

HENRY COUNTY ENTERPRISE

Saturday, May 25, 2024

(USPS-6)

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VDOT Begins Planning Safety Changes For U.S. 220



Maps of the proposed restructure of U.S. 220.

By Jessica Dillon
The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) held an informational meeting May 21 at Drey Mason Elementary School to explain some of the proposed changes/improvements to 6.5 miles of U.S. 220, between U.S. 58 and the North Carolina state border.

Currently, the project is in the planning stages, and “we are looking at improvements such as restructuring areas with low visibility,” said Mary Mays Yahl, the project manager at RK&K. There are substantial crashes along parts of the route. Crashes are also a concern, with a high fatality rating of 35 percent on

the extension of the road going from the North Carolina border.

The main concern of the renovation is the southern part of U.S. 220 leading into North Carolina. To combat this, the road would be straightened, and several new intersections created. The current model shows several “R” cuts, similar to the one in Blacksburg, Va., and thru-cuts to help regulate the flow of traffic. Some turning lanes will be lengthened, and new intersections will be added.

The southbound lane would also be changed under the closed model to change the original lane to a residential road. It is hoped the changes



VDOT spokesperson Jason Bond presenting information about proposed changes to U.S. 220.

would help reduce crashes by 46 percent and reduce severe crashes by 63 percent. Contact points would also be reduced from 32 to 20, VDOT officials said.

Many intersections along the route would fall to Grade D, and most movements would fall to Grade F by 2050. Additionally, studies show that by 2050, many of the intersections would take several minutes to cross.

Officials said the eastbound off ramp is acceptable, but has a his-

tory of crashes. That can be improved, according to VDOT, who also discussed adding flashers for northbound traffic and a signal ahead of flashers.

“I think there are some concepts that are new to people. I think that sometimes people struggle with change, but if you really look at what we are doing here, it will improve safety and increase traffic flow along this section,” said VDOT spokesperson Jason Bond.

(See VDOT Safety p.7)



Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. members pose with Martinsville City Council members.

Council approves budget

By Taylor Boyd
The Martinsville City Council approved its fiscal year 2024-2025 budget at its May 16 meeting on its second reading.

City Manager Aretha Ferrell-Benavides said the proposed budget is \$119,702,118.

Ferrell-Benavides said the general fund is approximately \$38.1 million.

“Our enterprise fund which consists of refuse, telecom, water utilities, sewer utility, and electric utility represents a total of \$38 million as opposed

to \$40 million last year,” she said.

The special revenue fund is approximately \$10 million, and includes stormwater, street fund, Industrial Development Authority (IDA), final allocations for American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), and the elimination of the meals tax which was moved to the general fund.

Ferrell-Benavides said the total school budget for the Martinsville City school system is \$32 million, which is up from the \$27 million of last year.

(See Council p. 7)

Pools to open at Fieldale Center on Saturday

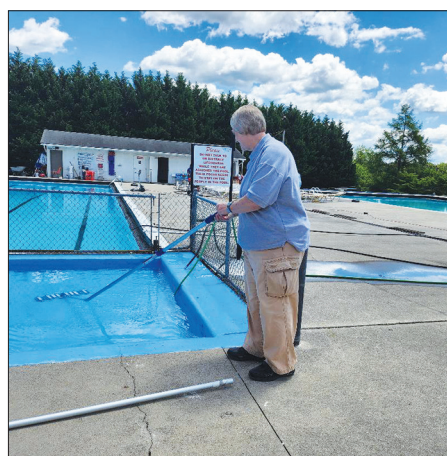
By Jessica Dillon

The Fieldale Heritage Center is set to celebrate the opening of the pools at the Fieldale Recreation Center for the 2024 summer season at 10 a.m. Saturday, with the Woodman Life Outreach Foundation to present a donation to Fieldale Heritage Inc. at 9:30 a.m.

The presentation will be for the Fieldale Recreation Center and Pools, and will be rescheduled in case of rain.

In advance of the opening, volunteers gathered in Fieldale a couple of weeks ago to help ready the facility for the season. Several volunteers from local high schools and the surrounding area pitched in to help with a large cleanup effort. This included readying the pools, tidying the fields, and cleaning up the historic Fieldale Community Center for its upcoming renovation.

The community center has been closed and in need of repairs for quite some time. Volunteers worked to clear out old furniture to prep the building for work.



Sharon Gilbert cleans the kiddie pools.

“The goal is to get all of this stuff out of here,” said Michael Jarrett. The center is going to begin looking for contractors once the building is emptied and the pool opens for the season.

“We got a \$1.5 million dollar grant that’s going to kick in,” he said. Grants are also being considered to update the

(See Pools p. 7)

PSA budget holds the line on rates



Keith Heath of the Lane Group Inc. presented the Utility Operation Report.

By Jessica Dillon
The Henry County Public Service Authority (PSA) Board approved its approximately \$14 million fiscal year (FY) 2024-2025 budget on May 20. The budget holds water and sewer rates flat for the eleventh straight year, with funds included in the bud-

get to study the need for rate increases in the future.

Currently, the PSA charges residential users \$30 a month and non-residential users \$45 a month, both based on 4,000 gallons/month, and \$68.50 for institutional customers.

(See PSA Budget p. 7)

A new ambulance service is seeking approval to operate in the county

By Debbie Hall
The Henry County Board of Supervisors will consider several requests when it meets Tuesday, including one from Quesinberry, LLC, which is asking for approval to operate an ambulance service.

The meeting gets underway at 3 p.m. on Tuesday, May 28, in the Summerlin Room of the Henry County Administration Building.

According to a memo from Brandon Quesinberry, president and a paramedic, the transport company is currently working toward obtaining an EMS agency license. Its office and ambulances are located in commercially zoned property. The company is currently in the final stages of securing a 3-year lease on a property at 4259 Appalachian Dr., Fieldale.

“The reason for obtaining an EMS agency license is to provide ambulance transport services for So-

vah Health Martinsville and other medical facilities,” Quesinberry wrote. “These services have been a growing need in our community and as a paramedic, I have seen firsthand the impact of the limited availability of this type of service.”

He said he decided to form the company “after years of monitoring the need for this type of service.”

Quesinberry is seeking the board’s approval to establish the company as a Designated Emergency Response Agency. The Code of Virginia grants the local governing body the authority to approve, by resolution, the creation of any new EMS agency formed after July 1, 1984.

Although the e Virginia Department of Health, Office of Emergency Medical Services is the regulatory authority for EMS organizations, local government

approval is required before the organization can apply for an Emergency Medical Services License.

Quesinberry indicates that he intends to provide interfacility transport services for Sovah Health of Martinsville and other

(See Ambulance p. 7)

VISIT

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Moncrief named Curator Emerita by VMNH board

The Virginia Museum of Natural History (VMNH) Board of Trustees announced today that mammalogist Dr. Nancy Moncrief has been named Curator Emerita in appreciation of her accomplished 35 year career at the museum. Moncrief, who recently retired as the museum's Curator of Mammals, is one of only five VMNH curators to have received the honor.

"For more than three decades, Dr. Moncrief has provided the museum with outstanding research accomplishments, invaluable leadership, and unwavering dedication," said VMNH Board of Trustees Chairman-Elect Mark Buss. "The museum has been fortunate to have someone of Dr. Moncrief's caliber spend the entirety of her curatorial career here and we're pleased to now recognize her as Curator Emerita."

As Curator Emerita, Moncrief will continue to receive access to the museum's scientific collections and laboratories, as well as the opportunity to continue collaborating with colleagues on ongoing research projects.

"This is a well-deserved honor and a testament to the tremendous professional success that Dr. Moncrief achieved during her tenure," said VMNH Executive Director Dr. Joe Keiper. "While her wealth of scientific and institutional knowledge will be greatly missed, we wish her well in retirement and look forward to continue working with her in the years to come."

As Curator of Mammals, Moncrief's research interests largely focused on the biogeography, ecology, and population genetics of mammals on the Virginia barrier islands, the ecology and evolution of eastern fox squirrels and eastern gray squirrels, as well as the systematics of sciurids (squirrels). She also oversaw the largest scientific collection of mammals from Virginia - over 18,000 specimens - along with thousands of additional mammal specimens from other parts of North America.

During her career, Moncrief published a multitude of peer-reviewed papers, many of which reported new findings about the distributions, ecology, and evolution of mammals in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States, particularly in Virginia. Her research into mammal populations on Virginia's barrier islands has provided a comprehensive foundation for the management of mesopredators (medium-sized carnivorous or omnivorous animals, such as raccoons and foxes), and the restoration of critical nesting habitats for beach-nesting shorebirds and colonial waterbirds on the islands. Though primarily research-focused, Moncrief performed nu-



merous other functions during her museum tenure, including time as head of the museum's Research and Collections department. She also served as lead curator for a wide variety of museum exhibits, including the recent special exhibit *The Science of Flight*, and served as lead in-house curator for the current special exhibit *Masters of the Night: The True Story of Bats*.

Moncrief also provided her professional expertise to numerous entities throughout the duration of her career. Among other roles, she served as president of the Virginia Natural History Society, chair of the Natural History and Biodiversity Section of the Virginia Academy of Sciences, and member of the Committee of Visitors of the National Science Foundation's Division of Environmental Biology.

Additionally, Nancy demonstrated continuous dedication to sharing her expertise, knowledge, and time with the public. She provided countless public lectures and presentations, helped develop and deliver professional workshops for teachers and citizen scientists, and contributed to a wide variety of educational programs within the framework of the museum's expansive outreach educational initiatives.

Prior to her arrival at VMNH in 1989, Moncrief had served as a postdoctoral research associate within the Department of Biology at the University of Virginia and as a postdoctoral research associate within the Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology at Wayne State University School of Medicine.

Moncrief received a Ph.D. in Zoology from Louisiana State University, a M.S. in Biology from Fort Hays State University, and a B.S. in Biology from Memphis State University.

Other individuals to have received the honor include Curator Emeritus Dr. James Beard, Department of Earth Sciences, Curator Emeritus Dr. Richard Hoffman, Department of Recent Invertebrates, Curator Emeritus Dr. Lauck Ward, Department of Invertebrate Paleontology, and Curator Emerita Dr. Judith Winston, Department of Marine Biology.

Pilot program offers easier motorcycle license endorsement

May is Motorcycle Safety Month, and the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) is making it even easier for experienced motorcyclists to get the proper endorsement on their driver's license and brush up on their safety training. As part of a pilot program, DMV is now accepting the license and skills course completion certificate from the Basic RiderCourse 2 (BRC2) administered through the Virginia Rider Training Program.

"We know that there are many experienced riders on the roads who don't have their motorcycle endorsement. In fact, one-in-four motorcyclists involved in a crash are riding without a motorcycle endorsement," said DMV Commissioner Gerald Lackey, the Governor's Highway Safety Representative. "It's our hope that by accepting the BRC2 certificate of completion we can cut down on the number of unendorsed riders. But most importantly we believe that getting motorcyclists the training they need will reduce motorcycle crashes, saving lives."

