Soriano, Nickolas Prewitt, Yaretzy Ramos Telles, Joshua Redd, Briana Reid, Amyah Richardson, Logan Richardson, Aaron Scott, Betty Sifuentes, Isaiah Stone, Emauri Tinsley, Caleb Valentine, Maria Velasquez-Zaldivar, Jamauri Williams.

9th Grade B

Ta'Mireya Campbell, Madisson Cortes, Crystal Gravely, Kamare Gravely, Kyniah Hairston, Tyneah Harrell, Randy Hernandez, Ja'Niyah Kellam, Jorge Lara-Diaz, De'Mari Martin, Caish Moyer, Benjamin Pickett, Jamarius Pritchett, My'Nique Scott, Desmond Snyder, Tristen Williams.

10th Grade A

Quentin Chism, Sincere Cook, Gabriel Davis, Chekiya Galloway, Layla Garrett, Abigail Hernandez, Kimora Holland, Aerran Kellam, Beyonce Lara Diaz, Gregory Moore, Jun Olea, Evan Pickett, Kaitlin Pulliam, Jailyn Reynolds, Avianna Watkins.

10th Grade AB

Jemea Craghead, Kamori Dillard, Zaniah Dillard, Caesar Draper, TyShawn Hairston, JMarion Harper, Ja'Kayla Harris, Melody Harris, De'Nyiran Hodge, Nyasia Long, Nyla Merchant-Williams, Camarie Niblett, Michael Parker, Linda Pulliam, Jared Santiago-Martinez, Tanaisa Walker, Kaira Womack.

10th Grade B

Anthoine Adams, Jamari Baker, Aubrey Blankenbaker, DeJuan Bradner, Kymani Brim, Shatavia Dillard, Nataly Enriquez-Santiago, KaNyah Giggetts, Ny'Asia Hood, Jahriane Jones, Shawn Joyce, KaMya Keen, Michael Kirby, Myasia Long, Yoshikoe Moyer, Morgan Niblett, Daisia Salda, Tamarion Siddle, Caroline Snyder, Jayden Stockton, Rilynne Williams.

11th Grade A

Adam Aguilar, Naun Andrade Paredes, Montel Bradner, Esmeralda Castillo-Ocampo, Natalie Dunagan, Ava Grant, Abigail Haskew, Deniyah Hightower, Isabella Hood, Kamryn Kirby, Zoe Lewis, Gavin Luther, Alondra Machuca Tiznado, Monserrat Machuca Tiznado, Skyla Martin, NaBria Millner, Yash Patel, Jaylen Solomon, Kaya Yates.

11th Grade AB

Yuvika Alvarez, Elvin Amaya Turcios, Jaydin Ayers, Yadira Carrillo Tamayo, Keara Carter, Gabriella Chilton, Ana Compton, Hayden Cundiff, Sontrell Daniels, Destinie Dillard, Elijah Dixon, Kassidy Dodson, Xavier Dunham, Jaquarius Gallant, Cameron Giles, Kaya Gravely, Aliyah Hairston, Ventson Kent, Taniyah Leftwich, Ashley Lintag, Leon Martin Jr., Sania Martin, Skyylar Miller, Rickyah Mitchell-Hairston, John Nguyen, Jacey Pamintuan, Naikem Penn, Jamerica Phillips, Terriah Roberts, Natalie Rodriguez, Destiny Salda, Jariyah Smith, Antione Swanson, Christopher Thacker, Isabella Vega, Jayden Williams.

11th Grade B

Anne Agee, Christian Brooks, Caleb Burgess, NaDasia Cobbs, Ny'Asia Cobbs, Ruby Flores, Aidan Hood, Ny'Qeriyah Kellam, Laimen Lowe, Aziah Martin, Honesty Martin, ANyshia Matthews, Connor Mosley, Asonti Price, Elisa Rodriguez, Mary Smith, Brooke Turner, Noah Young.

12th Grade A

Kirsten Blankenbaker, Shamiyah Carter, Johnny Clerc, Robert Davis, Niikko Dews, JKyan Finney, Briana Garcia-Macias, Trevion Gravely, Jaccob Hairston, Latrell Hairston, Gabriel Haley, Makenzie Hylton, Caleb Joyce, Suilma Navarrette Saligan, Nevaeh Norman, Cortay Price, Skyler Spence, William Stanley, Aniya Torrence, Jordan Vaughn, Jackson Via, Jayden Williams, Sariah Woods.

12th Grade AB

NyQuis Bradley, Tyler Carr, Kaitlynn Daughtry, Ryan DiMingo, Tiquasia Dodson Waller, NyAsia Drummond, Cheyenne Eldridge, Paris Fulp, Aleeyah Galloway, Sarrah Hoff, Khionna Howard-Hamilton, LynAsshia King, Marcus Long, Natalie Loreda, Mallori Lowe, Luke Luffman, Zikya Mills, Aaliyyah Mitchell, Adam Mounkaila, Fonshay Moyer, Martiniano Orozco, Nayti Patel, Elijah Pickett, Aubrey Price, John Ratliff II, Kaylee Rea, Mason Rorrer, Jordan Smith, Christopher Talley II, Emarius Tinsley, Tyra Valentine, Monica Watkins, Malachi Williams, Whitney Williams, Destiny Witcher, Reagan Wright.

12th Grade B

Isaiah Brimmer, Jaiana Brinson, Ma'layah Brown, Jaida Carter, Daniel Prewitt, Makayla Warren.

THANK YOU FOR READING
HENRY COUNTY ENTERPRISE

Calling all local artists: submit your work to Expressions 2024

Are you a visual artist in Martinsville, Henry County, or a surrounding area? If so, you are invited to enter your work into Expressions, an art show hosted by Piedmont Arts and the Lynwood Artists. This annual showcase will be on display at Piedmont Arts from June 1-July 26. All artworks must be submitted on Saturday, May 18 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the Piedmont Arts galleries. No early or late entries will be accepted. A reception and award ceremony will be held on Friday, May 31 at 5:30 p.m.

Unlike a juried exhibition, Expressions is open-entry, and all submitted works in compliance with the entry rules are accepted. Up to two pieces of art may be submitted per artist. All artwork submitted must have been completed within the last three years and should not be artwork previously submitted to Expressions. This exhibit is open to anyone within a 100-mile radius of Piedmont Arts, including high school students in grades 9-12. Last year, more than 100 artists of all ages submitted their work to be displayed.

Cash prizes will be awarded for first, second, and third



Artists pose with their first place win at a past Expressions showcase.

place in all mediums. Other awards include the People's Choice, the Lynwood Artists Award, and Best in Show. This year, Jennifer Reis, artist and Assistant Professor of Arts Administration at the University of North Carolina Greensboro will serve as judge for the showcase.

Official rules, forms, and additional information can be found on PiedmontArts.org.

