

HENRY COUNTY ENTERPRISE

Saturday, May 11, 2024

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Martinsville residents asked questions about the proposed spending plan during a public budget presentation.

Council explains budget at community event

By Jessica Dillon

A community budget presentation on May 2 was held to explain the \$114.4 million proposed budget that includes \$32 million in school funding and \$8.4 million for public safety, and receive input from residents.

Martinsville Mayor LC Jones, vice mayor Aaron Rawls, and

city council member Tammy Pearson took turns presenting slides, and Council member Kathy Lawson participated electronically in the meeting designed to bridge the gap between governing officials and residents.

"We are trying to increase the

(See Council p. 2)

Report shows crime decreased in city last year



Martinsville Police Chief Fincher (second from left) and other law enforcement officials attended a recent press conference held by Virginia Attorney General Jason Miyares (at the podium) to discuss crime reduction in their respective locality and the positive impact of Operation Ceasefire Virginia, which adds additional prosecutors and focuses on arresting and prosecuting repeat offenders.

By Jessica Dillon

Martinsville experienced a reduction in crime last year, according to a recent annual report. Data indicated a more than 19 percent overall decrease in 2023, and a 6 percent

decrease in violent crime.

The report noted by the Martinsville City Police Department examined crime trends over the past few years and also contains some statistics

(See Crime Decrease p. 2)

Martinsville math teacher among finalists for top award in U.S.



Elizabeth "Liz" Lynch, a mathematics teacher at Patrick Henry Elementary School in Martinsville, is among three state finalists in Virginia for the 2024 Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. (Contributed photos)



"The flexibility of my instruction allows me to meet students wherever they are," Elizabeth "Liz" Lynch said. "With open-ended, play-based lessons, even students who struggle can explore math in fun, unthreatening ways."



By Debbie Hall

A mathematics teacher at Patrick Henry Elementary School in the Martinsville City School division is among three Virginia state finalists for the 2024 Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching.

Elizabeth "Liz" Lynch is among the contenders for the award that is the highest recognition a kindergarten through 12th grade science, technology, engineering, or mathematics teacher may receive for outstanding teaching in the United States. The

award recognizes educators who have both deep content knowledge of the subjects they teach and the ability to motivate and enable students to be successful in those areas.

"I am so excited and humbled by this experience," Lynch said. "I have loved all of the

opportunities that have been offered to me by MCPS to grow my skills and engage our students, from participating in STEM-based competitions to providing equitable, resource-rich learning for all our students."

(See Math Teacher p. 3)

School board adjusts budget by \$2 million



Dr. Benjamin Boone speaks to the school board about the budget cut.

By Jessica Dillon

The Henry County School Board met on May 2 to discuss changes to the FY 2024-25 budget. The school's budget was reduced by more than \$2 million, from \$109,370,899 to \$107,018,816 due to the recent approval of the total county budget.

Dr. Benjamin Boone, Assistant Superintendent for Operations and Administrative Services, presented the FY 25 budget amendment to the board.

Champ Hardie, of the Ridgeway District, asked about the state budget which impacts the school division's spending plan.

"We are hopeful that they are going to provide more funding," said Boone.

"There are going to be multiple budgets. You can go ahead and bank on a three percent increase," said Teddy Martin, chairman.

The current budget still includes the five percent pay increase for teachers. If the budget doesn't increase once the state budget is approved, funding for preventive maintenance at the schools will be cut.

(See School Board p. 7)



(Left to right) Award recipients Michael Scales, Houston Stutz, Ella Wickham, Sheila Williams, and Josh Blancas.

Small businesses honored at luncheon

By Jessica Dillon

The Martinsville Henry County Chamber of Commerce met at the TAD Space on May 7 to honor several small businesses with awards at a luncheon. James Campos, the keynote speaker, offered an inspirational speech, and Del. Eric Phillips, R-Martinsville, presented the chamber's 65th-anniversary resolution.

Before the conclusion of the event, this year's winners were happy to receive their awards, and some were already looking to the future.

Michael Scales, a business analyst for the Longwood Small Business Development Center Western Region, won the award for Campbell-Lester businessperson of the year.

(See Small Businesses p. 7)

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Council

(cont. from page 1)

communication between government and citizens, so you guys have less questions and are more educated on how the government works and what we need to do moving forward," Jones said, adding that the city is looking for priorities up to 10 years in the future.

City Manager Aretha Ferrell-Benavides said the previous year's budget requested departments to cut between 2.5 to 5 percent to add more money to the budget. "If you cut a budget one year, then the next year what happens? You still have that balance."

The budget this year is similar to that budget, but with only a slight increase - the General Fund increased from \$37.5 million to \$38.1 million, and a jump from \$27.2 million to \$32.5 million for the school budget. It also represented a decrease in the Enterprise Fund, from \$40 million to \$38 million. The state will make its decisions on school funding later in the year, and the council will be meeting with the schools to further discuss their budget.

"One of the things we said to staff is, we need as close as possible to a flatline budget," Ferrell-Benavides said. "We budgeted for what we know, and also pretty much flat based on last year."

A 5% rate increase in utilities is expected to take place in July, expanding the revenue the city collects. Ferrell-Benavides said that MiNet will be rolled out to more residents and is expected to bring more revenues into the city's coffers.

One of the largest areas of revenue is the

\$10.6 million expected from property taxes.

Ed Brozowski asked the council about the large property tax increase that took place in 2023.

"My property taxes went up 30 percent," said Brozowski. "The value of the homes went up, but I don't understand why the amount of money that the city needed went up also?"

Ferrell-Benavides explained that housing assessments are done by an outside agency.

"Last year, the council reduced the tax rate based on the values going up so much," Brozowski said, adding that the tax rate should have been lowered.

"It was," Ferrell-Benavides said, adding that taxes will not increase in the upcoming fiscal year's budget.

"Residences are about the only thing that went up," Rawls said. "If everything had been raised as we would have hoped, we wouldn't have had such a steep increase in residences."

He added the city hopes the appreciation of industry and commercial land will eventually lessen the tax burden. "We do not like the soaking of homeowners for taxes."

Brozowski said his "point is still, from all the residents, you are getting 20 to 30 percent more tax money." The tax increase is based on home sales.

"This is a national issue," said Rawls. "If you do not assess them (homes) at true market value, you start getting money withheld from the state. You start having real problems."

Rawls said that the city has an immense

demand for houses, and noted that there isn't enough affordable living to meet the demand adding to the spike.

"We got a lot of people moving here to work and nowhere to live," he said.

Concerns about water lines was another issue.

"Every time they put the pressure through it, one of our water lines breaks in the streets," Brozowski said. "They take care of it right away. I'm just talking about the infrastructure."

Ferrell-Benavides said the federal government is exploring new grant programs to help cities update their infrastructure.

A city resident asked about the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which currently has under \$4 million left to spend from the original \$15 million.

"Council approved moving some money from ARPA to kick-off IDA," Ferrell-Benavides said of Martinsville's Industrial Development Authority. The remaining ARPA funds will be appropriated for city projects, including the pickleball courts and MiNet.

"The federal government gives you a certain amount of time to spend all those funds. We've allocated (some), and we have been very careful in holding some behind," Ferrell-Benavides said.

Jones and Rawls noted Ferrell-Benavides' efforts on the budget.

"When we came in, there was a consistency of a deficit year after year," said Jones.

"It looked like magic what you did," Rawls said, adding that prudence by professionals helped turn the budget around.

Crime Decrease

(cont. from page 1)

to give residents an insight into the work that the police department has been doing to lessen the number of drugs entering the community.

While there were three more homicides in 2023 than in 2022, the overall number of violent crimes has decreased from 208 cases to 198 cases. Two of the biggest reductions were robbery, with eight fewer cases than last year, and simple assault and intimidation, with 11 fewer cases than last year.

Aggravated assault increased by two cases, from 35 in 2022 to 37 cases in 2023; sexual assault and abduction

also saw a slight increase, from 14 cases in 2022 to 18 cases in 2023, according to the report.

The reduction in property crimes was even larger, from 295 cases in 2022 to 207 cases in 2023 - a reduction of 88. Burglary was reduced from 30 cases in 2022 to 22 cases in 2023. Motor vehicle theft also dipped from 26 cases in 2022 to 15 cases in 2023.

Larceny cases, in particular, showed a sharp decrease, from 238 cases in 2022 to 168 cases in 2023. Arson increased slightly, from a single case in 2022 to two cases in 2023.

The total crime in 2022 was

503 cases, while the total crime in 2023 was lower at 405 cases. Overall, in 2023, the data suggested a 19.28 percent reduction in total crime.

Crime has been steadily decreasing in the city since 2022, but there was a slight uptick in motor vehicle crashes in the past year. In 2023, there were a reported 301 motor vehicle crashes. That was an increase from the 246 reported in 2022. The incidents resulted in one fatality and 83 injuries in 2023.

Drug offenses declined, from 212 offenses in 2022 to 124 defenses in 2023. The de-

partment reported it collected more than 500 pounds of prescription medication during its drug takeback program, which residents can safely dispose of unwanted/unused prescription medicine.

In addition, officers participated in a number of community outreach programs last year, with a sampling that includes a catalytic converter marking event, Fast Track, and the Neighborhood Resource Officer program.

The department will continue its efforts to reduce crime and continue community outreach efforts to engage and involve the community.

Exciting things coming May 27.

American National Bank will become Atlantic Union Bank. And that means **more branches and ATMs** for you or your business, plus an **award-winning bank** with **great products and digital tools**. It's a convenient way to bank, all with caring, knowledgeable service.

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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

Friday, May 10

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

Wednesday, May 15

Planning Commission Meeting, 4 - 5 p.m., Municipal Building Council Chambers, 55 W Church St Martinsville.

Thursday, May 16

Architectural Review Board Meeting, 10 a.m. - 11 a.m., Municipal Building Council Chambers, 55 W Church St., Martinsville.

Events

Saturday, May 11

Cinco De Mayo, noon to 4 p.m., Broad St., Martinsville.

Friday, May 10

The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged), 7 p.m. Theaterworks Community Players, 44 Franklin St, Martinsville.

Saturday, May 11

The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged), 7 p.m. Theaterworks Community Players, 44 Franklin St, Martinsville.

Patrick & Henry Community College Graduation, 9 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., Patrick & Henry Community College, 645 Patriot Ave, Martinsville.

Thursday, May 16

Artificial Intelligence, 5 p.m. - 7 p.m., New College Institute, 191 Fayette St., Martinsville.

Friday, May 17 - Saturday, May 18

Mayo Fire-Baptized Holiness Association meeting, 7:30 p.m., Christian View Church, 56 Christian View Church Road, Spencer. The meetinghouse is located at 261 Burbank Drive,

five miles southwest of Ridgeway, Virginia. It is intended that the sessions of this association be devoted entirely to devotional service. Meeting times are Friday at 7:30 p.m., and Saturday at 10 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 23

Building Stronger Teams, 5 p.m. - 7 p.m., New College Institute, 191 Fayette St., Martinsville.