Designed for those who are already familiar with motorcycle riding, the BRC2 program can be completed with a licensed training site in almost half the time as the Basic RiderCourse. The course is made up of a three-hour online training, paired with one

eight-hour day of practical riding and safety training and evaluation at one of the many approved Virginia Rider Training Program locations.

By passing the BRC2 program you will not need to take the knowledge and skills tests at DMV, as all necessary evaluation will happen as part of the program. Bring in your certificate of completion and you will just need to pass the vision screening when you visit a DMV customer service center to apply for your motorcycle endorsement.

In Virginia, riding a motorcycle without the proper license could result in penalties that may include fines and potential jail time. The BRC2 is not just an easy way to make sure you are riding legally, but it is also an excellent way for experienced riders to brush up on their skills. Think you've been riding long enough to not need training? That's one of the dangerous motorcycle myths we recently addressed here. The fact is, 76% of riders involved in motorcycle crashes had not completed a training course. Even the best motorcyclists can use a safety refresher.

Visit <https://www.dmv.virginia.gov/licenses-ids/motorcycle/getting> to learn more about the Virginia Rider Training Program and find a Basic RiderCourse 2 near you.



Opening set for Expressions 2024

The artwork has been submitted and the Lynwood Artists and the staff of Piedmont Arts are hard at work getting them all displayed. Expressions, the annual showcase of artists within a 100-mile radius of the museum, will be on display at Piedmont Arts from June 1-July 26. A reception and award ceremony will be held on Friday, May 31 at 5:30 p.m.

Mediums represented this year range from watercolor to textiles to 3D sculpture and everything in between. Over 100 artists participated this year, including local students. This exhibit is always exciting and honors the amazing creativity that is abundant in the region.

Cash prizes will be awarded for

first, second, and third place in all mediums. Other awards include the People's Choice, the Lynwood Artists Award, and Best in Show. The Best in Show award is sponsored by Virginia Glass & Mirror. This year, Jennifer Reis, artist and Assistant Professor of Arts Administration at the University of North Carolina Greensboro will serve as judge for the showcase.

The reception will feature live music, complimentary beer and wine, and light refreshments. The reception is sponsored by King's Grant. Reservations for the reception and award ceremony may be made at www.PiedmontArts.org or by calling (276) 632-3221. Reservations should be made by May 28.

Study shows P&HCC Athletics adds \$2.4 million to economy

In a review of the economic value of Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC) athletics, Lightcast EIS has determined that for every \$1, student-athletes gain \$3.30 in lifetime earnings and society gains \$5.10 in added income and social savings.

The results of the analysis (reflecting fiscal year 2022-2023) demonstrate that P&HCC athletics creates a significant positive impact on the business community and generates a return on investment to its major stakeholder groups - students and society, along with substantial benefits to taxpayers.

The results of this study indicate that P&HCC athletics creates value from multiple perspectives. The college benefits regional businesses by increasing consumer spending in the region with visitors spending \$235,000 and student athletes spending \$815,300 in 2022-2023 alone. Resulting tax revenue and public sector savings related to P&HCC athletics yields a taxpayer gain of \$1.6 million for the same period. Ultimately, P&HCC athletics benefits society as a whole by creating a more prosperous economy and generating a variety of savings through the improved lifestyles of students.

P&HCC president Dr. Greg Hodges briefed the P&HCC Board on the study at its regular monthly meeting on Monday, highlighting the following:

Visitor spending added approximately \$235.0 thousand in income to the P&HCC Service Region economy.

Approximately 72% of student-athletes attending P&HCC originated from outside the region. All these students relocated to the P&HCC Service Region. In addition, some in-region student-athletes, referred to as retained students, would



P&HCC Board Vice Chair Jewell Drewery and President Dr. Greg Hodges discuss the Athletics economic impact study from Lightcast EIS.

have left the P&HCC Service Region for other athletic and scholastic opportunities if not for P&HCC Athletics. These relocated and retained students spent money on groceries, mortgage and rent payments, and other living expenses at regional businesses.

The expenditures of relocated and retained student-athletes in FY 2022-23 added \$815.3 thousand in income to the P&HCC Service Region economy.

Over the years, student-athletes have studied at P&HCC and entered or re-entered the workforce with newly acquired knowledge and skills. Today, thousands of these former student-athletes are employed in the P&HCC Service Region.

The net impact of P&HCC Athletics' former student-athletes currently employed in the regional workforce amounted to \$826.8 thousand in added income in FY 2022-23.

P&HCC Athletics' FY 2022-23 student-athletes paid a present value of \$0.3 million to cover the cost of fees and supplies. They also forwent \$2.2 million in money that they would have earned had they been working instead of attending college.

In return for their investment, student-athletes will receive a cumulative present value of \$8.2 million in increased earnings over their working lives. This translates to a return of \$3.30 in higher future earnings

for every dollar students invest in their education. Student-athletes' average annual rate of return is 12.4%.

Taxpayers provided P&HCC Athletics with little to no funding in FY 2022-23. In return, they will benefit from added tax revenue, stemming from students' higher lifetime earnings and increased business output, amounting to \$1.5 million. A reduced demand for government-funded services in Virginia will add another \$162.1 thousand in benefits to taxpayers.

Total taxpayer benefits amount to \$1.6 million, the present value sum of the added tax revenue and public sector savings.

In FY 2022-23, Virginia invested \$3.2 million to support P&HCC Athletics. In turn, the Virginia economy will grow by \$15.7 million, over the course of student-athletes' working lives. Society will also benefit from \$485.4 thousand of public and private sector savings.

For every dollar invested in P&HCC Athletics in FY 2022-23, people in Virginia will receive \$5.10 in return, for as long as P&HCC Athletics' FY 2022-23 student-athletes remain active in the Virginia workforce.

"This report reinforces the important role P&HCC athletics plays in our regional economy and the impact our programs have on keeping our community vibrant," Hodges said.

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

Tuesday, May 28

City Council Meeting. 7 p.m., Martinsville Municipal Building, 55 W Church St., Martinsville.

Henry County Board of Supervisors, 3 and 6 p.m., Summerlin Meeting Room, Henry County Administration Building, Kings Mountain Road, Collinsville.

Wednesday, May 29

The Henry County Board of Zoning Appeals meets at 12 p.m. in Room 205 the Henry County Administration Building, Kings Mountain Road, Collinsville. A public hearing will be held at 1 p.m. in the Summerlin Meeting Room.

Events

Saturday, May 25

Fieldale Pool Opens, 10 a.m., On the street beside the Fieldale Recreation Center, at the end of Mill Dr.

Monday, May 27

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

Friday, May 31

Expressions Opening Reception, 5:30 p.m., Piedmont Arts, 215 Starling Ave., Martinsville.

Monday, May 27

Memorial Day Service, noon, Roselawn Burial Park, 103 Clearview Dr., Martinsville.

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

Saturday, June 1

Infinity Acres Ranch 6th Annual Spring Carnival, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Infinity Acres Ranch, 136 Joppa Rd #4242, Ridgeway.

DRBA Celebration, 10 a.m. to noon, Dan Riv-

er Church, 2805 Riverside Dr, Danville.

Storytime! 10 a.m., Spencer Penn Center, 475 Spencer Penn Rd, Spencer.

Benefit Fundraiser for Maria & Larry Mebane, 11 a.m., 681 Laurel Park Ave., Martinsville.

ONGOING

Verizon Innovative Learning STEM Achievers Program, Monday-Friday, July 8-26, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. P&HCC Patrick County Site, Stuart and P&HCC IDEA Center, Martinsville.

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

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

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

The Blue Ridge Regional Library offers free

one-day passes to the Virginia Museum of Natural History and the Henry County YMCA with your library card. The passes are good for one day and exclude special events. There is a wait period before you can check out the pass again. For more details and exclusions, visit brrl.lib.va.us.

TOPS FIELDALE VA 0626 meets Tuesdays at 5:30-6:30 p.m. at the Bassett Public Library, 3969 Fairystone Hwy, Bassett. New members welcome. For more information, please 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. Join staff and volunteers in the Hylton Library at the Spencer Penn Centre for activities and socializing on the first and third Monday of each month. Registration is not required.

Organizations in Henry, Patrick to receive marketing funds

To kick off National Travel & Tourism Week, Gov. Glenn Youngkin announced that more than \$3.27 million in matching grant and sponsorship funds will be awarded to 268 tourism programs as part of Virginia Tourism Corporation's Marketing Grants programs, and organizations in Patrick and Henry counties are among those to receive funds.

In Henry County, Rooster Walk Music & Arts Festival will receive \$10,000 for event production, and \$8,892 for Strut & Squawk at Rooster Walk.

In Patrick County, Front Porch Fest 15 will receive \$5,000; One Family Productions, Inc. will receive \$3,305.25 for Spotlight on the Star; the Labor Day Weekend Gospel Singing will receive \$4,000 and the Beach Music Festival will receive \$4,000.

The funding programs are designed to leverage local marketing dollars with matching state funds to increase visitation and traveler spending through 2025. This funding cycle, local partners will commit more than \$9.2 million to match the VTC funding, providing more than \$12.5 million in new marketing and event production activity focused on increasing overnight visitation to Virginia across all nine GO Virginia regions. The funding will be awarded to 268 marketing programs, ultimately impacting 1,230 combined partners.

"VTC's marketing and sponsorship programs are powerful incentives creating tourism partnerships across Virginia that are a robust part of Virginia's economic ecosystem," said Youngkin. "Across the Commonwealth, the tourism indus-

try recognizes the importance of having inventive strategies to showcase all that Virginia has to offer. These grants will support those efforts and help draw thousands of additional visitors to the Commonwealth to experience everything that makes Virginia so special."

VTC's tourism marketing and sponsorship programs are designed to increase visitor spending by leveraging limited marketing dollars, to stimulate new tourism marketing through partnerships, and to extend the "Virginia is for Lovers" brand to drive visitation. Using the hub and spoke tourism partnership model, Virginia entities partner to apply for funding. Partners may consist of Virginia cities, towns, counties, convention and visitors' bureaus, chambers of commerce, other local or regional destination marketing organizations, museums, attractions, cultural events, and other tourism-related non-profits and private businesses.

These various grant programs assist Virginia Destination Marketing Organizations and established Virginia special events and festivals with marketing and/or event production costs.

The Marketing Leverage Program is a reimbursable grant program to leverage existing marketing funds available to Virginia travel industry partners including small businesses, DMOs, private sector attractions, accommodations, and events.

The Virginia DMO Grant Program is awarded to DMOs for marketing expenses that show positive and significant economic impact on tourism and must include marketing plans designed to

drive visitation to Virginia.

The Virginia Special Events & Festivals Program is for marketing and production of Virginia-based special events and festivals occurring in 2024. These events must have at least two years of prior attendance since 2017 with minimum attendance tiers.