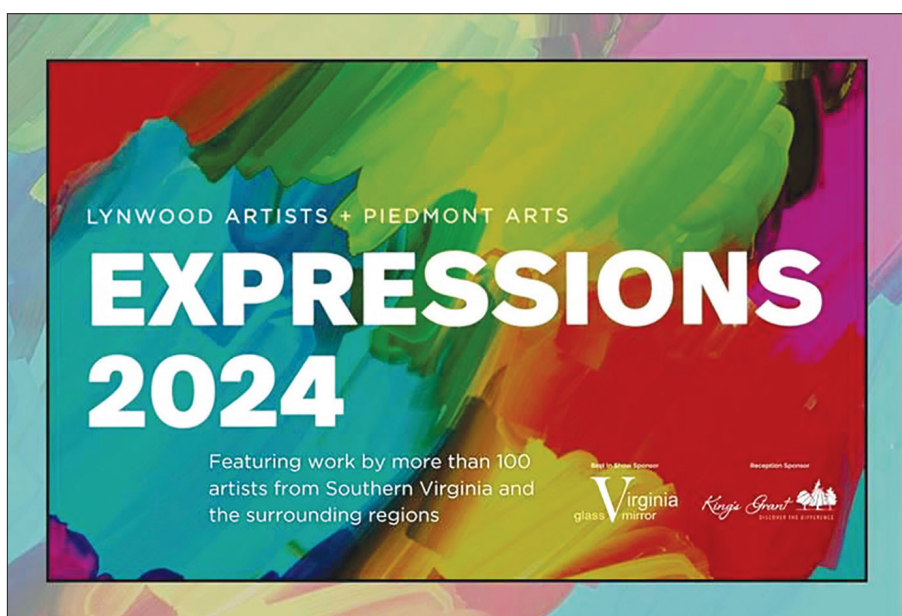
Piedmont Arts is a nonprofit art museum in Martinsville. Museum hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Admission is free. Learn more at PiedmontArts.org.



A work by Ashley Ullstein on display in Expressions.



Awards with cash prizes are given out at the annual Expressions exhibit opening.



Lineup announced for this year's Sounds on the Square



Sounds on the Square events from 2023.



John Phillips



Bill Kirby

The Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society announced its line-up for the 2024 season of Sounds on the Square:

- May 3, Andy Burnette Trio
- June 7, Barefoot Modern
- July 5, The League of Ordinary Gentlemen
- August 2, Forrest Taylor
- September 6, The Ghosts of Liberty
- September 13, "Line-Dancing on the Square" with Sue Ann Ehmann
- October 4, Andy Burnette Trio

Sounds on the Square, Uptown Martinsville's premier music concert series, is held on the first Friday of each month, May through October, on the Plaza of the Historic Henry County Courthouse, 1 East Main Street. Each night begins at 7 p.m. and concludes at 10 p.m.

Beginning at 6 p.m., Scuffle Hill Brewing Company will sell craft beers, and at least one food truck will be present.

Admission is free courtesy of sponsors Carter Bank & Trust, Children First Pediatrics, Deskins, Inc., The Estate & Elder Law Center of Southside Virginia, Hooker Furnishings, The Lester Group, New College

Institute, Sarver Cleaning Services, and Scuffle Hill Brewing Company.

Started in 2021, Sounds on the Square is a Family Friendly Festival finalist in the Best of the Blue Ridge 2024.

"Sounds on the Square revives the historical significance of courthouses serving as places to gather socially," said John Phillips, president, Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society. "The Historical Society proudly offers this community outreach as a means of sharing a local landmark, the Historic Henry County Courthouse with friends and neighbors from near and far, especially this year as we celebrate its 200th birthday."

"Martinsville benefits greatly from Sounds on the Square, as it brings people together to celebrate local musical talent and promotes a sense of unity in the community," Bill Kirby, Commercial Market Manager, Carter Bank & Trust, said. "At Carter Bank, we've been committed to supporting programs like Sounds on the Square for 50 years, as we believe showcasing the arts brings people together and strengthens our communities."

P&HCC Board elects new leaders

The Patrick & Henry Community College Board has elected Jewell Drewery, of Martinsville, as its chairman and Tim Stone, of Henry County, as its vice chairman.

"I am deeply grateful to both Ms. Drewery and Mr. Stone for their willingness to serve in these critical leadership roles with the P&HCC local board. These are very exciting times for Patrick & Henry Community College, and our board chair and vice board chair possess critical experience and expertise that will be invaluable to assist us as we continue to serve our community," said Dr. Greg Hodges, P&HCC president. Drewery, a graduate of Mar-

tinsville High School and Hampton University, has served on the P&HCC Board since January 2022 and is the chairperson of the Legislative committee and of the Executive committee of the Board. She is an agent with Rives S. Brown Realtors in Martinsville, VA.

Stone, a graduate of Bassett High School, P&HCC and Virginia Tech, has served on the P&HCC Board since November 2022 and is a member of the Facilities committee and the Executive committee of the Board. He is a real estate appraiser with Stone Real Estate Appraisal Service in Bassett, VA.



Jewell Drewery



Tim Stone

Advocates urge VA governor to sign prescription-drug affordability bill

Edwin J. Viera

Virginia News Connection

With the approval of the Virginia General Assembly, a bill reducing prescription drug prices is sitting on Gov. Glenn Youngkin's desk.

The bill establishes a prescription drug affordability board as an independent body evaluating drug price increases. A drug manufacturer can state its case for the cost increase before the board. But, if the increase is unfounded, the board could set a price on the drug for all Virginians to pay.

Jared Calfee, state advocacy director for AARP Virginia, said it is a first step, but there is no silver bullet to curb high prescription drug costs.

"This board would be looking to set an upper payment limit for up to 12 drugs," Calfee explained. "We're not going to completely solve the problem of prescription drug affordability overnight but



it would make a real difference in the lives of a lot of people. And so, this is a first step and there are certainly going to be more things to do, more things to take a look at."

Drug companies have pushed back, saying the law will discourage research and development, or reduce access to medicine. But Vir-

ginians across party lines and age groups support drug affordability. Should the bill pass, Virginia would be the tenth state where prescription drug prices undergo an affordability review.

The real-world impacts the bill will have will vary from person to person and drug to drug.

Mara Shapiro is a patient ad-

vocate with Crohn's disease. Her medication, Stelara, costs more than \$20,000 per dose, but she's on a copay assistance program to help offset the cost. Maintaining the program can be laborious and poor transparency can cause Shapiro delays in getting her medicine.

"It's just an unnecessary stressor or burden to already having multiple life-threatening chronic health conditions," Shapiro pointed out. "It's just frustrating that the cost for this one medication is so astronomically high that it makes it so much more difficult for me to obtain the medication every month."