Monday, May 27

Henry County Memorial Day Ruck 22, 10 a.m., 1094 Virginia Ave, Martinsville.

ONGOING

Bassett Train Station Farmers' Market is open Tuesdays 5-7 p.m. through September 24.

Uptown Farmers Market is open Saturdays 7:30 a.m. to noon through November 16, and Wednesdays from 7:30 a.m. to noon July 10 to September 25.

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.

The Bassett Ruritan Club hosts Rook Music & More on Fridays, 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. Donations 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.

TOPS FIELDVALE VA 0626 meets Tuesdays, 5:30 - 6:30 p.m. in the Bassett Public Library, 3969 Fairystone Hwy, Bassett. New members welcome. For more information, call Patti Farmer (276) 358-0489.

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, first and third Monday of each month, a different presentation and activity, 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. Registration is not required.

Math Teacher

(cont. from page 1)

A 13-year veteran of the school division, Lynch has worked as a 5th grade teacher at Albert Harris Elementary and Martinsville Prep Academy, 8th grade science at Martinsville Middle School, and is currently the STEM teacher at Patrick Henry Elementary, according to a release.

"Math is the foundation for all STEM learning," Lynch said in a release. "Understanding problems and being able to analyze data is vital for success in any future career. It allows students to be problem-solvers, critical thinkers, and ultimately gives them the tools to change the world. And I truly do believe that our students can change the world."

Her lessons are engaging and accessible, incorporate coding, games, and multiple entry points for learners who grasp concepts at different paces.

"The flexibility of my instruction allows me to meet students wherever they are," Lynch said. "With open-ended, play-based lessons, even students who struggle can explore math in fun, unintimidating ways."

A two-time recipient of the Southwest Virginia Technology Consortium's Technology Teacher Award, Lynch was selected by her colleagues at Patrick Henry as their school's Teacher of the Year for the 2020-2021 school year.

Lynch also serves as a coach for Odyssey of the Mind, First Lego League Lego Robotics, KidWind, and the King's Dominion Roller Coaster Engineering Challenge. Under her leadership, her Odyssey of the Mind team placed third in the world finals in 2020, and a second team is currently preparing to compete in this year's global competition. Her Lego Robotics teams have won state championships, and one even advanced to Global Innovations, an honor reserved for the top 20 teams in the



Martinsville City School teacher Elizabeth Lynch is among the three Virginia contenders for a national award that recognizes educators who have both deep content knowledge of the subjects they teach and the ability to motivate and enable students to be successful in those areas.

world. Focused on developing problem-solving and critical thinking abilities, Lynch emphasizes the importance of mathematics across all STEM disciplines.

"Throughout my career, I have never met a teacher who is more deserving of this recognition than Liz Lynch," said Cameron Cooper, principal. "No matter if it's during the school day or as a part of our many afterschool programs like Robotics, Odyssey of the Mind, or Kid Wind, her passion for STEM-based learning is infectious for both the staff and students at Patrick Henry Elementary. She constantly goes above and beyond to help create a fun learning environment that, in turn, creates opportunities and experiences that will have a lasting impact on our students."

A native of Buffalo, NY, Lynch holds a B.S. in Human Development and Learning from Lynchburg College (now Lynchburg University) and a M.Ed. in Interdisciplinary STEM from The Citadel.

"I am thrilled to receive this recognition," City Schools Superintendent Dr. Zebedee Talley



Elizabeth "Liz" Lynch (right, back row) also is a coach for Odyssey of the Mind, First Lego League Lego Robotics, KidWind, and the King's Dominion Roller Coaster Engineering Challenge.

said. "Mrs. Lynch has an unmatched work ethic and has the ability to relate to all students and encourage them to excel. Our district is blessed to have such a talented educator on our staff."

The two other Virginia finalists are Jennifer Gates, a science teacher at Randolph Elementary School in Goochland County, Goochland County Schools; and Dr. Laurie Sullivan, a Project Discovery Science/STEM teacher at K. W. Barrett Elementary School in Arlington, Arlington Public Schools.

"I am proud to recognize and honor three Virginia teachers who have been selected as finalists for this year's Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching," said Superintendent of Public Instruction Lisa Coons. "Virginia's finalists – Ms. Gates, Ms. Lynch, and Dr. Sullivan – deserve to be celebrated for their subject matter expertise and commitment to their schools, students, and communities. We are proud to have them represent the Commonwealth as they are considered by the national selection committee."

The finalists were selected by review committees convened by the Virginia Department of Education. Nominees were required to provide evidence of deep content knowledge and exemplary teaching skills.

The Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching program is administered by the National Science Foundation on behalf of the White House. The award alternates annually between teachers in Grades K-6 and teachers in Grades 7-12. The President may recognize a total of 110 exemplary teachers each year. A national review committee will review the applications of the 2024 state finalists, and the winners of the 2024 Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching will be announced by the White House.

National awardees each receive a \$10,000 unrestricted award from the National Science Foundation, a presidential certificate, and participate in a series of recognition events and professional development activities in the nation's capital.

See more at www.henrycountyenterprise.com

OPINION



Ed Coleman and Ginny Conaway are pictured. Coleman is the chapter president, and Conaway is the coordinator of the plant sale.

The thrill and allure of plant sales

Once a year, a certain madness comes over Patrick County.

It doesn't affect everyone, but those it affects really go nuts.

It's the Patrick County Master Gardeners Plant Sale.

There's nothing like it in the world. It is a wonderland for plant lovers and gardeners and dreamers.

One Saturday each spring, the Stuart Rotary Building is arranged chock full of plants. There's a huge pile of boxes near the door. The middle has five or six long rows of tables with plants in categories, then alphabetical order.

Going around the outside of the room, larger items are arranged in categories: hostas and ferns and something else along the first wall; then daylilies, irises, daffodils and similar items along the next; trees and shrubs along the back wall; then, up on a stage-type thing once we're headed back toward the boxes, rows of house plants.

Each plant is labeled, and signs in each section give pictures of each plant and information on its care and growth patterns.

And the prices? Honey, they are a third or a quarter of what you'd find in the store, or maybe even less. I put the back seats down in my Honda, which makes a large area, and I can fill that car to the top, even with stuff on the front seat so there's barely room for me, for about \$120.

Dozens of Master Gardeners, easily identifiable in green shirts and vests and name tags, circulate, answering questions and giving advice.

The plant sale coordinator, Ginny Conaway, told me that a major goal of Master Gardeners is educating the public, which is why they are so helpful with information. The chapter president, Ed Coleman, said having low prices is another way to make gardening more accessible to people. All together, they said, everything they do with the plant sale is with the aim of making people successful in gardening.

And here's another thing: These plants all come from the Master Gardeners' own gardens. That means they're not just tried and true, but also do well enough to grow in extra amounts, enough to share.

And their loyal customers, or shall we call them fans, appreciate it.

I, who find it a challenge to get out of the house every weekday by 8:45 a.m. to get to work on time, somehow miraculously am leaving out my driveway before 7 a.m. on that one Saturday of the week, all hyped up like a teenager going to a Taylor Swift concert.

By the time I arrive, the line is already 20 or 30 people long, waiting for the 8 a.m. opening of the door.

Last Saturday that line was no exception, even in the pouring rain.



Holly Kozelsky

I'm here to tell ya, these people mean business.

In its earlier years, a lucky shopper would have a partner along to stand guard at the pile of things to buy. Those without a partner would just pick up plants, put them in an empty spot if they are lucky enough to find one, and pray no one would take any, until ready to check out.

A few years ago, the Master Gardeners instituted a Holding Area, a long rectangular spot separated by netting. You walk in, get a number, and set your plants in the section labeled with that number.

I have a routine of going through that plant sale, as probably everyone else does too: Rush for the sections with plants I want most (which is silly, because there are always plenty), and load up my section of the Holding Area, then rush to another section. Then I rush through the tables in the middle of the room.

After my first go-through, it's on to Phase Two: Walk around more leisurely, chatting with folks, and going back over all the plants a second time, to look more closely, and read labels, and think what might go where in my gardens.

Phase Three is the cooldown, where I could check out if I want to, or socialize and have a little fun. Last Saturday, I enjoyed chatting with A.C. and Lucy Wilson. Then Lucy was ready to go, but A.C. was still enjoying some socializing. Their SUV was backed up to the big double doors in back, and their plants were on a long rolling cart. I went over cheerfully to start loading plants for them, since Lucy was standing there waiting on A.C. to do it.

"You don't have to do that," Lucy said. "A.C. will come do it if he finishes talking."

"That's OK," I replied. "I want that cart!"

Despite the wild chaos of the energetic shopping gardeners and the long line at checkout, the checkout process is deceptively efficient. As soon as you're done, a Master Gardener or two comes over to your area and tallies up the price. You're out in a jiffy.

You drive home in a haze of excitement, only to have reality sink in upon arrival.

Where will all those plants go? Silly me, I hadn't cleared any areas for new beds, because I was only planning to get "just a couple of things if I find anything interesting."

That also was my plan for the past few Master Gardener plant sales, and clearly, I didn't learn any lessons from that.

Hooray for Hollywood

The Highboro Comic-Con is pleased to announce a new addition to this month's event: all three stars of the hit 1980s sitcom "Nerds of a Feather" will be in attendance for photo opportunities and autograph signings!

Airing every Tuesday night on ANC from 1984-1989, "Nerds of a Feather" followed the life of widower Harold Frump (Burt Massey), a dyed-in-the-wool nerd raising his two preteen sons: Edison (Scotty Weiss), a nerd-in-the-making, and Oscar (Jake Fowler), a football-loving jock!

Who can forget the episode where Harold almost lost his job writing crossword puzzles because Oscar hit his word processor with a croquet mallet, or the time the whole family went to Hawaii and Edison defeated The Big Kahuna in a surf-off? For so many children of the '80s, "Nerds of a Feather" was a cherished family sitcom that proved "Nerd is the word!" We look forward to hosting these wonderful actors later this month at Highboro Comic-Con!

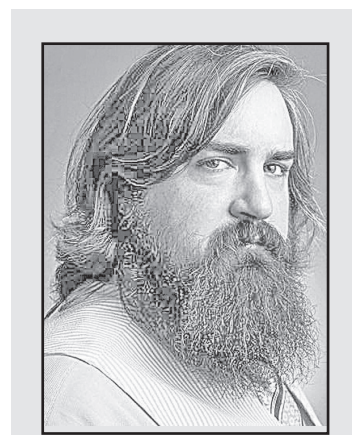
UPDATE

Since we announced a few hours ago that the stars of the 1980s sitcom "Nerds of a Feather" would be in attendance at the upcoming Highboro Comic-Con, several dozen women have come forward with disturbing allegations regarding actor Jake Fowler who played Oscar the jock on the beloved 1980s sitcom. In light of these allegations, Fowler will no longer be attending this event.

