

Saturday, JUNE 29, 2024

(USPS-6)

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Board nixes tax hike, funds school system

By Taylor Boyd

The Henry County Board of Supervisors did not vote to raise real estate taxes at its Tuesday, June 25 meeting. Instead, in a 5-1 vote, the board voted to amend the fiscal year 2025 school budget by increasing state and local funds by \$12,949,052, which includes \$975,845 from the county General Fund reserves.

The county considered a proposed real estate tax increase, which would have raised the real estate tax rate from 55.5 cents to 62-cents per \$100 of assessed value, as one of several options to provide additional funding to the schools after the state approved its budget.

Garrett Dillard, of the Iriswood District, cast the dissenting vote Tuesday because he said \$970,845 was the minimum funding amount presented by County Administrator Dale Wagoner at a June 11 work

(See Board p. 2)



Commissioner of Revenue Tiffany Hairston requested the 2025 reassessment deadline be moved back a year to January 1, 2026.

County school board tackles fundraising issues

By Jessica Dillon

Henry County Schools Superintendent Dr. Amy Blake-Lewis addressed extra-curricular fundraising issues and the various methods used at the fiscal year close-out meeting on June 20.

"I have spent this year reviewing multiple processes and procedures of the school division. In that review, I identified areas where improvement is much needed," she said, and cited the calendar fundraiser that took place earlier in the school year as an example.

"I was one of the people who received random text messages from multiple students soliciting my support of their calendar fundraiser," Blake-Lewis said, and added that she asked the students if they knew who they were texting and how they had received her number.

"The responses were all similar. The students entered random numbers and stated they did not know who this number was," Blake-Lewis said.

She also asked how the funds would be obtained and told the student that she would meet her for the exchange, which "raises serious concerns for me for the safety of our students."

"I think that exposes students to potential danger, and I think it exposes



Dr. Amy Blake-Lewis addresses concerns about fundraiser safety.

the school system and the board to potential liability," said Mike Gardner, (See School Board p.3)

Bassett staple reopens as Bryan's Corner Gas N Grub



From left, Assistant County Administrator J.R. Powell and Jim Adams of the Reed Creek District, were among those attending a ribbon cutting ceremony at Bryan's Corner Gas N Grub. Adams and Powell as well as family and friends of new owner Bryan Patel, celebrated the milestone.

By Jessica Dillon

A Bassett staple has reopened under new management after completing a round of renovations.

Bryan's Corner Gas N Grub is open and now serving the Bassett community with food, gas, fishing gear, and convenience store staples. The store, which held its ribbon cutting on June 24, was already busy with customers.

The new owner of the popular spot is Air Force veteran Bryan Patel who runs several businesses including 57 Grocery that's located about two miles up the road. Patel said the newest location had been through several previous owners and the opportunity to purchase was presented to him last June. "I

finally committed to it in November of 23. Then, from November all the way up to March, we were renovating."

He said that he wanted to bring the location's "nostalgia" back by incorporating some of the staples the store was known for in the past.

"We are serving food, have bait and tackle for the boaters, convenience items, and we also have gas," Patel said, adding his aim is to keep gas prices as low as possible.

The station is located on the corner of Fairystone Park Hwy. and Philpott Dam Road. The gas station has been around for several decades and has been a staple for many families to pick up food and supplies on

(See Bryan's Corner p. 5)



Officials from First Savings Bank were on hand as the agency was acknowledged for serving Martinsville for 100 years. From left, Vice Mayor Aaron Rawls and council members Tammy Pearson and Kathy Lawson flank representatives from the bank, along with Mayor LC Jones and council member Lawrence Mitchell.

Water line break prompts concerns about communication

By Jessica Dillon

A major topic addressed at the June 25 meeting of Martinsville City Council was a recent water line break and how residents were notified about the boil water advisory. Some residents said they felt the notifications weren't able to reach everyone, especially with older residents who don't use social media.

Julian Mei, who is among the candidates for a seat on the council in November, addressed the board about notifications for the water line break.

"For the population that might be older, that maybe doesn't have access to social media or cellphone, how did they know? How did they know, for example, that the boil water notice was done or still in effect," asked Mei.

"You won't believe how many people don't know how to put an app on your phone," said Mei suggesting a tech workshop to help citizens install an app for alerts.

Council member Lawson sug-

gested using reverse 911 to get alerts.

"We talked about a system like the school uses to reach parents, Reverse 911," Lawson said. "You can sign up for emails or the text on the city's website. We are looking at lots of different options."

City Manager Aretha Ferrell-Benavides said, "We sent out 9,000 messages via code red to citizens. You will hear more about pushing that out and other forms of communication."

Noting that "everyone receives information differently," Mayor LC Jones said this issue is an ongoing discussion.

The council praised utility workers who restored water.

"I wanted to echo sentiments about how fabulous our Public Works Department is and how quickly they were able to identify the issues and get repairs made. They worked tirelessly until it got done," Lawson said.