"The VTC grant programs continue to inject critical funds into communities across the Commonwealth, helping to make Virginia the best place to live, work, and raise a family," said Secretary of Commerce and Trade Caren Merrick. "The tourism industry is an incredible employment on-ramp for high school and college students, part-time workers, and those interested in long-term hospitality careers. From kitchen line cooks to regional executive hotel managers, these funds support a robust hospitality workforce by inducing tourism demand and increasing overnight visitation."

VTC will have a Microbusiness Marketing Leverage Program grant round opening in Summer 2024 designed to assist small tourism-oriented businesses and organizations, such as Main Street Organizations, with Fall and Winter marketing initiatives. Another round of the Virginia Special Events & Festivals Program will open mid-2024 for events that will occur in 2025. The next round for the Marketing Leverage Program and the Virginia DMO Marketing Grant Program will open in February. Organizations and businesses that are interested in applying for these grant opportunities may visit vatc.org/grants for more information.

Water safety helps to prevent tragedies

With summer now officially starting, the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) is urging beachgoers and those using and maintaining swimming pools, spas, and water parks to focus on simple steps that can be taken to help ensure a healthy and safe swimming experience for everyone.

Prevent Drowning Drowning in Virginia

*From 2016-2020, 32% of drowning-related hospitalizations in Virginia were children aged 0-4 years.

*Almost 1 out of 2 (48%) hospitalizations among Virginia children aged 0-4 years from 2016-2020 were due to drowning in swimming pools.

*Every four days, one Virginia resident dies by drowning.

Drowning in the United States:

*Drowning kills more kids 1-4 years old than anything else except birth defects.

*For children ages 5-14 years, drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional injury death after motor vehicle crashes.

*Every day, about 10 people in the U.S. die from drowning.

*While children are at highest risk, anyone can drown.

*Nearly 80% of people who die from drowning are male.

What you can do

Stay safe in and around the water:

PREVENT DROWNING VIRGINIA

*Make sure everyone has basic swimming and water safety skills.

*Formal swimming lessons in children as young as 1 year old can reduce the risk of drowning.

*Use U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets as directed.

*Remember that floaties, water wings, in-

ner tubes, foams, and other air filled devices are TOYS and not safety devices and can often provide a false sense of safety to guardians and swimmers.

*Designate a responsible adult to supervise children closely and constantly when they are in or near the water.

*Know how to recognize and respond to a swimmer in distress and how to perform CPR.

*No matter how strong of a swimmer you are, never swim alone.

*Don't drink and swim. Alcohol slows your reactions and can make you make bad decisions. Stay out of the water if you've been drinking.

Help keep backyard pools safe:
*Prevent access to water when pool is not in use.

*Install and maintain barriers that fully enclose the pool and separate it from the house, like four-sided fencing.

*Use locks and alarms for windows and doors.

*Remove all toys from the pool area that might attract children to the pool when not in use.

More information is available at <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/environmental-health/healthy-and-safe-swimming-summer-toolkit/>.

See more at www.henrycountyenterprise.com

OPINION

The Art of Vacationing

I'm sorry; I can't. We're doing vacation for three weeks. No — not ON vacation for three weeks. Being ON vacation is actually only four days, separated into two separate weekends. We're DEALING with vacation for about three weeks.

Me and my big fat mouth. It all escalated during one blissful moment enjoying the magnitude of the beauty of the Outer Banks. Wanting to repeat the thrill of travel as soon as possible, I blurted out, "It's almost Memorial Day weekend - an extra day off work. Let's go camping then!"

"We'll see," he said, which usually means "No," but after a pause, he added, "we could take the camper."

It was an exciting thought, at the time. However, during that 6-hour ride home Sunday evening, I started to dread what-all I would have to do during the work week ahead.

There's catching up on housework (that includes changing litter boxes and bird-cage papers and watering thirsty plants, doing all the laundry from the trip, putting things away and preparing for upcoming dinners and lunches for the work week.

I was already worn out from spending the evenings after work preparing for the two-day getaway: doing the laundry, cleaning the house, preparing the pets, watering the plants, pretty much everything I'd have to do all over again once I got home, but also, packing clothes, books, activities and snacks.

It took several evenings after work just getting things back in order after Trip 1. Then there was a



Holly Kozelsky

weekend filled with kids' activities, until Monday evening, when preparing for Trip 2 began.

There was helping set up and air out the camper; washing and folding all the sheets and towels, let alone clothes, for the trip. There's planning out a menu, then shopping, doing a little advance cooking; portioning out ingredients so they wouldn't take up too much room in the cooler or cabinet. There's packing clothes, boots, books, games, cooking fuel, firewood. Oh! Don't forget the lights, chargers, bug spray, sunscreen, dishwashing detergent, soap, pots, pans, and fancy things such as spatulas, and do we need a whisk? Do we need to bring toilet paper? Am I taking the right kinds of vacations - if that's even a question?

Planning for this trip has ruined the week and rushed me each night after work. The vegetable garden hasn't even been planted yet, and weeds have taken over the flower beds, with no time to tend either one in sight.

Alas, we will try to enjoy a long weekend camping without thinking about what the following week back home will bring: unpacking, washing, sorting, storing, night after night.

Sometimes, we need a vacation from vacations.

D-Day Memorial and the Crooked Road

You may be asking yourself what the D-Day Memorial in Bedford County and the Crooked Road have in common.

But what they share is that both are in Virginia's Ninth District, and both have been mentioned in National Geographic Magazine.

In a June 2002 National Geographic article based on untold stories of D-Day, Bedford's D-Day Memorial received attention for its historical contributions to World War II Remembrance. The article estimated that the town of Bedford suffered the most fatalities on June 6, 1944 per capita of any community in America.

Photos of the Hoback brothers, who died storming Omaha Beach, are shown. The photos were donated to the National D-Day Memorial Foundation in the fall of 2023.

National Geographic also shared a photo from the 2001 Dedication Ceremony of the National D-Day Memorial.

As a member of the Virginia House of Delegates, I was present at the 2001 Dedication Ceremony where President George W. Bush was invited to attend and give remarks.

The spectacular event gave wind to a burgeoning Virginia landmark that is celebrating the 80th anniversary of the Normandy invasion on June 6.

A separate Virginia historical centerpiece was recognized earlier this year, as National Geographic released an article entitled "Why southwest Virginia is the birthplace of country music."

The author, Mike MacEacheran, details his trip along the Crooked Road and discusses the profound history of country music in the region.

The Crooked Road, celebrating its 20th anniversary, spans 333 miles across the Ninth District, with one end in Rocky Mount in Franklin County and the other end at The Breaks in Dickenson County, Virginia.

I was Majority Leader in the Virginia House of Delegates when I voted for passage of House Bill 909, legislation sponsored by Delegate Bud Phillips designating the Crooked Road as Virginia's Heritage Music Trail.

At the 2004 ceremony when the bill was signed into law, bluegrass legend Dr. Ralph Stanley was present.

Dr. Stanley and his brother Carter, both of Dickenson County, had successful musical careers, particularly in the bands The Clinch Mountain Boys and The Stanley Brothers.

A song of Dr. Stanley's, "O Death", is featured in the popular Coen Brothers Film O Brother, Where Art Thou? His performance won the 2002 Grammy Award for Best Male Country Vocal Performance.

The producer of the film's soundtrack, T Bone Burnett, credits his visit to Bristol as in-



Morgan Griffith

Representative

spiration for the award-winning soundtrack.

The Ralph Stanley Museum in Clintwood will be celebrating its 20th anniversary this year.

2024 also marks the 50th anniversary of the Carter Family Fold.

Located in Hiltons in Scott County, the Fold pays tribute to the famous Carter Family. The trio of A.P., Sara and Maybelle, among the earliest recording artists in country music, is considered the "First Family of Country Music."

June Carter continued the family's legacy, accumulating five Grammy awards during her musical career. June married Johnny Cash.

The Carter Family were the first to be inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in Nashville, Tennessee.

The Carter Family hit commercial success after the 1927 Bristol Sessions. Along with the likes of Jimmie Rodgers and Ernest Stoneman, the breakout sessions helped put Bristol on the map.

As a result, we have the Birthplace of Country Music Museum. The Museum, celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, details the stories and impacts of the 1927 Bristol Sessions that unleashed the "big bang of country music."

The museum hosts festivals and a range of different exhibits and provides opportunities for the region to learn about its roots.

I was surrounded by country music as a child. Growing up in Salem, Lakeside Amusement Park attracted countless country music personalities and entertainers, with stars appearing from Conway Twitty to Rick Nelson.

Galax is the popular home to the Old Fiddler's Convention. Held for nearly one hundred years, the convention attracts scores of musical competitors that play the fiddle, banjo, mandolin or guitar. The dates of this year's convention are August 5-10. Governor Youngkin attended the 2023 Old Fiddler's Convention and recognized its importance to Appalachian music.

Governor Youngkin proclaimed this year the "Year of Country Music" as Virginia celebrates all these milestones and anniversaries.

It is an honor to represent a region home to such rich musical traditions. I look forward to the joy and fun these festivals will bring not just this year, but for many years to come.

Call my offices with questions, concerns, or comments: Abingdon, (276) 525-1405; Christiansburg, (540) 381-5671, or via email at <https://morgangriffith.house.gov/>.

Student Briefs

Hannah Catron, of Bassett, was named to Southern New Hampshire University's (SNHU's) Winter 2024 Dean's List. The winter term runs from January to May.

Full-time undergraduate students who have earned a minimum grade-point average of 3.500 to 3.699 for the reporting term are named to the Dean's List. Full-time status is achieved by earning 12 credits over each 16-week term or paired 8-week terms grouped in fall, winter/spring, and summer.

The following students were

named to Southern New Hampshire University's (SNHU's) Winter 2024 President's List. The winter term runs from January to May.

Erika Deal, of Bassett.
Victoria Deloy, of Martinsville.
Full-time undergraduate students who have earned a minimum grade-point average of 3.700 and above for the reporting term are named to the President's List. Full-time status is achieved by earning 12 credits over each 16-week term or paired 8-week terms grouped in fall, winter/spring, and summer.