UPDATE

Since our last update, it has come to our attention that dozens of women have come forward with disturbing allegations regarding actor Scotty Weiss, who played geeky son Edison on "Nerds of a Feather." In light of these allegations, Weiss will no longer be attending this event.

Fortunately, actor Burt Massey (family patriarch Harold Frump) will still be in attendance. Massey has promised to bring an assortment of the actual crossword puzzles he wrote for "Nerds of a Feather," which he will be auctioning off for charity. We look forward to see-



By Ben R. Williams

ing you at the Highboro Comic-Con!

UPDATE

Since our last update, the FBI has positively identified actor Burt Massey as the Zodiac Killer. Needless to say, Massey will not be in attendance at the Highboro Comic-Con as he is currently being held at Red Onion State Prison.

To make up for this unfortunate turn of events, we have a big surprise in store: Bubby the Chimp! Bubby appeared in the final three seasons of "Nerds of a Feather" as father Harold Frump's lab animal/business associate. Bubby will be in attendance at the Highboro Comic-Con and will be signing autographs. We look forward to seeing you there!

UPDATE

Since our last update, dozens of women have come forward with disturbing allegations regarding Bubby the Chimp, who is currently engaged in a shoot-out with the LAPD and will not be attending the Highboro Comic-Con.

In light of these events, Comic-Con staff has decided to devote the "Nerds of a Feather" booth space to an entirely different kind of talent: writer Mitch Calloway, author of the non-fiction work "Monsters in Our Midst: How powerful, dangerous men hide in plain sight." We look forward to seeing you at the Highboro Comic-Con.

UPDATE

Guys, you ain't gonna believe this.

Forest Service announces milestones in climate action

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service released new data today that shows how the agency has made progress in mitigating the impacts of climate change. The new data, published in the Forest Service Climate Action Tracker, represents a significant milestone in the agency's efforts to keep forests healthy. The agency is also updating its directives to clarify that Indigenous Knowledge can be considered as best-available science in land management decisions that guide forest management, restoration, and climate resilience actions.

"This is not just about tracking what we do, it's about the action we take to ensure our land management decisions incorporate the best available climate science to support the people, communities and landscapes we all depend on," said Forest Service Chief Randy Moore. "The Climate Action Tracker helps us make our forests more resilient and reduces our environmental footprint."

The Climate Action Tracker includes data collected from sources nationwide and shows how the Forest Service has reached goals from its Climate Adaptation Plan for increasing the amount of climate vulnerability information in its environmental analyses. Through the environmental analysis process, the Forest Service is recognizing the impacts of land management decisions on climate change.

Forest Service efforts to mitigate climate change and clarify that Indigenous knowledge can be

a source of best available scientific information is also responsive to President Biden's Executive Order to strengthen forests, communities, and local economies as well as Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack's direction to improve climate resilience and carbon stewardship on national forests and grasslands.

Vilsack also directed the Forest Service to review policies for agency work that involves water, wildlife, wood product innovation, outdoor recreation, and more -- with a focus on climate. This review was guided by public responses and is informing changes to new or revised climate policy, guidance, and training over the next several years.

The Forest Service's climate response also includes work to conserve mature and old-growth forests. A revised Mature and Old Growth Definition and Inventory revised report recently released has new charts that include lands managed by both the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service. The report includes updated estimates from the Forest Inventory and Analysis database as well. Public comments on proposed climate actions are now available which, along with feedback received in mature and old growth engagements, will continue to inform agency actions.

The Forest Service will continue to share plans and progress in its efforts to advance climate adaptation, with the release of a full climate action report and sustainable operations strategy later this spring.

See more at www.henrycountyenterprise.com

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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.

CLASSIFIED AD DEADLINE: MONDAY AT NOON

Call (276) 694-3101

SERVICES

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Positions open until filled.

PROPOSALS WANTED

The West Piedmont Workforce Development Board is seeking proposals from qualified organizations to provide Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) One-Stop Operator and Adult/Dislocated Worker/Youth Program Operator services within the West Piedmont region of Virginia (Area 10).

To view the RFP please visit: www.vcwwestpiedmont.com/content/vcw-westpiedmont/uploads/one-stop_rfp_may_2024.pdf. Completed proposals must be received at the West Piedmont Workforce Development Board office either by mail or in-person no later than 2:00 PM on May 31st, 2024. All questions regarding this solicitation may be sent to Tyler@vcwwestpiedmont.org.

If you've read this far, you can see how a classified ad in the Henry County Enterprise can work. Let our readers know you're hiring with a classified ad in The Enterprise for as little as \$8 a week. Call 276-694-3101 or email submissions@theenterprise.net for more information.

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

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ADVERTISE!

Correction:
Devan Walsh was incorrectly identified in last week's Theatreworks story. We regret the error.

Give us your view:

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.

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

HELP WANTED

Fairy Stone State Park
Now Hiring Multiple Seasonal Positions! Beach Maintenance Ranger, Beach Ranger (Life-guard), Contact Ranger, Food Service Ranger, Maintenance Ranger. www.dcr.virginia.gov/jobs. DCR is EEO Apply online or at the park office:
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As part of our expansion program, our company is looking for part time Work from home Account Manager and sales representatives, it pays \$1700 monthly plus benefits and takes only little of your time. Please contact us for more details. Requirements - Should be computer literate. 2-3 hours access to the internet weekly. Must be over 24yrs of age. Must be Efficient and Dedicated. If you are interested and need more information, contact: Kenneth.bbraun.com@outlook.com for more details.

LEGAL

Notice of Unsafe Structures

To All Owners and Parties in Interest of the Following Properties:

710 W Fayette Street - condemned 3/28/2024

Sons of Solomon Lodge #111 TRS

1004 W Fayette Street - condemned 2/7/2024

Gilbrather Lodge #1 Trustees c/o Lewis Carver - Sec/Treas

All unknown/unidentified Heirs, Lien Holders, and Trustees for the above properties

The City of Martinsville's Inspections Division inspected the above referenced properties and found them to be in violation of the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC) for the maintenance of existing structures. Each property listed above has two or more of the violations listed below:

710 W Fayette Street

PM - 106.1 Unsafe, unsecure structure.

PM -301.3 - Vacant structure not maintained safe and secure.

PM -302.5 - Structure not kept free from rodent harborage.

PM -304.4 Structural members not maintained free from deterioration.

PM -304.6 - Exterior walls not maintained free from holes or breaks.

PM -304.13 - Windows not kept in sound condition.

PM-501.1 - Plumbing service not in compliance.

PM-604.1 - Electrical service not in compliance.

1004 W Fayette Street

PM -106.1 - Unsafe, unsecure structure.

PM -301.3 - Vacant structure not maintained safe and secure.

PM -302.5 - Structure not kept free from rodent harborage.

PM -304.4 - Structural members not maintained free from deterioration.

PM -304.6 - Exterior walls not maintained free from holes or breaks.

PM -304.13 - Windows not kept in sound condition.

PM -501.1 - Plumbing service not in compliance.

PM -604.1 - Electrical service not in compliance.

ORDER

The Building Official has determined that in order to abate the unsafe or dangerous conditions on this property, this building must be razed and removed within (30) days of this notice.

Failure to comply with this order to abate the unsafe and dangerous conditions on this property will result in the City of Martinsville taking action to abate such conditions in accordance with the provisions of Virginia Code Section 15.2-906 and or the USBC, as the Building Code Official deems appropriate. This may result in legal action against you, which would subject you to a fine of up to \$2,500 00, or the City may take the necessary action, up to and including the taking down and removal of this building, and charge the costs or expenses thereof to you. Any charges assessed that are unpaid would constitute a lien in that amount against the property.

Right of Appeal

You have the right to appeal this decision of the Building Code Official to the local Board of Building Code Appeals as provided for in Section 108 of the USBC. A written request for such an appeal shall be made on forms provided by the Code Official, and filed with this office within 14 calendar days from receipt of this notice and accompanied by a fee of \$100.00. Applications for appeal may be obtained in the Inspections Office located in Room #217 of the Municipal Building on West Church Street, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.

email us DHALL@THEENTERPRISE.NET

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Carter Bank and Trust Honored with 2024 Chancellor's Award for Leadership in Philanthropy

Carter Bank and Trust of Martinsville, Virginia, received the 18th Annual Chancellor's Award for Leadership in Philanthropy. The organization was nominated for the award by Patrick & Henry Community College.

Hosted by the Virginia Foundation for Community College Education (VFCCE), more than two dozen individuals, families, and organizations have earned the 2024 Chancellor's Award for Leadership in Philanthropy. The awards were presented at a luncheon ceremony in Richmond on Tuesday, April 16, 2024. VCCS Chancellor Dr. David Doré served as emcee, and The Honorable Maurice Jones was featured as the keynote speaker.

"Virginia's growth, prosperity, and well-being depend on the success of our community college system and the success of our students," said Jones. "From childcare and housing assistance to reducing food insecurity, we must care and invest in the whole student for students and the Commonwealth to be successful."

This year's class of distinguished philanthropy leaders has collectively contributed \$17 million dollars to Virginia's Community Colleges. With appreciation to event sponsors and the VFCCE, each college will receive \$3,000 in honor of their philanthropy leader to support the college's student success fund.

Carter Bank & Trust has been a valued corporate partner to Patrick & Henry Community College for over 10 years. In addition to the financial and in-kind dona-



Renee Hodges, Tiffani Underwood (P&HCC Foundation Director), Maurice Jones (Carter Bank & Trust Board Member), Dr. David Dore (VCCS chancellor), Loran Adams (Carter Bank & Trust Director of Regulatory Risk Management), Lisa France (Carter Bank & Trust VP-Sr. Consumer Real Estate Underwriter), Bill Kirby (Carter Bank & Trust VP-Commercial Market Manager), Beverly Lyle (Carter Bank & Trust SVP, CRA & Fair Lending Officer), Dr. Greg Hodges (P&HCC president).

tions they have made over the years, they also take an active role in volunteering with the college. Employees from the bank serve on the P&HCC Foundation Board of Directors and on Business and Industry Leadership Councils helping to advise the college on local employer needs. In 2023, Carter reinvested a \$48,000 jobs retention grant award back into the community by donating it to the Patrick & Henry Community College Foundation to support workforce development efforts furthering their longstanding commitment to Patrick & Henry Community College and to the region.

"In the world of philanthropy, there are relationships and then

there are partnerships. While both are important, it is the latter that creates transformational opportunities for change and improves the quality of life of a local citizenry. For well over a decade, Carter Bank & Trust has partnered with Patrick & Henry Community College to help us fulfill our mission of economic mobility for our community. Their investments, their volunteerism, and their leadership have strengthened our college and the region that we serve in innumerable ways," said P&HCC president Dr. Greg Hodges.