"We learned a lot of lessons in that response in how we need

(See Water Line Break p. 3)

Historic Fayette Street Lofts offer new opportunity for Uptown-Living



Twenty-five historic rental apartments go on the market this week in Uptown Martinsville, twenty

of which are unique split-level lofts. This represents the third local property under the "Historic Collective" umbrella; rental residences specifically designed to address the local housing shortage faced by the area's workforce community.

Located at the corner of Fayette Street and Moss Street, the building was formerly a Winn-Dixie grocery store and then a furniture store. Originally built in 1954 the building sat dormant since 2014 before JRS Realty Partners proposed converting it into a mixed-use building, including 25 residential units, 2 retail storefronts, and 9 new work-

space concepts called "Make Your Space Studios," scheduled to launch in August.

"As with each property, our goal has been to transition this building of historic relevance into attractive living environments that are affordable to members of our local workforce," explained John Garland, Partner of JRS Realty Partners. With stainless steel appliances, in-unit washers and dryers, individual heating and air-conditioning units with high-efficiency heat pumps, ceiling fans, a keyless entry system, and quartz kitchen countertops, the in-town apartments are indeed unique for the Martinsville area.

The lofts were designed with efficiency in mind. The split-

level design creates an expansive feel. The bathroom, kitchen, and living space is on the first level, with an open dedicated sleeping loft above. Half of the apartments, referred to as the Sky-

(See Historic p. 5)

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Board

(cont. from page 1)



The Henry County Board of Supervisors approved a resolution honoring the Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC) National Champion Softball Team.

session. Wagoner said at the time that amount would be only enough to pay the school system's debt service. The division would have had no funds for its Facilities line item.

"My opposal is about not getting the school system enough money or the funds that we've discussed in meetings. Like I said, putting our money where our mouth is, and that's where that motion comes from," Dillard said.

Before the board cast their vote, Wagoner provided a brief history.

"On April 3, the board of supervisors adopted the fiscal year '25 school budget totaling \$107,018,865. Subsequently, the state biannual budget was approved and allocated an additional \$11,279,096 for our school divisions. As a result, however Henry County will need to provide an additional local match of \$3,816,789," he said.

At the June 11 work session, Wagoner said the board discussed how to meet this budget funding requirement, and several options to address the funding shortfall, including cuts to other county departments, using the reserved funds, raising taxes, or a combination of all three.

"As it relates to taxes, one cent increase on real estate taxes generates \$313,000. So, at the highest point...at 62 cents per \$100 of evaluation, that would generate an additional \$2,034,500 for the fiscal year 25 budget," he said.

Eventually, the board approved advertising a public hearing to receive input on a possible real estate tax increase.

Jim Adams, chairman, and of the Blackberry District, said in the time between the June 11 meeting and the public hearing, he's spoken with various community members and listened to their input.

"I am happy to" say "that I don't think there's a single board member tonight who would support this tax increase. We will find this funding in another way," he said.

Adams said he knows this may come to a shock to some as social media was running rampant discussing what the board was going to do.

"I've seen figures of \$9 million. Well, you heard \$300,000 per one cent, which equates to under \$2 million," he said.

Debra Buchanan, of the Horsepasture District, said the board has always been proud of the hard work educators have invested in the county's children.

"We're also mindful of the fact that the school board budget is approximately 65 percent, maybe plus, of the overall county budget. With an additional \$10 million that the state provided and \$3.8 million that Henry County had to come up with to help improve the educational opportunities for our students, and we're happy with that," she said.

However, during discussions about a potential tax increase, Buchanan said she was concerned about the potential impact on those who own their own homes.

"Approximately up to half of the homes in Henry County are considered rental property. So, those that rent do not pay into the increased real estate. In addition, the landlords have the option of raising the rent. It can be a vicious cycle," she said.

Buchanan said the housing market is currently up with some houses selling at a premium. She also noted the county conducts a reassessment every four years.

"So, when you receive your tax bill in the next year or two, it will look a little different. In most cases, the assessed value of your home will probably go up, and so will your tax bill based on the tax rate. I do not see putting a person that owns their home or rental property or business through two rounds of a possible tax increase within a two-year period," she said.

Buchanan added she didn't think it was a good idea to take funds away from public safety, law enforcement, or any government agency.

Pam Cobler, of the Reed Creek District, said she's received input, and a majority stated they would support the board's action.

"I received one email supporting a tax increase, I've got one direct message that said, 'I don't have any children or grandchildren in the Henry County Schools,' and then I received another email addressed to the entire board," she said.

Over time, Cobler said she's heard many different reports and figures of how much the county has in reserve, and asked Wagoner what the number was.

Wagoner said the unassigned fund balance is the county's monies that's unencumbered and



School Superintendent Dr. Amy Blake-Lewis discussed the school division's one percent sales tax money.