AARP data showed the prices for the top 25 Medicare Part D drugs tripled since they were introduced, including Stelara. Since going to market in 2009, the drug's price shot up 184%. If it was on the same track as the Consumer Price Index, it would have only increased 41% by 2023.

Appalachian Power seeks rate increase in rate review application If approved, the estimated \$10 per month rate increase would take effect in January

Appalachian Power's biennial rate review application filed last week with the Virginia State Corporation Commission (SCC) includes the base rates necessary for the utility to continue to provide safe and reliable electricity for its customers.

The company must file every two years for a base rate review under state law enacted last year. This is the utility's first application under the new state law, which required the company to make its initial filing in 2024.

Reviews are an opportunity for the SCC to examine the company's financial and operational performance, and any request to modify base rates for service.

The SCC conducted its last review of Appalachian Power's rates and earnings in 2023. In the application filed last week, the company requests

to increase revenues by approximately \$95 million, or 5.1 percent.

"We recognize these are challenging financial times and no one wants to experience rising electric bills," said Aaron Walker, president and chief operating officer of Appalachian Power. "Our customers need safe and reliable service, and we work hard to meet those expectations while keeping costs as low as possible."

Appalachian Power's rates are regulated by the Virginia SCC. In its application, the company outlined the factors that contributed to its request to modify rates. These include cost recovery for restoring service during major storms, increases in capital, material and labor costs, and rising interest rates. The application also fully incorporates the costs associated with the company's SCC-approved vegetation management program to

improve service reliability for customers in areas prone to tree-related outages.

"As demand for electricity increases, we owe it to our customers to make our energy supply more reliable," said Walker. "We know trees are the number one cause of outages. With our newly approved program, we'll be able to enhance our efforts to prevent and reduce the duration of outages in areas that have experienced the most service interruptions."

Appalachian Power has approximately 540,000 customers in southwest, central and southside Virginia. The proposed increase will vary depending on customer class and usage. If approved as requested, residential customers using 1,000 kilowatt hours (kWh) a month will see a net increase in their monthly bill of approximately \$10.

Any increase approved by the SCC will not take effect until January 2025.

Appalachian Power has 1 million customers in Virginia, West Virginia and Tennessee (as AEP Appalachian Power). It is part of American Electric Power, which is focused on building a smarter energy infrastructure and delivering new technologies and custom energy solutions. AEP's approximately 17,000 employees operate and maintain the nation's largest electricity transmission system and more than 225,000 miles of distribution lines to efficiently deliver safe, reliable power to nearly 5.6 million customers in 11 states. AEP is also one of the nation's largest electricity producers with nearly 29,000 megawatts of diverse generating capacity, including approximately 6,100 megawatts of renewable energy.

Enrollment in VA health care increases more than 46.04

The Department of Veterans Affairs has enrolled 20,537 Virginia Veterans in VA health care over the past 365 days, which represents 46.04 percent more than it enrolled the previous year. Nationally, VA enrolled 401,006 Veterans in VA health care over the past 365 days – 30 percent more than the 307,831 it enrolled the previous year. This is the most yearly enrollees in at least five years at VA, and nearly a 50 percent increase over pandemic-level enrollment in 2020.

This historic enrollment has been made possible by the PACT Act, which has allowed VA to expand VA health care and benefits to millions of Veterans. VA is also conducting the most aggressive outreach campaign in its history, including hosting over 2,600 events since the passage of the PACT Act, launching a \$16+ million advertising campaign, using public service announcements, and – for the first time ever – sending text messages to Veterans encouraging them to enroll in VA health care. VA is continuing these aggressive outreach efforts throughout 2024, with more than 550 in-person events already scheduled for this year.

Enrolling Veterans in health care is a top priority for VA and the Biden-Harris Administration because VA has proven to be the best care in America for Veterans who receive VA health care have better health outcomes than non-enrolled Veterans, and VA hospitals have dramatically outperformed non-VA hospitals in overall quality ratings and patient satisfaction ratings. Additionally, VA health care is often more affordable than non-VA health care for Veterans. In total, VA is currently delivering more care and more benefits to more Veterans than ever before in our nation's history, setting an all-time record for health care appointments provided in 2023.

"We want every eligible Veteran to enroll in VA health care for one simple reason: Veterans who come to VA are proven to have better health outcomes – and pay less – than Veterans who don't," said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. "That's why we've spent the past year meeting Veterans where they are – hosting thousands of events, sending millions of texts, advertising on every corner, and much more – to get them to come to VA. This aggressive outreach campaign has led more Veterans to enroll in VA care than during any year in at least a decade, and

we're not slowing down now."

"VA is the best, most affordable care in America for Veterans, so we want all eligible Veterans to enroll today," said VA Under Secretary for Health Shereef Elnahal, M.D. "Our clinicians know Veterans – they often are Veterans – and they know exactly how to help. Even if you don't need this care today, you might need it tomorrow, or the next day, or 30 years from now. It's quick and easy to apply, and once you're in, you have access for life."

VA recently expanded health care eligibility for millions of veterans nationwide, years earlier than called for by the PACT Act. As of March 5, all Veterans who were exposed to toxins and other hazards while serving in the military and meet certain requirements became eligible to enroll directly in VA health care. This means that all Veterans who served in the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Global War on Terror, or any other combat zone after 9/11 will be eligible to enroll directly in VA health care without first applying for VA benefits. Additionally, Veterans who never deployed but were exposed to toxins or hazards while training or on active duty in the United States will also be eligible to enroll. VA also recently expanded health care to all World War II Veterans.

VA is able to serve these new enrollees, in part, due to last year's record hiring in VA's Veterans Health Administration. Last year, we exceeded our hiring goals in the Veterans Health Administration – growing at the fastest rate in 15 years and bringing in more than 61,000 new hires – to prepare for an increase in VA health care enrollment among Veterans under the PACT Act. In total, VHA now has more employees than ever before in its history, and retention efforts also led to a 20 percent decrease in turnover rate among VHA employees from 2022 to 2023.

Moving forward, VA will continue to aggressively reach out to veterans to encourage them to come to VA. VA encourages all Veterans, family members, caregivers, and survivors to learn more about VA and apply for their world-class health care and earned benefits today.

For more information about VA care, visit VA's health care website. For more information about the impact of the PACT Act, visit VA's PACT Act dashboard.

Gardening offers more than a day in the sun

Millions of people embrace opportunities to get back in their gardens each spring, and they might be reaping more rewards from that activity than they realize. According to the American Institute of Stress, gardening sparks a level of creativity among enthusiasts, and that can help to alle-

viate stress by lowering levels of the hormone cortisol. In addition, authors of a 2022 study published in the journal *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening* concluded that gardening during the COVID-19 pandemic helped people cope with coronavirus-related stress through outdoor activity.