Recipients of the 2024 Chancellor's Award for Leadership in Philanthropy are:

Blue Ridge Diane C. Davis and

the late Richard D. "Rick" Davis
Brightpoint Dr. William W. Campbell
Central Virginia Dr. Muriel B. Mickles
Danville Stephen L. Worley
Eastern Shore Beth & Charlie Walker
Germanna Kevin Dillard
Laurel Ridge Rotary Club of Warrenton
Mountain Empire The Anne and Gene Worrell Foundation
Mountain Gateway Philip E. and Carole R. Ratcliffe Foundation
New River Gary Hancock
Northern Virginia Anne & Steve Altizer/Compu Dynamics
Patrick & Henry Carter Bank & Trust
Paul D. Camp The Blocker Foundation
Piedmont Virginia Bank of America Charlottesville Market Rappahannock The Giving Circle of the Catherine Courtney Nursing Professorship Endowment
Reynolds Altria
Southside Virginia Lowe's Foundation
Southwest Virginia Catherine Corte Payne & Family
Tidewater Audrey D. Settle
Virginia Highlands Tony Miller
Virginia Peninsula The Blocker Foundation
Virginia Western The Ellett Family: Lucy R. & Frank T. Ellett; Heather & Frank R. "Russ" Ellett
Wytheville The Estate of Janie Hale Gentry
VFCCE VA529 College Savings Plan

Golden, others promoted by sheriff

Henry County Sheriff's Sgts. Nicholas Golden, Corp. Sam Stone and Tyler Marinus were recently promoted by Henry County Sheriff Wayne Davis. The promotions were based on each officer's hard work and dedication.



Marinus works in the Patrol Division, and is pictured with Davis.



Golden works in corrections at the Adult Detention Center. He is pictured with Sheriff Wayne Davis (left).



Stone works in the Adult Detention Center. She is pictured with Davis.

School Board

(cont. from page 1)

"People need to realize that it comes down to, 'are we getting the raises for our staff or are we fixing facilities,'" Cherie Whitlow, at-large member said. The board intends to follow the Evergreen study to ensure that staff are paid properly.

The required local share is the bare minimum the local government can give to the schools.

"If the local government gives the bare minimum for local share, it really takes away from your facilities budget," said Boone.

The facilities budget was reduced by \$1.3 million under the current budget, to \$100,000. The instructional budget was reduced by \$600,000 - a \$300,000 reduction to technology and a \$160,000 reduction to administration.

"We felt that we justified every request within that budget," Superintendent Dr. Amy Blake-Lewis said, adding that the division needs to be proactive in addressing facilities needs like roofing and wiring before turning into larger issues.

"We had a water leak at FC Middle (School)

over spring break. It's estimated to repair, that it's going to cost about \$50,000," she said. "If this was for next year's budget, that one event would wipe out about half of the facility budget."

Several proposed policy revisions were approved, including a revision to the homework policy.

"We still are endorsing homework in the division. How and where are we going to address this" asked Ben Gravely, of the Iriswood District.

"Guidelines will go to schools to principals, to teachers, and to families on what is the best practice surrounding homework," Blake-Lewis said. Student Handbooks will still include guidance for giving homework to students.

"Those guidelines will still be there, specifically referencing amounts of homework that are appropriate by grade level and/or times when homework should or shouldn't be assigned," said Blake-Lewis.

Gravely also asked if there was a best practice to get the revised guidelines to teachers.

"We have talked to senior leadership about providing a summary document that is shared with all individuals within the district," said Blake-Lewis.

In other matters:

*Britney Meeks was appointed to a one-year position as the Clerk of the Board.

*The school board also approved the submission of the VSBA Workforce Readiness Application, awarded a contract for heating fuel and oil to Davenport Energy, and approved a tire contract to both Jimmy's Retreading and McCarthy Tire Service.

*Three school buses were approved for replacement at a total cost of \$ 380,781 from the FY24 budget, and two categorical transfers were made. The June meeting will include changes to the Code of Conduct presented to the board for approval.

*Recognized RUSecure CTF Finals and National Cybersecurity Scholars.

*Recognized Teacher Appreciation Week.

*Recognized School Nurse Appreciation Day.

Small Businesses

(cont. from page 1)

"The biggest value of this is all of the recipients were members of our class along with the small business development center, and our clients are the ones who made the awards. That is the ultimate honor I can get," said Scales.

Houston Stutz received the Young Professional of the Year award for his work at the Monogram Foods Smith River Sports Complex.

"My goal is to provide a better place for the Martinsville Henry County residents to live and impact the youth," said Stutz, and added the sports complex has been busy the past few weeks, with more games coming up.

Reed Electrical Solutions received the Small

Business of the Year award; Wig's Unlimited & The Cottage Salon won Small Business of the Year Retail.

"I feel very blessed, and I was just overwhelmed when I found out that I won this award. I see it as a ministry," said Ella Wickham, owner of Wigs Unlimited.

Brand Builders LLC won Best Manufacturing.

"I was a little bit taken aback that we were recognized," said Sheila Williams, the owner of Brand Builders, which plans to expand into a larger factory operation and is currently looking for more staff to hire. "It's a good feeling."

The Ground Floor won Small Business of the Year in Uptown Martinsville, and its owner,

Josh Blancas, announced that it will be starting up a new coffee-roasting business called Third Shift Coffee. The new start-up is expected to launch this summer.

"We will be the supplier of the coffee shop but also sell it across the region," Blancas said. He added that he is happy the business has made an impact on the community.

Phillip. "I've used some of those businesses that have won awards today. Mr. Reed and his electrical company have worked for my church, and Mr. Scales and I serve on the Martinsville City industrial development authority together," Phillips said, and added that he is pleased with the awards and felt that the Chamber of Commerce is hitting its stride again.

Free Professional Development Seminars offered to Virginia Educators

The Virginia War Memorial is offering two professional development opportunities for Virginia educators during June and July.

These 2024 Summer Teacher Institutes are free and open to all educators from throughout the Commonwealth and are tailored to those teaching middle and high school students. Both Teacher Institutes are held at the Memorial in downtown Richmond and include lunch, materials, and resources plus free parking onsite. Participants may be eligible to receive recertification points for attending.

Space is limited and pre-registration to participate in either or both of the Summer Teacher Institutes is required. For more information and to register to attend, visit <https://vawarmemorial.org/learn/schoolteachers/professionaldevelopment/>

Presenters for the seminars include Virginia War Memorial Director of Education James Triesler, Virginia War Memorial Archivist Sylvia Marshall, Major General Mari K. Eder (U.S. Army, Retired), the author of *The Girls Who Stepped Out of Line*, and the staff of the National D-Day Memo-

rial. Topics, dates and times for the Summer Teacher Institutes are:

*Topic: Connecting Students to History: A Workshop on Research, Writing and Photography

Date: Tuesday, June 18 (One Day)

Time: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

*Topic: Normandy and Beyond: The Fight for Freedom

Dates: Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, July 16, 17 and 18 (Three Days)

Times: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. (Tuesday and Thursday)

7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Wednesday) for chartered bus trip from Virginia War Memorial to National D-Day Memorial in Bedford, Virginia and return to Richmond.

"We invite all Virginia educators, especially those who teach history and social studies, to join us for these exciting and informative Summer Teacher Institute sessions. Education is one of the primary missions of the Virginia War Memorial and educating those who teach our young people is one of the best ways we can fulfill this mission," said Triesler. "I encourage teachers to join us and register to attend either or both of these free seminars today."

Social Health Connector tool launched

No Wrong Door Virginia has launched Social Health Connector, an innovative and award-winning online tool aimed at bolstering social connections and combating social isolation among Virginians. Developed in partnership with leading tech experts, Social Health Connector offers a unique and personalized approach to addressing the critical issue of social isolation.

No Wrong Door Virginia, a division of the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, held a virtual launch on March 20, which included recorded remarks from First Lady of Virginia Suzanne Youngkin, who said, "As our world continues to fight against the growing threat of social isolation, we must work together to foster support and encourage the well-being of others. That is exactly what the Social Health Connector tool is doing."

Social Health Connector offers a virtual survey through Virginia Easy Access, inviting people to answer a series of confidential, open-ended questions to assess their social connections and preferences. Driven by the 211 Virginia database, the tool generates a personalized Social Health Connection Plan with recommendations from local, vetted resources (for Virginia residents). The tool

leverages machine learning to enhance the relevancy of insights and resources offered to each user.

As part of its Commit to Connect campaign, the Administration for Community Living (ACL) selected Social Health Connector as winner of its 2021 MENTAL Health Innovation Challenge in partnership with United Way Worldwide and 211 Virginia. ACL awarded \$450,000 to fund the project.

"Virginia's Area Agencies on Aging have been charged with creating a culture of social connection, creating communities where older adults are recognized, valued and cherished. We believe the Social Health Connector tool will help support these efforts," said Amy Strite, executive director of Senior Connections, The Capital Area Agency on Aging.

"Social connections improve our health, well-being and the human experience. No Wrong Door Virginia has embraced this journey with our network of partners, building a tool that supports Virginians in finding meaningful community resources," said No Wrong Door Virginia Director Sara Link.

For more information about Social Health Connector or to access the tool, visit https://easyaccess.virginia.gov/soheco_survey.

Youngkin appoints new member to NCI board

Kevin B. Laine, an executive vice president at ValleyStar Credit Union, was appointed to the Board of Directors of New College Institute (NCI). Gov. Glenn Youngkin's office officially announced Laine's appointment to the position on March 15.

"I am honored by this opportunity," said Laine. "I look forward to collaborating with my fellow board members to advance the mission of NCI and support its initiatives to provide innovative educational opportunities to the community."

Laine has held various leadership positions, including Vice President of Facilities and Security, Vice President of Human Resources, and Vice President of Branch Operations. Laine's proficiency spans across collections, consumer lending, indirect lending, and mortgage lending. His wealth of knowledge and understanding make him a valuable asset to the board, according to a release.

"Kevin's appointment is a testament to his exemplary leadership skills, unwavering dedication, and extensive expertise," said Mike Warrell, president and CEO of the credit union. "We're confi-

dent that his strategic vision and commitment to excellence will greatly contribute to the mission and objectives of The New College Institute."

Laine "is a lifelong learner and currently serves on the Foundation Board for Patrick and Henry Community College, where he was instrumental in implementing and expanding our annual academic scholarships for the college, which now total over \$60,000. This has helped numerous students achieve their individual foundation of education, thus bettering their lives today and well into the future," Warrell said.

In addition to his professional accomplishments, Laine holds an MBA from Averett University and a Bachelor of Social Work from Ferrum College. He is actively involved in community service and currently serves on the board of directors for the Patrick & Henry Community College Foundation. Laine is also a 2001 graduate of the Southeast Regional Credit Union National Association Management School and has been an active participant in Virginia Credit Union League events and the Piedmont Chapter of Credit Unions.



Wiggington receives certificate

Matthew Wiggington, a Henry County Sheriff's deputy, was the recipient of the Certificate of Appreciation for May. Wiggington will receive two free meals from Chopstix Martinsville-VA and four movie passes from Hollywood Cinema. Wiggington (center), is flanked by Henry County Sheriff Wayne Davis (left), and Michael Jarrett (right).