Super Crossword

UNSPOILED EXPANSES

ACROSS	DOWN
1 Choco-coffee flavor	1 Ruhr city
6 Low bow of respect	24 Its cap, is Bismarck
12 Global rivalry concerning weaponry	29 Ex-Giant Mel
20 Customary	33 Ton of, casually
21 Last pope of the 1700s	35 Not pleasurable, colloquially
22 Bishops' jurisdictions	36 Aurora, to the Greeks
23 Iconic logo of McDonald's [Utah]	37 Most wacky
25 Proceeds forward	38 A stern
26 Long, thin cut	40 TV's
27 Three, in Germany	44 Mayberry's Otis, e.g.
28 Sgt., say	46 Brand of bottled water
30 Poet's "always"	48 Sassy quality, for short
31 Suffix with percent	50 Elite NFLer
32 "Holmes" (2020 Millie Bobby Brown film)	51 Medieval war weapon
34 Biblical metaphor for Jerusalem [Utah]	52 Catty
38 Drs.' org.	54 Wheel bars
39 Slimy veggie	55 Singer Rita
41 "Swell!"	56 "Othello" role
42 Hush-hush U.S. org.	57 Sloping
43 Original thing	59 Counterfeit
45 Regal name of Norway	62 Needle case
47 Erwin of old Hollywood	64 Flute sound
49 Dozes	65 Respond to
53 Full-size SUV introduced in 2000 [California]	66 Toluca locale
58 It's between tau and phi	68 Rombauer of cooking
60 Curbside cry	70 Actor
61 Not given an assessment	Malcolm — Warner
63 Very, in slang	72 Line of family rulers
64 Scottish cap	73 Attendee
67 "Star Wars" royal	75 "Hooked on Classics" label
69 Opaque quartz with banding [Alberta]	79 At any time
71 Nervous	80 Seer's skill
74 Pol who was John-John's uncle	82 Pool growth
76 Coll. in Columbus	86 Tuscany city
77 Big name in train travel	88 Baby sheep
78 Mac computer platform released in 2014 [California]	89 Top pilot
81 Actor Neeson	91 Irritating
83 — 10 (acne medication)	93 Outskirts
84 Strong string	94 Be a pioneer
85 Actress Redgrave	95 Arcane
87 "Ooh" or "tra" follower	96 Uncooked
92 Ice mass descending a mountain valley [British Columbia]	99 B&B, e.g.
97 Love god	103 Big Texas city
98 Magnate Onassis	105 Has too much, with "on"
100 High volcano in Sicily	106 Brezhnev of the USSR
101 Society for brainiacs	107 Enter forcibly
102 Bronze-hued	109 Tabula —
104 "Sheena" star Gena Lee —	111 Bleating beasts
108 Action word	112 Singer Cyrus
110 "ASAP!"	113 Not fuzzy
111 Full-size SUV introduced in 1998 [Alaska]	114 Talk formally
116 Natty necktie	115 Singer Cleo
118 OPEC supply	117 Italian isle
119 Type of 35 mm camera	122 Make tangled
120 Part of USSR: Abbr.	124 — Ball
121 Torah cabinets	126 Geller of the paranormal
123 Rd. crossers	127 Denials
125 Like Attu's island chain	129 "For shame!"
128 What each of seven key words in this puzzle is the name of	130 Indy circuit
131 Really rant at	
132 "Beats me"	
133 Shaw of jazz clarinet	

Auction

480 Dyers Store Road, Martinsville, VA 24112
Saturday, June 1, 2024 - 10:00 AM
Church and Contents

****Pictures on Web Site/AuctionZip.com**

Directions: From Martinsville, Virginia go East on US-58 about 1 mile, turn left onto SR-57 North (at Food Lion), go about 4 miles, turn left onto Dyers Store Road (SR 647), go about 1/2 mile on right, #480 on mail box at Church, Auction sign in parking lot.

Real Estate: Per Map Book 8/99 property runs along Dyers Store Road about 210 Feet. Contains Church and Fellowship Hall.

Personal Property: Band Equipment, Seating Equipment, Stereo Equipment, Peavey Mixer, Casio Key Board, Drums, Amp, Speakers, etc. and Tables

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OPINION

Fortune's fools

This month, a new production of "Romeo and Juliet" opened on London's West End. It stars Tom Holland, a talented young actor perhaps most famous for being one of the fifteen people to play Spider-Man over the last couple of decades, and Francesca Amewudah-Rivers, an accomplished stage actress.

And people on the internet are losing their minds.

"Why is Hollywood obsessed with re-writing history?" tweeted conservative activist Brigitte Gabrielle, apparently under the mistaken impression that London's West End is located in Hollywood and that "Romeo and Juliet" is a true story.

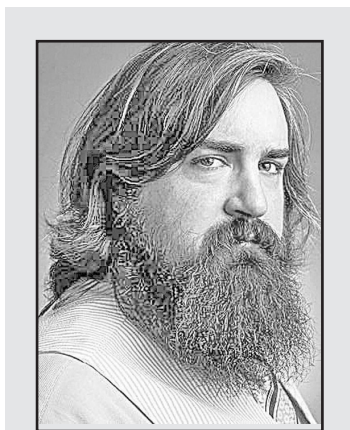
"But the character is white," wrote another brain genius, referring to the character who is Italian. "This is the worst casting ever for Juliet," wrote another person who has clearly never seen a high school production of the play.

The outrage, of course, is because the actress playing Juliet is black. The internet has labeled her a "DEI hire" from a "woke" theatre company. And as much as I wish I could tell you that this outrage is from just a handful of fringe racists, the situation has gotten so out of hand that the company has had to issue a statement asking the public to please stop abusing this poor woman. Additionally, more than 800 black actors signed off an open letter condemning this abuse, which was published in The Guardian.

Not to trot out my bonafides, but I've written a couple of plays that received full productions, a few more that received staged readings, and I served as the general manager of a playhouse for two years. I feel qualified to weigh in on this abject stupidity.

First things first, if this production were keeping true to the standards of Shakespeare's era, the role of Juliet would be played by a man in drag, something I'm guessing would be even more objectionable to the lunatics raging about this play.

Secondly, I've seen maybe one or two Shakespeare productions in my life that actually held true to the time and place Shakespeare intended. Directors love taking Shakespeare in new directions, probably because they're sick of Shakespeare. A buddy of mine actually saw a production of "Hamlet"



By Ben R. Williams

that opened with the sound of helicopters flying overhead, causing a sleeping Hamlet to leap to his feet screaming and brandishing a combat knife because he was having a 'Nam flashback.

There are so, so many reinterpretations and parodies that exist of "Romeo and Juliet." Aside from "West Side Story," there have been movies based on "Romeo and Juliet" that feature rival pizza restaurants, star-crossed leprechauns, zombies, and garden gnomes. The text is not exactly sacrosanct.

You might think I'm missing the forest for the trees, but the point is this: there's no plausible deniability here. The mass outrage over this casting is just pure, unadulterated racism. And not just any racism, but old school 1960s pouring-ketchup-on-a-guy-at-a-Woolworth's-lunch-counter-sit-in racism.

I'm not under the Pollyanna-ish impression that this kind of racism is something new, but up until the last decade or so, it seemed like racists had some understanding that they should be ashamed, or at least be pragmatic enough to not voice their opinions in public. That doesn't seem to be the case any longer.

Sure, most of the racists realize there's at least one word they shouldn't say. That's why they have their stand-ins. "Thug" used to be a pretty popular one, but it's increasingly been replaced by "woke" and "DEI." When we hear these words used as insults, we should mentally replace them with the word the person wanted to use.

To paraphrase The Bard, a slur by any other name still stinks.

Wells named to new leadership post at IALR

Jason Wells will join the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research (IALR) leadership team as Executive Vice President of Manufacturing Advancement, effective June 3.

Wells most recently served as President of Kyocera SGS Tech Hub, a manufacturing and research hub within the cutting tool division of Kyocera Corporation, and brings nearly 30 years of experience in high-performance manufacturing. He will provide executive-level strategic management and oversight of IALR's growing Manufacturing Advancement division and will report directly to IALR President Telly D. Tucker.



Youth sought for advisory council

The VDH Youth Advisory Council (YAC) is seeking youth in Virginia aged 14-21 who want to see changes in their community's health and be Youth Advisors. Youth Advisors are young adults who work to engage youth in public health by co-leading

the Youth Advisory Council.

The council also gives input and feedback on current VDH health issues that cater to youth. For more information, visit <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/adolescent-health-hub/about-youth-advisors/>.

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

Free riparian buffers offered in new program

The Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF) announced a new program that provides landowners free, flexible riparian forest buffer installation plus one year of maintenance. The Riparian Forests for Landowners (RFFL) program is a unique watershed-based partnership including DOF, the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, Friends of the Rappahannock, James River Association, Terra Habitats LLC, and York River Steward.

Riparian forest buffers are transition areas that protect streams, creeks or other water features by capturing sediment, nutrients and pollutants in the soil before they reach the water.

This program is open to all Virginia private property owners including homeowner associations and civic leagues in rural, urban and suburban areas. Funding is provided by the Inflation Reduction Act through the USDA Forest Service and the Commonwealth of Virginia's Water Quality Improvement Fund Act. Complete this survey-style Landowner Interest Form and a DOF forester or partner organization representative will contact you.

"This turnkey program covers free services including planning, site preparation and planting of buffers, as well as one year of maintenance," said RFFL Program Coordinator Deya Ramsden. "Trees established in these buffers will act as filters to provide cleaner water, reduce erosion and flooding, and help replenish underground aquifers."

DOF is accepting continuous

sign-ups for this program until funding depletes. Eligible projects will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis with planned buffer establishment from fall 2024 to spring 2025, with follow-up maintenance support through 2026.

Buffer installation details:

Buffers can be installed on open land adjacent to a water feature where a forested buffer of at least 35 feet in width from the water's edge can be planted.

Existing buffers may be expanded up to 300 feet from the water's edge.

Buffers may be planted with pine seedlings, hardwood seedlings or a mix of both.

Buffers must be at least 35 feet wide and no greater than 300 feet wide per side from the water's edge.

Land must have less than 20% coverage by invasive plant species to qualify for this program.

Landowners must agree to retain the buffer as forest for 15 years.

The water feature may be any of the following bodies of water, including:

- *Streams
- *Rivers
- *Lakes, ponds and reservoirs/municipal water supplies
- *Seeps and springs
- *Karst features
- *Sloughs
- *Wetlands
- *Water features within wetlands
- *Fresh and saltwater marshes
- *Irrigation ditches, canals and other man-made water features

For more information, visit the DOF website.

Scholarships awarded to local students

GRASP (Great Aspirations Scholarship Program, Inc.), a non-profit, college and career access organization, headquartered in Richmond, recently awarded 130 Last Dollar scholarships totaling \$160,000 and 84 Community College scholarships totaling \$84,000 to Virginia high school students graduating in 2024.

Three students in Martinsville received awards: Mallori Lowe, Nayti Patel, and Elijah Pickett.

Audrey Young, of Patrick County, was also awarded a scholarship.

GRASP's goal is to ensure that every student has an equal opportunity for continuing education after high school, regardless of financial or social circumstances. During the 2023-2024 academic year, GRASP implemented its programs via advisors who provide free, confidential, one-on-one counseling in 111 Virginia high schools to students seeking financial aid and scholarships for continuing education after high school – whether that is technical school, community college or a four-year university. Advisors conducted meetings with more than 8,100 students this school year.