Kansas Man Pleads Guilty to Exploitation of Lynchburg Teen

Andrew Kent, 22, a.k.a. "Leo" and "JeffThePumpkin," from Manhattan, Kansas, pleaded guilty in federal court to one count of sexual exploitation of children. At sentencing, Kent faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 15 years in prison and a statutory maximum sentence of 30 years.

"This case demonstrates the importance of knowing not only what your children are doing online, but also with whom they are communicating," U.S. Attorney Christopher R. Kavanaugh said. "There are dangerous people on the Internet who specifically target children. We will use every tool we have to find those people and bring them to justice, but parents also perform a critical part in educating and monitoring their children's online activity."

"Pursuing justice for victims of child exploitation is one of our highest priorities." Special Agent in Charge Stanley M. Meador of the FBI's Richmond Division said. "We will continue to work with our partners to investigate these horrific acts and bring those responsible to justice."

According to court documents, in January 2023, Kent met a 14-year-old girl from Lynchburg, Virginia, on Twitter. Initially, Kent pretended to be a 20-year-old woman named "Tris." He used this "Tris" persona to introduce his victim to a young man named "Leo." In reality, both the "Tris" and "Leo" profiles were controlled by Kent.

Kent told his victim that he was from Roanoke, Virginia, and sent generic pictures of Roanoke in order to further convince her of their geograph-

ic proximity to each other.

When they began chatting, the victim informed Kent that she was only 14 years old. Kent told her that he was 21 years old and that he was interested in meeting her someday.

As the conversations progressed, Kent told the 14-year-old that she needed to call him "Daddy," "Sir," or "Master," and then warned her that he might punish her if she failed to do so. Kent also directed violent language at the victim.

After several weeks of chatting, Kent instructed the victim to send him nude photographs and videos of herself, to which she obliged.

On June 16, 2023, Kent was arrested by law enforcement and interviewed by agents with the Federal Bureau of Investigation. At that time, he admitted to using Twitter, Snapchat, and Discord to contact minor girls for the purpose of getting them to send him naked pictures. He often used the "Tris" persona because he found it was easier to get minor girls to talk to him if he pretended to be a young woman.

Kent estimated he solicited and received images of child sexual abuse material from approximately 200 minor girls.

Led by the U.S. Attorneys' Offices and the DOJ's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state, and local resources to locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who exploit children, as well as identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, visit www.projectsafchildhood.gov/.

Va. free clinics await first funding increase in years, amid budget battle

By Taya Coates

Capital News Service

The network of Virginia free clinics may receive its largest funding increase since 2016 to help with a growing need for services, although the bump was less than originally requested.

The statewide Virginia Association of Free Clinics, or VAFCC, offers primary care health services in addition to counseling, dental care and syringe exchange. The clinics help patients with other barriers they may face, including a transportation assistance program and food bank.

The House and Senate approved earlier in March a \$1.5 million annual increase over the next two years, starting in July. That brings nearly \$16.6 million in total funding for the clinic network.

Sen. Barbara Favola, D-Arlington, and Del. Betsy Carr, D-Richmond, originally submitted requests to their respective chambers to increase annual funding by \$5 million.

Favola, who chairs a health subcommittee and sits on the Finance and Appropriations committee, said she is intent on ensuring that no Virginia is uninsured. The state has had to review Medicaid eligibility criteria and allocate required funding, she said. That can sometimes eat into funding for “discretionary programs” like the clinics.

The largest funding bump within the decade was \$3.1 million in 2016, when the VAFCC received just over \$12.4 million in the biennial budget.

There are 69 member clinics in the association, including three new clinics added this year. The clinic association reported over \$114 million of care for over 75,000 patients across the state in 2022, according to its website.

Operation costs for the clinics have increased by around 170% since 2016, according to CEO Rufus Phillips.

A \$5 million annual increase in state funding would help offset the cost increase, Phillips said. The majority of VAFCC funding comes from fluctuating charitable donations, grants and philanthropic support.

The association received funding through the federal COVID-19 relief CARES Act in 2020 and the American Rescue Plan Act in 2021.

“Those were one-time funds and without increased year-to-year funding, the clinics are going to have a very difficult time,” Phillips said.

The association was grateful to the General Assembly, Favola and Carr for their support of free clinics, Phillips said.

“I hope the state in general continues to increase its level of support because you only get things

done at a community level,” Phillips said.

Karen Legato, executive director of the Health Brigade, the first free clinic in Virginia, is concerned clinics may decrease the breadth of services offered without further state funding.

Free clinics played a vital role in reaching underrepresented communities throughout the height of COVID-19. The pandemic led to an enrollment surge in other clinic services, according to Legato.

“The ARPA funding dried up but our services didn’t,” Legato said. “We have more people now than we ever have had in terms of diverse populations that have been alienated from health care.”

Free clinics also evaluate non-medical factors that influence health outcomes, using the social determinants of health model, according to Legato. The model includes factors such as employment, housing and education, among others, that impact a person’s physical health.

“I wish I could go there instead of having to go to my normal care, because people have plenty of time with their providers and we take a holistic approach, and we know our patients,” Legato said. “We pick up things that a lot of times the traditional health care system may not pick up.”

The House and Senate budget

raises tax to cover spending for programs such as free clinics, Favola said.

Gov. Glenn Youngkin has publicly stated his finalized version of the budget will not include a tax increase. Youngkin expressed disapproval of the “backward budget” in a statement after the General Assembly adjourned, and in several public addresses since.

“A budget is a statement of your values,” Favola said. “Where do you think investment should be made and how do you want to grow the economy? What future do you see for Virginia? Democrats gave him a pathway forward.”

Youngkin and the first lady recently donated \$21,785 from the governor’s salary toward each of two free clinics, located in the Roanoke area. One is the Christian outreach ministry Straight Street, which supports at-risk teens. The other is the Bradley Free Clinic, which helps support people battling substance use.

The General Assembly will reconvene on April 17 to review any actions or vetoes Youngkin makes to legislation.

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Initial unemployment claims rise 10.2 percent

The number of initial unemployment insurance weekly claims filed during the week ending March 23 was 2,098, which is 10.2 percent higher than last week’s 1,904 claims and 11.8 percent higher than the comparable week of last year (1,876), according to Virginia Works.

Nearly 84 percent of claimants self-reported an associated industry; of those reported, the top five industries (61 percent) were Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (275); Administrative and Support and Waste Management (229); Health Care and Social

Assistance (183); Manufacturing (167); and Retail Trade (152).

Continued weeks claims (15,497) were 0.7 percent lower than last week (15,612) and were 31.8 percent higher than the comparable week of last year (11,758). Nearly 93 percent of claimants self-reported an associated industry; of those reported, the top five industries (56 percent) were Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (2,227); Administrative and Support and Waste Management (2,084); Manufacturing (1,297); Health Care and Social Assistance (1,290); and Construction (1,226).