Virginia to offer nutrient management training in June

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation will offer a two-part agriculture nutrient management training in June. The training is for anyone interested in learning about the development of agricultural nutrient management plans or how to become a certified plan writer.

The first session, June 11-12, is a lecture series by Virginia Tech professors on soil science, soil fertility and crop production. This is a virtual course hosted through Microsoft Teams and will run from 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. each day. Registration is \$150 with a deadline of June 3.

The second session, June 25-27, will cover nutrient management plan writing using a case-study farm. The training will be held in the Bioscience Building of Blue Ridge Community College in Weyers Cave. Each day will run from 9 a.m. until 4:30

p.m. Registration is \$150 with a deadline of June 17.

Nutrient management continues to be an important factor in a farmer's decision-making process when considering application of materials to supply nutrients to crops and forages. Nutrient management plans determine rates for applying manure, fertilizers, biosolids and other soil amendments so that yields are maximized, and nutrient loss to ground and surface waters is minimized. Application rates are determined by a process using actual yield records or soil productivity when yield records aren't available.

To register and for more information on nutrient management certification please visit www.dcr.virginia.gov/nmtrain.

Contact Stephanie Dawley at 804-382-3911 or Stephanie.Dawley@dcr.virginia.gov for additional details.

Teachers offered environmental education training through Extension

Virginia Cooperative Extension in collaboration with the Southwest Virginia Chapter of the Society of American Foresters and other members of the forest industry – is offering an environmental education opportunity for teachers from July 8-11.

The Trees to Products program is designed to correlate with the Virginia Standards of Learning for grades K - 12. It awards 30 hours of professional development credits for participants, along with Project Learning Tree certification.

"We are pleased to offer this program for teachers again this year," said Bill Worrell, Extension agent for forestry and natural resources in Southwest Virginia. "This is an excellent opportunity for teachers to get an in-the-field tour of sustainable forest-management techniques, as well as professional development credits, at a very low cost."

Teachers will tour key forest-industry sites to learn about sustainable forest

management. They will also learn about how forests provide wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities, and the importance of forests in view-shed and water-quality efforts. Participants will see how trees are converted into a variety of everyday products.

In addition, teachers will receive Project Learning Tree® certification at the completion of the course. Project Learning Tree is a multidisciplinary environmental education program of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative for educators of students in grades pre-kindergarten through 12.

Participants pay a \$25 registration fee for the four-day conference. The costs of all meals, transportation, and lodging are provided by the sponsors, with the exception of transportation to the conference headquarters in Wise, Va.

Register at <https://forms.gle/NHsbmGdwuqqCSzf19>, or for more information, contact Bill Worrell at (276) 889-8056 or bworrell@vt.edu.

Digital Delivery Scams

If you're like many Americans, the arrival of a package at your doorstep is a common occurrence. In the age of digital shopping, it has become harder than ever to keep track of what is coming, when and from whom. This new reality has led directly to the rise of the digital package delivery scam.

These scams start with a text message claiming that your package has been kept on hold because of an issue with your address, insufficient postage, or nobody was home to receive it. This type of impostor scam will claim to be from the U.S. Postal Service, UPS or FedEx delivery, to name a few, and will include a link to a website that looks legitimate.

Once there you'll be asked

to verify personal information like your address or login credentials or pay a postage or delivery fee. According to the Federal Trade Commission, Americans reported \$330 million in theft from text scams in 2022, more than double the reported losses from the year before.

To avoid these scams, never click on links or call phone numbers from random text messages. If you think there is an issue with a package you've ordered, go directly to the retailer or shipper's website and check for yourself.

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.

County, PSA recognize employees at banquet

Henry County and the Henry County PSA recognized several employees, who have contributed a combined total of 350 years of public service, at a recent Employee Service Awards Banquet.



Mike Arnold (left) was recognized for his 35 years of service. He is pictured with Dustin Christian, director of Maintenance.



Tim Pace (right), director of Engineering, was recognized for 30 years of service. He is pictured with County Administrator Dale Wagoner.



Richard Smith was recognized for 30 years of service. He is pictured with Steve Clary, director of PSA Construction & Maintenance.



Cheryl Martin (right) was recognized for 25 years of service. She is pictured with Henry County Circuit Court Judge James R. McGarry.



County Attorney George Lyle was recognized for 20 years of service. He is pictured with Jim Adams, chairman of the Henry County Board of Supervisors.



Darrell Jones is pictured with County Administrator Dale Wagoner. Jones, the county's Chief Financial Officer, was recognized for 20 years of service.



Tierra Dillard was recognized for 15 years of service. She is pictured with Assistant County Administrator J.R. Powell.



Brandon Kitchen (left) was recognized for 15 years of service. He is pictured with Steve Clary, director of PSA Construction & Maintenance.



Brandon Helms was recognized for 5 years of service. He is pictured with Tim Pace, director of Engineering.



Dustin Christian (right) was recognized for his 5 years of service. He is pictured with Assistant County Administrator J.R. Powell.



Jessica Loveday (right) was recognized for 5 years of service. She is pictured with Tierra Dillard, director of the Martinsville-Henry County 911 Center.



Hali Clifton was recognized for 5 years of service. She is pictured with Tierra Dillard (left), director of the Martinsville-Henry County 911 Center.



Drew Nolen was recognized for 5 years of service. He is pictured with Mark Alley, director of Information Services.



Gary Gammons (left) was recognized for 5 years of service. He is pictured with Roger Adams, director of Parks & Recreation.



Lucas Draper, Safety Manager, was recognized for 5 years of service. He is pictured with Michelle Via, director of Human Resources.

Meeting for US 220 study set, online survey available May 21 - June 3

In response to a request from the Virginia General Assembly, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is developing a plan for improvements for approximately 6.5 miles of U.S. 220 in Henry County between U.S. 58 and the North Carolina border.

VDOT is studying potential safety and operational improvements and will evaluate realigning and reconfiguring the existing corridor. The study is expected to be completed in fall 2024 and will provide decision makers with alternatives to consider for future funding.

VDOT will host a public information meeting about the study on Tuesday, May 21, from 5 to 7 p.m. at Drewry Mason Elementary School, located at 45 Drewry Mason School Road in Ridgeway. A presentation will be made at 5:15 p.m. followed by an "open house" meeting where VDOT representatives will be present to answer

questions.

Meeting attendees and survey participants will provide input on the improvement concepts being considered for U.S. 220. As part of this study, VDOT will request public input through an online survey that will be open for responses from noon on May 21 through 11:59 p.m. June 3. The survey will be available online at <https://publicinput.com/route220study>.

The study will focus on strategic improvements such as innovative intersection designs and modifying access along U.S. 220 between U.S. 58 and Route 87 to improve safety and traffic flow. The potential improvements also include reconstructing and straightening the southbound lanes of U.S. 220 between Route 87 and the state line.

Innovative intersections concepts being considered include Restricted Crossing U-turns (RCUT) and thru-cuts. An RCUT

would redirect vehicles that currently turn left onto Route 220 to make right turns and proceed to make a U-turn. Thru-cut intersections would redirect through traffic from side streets to turn left or right onto U.S. 220 to turn directly into businesses or to use a nearby crossover to make a U-turn.

Previous studies for U.S. 220 between U.S. 58 and the North Carolina border, such as the I-73 Environmental Impact Statement and the Martinsville Southern Connector Study, were broader in scope and focused on limited access alternatives for this corridor. These projects would require a greater investment than safety and operational enhancements for the existing corridor.

Anyone requiring special assistance to attend and participate in the public information meeting may contact VDOT's Civil Rights Division at 540-387-5552, 1-800-367-7623, or TTY/TDD 711.

OBITUARIES

Linda Joann Foster Crowe



craft and crocheter. She loved traveling to Ocean Isle Beach, North Carolina where she spent many hours. She was a loving and dedicated member of Free Worship Baptist Church; she thoroughly enjoyed her friends there.

The family would like to send a special thank you to the cherished caregivers at Mountain Valley Hospice for their dedicated service and time.

A funeral service will be held Wednesday, May 8, 2024, at 1:00 PM, at the Bassett Funeral Service Chapel, with Pastor Leonard Hall officiating. The family will accept friends one hour prior to the service. Interment will follow at Henry Memorial Park.

Online condolences may be made by visiting www.bassettfuneralservice.com. Bassett Funeral Service is serving the Crowe Family.

Randall, Jacob (Cindy) Prillaman, Tabatha (Brandon) Miller (Jackson Morley), Grayson Morley, and Carson Morley; 12 great grandchildren; and brothers, Bill (Phyllis) Cline, Arthur (June) Cline, and Danny Cline.

Linda grew up in Mohawk, West Virginia and later moved to Bassett to raise a family. She worked at Stanley Furniture, Tultex, and retired from Bassett Walker Inc. She has a passion for gardening, and especially loved yellow flowers. In addition, Linda was a gifted

Linda Joann Foster Crowe, 82, of Bassett, VA passed away peacefully, in her home, on Thursday, May 2, 2024, surrounded by her loving family. Linda was born on May 15th, 1941, in Mohawk, West Virginia to the late Beulah and Woodrow Cline. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by Son, Mark Denning Foster; brother, Leroy Cline; Sisters, Dorothy Barbour and Deborah Cline.

Linda left behind the following legacy; Jimmie Cecil Crowe of Bassett, Virginia; son, Leonard Stephen (Nancy) Foster of Bassett, Virginia; daughters, Donna (Dean) Prillaman of Martinsville, Virginia and April (Tim) Morley of Charlotte, North Carolina; grandchildren, Will (Sherry) Foster, Mark (Kayla) Foster, Elizabeth (Marty) Gruber, Sandra (Charlie)



Historical Society joins NARM, which means more benefits for members

Now membership in the Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society may grant you admission to more than 700 other museums and cultural institutions in the nation, and 600 more in five other countries, depending on your membership type.

The Martinsville-Henry County Heritage Center & Museum has joined the North American Reciprocal Museum (NARM) Association®. The MHC Historical Society pays an annual fee to be included. Through NARM (narmassociation.org), MHC Historical Society members at a certain tier and above receive free or reduced admission and gift shop discounts in more than 1,300 museums and cultural institutions in six countries.

NARM guidelines state that reciprocal benefits are for museum members who pay \$100 or above per year for membership to the institution, and either a gold NARM sticker or the printed sticker replica must be on the qualifying members' card in order to receive NARM benefits at other participating institutions. Only members with the correct identification on their membership cards receive the NARM benefits. Guests are not included.

The MHC Historical Society is developing new optional higher-tier membership packages to grant benefits with the new museum annex which is expected to be open in late fall or early winter. These are in addition to the lower cost memberships that will remain in effect. NARM membership is one of those benefits. As memberships come up for renewal, cards for the levels which offer NARM will be issued. That will start at the Bronze level (\$150-249). If you would like a NARM membership card before then, simply contact the museum (mh-historical-society@gmail.org; 276-403-4697).