GRASP advisors were able to provide financial aid advising this year through in-person meetings as well as virtual options including video meetings, phone, email, texting, assisting students/families through the financial aid process to include completion of the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) as well as the VASA (Virginia Alternative State Aid) application. GRASP advisors now serve students and families in Virginia schools, from the greater Richmond area to Buchanan County in the southwest, Highland County in the west, Northumberland County in the north, Isle of Wight County in the east and Mecklenburg and Patrick counties in the south. The highly trained GRASP advisors are adept at navigating the maze of the college and post-secondary education financial aid process. They also have a passion for expanding students' opportunities to learn.

The GRASP advising program and scholarships are made possible by generous donor support year af-

ter year. Last Dollar scholarships are awarded to at least one student at each school GRASP serves. The Community College Pathway Scholarships are awarded to students who plan to attend community college to receive a career certificate or transfer to a four-year college.

GRASP salutes the 2024 scholarship recipients. Many of this year's scholarship recipients will be the first members of their families to attend post-secondary education. All have learned about the importance of continuing their education as the next step for their future successes. This year, GRASP will host regional scholarship luncheons in seven areas of the state (Cedar Bluff, Staunton, Warsaw, South Boston, Williamsburg, Hopewell, and Richmond) served by GRASP to recognize GRASP Scholarship recipients as well as high school seniors who have participated in the early commitment scholarship (SOAR Virginia®) program, a collaboration with Virginia529 that was created and funded by Virginia529 to inspire and assist high school students to reach their post-secondary education goals.

GRASP also coordinated a new program, Richmond Pathways Scholarship & Stipend, this year for students who attend Armstrong, Huguenot, John Marshall, Richmond High School for the Arts, or Thomas Jefferson high schools. These scholarships and monthly stipends help students bridge the gap and overcome barriers that might stop them from pursuing higher education. This year, 37 scholarships (\$74,000) and 32 stipends (\$400/month) are being awarded. The City of Richmond's Office of the Mayor, generosity of our corporate donors, and collaboration with our community partners made these scholarships and stipends possible.

GRASP was co-founded in 1983 by Sen. Walter Stosch and Dr. Ray Gargiulo. GRASP advisors work one day per week at each school. Appointments, which are free of charge, can be made through the schools' counseling offices. More information about GRASP is available at www.grasp4va.org.

See more at www.henrycountyenterprise.com

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Weekly Publication

Published Each Saturday

Michael Showell, Publisher
Debbie Hall, Editor
dhall@theenterprise.net
 (276) 694-3101

Wendi Craig, Advertising Manager
advertise@mainstreetnewspapers.com
 (276) 340-2445

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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

LEGAL

COUNTY OF HENRY BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Pursuant to Section 15.2-2204 of the Code of Virginia, a public hearing has been scheduled for **May 29, 2024, at 1:00 p.m.** in the Summerlin Meeting Room of the County Administration Building, Kings Mountain Rd, Collinsville, Virginia. The purpose of this public hearing is to receive citizen input into the possible issuance of Special Use Permit for the following cases.

Case S-24-03 John C. Draper
 A request for a Special Use Permit was received under Section 21-302 of the Zoning Ordinance to allow for the construction and use of a gymnasium facility on 40+ acres. The property is located on the west side of Spencer Preston Rd, just north of 3101 Spencer Preston Rd, in the Horsepasture District and shown on Tax Map 49.1(2)/3-13,13A,16-18,21. The property is zoned Agricultural District A-1. The application for this request may be viewed in the Department of Planning, Zoning & Inspection between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.
 Lee H. Clark, AICP
 Director of Planning, Zoning & Inspection

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VDOT Safety

(cont. from page 1)

Support for the changes seems positive. “We need it today, we don’t need it tomorrow,” said County Administrator Dale Wagoner. Del. Eric Phillips, R-Henry County, also supports the restructuring. “I think anyone who drives 220 southbound and drives beside a double tractor-trailer would hope that we straighten out those curves and

Council

(cont. from page 1)

The mandated agencies like the Blue Ridge Library, Social Services, Piedmont Community Services (PCS), and Martinsville-Henry County Health Department is around \$1.822 million.

Ferrell-Benavides said the citizens community and engagement organizations like ANCHOR, boys and girls clubs, Southside Survivor Response, Southern Area Agency on Aging, and others is \$157,969.

Ferrell-Benavides said \$227,746 was allocated to the economic development category, which includes the Blue Ridge Airport Authority, Uptown Revitalization, events, Uptown partnerships, West Piedmont Planning District (WPPD), and others.

“Last and certainly not least, tourism. Within this one for tourism, we had Piedmont Arts, Virginia Cooperative Extension, and Virginia Museum of Natural History, our total contribution is \$33,571,” she said.

Council member Kathy Lawson suggested increasing the funds distributed to the Virginia Cooperative Extension.

“You can always approve a pot of money and then appropriate it later,” she said.

The council decided to take more time to decide on how to distribute the funds to the agencies.

“We will increase the pot to accommodate that extra money,” vice-mayor Aaron Rawls said.

In other matters, the council:

*Amended its motion that it approved the allocation of money in the amount of \$285,000 for this coming fiscal year for the Virginia Career Works youth employment program.

At the December 19 council meeting, Ferrell-Benavides said the Virginia Career Works presented a proposal to hold this program.

“Following the presentation, funds were identified from ARPA. Initially, \$200,000 was allocated, unfortunately they had budgeted the total project which comes

PSA Budget

(cont. from page 1)

The spending plan is a five percent reduction from FY24. The reduction in the budget is attributable to fewer capital expenditures and less debt service due to a completed loan repayment during FY24.

Keith Heath, of The Lane Group, Inc., presented the 2023 Utility Operation Report. The PSA goes through an annual third-party review to ensure requirements match a bond trust agreement that came about in 1991. The group gives advice and recommendations to help the PSA remove smoothly.

“We reviewed a number of items related to this report preparation,” Heath said. “The PSA has operated for over 10 years with the same rate structure.”

The current median income in the county is about \$43,000, with a 1 percent rate being equivalent to a water only bill of \$36.41.

“With respect to that PSA’s rate is a little bit under that 1 percent threshold,” Heath said, adding the current rates are lower than the recommended amount.

“The revenues and expenses fluctuate a little bit every calendar year, but by large they are fairly consistent,” Heath said, and noted that indicates the PSA is maintaining stability.

The “PSA has endured some hardships, as well as a

Pools

(cont. from page 1)

pools, but none have been confirmed.

“The gym floor is one of the big things that we are going to have to renovate,” said Jarrett. The community center bathrooms will also need to undergo renovations to meet handicap standards and be more accommodating. Many of the office areas will also receive a refresher.

There is no timetable set for when the center will be finished, but it’s expected to take more than a year’s time.

Volunteers were happy to help with efforts around the center.

Ambulance

(cont. from page 1)

medical facilities. It would not be dispatched by the county’s 9-1-1 Center, and would not be eligible to respond to emergency calls.

In other matters Tuesday, the board will:

*Consider a request from staff to award a \$349,000 contract to D.H. Griffin of Greensboro, North Carolina, to demolish the previous jail building. Following a competitive bid process, D.H. Griffin was selected to conduct the demolition and return the lot to a grassed area. Funding for this project is included in the capital improvement plan.

*Consider a request from Public Safety Director Matt Tatum, who is asking the board to award a \$199,969 contract to Vest Sales and Service, Inc. of Check, VA, for the re-chassis of an existing 2019 Ambulance to a 2025 Ford 4x4.

*Consider a request from county staff to approve a \$78,402 contract to TK Elevator located in Roanoke, to update the elevator cabs and shafts in the administration building. Funds for this project are included in the Capital Improvements Plan budget.

*Consider a request from staff to award a \$389,513 contract to Excel Truck Group of Roanoke, to buy a 2025 Mack LR front-loading garbage truck to replace an existing truck experiencing repeated equipment failures. Funds for the purchase are included in the capital discretionary fund.

*Consider a request from Chief Purchasing Agent Carole Jones, who is asking the board to award a contract to

flatten those hills. That’s the goal. This is a positive thing,” he said, adding that he owns a business that involves double tractor-trailers and said it was concerning for truck drivers as well.

“Not only as a passenger, but a business owner, it’s a risky little drive through there,” Phillips said. “Our area in Virginia has the fastest growing immigration in any part of Virginia,” with

to \$559,000, which was the amount the program was built on,” she said.

Ferrell-Benavides said Virginia Career Works is now requesting the full allocation to complete the program successfully.

“So, this would be an additional \$359,000 from ARPA that they’re asking for, for their program,” she said.

Rawls said when the council initially allocated the funds the highest it was ever at was \$400,000.

“Four hundred thousand was the max, I don’t know how we ended up altering that down to \$200,000. But we do have significantly less ARPA money than we thought we had remaining, so that additional” funding “is pretty significant. That’s my two cents on that,” he said.

Ferrell-Benavides said she doesn’t know how the council got down to \$200,000.

“At the minute, we actually didn’t approve at NCI (New College Institute), we approved when we did the larger presentation. It may have been a possible recommended amount saying, ‘let’s see if they could work with that’ just because we were at the limited amount,” she said.

Ferrell-Benavides added there is currently about \$1.5 million left in the APRA account.

While she doesn’t have a detailed explanation for how this situation happened, Ferrell-Benavides said the city did receive an invoice for \$559,000.

Mayor LC Jones said his question is where the program will go if the council cuts the funding back to the original \$400,000 as Virginia Career Works has already started the program and has 20 children signed up.

“When they sent over the invoice, what the pause was, the money wasn’t available from the start. Once they start, these kids will start internships again and begin getting paid on a monthly basis,” he said.

Jones said one alternative is to allocate funds for one

lot of other localities around. with economic swings and with the loss or introduction of industries,” he said, but the PSA’s operating budget stays consistent throughout the year.

The agency PSA made \$705,600 in interest income, which Heath said, “is very commendable to PSA to the PSA’s financial operations” and shows a positive growth in income. “That’s a very large number, it has not been seen in previous operating years, it’s a reflection of the financial times that we are in.”

Overall, the review was positive.

“We feel that PSA’s operating budget is fair, and consistent, it has been laid out well,” Heath said.

The group did not recommend any changes.

The PSA also managed to keep the agreed \$400,000 in reserve in case of emergency. Currently the account has more than \$600,000.

“You are meeting and exceeding the required replacement reserve account,” Heath said, and added the agency met the requirement for the operating revenue reserve requirement.

The board reviewed a map of the current sewer and water system, showing where services were available in the county.

“Let’s keep this thing alive. It’s a good cause,” said Jamie DeMoss. She said it was a good Saturday to do things, and she liked that Fieldale had an organized event going on.

At the pool, volunteers worked to clean the water and lounge chairs. Grass across the street was also being mowed, and the basketball courts were clean. The pools have already seen a huge outcry of support, with most of the facility’s pool parts slots being booked ahead of the summer season.