Wage mandates among seven bills vetoed last week

Acting on 107 bills last week, Gov. Glenn Youngkin signed 100 bills, including bills that strengthen law enforcement’s ability to prosecute child predators and expand Department of Corrections inmate access to quality health services.

The Governor vetoed seven bills that would legalize the sale of drugs, weaken public safety, and arbitrarily set labor prices.

“This proposal is an arbitrary, mandatory 25% increase in the starting wages of all employees. Contrary to ensuring higher compensation, such a substantial increase will raise business operational costs. In response, businesses will raise prices, creating more inflation, and implement hiring freezes and layoffs, ultimately hurting the workers the proposal seeks to assist,” Youngkin said in his veto statement.

“This proposal also harms Virginia’s economic competitiveness. Neighboring states have reduced business costs and encouraged investment, resulting in thriving economies,” he said, adding “the net outmigration of over one hundred thousand residents from Virginia between 2012 and 2021, primarily to states like North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Georgia, none of which have wage mandates.”

He also vetoed House Bill 157, which removes the farmworker exemption from the Virginia Minimum Wage Act.

“Producers who employ H-2A workers must adhere to the U.S. Department of Labor’s Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR), currently set at \$15.81 per hour. Even farms that do not employ H2A workers pay the AEWR to compete with those that do,” Youngkin noted in his veto statement.

“Farmers have a unique economic environment with unpredictable weather and fluctuating production costs. Due to federal pricing systems and global market conditions, farmers often lack control over the prices they receive for their goods.” Young-

kin noted. “Agricultural budgeting and operations are already challenging, and imposing a wage mandate without considering these factors could drive small and medium-sized farms into debt or closure.

“The agricultural sector has thin margins, and this bill will significantly affect the industry. The data from the USDA Census of Agriculture and the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Policy further emphasize the importance of supporting our agriculture industry. The loss of five thousand farms and nearly five hundred thousand acres of farmland in the last five years has dramatically altered our economy and communities,” he said, and added “The AEWR already materially determines the labor rates. A further wage mandate financially strains farmers, leading to farm closures, job losses, and increased consumer food prices.”

When vetoing the legalization of retail marijuana, Youngkin said the proposal “endangers Virginians’ health and safety. States following this path have seen adverse effects on children’s and adolescent’s health and safety, increased gang activity and violent crime, significant deterioration in mental health, decreased road safety, and significant costs associated with retail marijuana that far exceed tax revenue.

“It also does not eliminate the illegal black-market sale of cannabis, nor guarantee product safety. Addressing the inconsistencies in enforcement and regulation in Virginia’s current laws does not justify expanding access to cannabis, following the failed paths of other states and endangering Virginians’ health and safety,” he added in his veto statement.

“I am also vetoing bills that would implement drastic wage mandates, raise costs on families and small businesses, jeopardize jobs, and fail to recognize regional economic differences across Virginia,” Youngkin said.

Low-Head Dams are the focus of a public safety campaign

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation is supporting April Low-Head Dam Public Safety Awareness Month to encourage Virginians to protect themselves from the dangers associated with these structures.

A low-head dam is a dam that runs from bank-to-bank, typically with a low height, across a river or stream. Water pouring over the dam creates a hazardous current termed a “spin cycle” like that of a washing machine that can trap even the strongest swimmer wearing a flotation device. Once caught in a spin cycle, it is almost impossible to escape.

“Every year, these deceptively dangerous dams claim lives and pose an ongoing risk to boaters, swimmers and fishers throughout Virginia,” said Mark Killgore, DCR’s lead dam safety engineer. “Low-head dams are called ‘drowning machines’ for a reason. Over 1,000 people have died in incidents at low-head dams in the United

States in the past few decades.”

You can take the following steps to protect yourself:

- Know before you go: check your route, read maps, talk to locals and obey signs.
- Watch for a smooth horizon line where the stream meets the sky and look for concrete retaining walls on either side of the water. These could be signs of a low-head dam.
- If you spot a dam, exit the river and reenter well downstream.
- Never try to dive in to help someone caught in a spin cycle. Exit the river and call 911. Use a rope or throw bag to pull them to safety.

“The only escape may be crawling along the river bottom and surfacing well downstream of the dam,” Killgore added.

For more information about low-head dams, visit <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/dam-safety-and-flood-plains/ds-education>.

VSU College of Ag dean says supporting its programs is a ‘return on investment’

The tri-part mission of Virginia State University’s College of Agriculture is to meet myriad needs of students and neighbors, while facilitating research and outreach to secure the industry’s future.

Virginia Farm Bureau Federation leaders recently learned about the ongoing mission of academics, research and Virginia Cooperative Extension services from Robert N. Corley III, college dean and director of land-grant programs. Officially appointed last summer, Corley oversees the VSU Agricultural Research Station, Virginia Cooperative Extension and the college’s academic departments, including agriculture, family and consumer sciences, and hospitality management.

“Someone once said, if agriculture gets it wrong, nothing else can be right,” he said.

Corley has truly embraced the theme “Greater Grows Here” at the VSU College of Agriculture, said Martha Moore, senior vice president of VFBF governmental relations.

“And we appreciate all the work you are doing to preserve farming in the state, and the support you give us.”

Corley shared recent wins for the college and community—increased enrollment, millions in state and federal grant funding, industry partnerships, engagement efforts, and leadership development to enhance the state workforce.

“When we talk to our legislative partners, we say we’re a great return on investment,” he said.

While the land-grant university

receives federal money, goals to increase competitive funding were exceeded—up \$2.3 million on the academic side, \$7.8 million for research and \$12 million for Extension.

“But none of this matters if you don’t have greater community impact,” Corley noted.

A six-year plan focuses on community impact and food access, plus health and nutrition. Local food parties featuring area agriculturalists welcomed over 500 attendees.

“It began to create a different food reservoir,” Corley explained. “As you know, there are food deserts in the Petersburg area, which impact on health disparities and life expectancies compared to other areas of the commonwealth. It’s disheartening as a community partner to have those kinds of statistics in our backyard.”

To move the needle forward, the college is growing its urban and minority farming initiatives through the Sustainable & Urban Agriculture and Small Farm Outreach programs.

As the local food movement expands, the college has developed an international collaboration with Chonnam National University in South Korea, which developed plant-based hand sanitizers and diagnostic tools that can help detect diseases such as COVID and HIV.

“Partnerships like these may provide our small farmers new markets and create an economic boost for the region,” Corley said.

The eyes of the nation will be on the campus this November, he added, as it hosts an upcoming presidential debate.

Large turnout welcomes exhibit openings



Washington & Lee University art professor Dr. Elliot King (left with microphone) describes Salvador Dali's unique work to an audience of about 150 at Piedmont Arts' exhibit opening. Dr. Michael R. Taylor, chief curator and deputy director for art and education of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (at right, in red tie) talked about how the VMFA researched and acquired the valuable collection.