If your membership is not at the required level to take advantage of NARM privileges, you may upgrade your membership. If you made an additional donation when you joined which would equal \$100 or more between the membership and the donation, you already qualify. Within an hour's drive of Martinsville, the MHC Historical Society's membership in NARM grants admission to the Danville Museum of Fine Arts and History, Taubman Museum of Art, Green Hill Center for North Carolina Art, Reynolda House Museum of American Art and Lam Museum of Anthropology, Wake Forest University. In total, 26 museums and cultural institutions in Virginia are NARM members, and 23 in North Carolina.

Restrictions apply. Contact Holly Kozelsky, executive director, with questions.

Below is the full list of participating museums and cultural institutions in Virginia and North Carolina:

- Virginia**
- Abingdon, William King Museum of Art, 276-628-5005
- Arlington, Arlington Historical Museum/Arlington Historical Society
- Charlottesville, The Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia, 434-924-3592
- Danville, Danville Museum of Fine Arts and History, 434-793-5644
- Harrisonburg, Virginia Quilt Museum, 540-433-3818
- Lynchburg, Maier Museum of

- Art at Randolph College, 434-947-8136
- Manassas, The Manassas Museum, 703-368-1873
- Middleburg, National Sporting Library & Museum, 540-687-6542
- Newport News, The Mariners' Museum and Park, 757-596-2222
- Newport News, Mary M. Torggler Fine Arts Center, 757-594-0800
- Norfolk, The Hermitage Museum and Gardens, 757-423-2052
- Onancock, Shore History, 757-787-8012
- Petersburg, Petersburg Area Art League, 804-861-4611
- Reston, Tephra Institute of Contemporary Art, 703-471-9242
- Richmond, American Civil War Museum, 804-780-1865
- Richmond, Maymont, 804-525-9000
- Richmond, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts**, 804-340-1400
- Richmond, Virginia Museum of History & Culture, 804-340-1800
- Richmond, Wilton House Museum, 804-282-5936
- Roanoke, Taubman Museum of Art, 540-204-4119
- South Boston, South Boston-Halifax County Museum of Fine Arts & History, 434-572-9200
- Virginia Beach, Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum, 757-437-8432
- Virginia Beach, Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), 757-425-0000
- Williamsburg, Muscarelle Museum of Art, 757-221-2707
- Winchester, Museum of the Shenandoah Valley
- North Carolina**
- Asheville, Asheville Art Museum*, 828-253-3227
- Blowing Rock, Blowing Rock Art & History Museum, 828-295-9099
- Boone, Turchin Center for the Visual Arts/Appalachian State University, 828-262-3017
- Carrboro, Franklin Street Arts Collective | FRANK Gallery, 919-636-4135
- Chapel Hill, Ackland Art Museum, 919-966-5736; 919-962-0837
- Charlotte, Bechtler Museum of Modern Art**, 704-353-9200
- Charlotte, The Mint Museum**, 704-337-2000
- Cherokee, Museum of the Cherokee Indian, 828-497-3481
- Durham, The Nasher Museum of Art/Duke University*, 919-684-5135
- Greensboro, Green Hill Center for North Carolina Art, 336-333-7460
- Greenville, The Greenville Museum of Art, 252-758-1946
- Highlands, The Bascom, 828-526-4949
- Newton, Southeastern Narrow Gauge & Shortline Museum, 980-858-4266
- North Wilkesboro, Wilkes Art Gallery, 336-667-2841
- Raleigh, Joel Lane Museum House, Inc. **, 919-833-3431
- Raleigh, North Carolina Museum of Art*, 919-839-6262
- Raleigh, North Carolina Museum of History***, 919-814-7000
- Salisbury, Waterworks Visual Arts Center, 704-636-1882
- Statesville, Iredell Museums, 704-873-4734
- Tryon, Tryon Arts and Crafts School, 828-859-8323
- Wilmington, Cameron Art Museum, 910-395-5999
- Wilmington, Cape Fear Museum, 910-798-4370
- Winston-Salem, Lam Museum of Anthropology, Wake Forest University, 336-758-5282
- Winston-Salem, Reynolda House Museum of American Art**, 336-758-5150

California Man Sentenced for Trafficking Fentanyl into Virginia

A Buena Park, California man, who supplied as many as 30,000 pressed fentanyl pills a week to individuals who then shipped the pills into Southwest Virginia, was sentenced last week to 18 years in federal prison.

Robert Contreras, 24, a.k.a. “Quill,” previously pleaded guilty to one count of conspiring to distribute and possession with the intent to distribute 400 grams or more of fentanyl, and one count of possessing a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime. In addition to his prison term, Contreras was ordered today to forfeit five firearms and \$31,294 in cash.

“Fentanyl, especially in the form of pressed pills, is taking its toll on America, and Virginia is no exception. This case, involving the collaboration of law enforcement agencies across the country, is a prime example of the proactive measures undertaken by this Department of Justice to combat the burgeoning pressed pill epidemic currently plaguing our nation,” United States Attorney Christopher R. Kavanaugh said. “We will investigate, prosecute and hold accountable those who profit by poisoning our communities, and – as exhibited here – we will work up the chain of drug traffickers as far and wide as possible to bring them to account.”

According to court documents, between 2020 and 2023, Contreras sold between 10,000 and 30,000 pressed fentanyl pills at a time to co-conspirator Marco Orozco at least once a week. At the height of the conspiracy in late 2021 and early 2022, Contreras sold Orozco 10,000 pressed fentanyl pills multiple times per week. The pills were then shipped from California to Southwest Virginia and other locations across the country for further distribution. Specifically, Orozco's sub-distributors used various social media platforms to fa-



U.S. Attorney Christopher R. Kavanaugh

facilitate their drug trade.

On March 6, 2023, a search warrant was executed at Contreras' residence in California. At that time, officers recovered 1,639 pressed fentanyl pills, \$31,294 in cash, and five firearms without serial numbers, in addition to approximately 7,000 alprazolam pills, 3,000 Adderall pills, 242 grams of cocaine, and other hallucinogenic narcotics.

The Wise County Sheriff's Office, the Norton Police Department, the Southwest Virginia Drug Task Force (consisting of the Wise County Sheriff's Office, the Scott County Sheriff's Office, the Lee County Sheriff's Office, the Norton Police Department, the Big Stone Gap Police Department, and the Virginia State Police), the Orange County (CA) Sheriff's Department, the Santa Ana (CA) Police Department, the Anaheim (CA) Police Department, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives, and the United States Postal Inspection Service investigated the case.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Lena L. Busscher prosecuted the case.

VA can bolster higher education access for incarcerated people

Edwin J. Viera
Virginia News Connection

Virginia advocates believe more can be done to make higher education accessible to incarcerated people.

Only a handful of community colleges partner with less than half of the state's correctional facilities to help people obtain associate's degrees.

In 2023, incarcerated people became eligible for federal Pell Grants, supporting tuition costs for low-income individuals.

Terri Erwin, director of the Virginia Consensus for Higher Education in Prison, an initiative of the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy, said the General Assembly can help grow the programs.

“I think that the General Assembly can be kind of a third leg in the stool in supporting the collaboration as it develops between the Department of Corrections and the institutions of higher education,” Erwin asserted. “What might be needed depends in part on how those relationships develop.”

Higher education's shift to technology was one big challenge in maintaining this access during the pandemic.

She noted Virginia did not pivot the same way, yet technology solutions in states such as Tennessee and Maine provided secure learning management and intranet access to incarcerated students. Despite the challenges, higher education in prison has grown nationwide in recent years.

Studies show some benefits of these programs are a 43% reduction in recidivism and a 13% increase in post-release employment. Erwin emphasized the programs can be transformative for people.

“It's an opportunity to reenter society with just one more similarity to folks who have been on the outside all along,” Erwin pointed out. “It helps to move past some of the stigma. It gives them a hook to put their hat on as they move forward in looking for jobs and telling the story about who they are.”

Formerly incarcerated people reentering society face numerous obstacles. Programs such as SNAP and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families are proven to reduce recidivism by 10% but having a criminal background disqualifies someone's eligibility for both social programs and unemployment insurance.

School board fills five administrative posts

The Henry County School Board at a May 2 meeting approved the Superintendent Dr. Amy Blake-Lewis recommendations to fill several administrative positions for the 2024-25 school year.

"I am pleased to welcome each of these administrators to their new roles for the 2024-2025 school year," said Blake-Lewis. "Their dedication to student learning and growth will continue to propel our students towards future success."

Appointments, as outlined below, are effective July 1.

Marcie Seay has been appointed director of student support services. Seay currently is the principal at Axton Elementary School. She joined the county school division in 1998 and has served students as an elementary and secondary teacher, an administrative intern, and elementary principal.

"I am deeply honored for the opportunity to continue to serve Henry County students in this capacity. The journey through education is not just about academic milestones; it's about cultivating an environment where every student is supported, valued, and empowered to reach their true potential. I look forward to collaborating with administrators to continue our efforts in building such an environment," she said.

Jo Ellen Hylton will be returning as principal at Meadow View Elementary School. Hylton has more than 15 years of progressive educational leadership experience in the division, having served as principal at the elementary, middle and high school levels before spending the past two years as director of human resources in Danville Public Schools.

"I am honored and thrilled to have been selected for the principalship at Meadow View Elementary and eager to contribute to the success and growth of the school community. My vision for Meadow View is to provide a nurturing environment that promotes academic excellence and personal growth for all students," Hylton



Marcie Seay

said. "I am committed to working collaboratively with teachers, staff, students, and families to create a positive and supportive learning environment where all students grow. I am thankful for this opportunity and look forward to making a positive contribution to the lives of the Meadow View school community."

David "Marty" Ingram will succeed Seay as principal at Axton Elementary School. A veteran educator, Ingram will relocate to the county from Albemarle, North Carolina. He has served as an elementary and middle school teacher, literacy facilitator, and secondary assistant principal, currently serving as assistant principal at Albemarle Middle School.

"I am very excited about taking the next step in my career as principal of Axton Elementary School, and I look forward to forming relationships with the staff, students and community," he said.

Michael Minter, Jr., has been named principal at Bassett High School. Currently director of CTE and Career Academy. Minter has served in various capacities over the past two decades, including secondary teacher, athletic director, high school assistant principal, coordinator of regional alternative, and director of assessment.

"I am truly honored and excited



Jo Ellen Hylton



David "Marty" Ingram



Michael Minter, Jr.



Eric Ross

to accept the position of principal at Bassett High School. I am committed to fostering a positive and inclusive learning environment where students can thrive academically and personally," Minter said. "I look forward to working collaboratively with the staff, students, parents, and the broader community to continue the tradition of excellence. Together, we can create a vibrant and supportive educational experience for all. Thank you for this incredible opportunity; I am eager to embark on this journey with the Bassett community."