Jarrett acknowledged that a lot of work was done in

Bassett Office Supply, Inc. to supply and deliver office supplies to County offices. The contract is for one year with an option to renew for up to seven one-year periods.

*Consider a staff request to approve a \$212,139 contract to Berkley Group, LLC, of Bridgewater, Virginia, to provide Comprehensive Planning Services over the next two years for a complete rewrite of the county’s Comprehensive Plan.

*Consider a request to approve an additional appropriation of \$20,000 in grant funds from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development to hire a licensed surveyor to reconfigure 31 existing lots into 16 building lots for the Villa Heights Housing Project.

* Sheriff Wayne Davis is asking the Board to approve an additional appropriation of \$3,784 and \$11,914 received from a 2022 and 2023 grant from the U.S. Department of Justice State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP). The grant funds are authorized for deputy overtime, special operations, and off-site security of inmates during medical procedures.

*Consider an additional appropriation of \$1,500,000 received as two grants from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development for the Fieldale Heritage Revitalization Project. In 2021, Henry County was awarded a \$500,000 grant through the Virginia Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), followed in 2022 with a \$1,000,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). Both grants were awarded specifically for renovations to the Historic Fieldale Community Center.

9,000 leaving to work, and 9,000 people coming into the area for work each day. “It’s only going to increase as we build out these business parks.”

As part of the restructuring project, VDOT is requesting public input via an online survey that is available through 11:59 p.m. June 3. The project is still in the works and no restructuring designs are finalized.

year of the two-year program and then consider it in the budget next year.

“Then try to help garner support to complete the program out,” he said.

If its ARPA funding next year, Ferrell-Benavides said the council would have to decide in September if it will fund the program and then send an advance.

“But we don’t have to make that decision today,” she said.

*Approved an application for excavation/construction/street closure in the city’s right-of-way. It will include a permitting fee of \$100 and will be effective immediately. This is an application for anyone doing work in the city’s right-of-way where they are required to fill out a permit that includes giving a calculation as to the amount of asphalt that will be cut or how much dirt will be disturbed. It also requires companies to have insurance and allows the city to look at the company’s traffic control plans.

*Recognized the 50th anniversary of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. and proclaimed May 25 as the Kappa Delta Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. day.

*Discussed the Virginia Municipal League (VML) appointments of the council members. Council member Tammy Pearson was nominated to Community and Economic Development, City Manager Aretha Ferrell-Benavides to Finance, council members Lawrence Mitchell to General Laws, LC Jones to Human Development Education, and Kathy Lawson to Infrastructure.

*Appointed Nelson Evans to the Anchor Group Commission for a term ending December 31, 2027.

*Appointed Cynthia Cindy Frank to the Children’s Services Act (CSA) board.

*Approved giving a \$5,000 sponsorship to the Fayette Area Historical Initiative (FAHI) for its upcoming June-tenth event.

“A majority of the county’s citizens do have access to water services,” Heath said. The sewer system is smaller, with more than 7,000 customers, and the PSA is actively working to expand the water and sewer network.

The budget also included a three percent salary increase for all PSA employees, which will take effect on July 1. In addition, it contains a merit-based step increase for many employees that will take effect on September 1.

While PSA employees already receive full health insurance coverage, the budget includes a 10 percent reduction in spouse and family coverage. This will not only ease the burden on employees with families, but also enhance the PSA’s ability to recruit and retain dedicated staff members.

In other matters, the board:

• Accepted an annual report from the Lane Group regarding the organization’s compliance with their 1991 Master Trust Agreement with Crestar Bank. There were no recommended changes.

• Accepted monthly reports on Finance, Construction, Engineering, Safety, and Treatment and Regulatory Compliance.

a single day and was grateful for the volunteers. “We’ve gotten a lot done,” he said, and added that 15 volunteers showed up to help with the work, including several students earning community hours for school.

This year, the pool opens on May 25. Lifeguards and volunteers for the snack bar adjacent to the pools are needed. Those interested in helping can call (276) 201-9913 or (276) 340-7226. Information about the pool’s hours and upcoming events can be found on the center’s Facebook page.

*Commonwealth’s Attorney Andrew Nester requested the approval of an additional appropriation of \$1,341 from State Asset Forfeiture funds for the purchase of furniture and fixtures.

*Consider a request from the school board for the approval of two categorical transfers: \$253,854 from the Administration/Attendance and Health category to the Transportation category; and \$152,168 from the Administration/Attendance and Health category to the Operation and Maintenance category. Superintendent Dr. Amy Blake-Lewis indicated the funds will be used to purchase two new school buses and upgrade the school surveillance systems and classroom door locks as part of the safety measures for students and staff.

*Hear a presentation about a draft energy plan. The county partnered with George Mason University (GMU) to develop the plan.

*Consider meeting in closed session to discuss appointees to the Parks and Recreation Board, Patrick & Henry Community College Board, and Piedmont Regional Community Services Board; pending legal matters; the acquisition/disposal of real estate and as-yet unannounced industries.

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

*Present the Community Connected Citizen Award, to better recognize everyday contributions.

*Lisa Hughes, resident engineer for the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), will discuss general highway matters.

Suite of summer nutrition programs launched

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is launching “SUN Programs: USDA’s Summer Nutrition Programs for Kids,” to help improve nutrition security during the summer months. Through the suite of SUN Programs, families now have more choices and convenient ways to get summer nutrition support for their children and teens with new SUN Bucks, SUN Meals, and previously launched SUN Meals To-Go. Collectively, these programs continue the work of the Biden-Harris Administration in promoting food and nutrition security.

“Nearly 30 million children participate in USDA’s school breakfast and lunch programs on an average school day, but when school is out, kids lose access to those vital meals,” said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. “USDA’s SUN Programs offer more options for families to conveniently access the essential nutrition children need to thrive, learn and grow during summer and beyond.”

SUN Bucks, the new evidence-based Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (Summer EBT) program, provides a grocery benefit of \$120 per eligible school-aged child this summer; the benefit value will be adjusted annually for inflation and is higher outside of the contiguous 48 states. SUN Bucks helps families and caregivers expand their summer grocery budget to buy foods that best fit their family’s needs, cultural traditions and preferences. Research shows that this type of summer grocery benefit can reduce child hunger in the summer by 33%, and also improve eating patterns with increased whole grain, dairy, and fruit and vegetable consumption by children in participating households.

This inaugural summer, many states, the District of Columbia, all U.S. territories, and some tribal nations are partnering with USDA to make SUN Bucks available in their communities. About 21 million children are expected to benefit from SUN Bucks this summer.

In participating areas, SUN Bucks can be used at a variety of grocery stores and other food retailers and are in addition to other food benefits families may already receive, like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and

Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR). Families with eligible children currently receiving SNAP and other benefits will automatically be enrolled in SUN Bucks; others will need to apply each year.

In addition to the new grocery benefit, SUN Programs also provide nutritious meal and snack services during the summer months to kids 18 and under in communities and among populations with high rates of poverty throughout the U.S.:

SUN Meals are served at schools, parks, community centers, and other neighborhood locations. This long-standing in-person summer meals program has been available in communities since 1968. Meals are often provided along with enrichment activities to support children’s healthy growth and development.

SUN Meals To-Go, launched in 2023, offers pick-up and delivery options in some rural areas when and where SUN Meals are not available.

“It’s heartening to see Congress’s bipartisan action to help make sure no child goes hungry during the summer months,” said Agriculture Deputy Secretary Xochitl Torres Small. “President Biden’s investment in high-quality, nutritious school meals creates healthier brighter futures for kids across America and USDA’s SUN Programs give families more ways than ever to support their kids’ nutritional needs.”

These nutrition programs advance the goals of the Biden-Harris Administration’s national strategy to end hunger and reduce diet-related disease by 2030 set forth at the historic White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health in September 2022.

To help families connect to services in their community, USDA’s SUN Programs website at www.fns.usda.gov/summer, directs visitors to local resources, including how to find a nearby SUN Meals site and see if SUN Meals To-Go are available in their area. Information will be updated throughout the summer. USDA’s SUN Programs website also provides information on SUN Bucks and links visitors to the states and jurisdictions offering the new grocery benefit. The site is also available in Spanish at www.fns.usda.gov/verano.

Late spring planting leads to Virginia’s fall corn mazes

As summer approaches, some Virginia farmers will be sowing the seeds of this year’s corn maze craze—offering families plenty to look forward to this fall.

Traversing a corn maze’s twists and turns is a beloved autumn tradition. Many of the 500-plus corn mazes across the U.S. serve as a major source of income for the farmers who grow them.

The first corn maze was created in Pennsylvania in the 1990s. A 3-acre field was cut in the shape of a dinosaur using a grid system to plot the design—a commonly used method.

Today, creating the Northern Neck Farm Museum’s annual 1.5-acre corn maze is a “very hands-on process,” said Barbara Jean Jones, chair of the museum’s board of directors.

Jones’ daughter uses the traditional method of creating patterns on paper and laying them out on a grid for cutting. After the corn is planted around late June and reaches grass height, various board members will begin cutting this year’s design with lawn mowers.

“We try to make it where visitors can go through the maze and come out in a reasonable time—it’s just a fun thing to go through, and the kids love it,” Jones added.

Planning, designing and cutting the 8-acre corn maze at Jeter Farm in Botetourt County is a year-round endeavor for the family. They use similar methods for creating their “preschool approved” maze.

“We get a lot of preschool groups and younger families that enjoy more of a walk with a few wrong turns than a full-blown maze,” explained Rose Jeter.

Many farmers hire professionals to develop a computer-aided design and cut the corn—especially for more challenging courses.

Bringing Wayside Farm’s complex, 10-acre corn maze to life requires help from The MAiZE Company, the world’s largest corn maze design firm.

The Clarke County farm will begin planting this year’s Spiderman-themed maze in late May. The seeds are cross-planted to ensure a thicker stand of corn—and no shortcuts for visitors.

“People get lost in there all the time,” laughed Philip Shenk, the farm’s part owner.

He said it’s “very gratifying” to welcome school groups and families to the 125-acre farm for its seven-week fall season, which will include a U-pick pumpkin patch, hayrides, barrel train rides, slides, an apple cannon and farm animals.

“There’s just so many kids now that are so far removed from the farm, so it’s a way to educate while we’re having fun,” Shenk remarked.

“It’s my hope that we are providing folks with a positive farm experience that also helps them see and appreciate where their food comes from,” Jeter said. She added that they utilize Virginia Agriculture in the Classroom resources.

Visitors to the Jeter Farm Fall Festival in late September through October will find educational signage, wagon rides, barnyard animals, a pumpkin train, newly designed Jeter Farm T-shirts and other fall favorites.

The Northern Neck Farm Museum’s Fall Harvest Fest is scheduled for Oct. 19, and the corn maze will open by mid-September and run through the last Sunday in October.

And nothing will go to waste once the corn mazes close, as most farms harvest the corn for livestock feed.