Dr. Elliot King walked around the gallery during his talk on Salvador Dali's art, and the audience followed, taking close looks at the etchings.

About 150 people crowded Piedmont Arts for the opening reception of the museum's latest exhibits on March 29. They attentively followed the talk of art experts describing the 44 etchings that Spanish Surrealist artist Salvador Dali created in Paris in 1934.

The exhibition presents the unique proof set for the complete series of etchings that make up the first edition of "Les Chants de Maldoror," the infamous 1869 prose poem by Isidore Ducasse. It was curated by Dr. Michael R. Taylor, chief curator and deputy director for art and education of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, who spoke at the event, along with Dr. Elliot King, Dali expert and associate professor of art history at Washington & Lee University.

Also on exhibit, "Citizens and Soldiers: The Mostly World War II Paintings" by Ken Smith depict action on the frontlines. The

paintings were created for the Advanced Squad Leader board game, originally reproduced on game boxes, magazines and folders. The exhibit contains 15 paintings spanning the era of 1939 ("Kollaa Holds") to 1950 ("Frozen"). Smith is an associate professor of graphic design at Radford University.

"Lintspiration" in the Lynwood Artists Gallery features Meritha Alderman's unique signature medium: dryer lint. One of her first lint art portraits, coincidentally, was of Salvador Dali, along with another of Audrey Hepburn, which she showed in Piedmont Arts' "Expressions" exhibit in 2014. Alderman, who has a bachelor's degree in studio art and communications and a master's degree in art education, is an art teacher at Laurel Park Middle School.

The three exhibits will be on display through May 11. Piedmont Arts, at 215 Starling Ave.,



Ken Smith's paintings depict scenes from war, mostly World War II.

Martinsville, is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays, and admission is free.



Local artist Meritha Alderman is known for her unique works made with dryer lint. This portrait of Salvador Dali was one of her first, shown for the first time in 2014 at Piedmont Arts, and again at the entrance of the Lynwood Artists Gallery for her exhibition "Lintspiration."

Consumer protection roundup:

Subscription auto renewal and drip pricing

Virginia lawmakers could not reach consensus on ticket service fees

By Sam Bradley

Capital News Service

Virginia lawmakers, in alignment with recent federal attempts, introduced consumer protection bills to tackle surprise tickets fees and recurring subscriptions, but only one measure passed.

Autorenewal notification updates — passed

Del. Michelle Maldonado, D-Manassas, introduced House Bill 744 to update current state code to add "small business" to the existing consumer protections for auto renewal. That includes any goods, services, money or credit for business purposes.

Maldonado was presented with the issue by a constituent and small business owner concerned about auto renewals for subscription services, she said.

"I think that it is always good for companies, for businesses and for consumers when there is clarity and a consistency of process," Maldonado said.

The state legislature in recent years has grappled with transparency around auto renewal notification and ensuring the consumer has a way to cancel their subscription. An update last year set a time frame that the business must notify the consumer within 30 days.

Maldonado's bill now requires subscription services to inform customers of the option to cancel no less than 30 days and no more than 60 days of the billing date, if the contract is longer than 12 months.

For Virginians in a tumultuous financial situation, surprising or inconvenient subscription payments can mean the difference between paying a bill or putting gas in the car, according to Maldonado.

Maldonado is hopeful the bill will pass Gov. Glenn Youngkin's desk because it had strong bipartisan support in both chambers.

Ticket service fees and scalping — failed

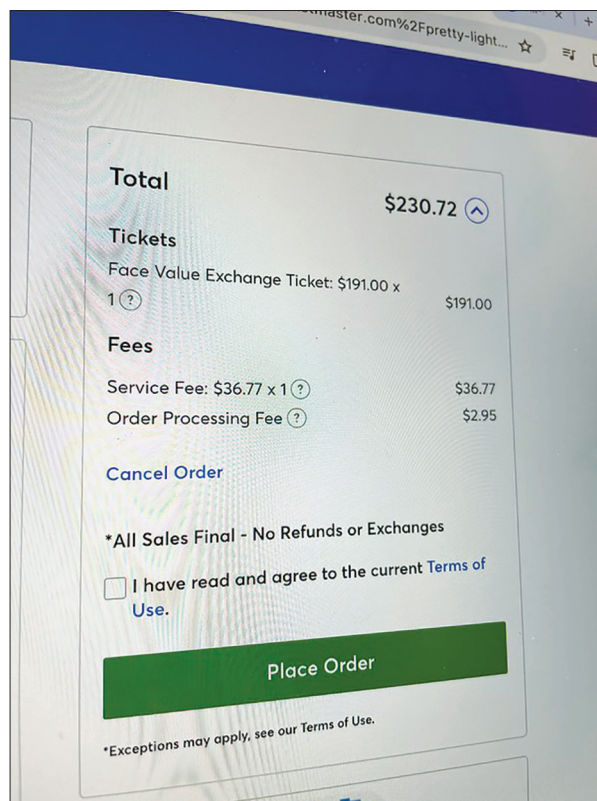
Del. Dan Helmer, D-Fairfax, introduced HB 277 to mandate that any ticket sold must display the total price upfront, including a resale ticket. New York, Tennessee and Connecticut have similar laws, according to a Ticketmaster brief on the topic.

Sen. Stella Pekarosky, D-Fairfax, introduced Senate Bill 388, which had similar language in regards to misrepresenting a good or service and the disclosure of fees. It was amended in the House to reflect the language in Helmer's bill.

Both bills passed their respective chambers with strong bipartisan support but could not pass a conference committee that tried to resolve the differences between the House and Senate amendments.

The House committed to creating a "ticket fee transparency act" that also allowed the attorney general's office to litigate certain violations. In the end, there was a tied vote in the House and the Senate which ultimately kept the bills from passing after the presiding officers voted.

HB 277 draws inspiration from the evergreen discussion around ticket costs for the Taylor Swift Eras tour, Helmer said.



An example of how fees are added to a purchase. This was the total cost to checkout a resale two-day pass for Pretty Lights in Hampton, Virginia at the time of the reporting. Sam Bradley/Capital News Service

But before that outrage existed, Pearl Jam challenged Ticketmaster in 1994. The band was frustrated by the ticket fees passed on to consumers, in part due to Ticketmaster's exclusive contracts with stadiums, according to Rolling Stone.

Helmer learned from his staff how drip pricing fees sneakily make an already expensive ticket cost even more.

"I've been in the trenches fighting for price transparency for years," Helmer said.

Helmer is excited to see this discussion taking place on a national level, but surprised the bill could not pass.

"We were disappointed because we've got to get rid of these junk fees," said Stephanie Sedgwick, Helmer's chief of staff.