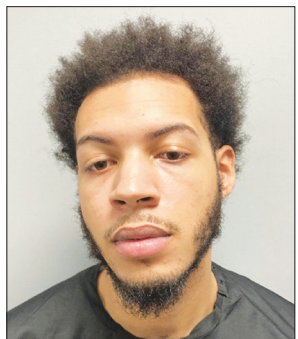
Eric Ross will be principal at Stanleytown Elementary School.

Ross has held progressive roles in Henry County schools, from special population paraprofessional to teacher and then administrator. He currently serves as assistant principal at G.W. Carver Elementary School.

"I'm deeply honored and excited about the opportunity to join the Stanleytown Elementary family. I look forward to the opportunity to build strong connections with the Stanleytown community to support our students in their academic growth and achievements," he said. "I eagerly anticipate the remarkable accomplishments that Stanleytown will achieve as we continue to put students first."



Donte Cheron Freeman aka Leonard Cheron Freeman



Pindarius Verdonte Simmons



Johnny Alphonso Harley

Months long investigation yields arrests

A months-long investigation into the illegal possession, manufacturing, and distribution of narcotics culminated on Tuesday, April 30, with the Henry County Sheriff's Office and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) executing search warrants at 66 Valentine Ct, Martinsville, 134 Preston-Scales Dr., Martinsville, and 439 Ziglar Road, Martinsville.

During this investigation, more than 1.5 pounds of suspected fentanyl, approximately a quarter pound of suspected cocaine, and a quantity of methamphetamine and marijuana were seized. The United States Drug Enforcement Administration reports that two milligrams of fentanyl can potentially be a lethal dose; this seizure contains thousands of lethal doses that won't make it to the streets of Henry County.

In addition, six illegally possessed firearms, three vehicles, and an undisclosed amount of U.S. currency, along with equipment used to aid in the distribution of illegal narcotics, such as digital scales and packaging materials, were seized.

So far, as a result of this investigation, three were arrested:

- Donte Cheron Freeman, also known as (aka) Leonard Cheron Freeman, 42, 2118 The Great Road, Fieldale, is currently held in the Henry County Adult Detention Center on no bond on one count of possession of Schedule I or II drug with the intent to distribute, 3rd offense (Cocaine).
- Pindarius Verdonte Simmons, 24, 2363 Willie Craig Road, Bassett, is currently held in the Henry County Adult Detention

Center on no bond on one count each possession of Schedule I or II drug with the intent to distribute (Fentanyl); possession of a firearm by a convicted felon and possession of a firearm while in possession of a scheduled I/II substance.

- Johnny Alphonso Harley, 51, 134 Preston Scales Road., Martinsville, is currently held in the Henry County Adult Detention Center on no bond on one count each possession of Schedule I or II drug with the intent to distribute, (Fentanyl & Cocaine); possession of a firearm by a convicted felon and possession of a firearm while in possession of a scheduled I/II substance.

The drug operation has dealt a blow to the drug trade in Henry County, and we intend to send a clear message that such illegal activities will not be tolerated in our community, Sheriff Wayne Davis said in a release.

This investigation is ongoing, and if anyone has any information related to this investigation or narcotics trafficking, you are encouraged to call the Henry County Sheriff's Office at (276) 638-8751 or Crimestoppers at 63-CRIME (632-7463).

The Crimestoppers Program offers rewards of up to \$2,500 for information related to crime. The nature of the crime and the substance of the information determine the amount of reward paid. Crimestoppers is an anonymous tip line that helps local law enforcement agencies by soliciting tips from individuals and forwarding that information to the particular agency.

Trade association names Virginia the top state

for most economic impact by sports tourism

Sports ETA, the trade association for the sports events and tourism industry, named Virginia in its Top 10 list of U.S. states in terms of the economic impact generated by sports tourism in 2023.

This announcement was made last month at the Sports ETA Symposium in Portland, Oregon in the association's annual "State of the Industry Report" for 2023.

The report stated that in 2022, the Central & Southern Virginia regions had 32% share of sports spending, the highest relative to other regions. Martinsville and Henry County are in the Southern region.

Other regions were Northern Virginia, which accounted for 28%, the Coastal Virginia Region represented 27%, and Western Virginia, which contributed 13% to the total sports spending across the state.

The report also stated that sports tourism across the country contributed to a direct spending impact of \$52.2 billion, which generated a total economic impact of \$128 billion. This contribution supported 757,600 full-time and part-time jobs and contributed \$20.1 billion in taxes to various sectors of the economy.

Data provided by sports tourism industry stakeholders and economic data were used in the ranking analysis. Sports tourism marketing funds and other initiatives, such as bid fees and local grants, also influenced how states performed. Virginia joins other states such as Florida, Texas, and California in its rankings.

According to a study by Virginia Tourism Corporation and Tourism Economics released in 2023, sports tourism in Virginia generated \$2.7 billion in direct spending in 2022 and accounted for nearly 8% of Virginia's overall visitor economy, directly contributing \$2.4 billion in visitor spending. Sports-related travelers spent \$7.3 million every day in Virginia in 2022. Additionally in 2022, sports tourism directly employed 28,138 Virginians and

drove \$344 million in state & local tax revenues.

"We are thrilled to see Virginia's sports tourism industry be acknowledged as one of the best in the country," said Rita McClenny, President & CEO for Virginia Tourism Corporation. "Accolades such as this show the significant impact sports tourism has on the economic growth of the Commonwealth by creating job opportunities, driving development in new infrastructure and venues, increasing tax revenue, and boosting local businesses in the area."

"We are elated to be recognized as a top state in the U.S. in terms of economic impact generated by sport tourism and are very proud of our partners throughout the Commonwealth for their ongoing efforts to make Virginia a premier sports destination," said Danish Saadat, National Sales & Marketing Manager for Virginia Tourism Corporation and representative of Sports Virginia, the statewide collaboration of professionals from local convention and visitor bureaus, sports commissions, parks and recreation departments and facilities.

Sports tourism played a pivotal role in Virginia's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic with visitor spending fully recovering in 2021 and by 2022, exceeding pre-pandemic levels. In 2022, Virginia's sports spending exceeded 2019 levels by 17%, and sports visitation saw an 11% increase compared to 2019 levels. To further speed recovery, Virginia Tourism Corporation utilized \$1 million of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to support a Sports Marketing Incentive Program. The funds were used for event incentives and marketing promotions targeted specifically at attracting new sports tournaments and competitions to spur economic activity and travel across the Commonwealth.

For more information on Virginia Tourism Corporation's 2022 Sports Tourism Impact study, visit vatc.org/research/sports-tourism-impact.

‘Who do you serve?’: Police raze pro-Palestine encampment at VCU, students outraged

By Jack Glagola, Sarah Hagen, Andrew Kerley and Thailon Wilson

The Commonwealth Times

Pro-Palestine VCU students protested what they called the ongoing genocide in Gaza on Monday, April 29, by building an encampment on campus. The protest began with song and dance and ended with pepper spray, smoke bombs and 13 arrests by police.

The incident comes amid a wave of pro-Palestinian protests and consequential arrests on college campuses across the country. In Virginia, at least 94 protesters in total have been arrested at Virginia Tech and the University of Mary Washington over the last week. Students started peaceful protests at the University of Virginia and Christopher Newport University on Tuesday, April 30, and at James Madison University on Wednesday, May 1, according to reports by multiple Virginia newspapers.

Gov. Glenn Youngkin said on Sunday, April 28, the state would permit peaceful protests, but not encampments, according to a previous report by the Virginia Mercury.

Timeline of the April 29 events

The protest began at approximately 8 a.m. when organizers claimed the green space next to James Branch Cabell Library as their “liberated zone for Gaza,” laying out blankets and holding chants.

The “liberated zone,” organized by multiple student groups, was complete with stations for food, toiletries, medicine and even piles of pro-Palestine and abolitionist pamphlet literature stacked up on a wall — much of it donated by people passing by. Students sprawled out on the grass to make art, play their instruments and do their homework.

That afternoon, associate vice president of VCU public relations Michael Porter stated in an email to *The Commonwealth Times* that VCU was committed to upholding and protecting free speech, health and safety while maintaining campus operations.

Protesters held rallies multiple times throughout the day during which they chanted in support of Palestine. Knowing many students were arrested for similar activities on other campuses, organizers held a bail fund training at 4 p.m. and required students to fill out forms with their emergency contact information.

Over 300 protesters gathered to rally at 5 p.m. when Sreen Haddad, a Palestinian student and frequent protest organizer, declared they would not be leaving until their demands were met by VCU.

The demands were:

—To disclose all institutional expenditure including, but not limited to direct and indirect investments, endowments, stocks, bonds and hedge funds.

—To divest from all companies and partnerships that support or otherwise profit off the colonization and genocide of the Palestinian people. This includes full divestment from financial investments, the complete boycotting of Israeli institutions, the termination of relationships with companies active in this apartheid and the refusal of any donations from institutions that support the occupation.

—To defend pro-Palestinian speech and activism on VCU’s campuses, and to support and protect the rights of Palestinian, Arab and Muslim students as well as comrades who have been targeted, harassed and repressed for expressing solidarity with the Palestinian people.

- To declare support for a permanent and immediate ceasefire and an immediate end to the occupation, colonization and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, as well as the condemnation of the United States’ complicity in the ongoing genocide in Gaza.

Protesters formed an encampment immediately after Haddad’s speech, setting up tents, linking arms and briefly holding up wooden pallets to form a wall around the green space. VCU’s vice president of student affairs Aaron Hart then informed multiple students they were now illegally trespassing and in violation of VCU’s Reservation and Use of Space Policy.

The policy states major events are instances other than academic course programs or curriculums approved by the provost, which have an attendance of over 150 people. All major events require advance notice and permission from the university.

Students continued to flood into the encampment through the evening to sing, dance and chant. Rumors that police would arrive began circulating around 7:30 p.m. Officers in riot gear were spotted in the area as early as 6:50 p.m. In response, protesters re-formed the barricade and put on masks to protect their identities and their faces from impending chemical irritants.

Over 50 state, city and campus police officers arrived in riot gear at approximately 8:30 p.m. At approximately 8:40 p.m., police announced to protesters over a bullhorn they violated policy and could be arrested for trespassing — though many students reported they could not hear it.

Riot officers advanced on the crowd at 8:42 p.m., four minutes before a VCU alert calling the situation a “violent protest” was sent out. The Richmond Police Department also declared the gathering to be an “unlawful assembly.”

Students threw water bottles — among other objects — at the approaching police riot line. Officers retaliated by using smoke grenades and chemical irritants, including pepper spray and OC fogger — which can induce effects similar to tear gas. Inside sources say police used CS spray — also similar to tear gas, although VCU Police stated only pepper spray was used.

Officers provided four mass warnings to protesters who did not leave the encampment after tents



Virginia Commonwealth University students outside the library during the pro-Palestine demonstration. They shouted for students inside to join them. Photo by Thailon Wilson/VCU CNS.

and structures went up, according to a statement released by VCU the following morning.

Haddad said in an interview the following day that protesters received no warning that things would escalate.