Visit the Virginia Tourism website for a list of corn mazes and pumpkin patches across the state.



City students were honored during the Big M Awards 2024 ceremony hosted at Martinsville High School.

Students honored with Big M Awards

The annual Big M Awards were hosted May 16 at Martinsville High School. This award honors seniors that went above and beyond in their academic career by maintaining a GPA of 3.7 or above, and participating in at least three academic subjects. Younger students were also honored with certificates.

Big M Trophy Recipients - Tyler Wayne Carr, Aleeyah Marie Galloway, Gabriel Lucas Haley, LynAsshia Neveah King, Nayti Bhavesh Patel, John David Rattliff II, Skyler Lee Spencer, Whitney Ashton Williams, Ryan Connor DiMingo, Briana Garcia-Macias, Arlette Jaramillo Mata, Mallori Sherril Lowe, Elijah Kenley Pickett, Kaylee Angel Rea, Christopher Bryant Talley II, Destiny Jonet Witcher, Paris Rose Fulp, Latrell Demarq Hairston, Caleb Parke Joyce, Adam Idris Mounkaila, Cortay Jovon Price, Mason Crenshaw Rorrer, Tyra Makelle Valentine, Reagan Bailey Wright.

Patrick Henry Elementary School - Jackson Ray Branch, Fernando Jatneil Isidro Carrillo, Jaidence Antonyah Hairston, Nylah-kay Scott, De’Coyia Ni’Cole Smith, Yetzael Ramos-Tellez, Leonel Matthew Reyes Villanueva.

Albert Harris Elementary School - Abbas Ali Bayani, Remington Levi Crockett, Archer Barnour Deatherage, Lily Rose DeJesus, Deontre Lamar Fitzgerald, Jade Inyaa Holland-Dallas, Wyatt Andrew Hoyer, J’Amira Monae Lockett, Kennedy Koy-Monroe Martin, Samuel Andres Olivares-Rosas, Dillion Javon Sandoval Wilson, Asma Sediqi, Katherine Rose Wall, Mason VonRonstead Eckmund Wright.

Martinsville Middle School:

Sixth Grade - Kevin Gabriel Avila-Santiago, Zariyah A’neese Bouldin, Janette Guadalupe Carrillo-Llamas, Alan Carillo-Tamayo, Litzzy Contreras Rosas, Reginald Cobbs, Jeffrey Alan Cousins, Skylar Latress Euceda, Elaina Jimiya Hairston, James Andrew Hall, Jewel-Armani Martin, Jairo Samuel Mata, Freddy Munoz, Dainya Sue Penn, Quandel Fitzroy Richards.

Seventh Grade - Joshua Lyn Branch, Bridgette Alise Brent, Edward Brown, Olivia Grace Campbell, Christopher Rolando Carpio Yanez, Kayleigh Alexis Cristobal, Nadia Yazmin Dominguez Gonzalez, Marisol Garcia-Macias, Zackary Randall Harter, Zanaysia Niyerra Jones, Hazel Wren Moore, America Ramos Tellez, Ayden Leon Roberts, Adrenal Jaydon Stultz, Dayanna Yoseline Torres-Jose, Kailyn Amyah Venable, Arianna Marie Ybarra.

Eighth Grade - David Alexi Argueta, William Dardan-Scott Bela, Jayrus Trevon Brim, Abigail Savannah Campbell, Zhedrick Louise Campbell, Chanity Jenise Chism, Brennan Chase Coleman, Kira Lynn Compton, J’Kobe NySier Covington, Cordell Elijah Daniels, Keyara Ronee Dillard, Ja’Da Nicole Eggleston-Wade, Jayden Demetrie Farris, Christopher John Floyd, Ny’Kerion J’Von France, Hudson Logan Grant, Lee’Yla Abrielle Hairston, Benjamin Jesse Haley, Leonardo Hernandez Mata, Aubrey Nichole Hill, Jonathan Duane Hudson, Isabella Claire Hurd, Nykira Chantel Johnson, Abraham Gabriel Michael, Aileen Yuritzia Nolasco, Faith Kayleigh Pack, Zion Faith Perkins, Xavier Alonso Rodriguez, Erzart Sahini, Veronixa Loraine Smith, Symphony Chynah Necoal Talley, Phyllis Marie Thomp-

son, Ja’Corian Drakar Turner, Lilly Grace Wall, William Henry Wall, Paris Noel Waller, Addison Aleese Williamson, Noah Drew Wright.

Martinsville High School:

Ninth Grade - Crystal Shy’ann Adams, Jaden Alexander Ayoub, Kayra Shawn Carr, Sherman Chase Dillard, Fernanda Guadalupe Dominguez-Machuca, Angeliah Monae Eccles, Jordan SaRai Foster, Sarah Rose Greene, Alyana Nicole Hairston, Carrie Lynn Hudson, Carrie Lynn Hudson, Caden Amir Martin, De’Mari Dalevon Martin, Gabriella Frances Michael, Aniyah Brenae Millner, Jazmin Rubi Mota-Ocampo, Julie Anna Nguyen, Ariyana Re Nae Nowlin, Erika Noemi Ortiz-Soriano, Jaden Anthony Porter, Trinitee Faith Prunty, Yartzy Ramos Tellez, Nasir Antwaine Turner, Joshua Louis Redd, Briana Aniya Reid, Amyah Sheronne Richardson, Logan Layne Richardson, Dulce Maria Romero-Jimenez, Ja’Vonna Marjae Stubblefield, Mauri Obyran Tinsley, Caleb Tyree Valentine, Karter Anthony Winbush.

Tenth Grade - Kymani D;Niya Brim, Jemea Leshay Craghead, Gabriel Shalom Davis, Beyonce Lara Diaz, Kamori Re Yanna Dillard, Shatavia Danielle Dillard, Zanish Ariana Dillard, Caesar Kamari Draper, Chekiya Kailyn Galloway, Abigail Hernandez, De’Nyiran Tyjuahn Hodge, Ny’Asia Chenelle Hood, Aerran Elysia Kellam, Myasia Kimiya Long, Nyasia K Long, Jun Hermes Olea, Michael Jeremy Parker, Jailyn Omarion Reynolds, Tamarion Laquan Siddle, Rilyne Addison Williams, Kaira Merci Womack.

Eleventh Grade - Anne Frances Agee, Adam Luis Aguilar, Elvin Ariel Amaya Turcios, Naun Isai Andrade Paredes, Jaydin Michael Ayers, Montel Deyshaun Bradner, Caleb William Burgess, Yadira Carrillo Tamayo, Keara Lanette Carter, Esmeralda Castillo-Ocampo, NaDasia Janae Cobbs, Ana Marie Dixon, Kassidy Michael Dodson, Xavier Patrick Dunham, Ruby Jaqueline Flores, Cameron Nicole Giles, Ava Brooke Grant, Abigail Fae Haskew, Deniyah Shanice Hightower, Aidan Michael Hood, Isabella Juliann Hood, Kamryn Nashay Kirby, Jose Antonio Lara-Alvarado, Zoe Wilhelmina Lewis, Ashley Marishka Lintag, Gavin Luke Luther, Alondra Machuca Tiznado, Honesty Nevaeh Martin, Skylla Daniele Martin, Skyylar Eva Miller, NaBria Millner, Rickyah Charlee Mitchell-Hairston, John Riley Nguyen, Jacey Claire Pamintuan, Yash Rakeshkumar Patel, Terriah D’Nae Roberts, Destiny Layanie Salda, Jariyah Yanise Smith, Jaylen Roy Solomon, Brooke Allison Turner, Isabella Haze Vega, Jayden Tyron Aki Williams, Kaya Renee Yates, Noah Alexander Young.

Twelfth Grade - Kirsten Alise Blankenbaker, Shamiah Aa’jiyanna Carter, Johnny Owen Clere, Robert Luther Davis, Niiko DaJuan Dews, Jkyan /nizarian Finney, Trevion Ky’lee Gravely, Jacob Josias Hairston, Sarrah Marianna Hoff, Khionna Simone Howard-Hamilton, Mackenzie Kamori Hylton, Natalie Dominique Loredo, Fonshay Shimyrie Moyer, Sulma Zarela Navarrete Saligan, Martiniano Torres Orozco, Syriah Monae Roberts, William Lewis Stanley, Aniya Elise Torrence, Jordan Patrick Vaughn, Jackson William Via, Makayla Elise Watkins, Monica Elise Wtkins, Jayden Lamontt Williams, Sariyah I Najja Woods.

VA works to improve, better fund mental health services

Edwin J. Viera

Virginia News Connection

Virginia is bolstering mental health care during and beyond Mental Health Month.

Since the pandemic, the need for behavioral health services has grown considerably, especially among young people. Social media and pandemic-era isolation contributed to an ongoing youth mental health crisis.

Bruce Crusier, executive director of Mental Health Virginia, said a spillover effect of the pandemic is the reduced stigma around mental health.

“You have more people willing to talk about their mental illness or the fact that they’re not feeling well,” Crusier observed. “It’s good that more people are open about it and more people are asking for help when they need it. I mean, that’s a good thing. The bad thing is that there’s so much need.”

The state has made progress in fund-

ing mental health services. Virginia’s new budget provides an almost \$2.5 million increase in children’s mental health funding to \$15 million for 2025 and 2026, but many other funding pots have been reduced, redirected or eliminated.

While the state is broadening the services provided, barriers to accessing them remain. Beyond existing stigma in certain communities, Crusier pointed out there are many reasons people are unable to get the help they need.

“For some people it’s cost, because they still might not have insurance or know about available insurance options,” Crusier acknowledged. “But even with insurance, there can be high copays, etc. But another one is availability of the service.”

The federal Health Resources and Services Administration designated all of Virginia under a mental health professional shortage. Other reports show the state has few areas where youth behavioral health services are close to sufficient.

Suspected drugs, firearm seized, one charged



Authorities seized what is believed to be illegal drugs with an estimated street value of more than \$100,000.

Henry County Sheriff's deputies executed four search warrants on separate residences in search of illegal narcotics on May 16. The warrants were executed at 1438 Rivermont Heights, Martinsville, Dan Wythe Dr., Apartments 3 & 5 and 433 Chestnut Knob Dr., Martinsville.

Authorities seized approximately 1.87 pounds of suspected fentanyl, 1.96 pounds of suspected cocaine, 3 grams of pressed pills, one firearm, and a hydraulic drug brick press. The seized illegal drugs have an estimated street value in excess of \$100,000.

As a result of the search warrants, Donte Cheron Freeman, aka Leonard Cheron Freeman, 42, 1438 Rivermont Heights, was charged with 3rd or subsequent manufacturing, selling, giving, distributing, or possessing with intent to manufacture, sell, give, or distribute a controlled substance.

This is the second time in three weeks that the sheriff's office has executed search warrants relating to the alleged illegal selling and possession of drugs by Freeman, Henry County Sheriff Wayne Davis said.