Drip pricing and hidden fees are present in purchases such as airline tickets, food delivery and ticket pricing. A 2023 Senate Joint Economic report defined drip pricing as the practice of businesses showing a low base price, but various fees are added to the total throughout the purchase process.

A customer purchases a ticket that originally states the price is \$50. As the purchasing process continues, the total increases when various convenience fees or services charges are added. The price may be nearly doubled by the time the checkout process is complete.

Ticketmaster has transitioned toward optional all-in pricing to remove some of its added surprise fees. President Joe Biden met with representatives from many entertainment and lifestyle companies

in June 2023, including Ticketmaster, DICE, SeatGeek and AirBnB.

Consumers using Ticketmaster can now see a display that explains the new all-in pricing model, if the venue or artist opts in. The tickets display all included fees as part of the total to pay, instead of additional fees tacked on to the end price.

However, fees can still be added to verified resale tickets through Ticketmaster. One example of this is the price of a resale two-day pass for live electronic act Pretty Lights in Hampton. An event pass with a listed price of \$191 becomes over \$230 during the checkout process.

Lucas Anderton is creative director for the political communication tech firm SBDigital and an avid concert goer. Anderton has traveled regularly to see some of his favorite jam bands like Phish and Goose, and knows tickets are difficult to find. The surprise ticket fees make it even harder, and also diminish transparency for fans.

"I think that we're seeing fees that are as much as 75, 80% of the ticket value," Anderton said. "It's such a turn off."

Hidden costs associated with rentals like AirBnB also directly relate to a music fan's negative experience, considering the amount of people who travel for these big events, according to Anderton.

He is looking forward to all-in pricing becoming more common.

"I think that's No. 1, is when you first click on that seat on the seat map, the seating chart, like the price it shows you is with fees and everything," Anderton said.

Ongoing federal efforts

The Biden administration has addressed drip pricing and junk fee issues since 2022. The White House announced a new strike force in early March this year that will examine "unfair fees," which could save consumers an estimated \$20 billion annually.

The Strike Force on Unfair and Illegal Pricing will also confront the issue of credit card late fees, which could reportedly save consumers \$10 billion a year. The Credit Card Accountability Responsibility and Disclosure Act took effect in 2010 and set a precedent where banks could only charge late fees to cover the cost of a late payment.

Companies were allowed to set a \$25 fee for the first late payment, and \$35 for subsequent late payments, which increased to \$30 and \$41 due to annual inflation. Late fees are a "major driver" in the credit card company profit model, according to a report from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, or CFPB.

The CFPB in early March set the threshold for these late fees at \$8. Larger card issuers can charge fees above the threshold if they can prove it will cover actual collection costs.

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How the equity fund could help more people cultivate and sell cannabis

By Michael Chun
Capital News Service

Virginia's plan for a recreational cannabis market includes a way to help micro businesses, formerly known as the social equity license, get involved with what is anticipated to be a multimillion dollar business — if the plan survives the governor's desk.

The Virginia Cannabis Equity Loan Fund will provide grants, low-interest and zero-interest loans to qualified micro business licensees, according to legislation passed by the General Assembly.

Del. Paul Krizek, D-Fairfax, and Sen. Aaron Rouse, D-Virginia Beach, reached a compromise between their two measures to create a state cannabis market.

An applicant must meet certain criteria to qualify, including having at least 66% ownership and direct control of the business.

The applicant must either have been convicted or adjudicated of a prior misdemeanor violation for marijuana to qualify.

The applicant could also qualify if they lived at least three of the past five years, or attended at least five years of public school, in a historically economically disadvantaged community.

Another qualification would be if the applicant received a federal Pell Grant or attended for at least two years a college or university where an average of at least 30% of the students are eligible for a federal Pell Grant.

Any veteran of the U.S. armed forces would qualify if they met the 66% ownership and direct control qualification.

The Virginia Cannabis Control Authority board of directors will regulate the application process. The board will also determine what percentage of license fees can be waived and promote participation in the loan program despite the ability to pay such fees, according to the bill.



Members of the group Marijuana Justice at a press conference to support the legalization of marijuana in the commonwealth. Activist Chelsea Higgs Wise in center. Photo by Emma Gauthier/CNS.

Either the director of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, or a majority of the members of the Cannabis Equity Reinvestment Board, will sign off on the disbursement of funds.

The General Assembly approved \$1.8 million each year, which will transfer to the Cannabis Equity Business Loan Fund in July, if the governor does not appoint a director of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, according to the budget. The governor renamed it the Office of Diversity, Opportunity, and Inclusion in 2022.

"The program will be funded by 100% of the licensing fees collected by the authority in the first year," Krizek said in a Senate committee meeting for Rehabilitation and Social Services. "After that time, the program will be supported by 60% of the tax revenue from retail sales of marijuana."

The equity fund will foster business ownership and economic growth within communities that have been affected by the prohibition of cannabis.

"The marijuana market bills are the most promising that we've had since 2021," said Chelsea Higgs Wise, executive director of Marijuana Justice. "It includes the equity portions and includes repair for communities and includes certain funds and this is what we've been promising Virginia."

The loan fund was created by the 2021 General Assembly and given \$3 million to help develop an adult-use retail market, the CCA stated in an email. The 2023 General Assembly returned the \$3 million back to the general fund, since the recreational cannabis market was not reenacted.

"We have an equity fund already established in statute," said Sen. Barbara Favola, D-Arlington, at the committee of Rehabilitation and Social Services. "But it needs to be funded to make sure that our micro business really do have access to capital so they can start their cultivation and be able to get to the market."

The CCA will collaborate with a community development financial

institution that provides credit and financial services for disadvantaged communities to help manage the fund.

"We're really hoping that it will be people of color, folks from certain communities that will be able to take advantage of entering the business and the setups that we've put into place," Higgs Wise said.

Cannabis tax will be 8% and the revenue is estimated to be \$6.41 million in 2025 and increase to \$77.1 million by 2030, according to the bill's final fiscal impact statement.

The state will add a 1.115% tax, and a locality can add an extra tax up to 2.5%.

The CCA stated that it could not respond to questions about potential licensing costs, because no adult-use cannabis market exists. Applications would start in September if the bill is signed.

The current application fee for a medical cannabis pharmaceutical processor permit is \$18,000. The initial permit fee is \$165,000 and the annual renewal fee is \$132,000, according to the CCA.

Gov. Glenn Youngkin has stated many times that he's not interested in signing the adult-use market legislation. He has issued 50 vetoes as of March 26. When asked about the cannabis bill on March 14, Youngkin told a Virginia Mercury reporter that he would read it and that it is a long bill.

Youngkin has until April 8 to take action on all bills that cleared the General Assembly. The legislature will reconvene on April 17 to review his changes, but Democrats do not have the super majority needed to overturn a veto.