“We were dancing, we were singing,” Haddad said. “The only thing we were told was that the tents were a violation of policy.”

As campus-wide sirens went off, many students reported they could not go in or out of some campus buildings, including Cabell Library, Cary Street Gym and Shafer Court Dining Center.

Police continued to move in on the protester barricade for over an hour, tearing down tents as they went. Students could be heard chanting “Who do you serve?” “Who do you protect?” and “Peaceful protest!” as they pushed back against officers’ riot shields.

Multiple protesters were thrown to the ground by police and detained in zip-tie handcuffs — many of whom reported injuries including black eyes, cuts, bruises and sprained wrists and shoulders. Haddad said one officer pinned her to the ground and pressed his knee against her neck. Thirteen individuals were arrested — six of whom were students — and charged with unlawful assembly, according to a statement VCU released the following morning.

The encampment was completely destroyed by 9:40 p.m., with most protesters being pushed to the sidelines. “If you leave, we will leave,” students shouted at the police riot wall. Hundreds of students watched the scene play out from the compass and through the windows of Cabell Library.

VCU released a statement at 9:43 p.m. saying the gathering violated several university policies.

“VCU respectfully and repeatedly provided opportunities for those individuals involved — many of whom were not students — to collect their belongings and leave,” the statement reads. “Those who did not leave were subject to arrest for trespassing.”

By 10 p.m., protest organizers urged students to remain calm and hold their line around the green space. Some individuals threw more objects at the police, which organizers repeatedly asked them not to do and to protest peacefully.

Haddad urged protesters to leave through a megaphone at 10:13 p.m.

“We have to remember why we came here in the first place,” Haddad said. “It was to build an encampment in solidarity with the Palestinian people. If you would like to continue that, not to cause chaos, but to be a part of a movement, then you need to leave now, and we will rebuild in the morning.”

The area was clear by 11:50 p.m., according to a VCU alert.

Protesters did not rebuild the encampment the following day

The Cabell Library green space was completely cleared and cleaned as early as 9 a.m. the following morning. Chalk drawings and messages were also removed.

Some students and protesters returned to the area but did not set up an encampment. Gabe Willis, VCU’s associate vice president and dean of student advocacy, handed out flyers detailing a new directive regarding VCU’s reservation of space policy.

The new directive stated that events with an attendance of more than 50 people, instead of the original 150, will be considered major events, and that wearing a mask for the purpose of concealing one’s identity would not be permitted. If students failed to comply with university official’s requests for identification, they would be subject to disciplinary action or arrest.

Organizers directed students to leave the area because they were nervous about the growing police presence.

When asked if they planned to rebuild the encampment, Haddad said the organizers’ priority was to keep students safe. She said the movement would not stop despite the reaction from police, which she described as unnecessary and violent.

Haddad — who said over 100 members of her family have been killed since Oct. 7 — added that the situation in Gaza is not getting better. Israel’s

war in Gaza has killed more than 34,000 people — two-thirds of whom were women and children, according to the Associated Press.

“We are outraged,” Haddad said. “We have a lot of passion in our hearts for this movement, and the fight is not going to end.”

Students, faculty, lawmakers and Rao had mixed reactions

President Michael Rao released a statement the following morning stating individuals violated VCU policy by setting up structures on a campus lawn and remarked on the “complexities” the university faces when it comes to free speech.

“I deeply appreciate those who peacefully expressed their views and the efforts of our staff during this time,” Rao stated.

The heads of multiple VCU schools and departments sent emails to students and created an open letter condemning the university for deploying police on peaceful protesters. Some of the faculty on the list include the Department of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics Chair Rebecca Segal, School of World Studies Director Amy Rector, Department of English Chair Les Harrison and Department of African American Studies Chair Shawn Utsey.

VCU Student Government Association, VCU NAACP and other student organizations have released Instagram statements in support of the protesters and condemning the police response.

Gov. Youngkin weighed in on the social platform X and condemned student protesters for refusing to disperse.

“My administration will continue to fully support campus, local and state law enforcement and university leadership to keep our campuses safe,” Youngkin stated.

Attorney General Jason Miyares released a video statement on X condemning pro-Palestine protests on Virginia campuses.

“For those cowards that assaulted our officers, we will use every resource to track you down,” Miyares said. “We will find you, and we will make sure there’s consequences to your actions.”

A growing list of Virginia lawmakers and politicians have spoken out in support of the student protesters, including U.S. House Rep. Jennifer McClellan, who represents Richmond; 1st District City Councilman Andreas Addison; state Sens. Ghazala Hashmi, D-Richmond and Saddam Salim, D-Fairfax; and Dels. Nadarius Clark, D-Suffolk, Joshua Cole, D-Fredericksburg, Rae Cousins, D-Richmond, Rozia Henson Jr., D-Woodbridge and Adele McClure, D-Arlington.

“Excessive force towards students who are protesting non-violently is unacceptable,” Cousins stated on X. “The right to assemble peacefully is a hallmark of our democracy, which we must protect.”

5th District City Councilwoman Stephanie Lynch reposted Cousins’ statement on X.

Del. Todd Gilbert, R-Shenandoah, called protesters “anti-Semitic” in a post on X.

“Barricades and assaults on police are not merely innocent, non-violent protests,” Gilbert stated.

One second-year student, who preferred to remain anonymous, was pepper sprayed in their eyes. They said they feel betrayed by the university, which says its goal is to keep students safe.

“I love this campus, I love Richmond,” the anonymous student said. “Now I don’t feel safe going back there.”

Another anonymous second-year student said they were “very anxious” when they found out police were coming to shut down the protest, and that the “unnecessary” use of force tarnished their view of the university.

A third anonymous second-year student said they felt VCU’s communications about activism on campus seem more about the university’s opinion on the matter, rather than students’ opinions or concerns for their safety.

“It was weird to see a part of campus I walk through every day turn into what seemed to be a war zone,” the anonymous student said.

Editor’s Note: The Commonwealth Times has made the editorial decision to obscure the names and faces of some students to protect them from harassment. The Commonwealth Times is the VCU independent, student-led newspaper.

Season underway for Uptown Farmers' Market



By Jessica Dillon

The Uptown Farmers Market opened on April 27. Several rotating vendors book stalls at the location to sell various goods, rain or shine. Some of the available merchandise includes potted flowers, home-baked sweets, and fresh vegetables.

"This is a very close-knit market, we have tons of return customers," said Brenda "Nana" Davidson. Has been selling at the Farmer's Market for around ten years selling baked goods. "Most of my recipes have been handed down, through the generations."

Despite the rain during the market's second week, Davidson stated that she had seen a generous amount of support from shoppers.

"I've had a good two weeks here," said Grover Roark, who had an assortment of honey set up and some leftover greens. Many of the stalls were selling different types of items to provide a variety to shoppers. "I sell plant starts, microgreens, canned goods, and as the year progresses, I will have gourmet mushrooms," said Jason Bryant. A local business, Snow Creek Nursery, set up a mini shop to sell their flowers, and encourage shoppers to stop by the main store for more.

The vendors rotate, with some only appearing a few times a month.

"I'm only here once a month. I have a couple of different restaurants and chefs who come by," said Roger Bell, who has been sharpening knives at the market for six years. Bell moves between farmers' markets in Martinsville and Stuart, and works as a School Resource Officer at Blue Ridge Elementary School in Patrick County.

Many of the stalls ran low in stock as the clock inched towards closing time, and several vendors noted that the best time to come by the market is when it opens at 7:30 a.m.

"Getting here early is really important because a lot of people who bring vegetables only have so much," said Bell. "It goes quickly."

Vendors interested in selling their goodies at the market may apply for a stall by filling out an application on www.martinsvilleuptown.com, or contacting the chamber of commerce to get on the waitlist by emailing kimberly@mhcchamber.com or by calling (276) 632-5688.

The market will run through November 16, from 7:30 a.m. until noon. Starting July 10, the market will be open from 7:30 until noon through September 25.

A seller's directory is available for browsing online. Families who use EBT may talk with the market manager to receive EBT match tokens that can be exchanged with vendors at the market.

Washburn Valley Farms also offers baked goods to shoppers frequenting the Uptown Farmers' Market in Martinsville. (Contributed)



The Uptown Farmers' Market opens at 7:30 a.m., and shoppers are encouraged to arrive early for the best selection and fully stocked market stalls. Most vendors have limited quantities, and their items tend to sell quickly, as evidenced by Brenda "Nana" Davidson, who had sold much of her goodies by mid-morning.

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Suttell to serve as Distinguished Lecturer at annual meeting

The Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society will hold its annual meeting and Distinguished Lecture, "Campus to Counter: Civil Rights Activism," on Sunday, May 19, at 3 p.m., at the Historic Henry County Courthouse, 1 East Main Street in Martinsville.

Dr. Brian Suttell of Ferrum College will present the Distinguished Lecture. Suttell is an Assistant Professor of History and Director of the Richard L. Smith Center for International Pro-

grams. He authored, "Campus to Counter: Civil Rights Activism in Raleigh and Durham, North Carolina, 1960-1963," and was the featured historian on Hope's City, a documentary film about the history of Pamplin City, Virginia. He holds a bachelor's degree from the State University of New York at Fredonia, a master's degree from North Carolina State University, and a doctorate from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

"Campus to Counter" analyzes



Annual Meeting & Distinguished Lecture
of the Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society

Sunday, May 19, 2024, 3:00 P.M.

Historic Henry County Courthouse
1 East Main Street, Uptown Martinsville

Distinguished Speaker

Dr. Brian Suttell

Assistant Professor, Ferrum College

Author, "Campus to Counter: Civil Rights Activism"

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Historical Society
President
John Phillips
will present the
Annual Report
and introduce the
2024-2025
Board of Directors

The Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society will hold its annual meeting and Distinguished Lecture, "Campus to Counter: Civil Rights Activism," at 3 p.m., on Sunday, May 19.

civil rights activism in North Carolina in the early 1960s, especially among students at Shaw University, Saint Augustine's College, and North Carolina College at Durham. Their significance in challenging segregation has been underrepresented in scholarly works. These students played a crucial role in bringing the end of legal segregation and in reducing hiring discrimination. While activists proceeded from campus to lunch counters for sit-ins, their actions also represented a counter to businesspersons and politicians seeking to preserve a segregationist view of Tar Heel hospitality. Suttell used extensive archival research and conducted 31 interviews with activists and Raleigh and Durham community members, in addition to nationally recognized civil rights leaders like Andrew Young and Wyatt Tee Walker.

"We welcome a noted speaker of Brian Suttell's caliber to discuss his important research that occurred just down the road. Join




Dr. Brian Suttell

us to learn more about this significant time period in our regional history," John Phillips, president of the historical society, said.

Admission to the Annual Meeting is free, and the public is welcome, made possible by corporate sponsors, Carter Bank & Trust and The Lester Group.

The Historic Henry County Courthouse is fully handicapped accessible. The Heritage Center & Museum will be open following the event.

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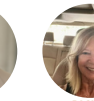
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