On April 30, deputies executed search warrants at 66 Valentine Ct., 134 Preston Scales Dr., and 439 Ziglar Road, regarding Freeman and his alleged "drug enterprise," Davis said.

Freeman previously obtained a bond



Donte Cheron Freeman, aka Leonard Cheron Freeman, was charged on May in connection with a flurry of search warrants.

from the courts and allegedly once again started selling drugs, according to Davis.

The estimated population of Henry County is 50,000 people. The combined suspected fentanyl from May 16 and April 30, is approximately 3.37 pounds. If the suspected fentanyl were pure, that's enough fentanyl to kill approximately 765,000 people.

This seizure has again put a dent in the drug trade in our communities, and as stated previously, the Henry County Sheriff's Office will not tolerate these actions in our county.

This investigation is ongoing, and if anyone has information about this investigation or narcotics trafficking, Davis encouraged them to call the sheriff's office at (276) 638-8751 or Crime Stoppers at 63-CRIME (632-7463).

The Crime Stoppers 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 the reward paid. Crime Stoppers is an anonymous tip line that helps local law enforcement agencies by soliciting tips from individuals and forwarding that information to the particular agency.



Traci Morton of Magnolia & Main Books. A grand opening ceremony will be held later this month.



Magnolia & Main boasts used books from every genre.

Magnolia & Main Books brings affordable shopping to Ridgeway

By Jessica Dillon

Magnolia & Main Books, a new indie bookstore, opened May 9 at 810 Main St., Ridgeway. While the store offers a mix of products, the largest portion is books, and plans to have a grand opening ceremony later in the month.

Magnolia & Main Books selection will be mostly priced under \$25 with a large selection of used books and gifts. Morton believes in keeping prices affordable for everybody. "I can't go out and spend \$20, \$25 on a book every couple of weeks, and I know other people can't either" She expects many items in the store will be under \$10. Books range in genres from YA to non-fiction.

The store had previously planned to operate at small events as a pop-up shop.

"I started everything on April 7th, before I even had time to do the first pop-up event. I saw the for rent sign out here," Traci Morton, owner, said. "It's been incredible the way people have been supporting almost all of the used books have been donated."

The store will continue to accept donated books with the caveat that they are clean and from a smoke-free home.

The space will have a place for children to play and parents to read in the back, with coffee available for readers who need caffeine.

"Any kid that comes in, I want them to have a book so that their mom doesn't have to choose who's getting a book that day."

The free, age appropriate books are donated, and Morton hopes they help ease the burden on families. Moms are also invited to sit and read while their kids play in the store.

Morton is offering space in her shop to other small businesses. Merchandise from Cullen Libby Waterworks, Tiny Creations, and Wonderland Crafts will offer wares for sale in the bookstore.

"I definitely want to have some author signings," Morton said, noting she is able to use the larger conference space next door to host events and plans to do so once the store is settled. She also expressed interest in working with the library.

The store is open Wednesday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Saturdays from 1 to 4 p.m., and Sundays from 1 to 5 p.m. Parking is in a gravel parking lot located next to the store.

Three charged after interdiction operation at correction center

A recent operation at a Virginia Department of Corrections (VADOC) facility demonstrates the importance of constant vigilance in fighting the flow of drugs and contraband into facilities.

The VADOC, along with law enforcement partners the Virginia State Police and the Chesapeake Police Department, conducted an intensive interdiction operation at Indian Creek Correctional Center on Saturday, March 30. During this operation, incoming visitors were screened for drugs and other contraband.

Several contraband items were discovered during the search, including drugs, drug paraphernalia, alcohol, syringes, and three handguns. Nine visits in all were denied.

In total, three arrests were made.

Calli L. McGinnis, 30, of Roanoke, Va., was charged with drug possession, attempted delivery of drugs to a prisoner, carrying a concealed weapon, and carrying a weapon while in possession of drugs.

Brittney S. Salley, 32, of Virginia Beach, Va., was taken into custody after it was discovered she had a warrant for

failure to appear in court. She has been charged with having altered plates and expired registration.

James P. Campbell, 34, of Hayes, Va., was taken into custody after law enforcement attempted to conduct a stop for speeding as he left the facility. Campbell allegedly refused to stop, and a pursuit was initiated. He was charged with drug possession, possession of drug paraphernalia, drive while intoxicated - drugs, refusal to take a blood test, driving on a revoked or suspended license, and failure to yield.

"There is a zero-tolerance approach to drugs and contraband at our facilities," said VADOC Director Chad Dotson. "This operation improved the safety and security of Indian Creek Correctional Center. Our corrections team will continue to fight the flow of drugs and contraband in our facilities."

The Virginia Department of Corrections continues to monitor the intake of contraband into its facilities. If you have any information, you can call anonymously to (540) 830-9280.

Youngkin Takes Final Action on 2024 Regular Session Legislation

Gov. Glenn Youngkin recently acted on legislation that was returned to his desk after the General Assembly rejected his proposed recommendations.

"During my State of the Commonwealth address in January, I made clear my intention to work in a bipartisan manner with the General Assembly to accomplish policies that move Virginia forward, and we have a lot to be proud of this session," said Youngkin. "I sent 115 bills back to the General Assembly with amendments which improved the legislation and sought compromise on collective priorities. I'm glad the majority of those recommendations were accepted. While I look forward to working with the General Assembly to see if we can reach agreement on language in the future, today I must act on the language before me, and there are several bills which are not ready to become law."

"This includes legislation related to contraception. Let me be crystal clear: I support access to contraception. However, we cannot trample on the religious freedoms of Virginians. And that is the issue the recommendations I sent back to the General Assembly addressed. I will continue to uphold the oath that I swore to support and defend the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Virginia," Youngkin said.

The Governor signed seven bills, which included:

*SB 498 - School-connected overdose policies; guidelines, parental notification and response- the Virginia Senate accepted the Governor's recommendation, which returned the bill to its stronger original version. The House of Delegates unfortunately rejected the recommendation. While the current language does not go far enough to ensure parental notification of school-connected overdoses, it allows the Board of Education to establish guidelines. The Board of Education will begin this important work immediately. In addition, Executive Order 28, which establishes a 24-hour

parental notification standard for all school-connected overdoses, remains in effect.

*HB 707 & SB 361- Consumer Data Protection Act; protections for children- the Governor's recommendation would have expanded protections for children from harmful social media practices online. In its current form, the bill does not go as far as it should, particularly by excluding minors over the age of 13 from protection, but the bill can be signed as the Administration works with the legislature and stakeholders to further strengthen these protections next session.

*HB 1055- Eastern VA Health Sciences Center at Old Dominion University, board of directors of; membership- The Governor's recommendation strengthened the ability of the General Assembly and the executive branch to oversee the new board established by the forthcoming merger of Eastern Virginia Medical School and Old Dominion University. The bill in its current form can be signed, allowing the merger process to continue while pursuing future governance changes.

*SB 142- Public school teachers; licensure requirements, issuance of a one-year local eligibility license- the Governor offered recommendations that would have improved the functionality of the bill. While legislative changes will be necessary next session to make it more effective, the bill as it currently stands will improve the ability to hire teachers.

*HB 214- Common interest communities; residents providing certain services exemption- this bill was sent to the Governor's desk in the "7-day" bill window during the 2024 Regular Session. Additional review was needed. The relevant agencies have been consulted and the bill is ready to be signed into law.

*HB 1071- Reduction of speed limits; local authority- while additional work will need to be done on this policy in the future to continue to improve its implementation while continuing to guarantee road safety, the bill can move forward at this time.

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Fairy Stone, Douthat state parks complete final phase of cabin renovations



Exterior Log Cabin



Log Cabin Living Room



Renovated Block Cabin Living Room

Cabin renovations at Fairy Stone and Douthat state parks have been completed, according to the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). The upgrades mark a milestone in the ongoing efforts to enhance visitor experi-

ence and preserve the historical elements of these cherished parks.

"This project represents a significant investment in the future of Douthat and Fairy Stone state parks, reaffirming their status as premier outdoor

destinations," said Virginia State Parks Director Dr. Melissa Baker. "After years of meticulous planning and hard work, the transformation is now complete, and we are ready to provide visitors with unparalleled opportunities for recreation,

relaxation and exploration."

The renovations, led by PMA Architecture, began in 2021 and were part of a comprehensive plan aimed at addressing infrastructure needs and modernizing the log cabins built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the 1930s and the cinder block cabins constructed in the 1950s. Phase one wrapped up in the spring of 2023 and included 29 cabins. The remaining 26 cabins received upgrades in phase two, which was completed in May, including:

Rehabilitated exterior and interior log cabin walls.

New exterior cladding and interior finishing on cinder block cabins.

Upgraded bathrooms.

Upgraded kitchens with new stainless-



Renovated Log Cabin Kitchen

steel appliances.

Upgraded plumbing, HVAC and electrical.

New windows and furniture.

Throughout the renovation process, sustainability was a top priority, with efforts focused on incorporating eco-friendly materials and practices to minimize the environmental impact and promote conservation.

At Douthat, the park selected composite shakes for the

roofs. They were designed to look like the cedar shakes installed by the CCC but have a lifespan of more than 50 years compared to the 15-year lifespan of the original shakes.

This sustainable roofing initiative received Virginia Green Travel Alliance's Green Travel Star Award in 2023. These awards are presented annually to the state's greenest tourism operators and partners for their commitments to sustainability and contributions to green tourism in Virginia.

Another priority during the renovations was accessibility. At Fairy Stone, the park transformed its most popular lakefront log cabin into an ADA cabin. This required changing the bathroom and kitchen layouts and building an elevated sidewalk leading to the front porch and entry door.

Now, both Fairy Stone and Douthat offer ADA-compliant log and cinder block cabins for their guests.

"We are excited to open these newly renovated and historically significant cabins to the citizens of the commonwealth," said DCR's Director of Planning and Recreation Resources Kelly McClary. "We hope the public enjoys the upgraded amenities and the attention to detail that the design and construction team delivered to this very important project."

To learn more about the cabins and their amenities, please go to virginiastateparks.gov. Guests can make reservations for overnight accommodations 11 months in advance online at reserveaparks.com or by calling the Virginia State Parks Reservation Center at 800-933-PARK.

Shepherd honored for contributions to chamber

Sharon Shepherd has moved on from the Martinsville Henry County Chamber of Commerce. She worked with the chamber for 16.5 years and was sent off with a floating party.

"Sharon has been a tremendous asset not just to the chamber, but to this community," said Chamber president Brenell Thomas. "We are very grateful for all that she has done."

Shepherd will start work at Kings Grant Retirement Community, where she will be helping to plan events for the residents. Her coworkers are sad to see her go but wish her well in her future endeavors.

"It's going to be a big change, we are very happy for Sharon," Kimber-



ly Keller-Bonacci, Uptown entrepreneurial development manager, said. "We look forward to her next chapter and are wishing her the best."

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