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Reaching for the sky: Virginia's majestic trees inspire awe

Across the commonwealth, awe-inspiring giants tower over the land, creating serene spaces to contemplate nature—giants like the stately American beech tree in New Kent County.

Measuring a staggering 90 feet high with a 224-inch trunk, the commonwealth champion dwarfs landowner Clynt Parrish in his front yard, where it has stood for nearly 200 years.

Parrish's tree is one of hundreds of large trees throughout the state recognized by the Virginia Big Tree Program. An outreach program of Virginia Cooperative Extension, the initiative aims to promote the conservation and care of forests by celebrating Virginia's largest trees.

What began as a 4-H and FFA enterprise in 1970 to encourage youth engagement in forestry and natural resources has branched into a community of tree enthusiasts scouting standouts on historical sites, public areas, farms, residences and in the wild.

"It's a way to get people excited, inspired and appreciative of trees and forests," said Eric Wiseman, an associate professor in Virginia Tech's Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation and coordinator of the Virginia Big Tree Program.

Big trees bring to mind titans like the 139-foot-high tulip poplar in Bedford County or Harrisonburg's 96-foot-tall Fraser fir standing sentinel over the city cemetery. But "big" is relative, Wiseman said.

"We recognize the three largest specimens of each species of tree," he explained. "They're super big for their species but not necessarily huge, towering trees. Our state champion dogwood, for example, is a relatively small tree but big for its kind."

Recording the natural marvels has led to a registry of over 2,500 trees encompassing 400 native and non-native species. The Virginia Big Tree Reg-

ister boasts 566 state champions with 82 claiming the national title—the biggest in the country recognized by American Forests' National Champion Trees Register.

Trees are ranked and scored on a point system based on height, trunk girth and average crown spread. The champions are periodically visited by volunteers and arborists for recertification.

While age isn't a factor for scoring, "big trees are often ancient trees," Wiseman noted. "It's one of the ingredients—they've got to live a reasonable amount of time to get to superlative size."

In a time of increasing modernization and development, big trees serve as a reverent reminder of past generations and changes they've endured. There are trees that survived battlefields, helped shade cattle, or served as a property boundary on an old homestead.

See more in Cultivate magazine at bit.ly/4boLV8n.

HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE DAY

FREE TO ALL CITY OF MARTINSVILLE AND HENRY COUNTY RESIDENTS
(Not available to Commercial Businesses)

ITEMS TO BRING

Solvents (mineral spirits, paint thinner, turpentine, acetone, etc.)
Paints (oil base, polyurethane, tung oil, deck or oil base stains, etc.)
Fuels (gasoline, #2 fuel, kerosene, diesel fuel, small engine fuel, etc.)
Automobile Fluids (motor oil, transmission fluids, antifreeze, etc.)
Lead acid batteries, computer equipment, cell phones, ink cartridges, paper (8.5 x 11, 4 boxes max)

ITEMS NOT TO BRING

Smoke detectors, compressed gas cylinders, explosives, radioactive materials, household cleaners, pesticides, herbicides, drain cleaners, tires, light bulbs, TVs

SATURDAY, APRIL 13

9 am - 12 Noon (Will be held rain or shine)

LOCATION: BASSETT SERVICE CENTER
2285 Fairystone Park Highway
Bassett, Virginia 24055

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Hundreds gather in Williamsburg to plan America's 250th birthday celebrations

Local committee expects to add several events



'Thomas Jefferson' discussed the need to support those who were punished for the Boston Tea Party.



Williamsburg hosted 450 people from all over the U.S. and Virginia to plan America's 250th birthday celebrations.



National VA250 Chair Carly Fiorina spoke to planners from all over Virginia.

By Pat Delaney

With America's 250th birthday coming up in 2026, 450 local and state commemoration planners from 37 states and 33 cities and counties from all over Virginia gathered in Williamsburg for 'A Common Cause to All.' The three-day program allowed planners to network, share ideas, and discuss how best to commemorate America's Semiquincentennial.

A theme running throughout the conference was how the 250th commemoration can bring together and unite Americans, much as the Bicentennial did in 1976. The commemoration can also increase interest in American history for all ages, but particularly for children.

Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin highlighted the conference's opening night. He spoke about how important knowing our history is, and how the 250th commemorations can help inspire Americans and Virginians alike to learn more about their home state and country. Youngkin said the commemoration will be "an extraordinary celebration," and expressed his personal feelings about commemorating "the most important

day in the history of this great country and possibly the world. My heart swells with pride."

He also talked of the investment Virginia is making in the 250th commemorations. Leading up to July 4, 2026, Youngkin said he expects to see an economic and tourism boost from those coming to Virginia for Semiquincentennial events.

Longtime television journalist Harry Smith offered stories from his travels across America, where he saw firsthand how much average Americans have in common, even in divisive times such as these.

Tuesday morning began with a powerful speech from Virginia Supreme Court Justice John Charles Thomas, the first African American and youngest appointed to the post. Thomas said he views America not as a melting pot, but as a tapestry made of many parts showing America's history, good and bad.

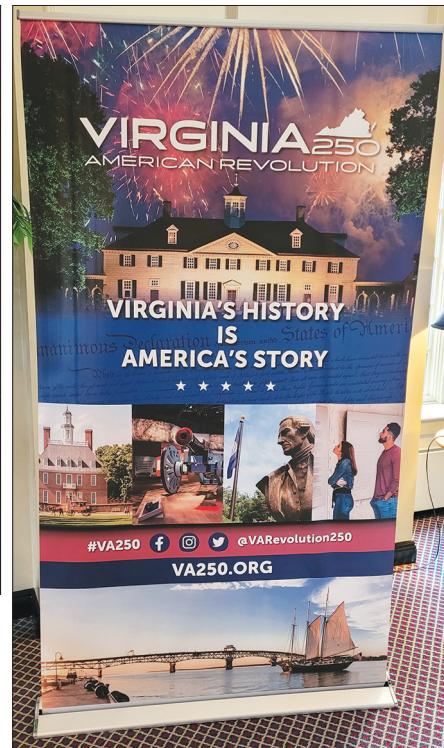
Attendees also heard from Carly Fiorina, the National Honorary Chairman of VA250, Rosie Rios, the 43rd Treasurer of the United States, and Chairman of the America 250, as well as nationally



Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin addressed those gathered for "A Common Cause to All."

known historians. Attendees also got a sneak peek of the upcoming documentary from Ken Burns, 'The American Revolution', which will air in 2025.

The conference closed with a re-enactment of the Virginia House of Burgesses call for a day of 'Fasting, Humiliation, and Prayer,' in support of the people of Boston, following England's closing of their port in response to the Bos-



"Virginia's History is America's Story" is the tagline for VA250.

ton Tea Party.

Jarred Marlowe is the local chairman for the Martinsville and Henry County Virginia 250 Commission. For information about upcoming local events, visit www.facebook.com/groups/361258202916918/.



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