Mary Martin said she was glad the board didn't raise taxes.



Several school board members and personnel attended the meeting.

can be used at the board's discretion. The most recent audit number indicated the unassigned fund balance is \$38,230,250.

"In 2017 and the end of 2018, this board was looking to finance a new Adult Detention Center. To get a better bond rating, it's kind of like the credit rating for yourself," but for the locality, "this board established a financial policy to strengthen our bond rating. That financial policy said we would set aside a percentage of our operating budget into a reserve account... basically, we set aside 18 percent of our total budget in the reserve funds to meet our financial policy obligations," Wagoner said

Cobler noted the number Wagoner presented differed from the numbers the board's been hearing and seeing in public.

Joe Bryant, vice-chairman, and of the Collinsville District, said the board is elected by the public to serve it on all matters.

"As a county supervisor, my job is to work for the county as a whole. The school board works for the school board if that makes sense. That's what their primary goal is - the school board system. My goal is to provide to the school board, to public safety, administration, and to all the other entities that we have to provide to," he said.

He too said the school system gets about 65 percent of the county's total budget. "The rest of that's left up for the supervisors to split up between public safety, the sheriff's department, county administration, all the other entities that goes along with running" the county, Bryant said.

"So, we have to be real tight on money that we work with because we have to divide this money up," Bryant said, and added that he also likes for the county to have a rainy-day fund, which in his mind in the unencumbered fund balance.

"We use these when we have to use these as emergency because there'll be times" when we have to use it. "If we start dipping into our unencumbered fund balance and get to a point where we start taking out of it, our bond rating, it's a double A bond rating, which is one of the highest in the state of Virginia, at some point in time our fund balance is going to change," he said.

Bryant said if it changes a percent, it could result in taxes being increased.

Travis Pruitt, of the Ridgeway District, said he believes it's the board's responsibility as community members to be financially savvy, save and ensure the wellbeing of the county continues.

"That's why we have these financial policies and that's why they were approved. So, we have to keep within those regulations so everyone can live comfortably and not have a tax increase or any of that," he said.

Dillard said the county is not in a bad situation and he doesn't want people to feel doom or gloom.

"If we pull the money out, according to what Mr. Wagoner said, there's still \$9.4 million that's totally available for us to use, there's \$24 million that is in the account to make sure we keep the credit rating," he said.

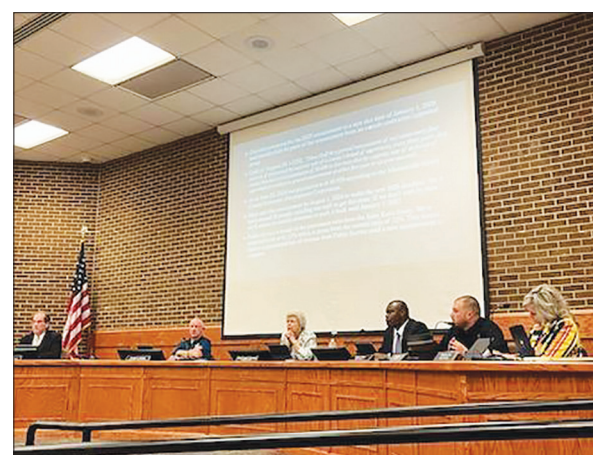
Dillard said he also assumes that over time the county will generate more revenue so "those funds are going to increase."

Adams said he was glad the board had options rather than a tax increase.

The board also heard from the public before voting.

Schools Superintendent Dr. Amy Blake-Lewis wanted to highlight information concerning school funding.

Regarding the one percent sales tax, Blake-Lewis said the account has stipulations for the funds to only be used for new construction or



The Henry County Board of Supervisors nixed a real estate tax hike at its June 26 meeting.

major renovations.

"These funds cannot be used for general, preventive maintenance. Currently, Henry County Schools has committed funds from the one percent sales tax for the construction of athletic field houses at both Bassett and Magna Vista High Schools. One percent sales tax funds have also been committed for construction of elevators at Drewry Mason Elementary, Campbell Court Elementary and George Washington Carver Elementary to ensure compliance with guidelines from the Americans with Disability Act (ADA)," she said.

In the superintendent's estimate of needs that was presented to the supervisors at a joint meeting in March, Blake-Lewis said she presented the findings from the most recent facilities study, which was performed by an outside agency.

"They identified preventative maintenance needs along with priority repairs that totaled nearly \$40 million. These needs ranged from electrical switch gear replacements, heating and air conditioning replacements to plumbing projects and parking lot" repaving, she said.

Blake-Lewis said the school division's original budget request was \$23,987,617, with the supervisors' approved budget of \$21,635,583.

"With the revised approved budget from the state, the requests from Henry County Public Schools for the local board of supervisors have not changed. We are asking for the same amount we initially requested because our estimate of need remains constant. It has not changed," she said.

Blake-Lewis said it's in the best interest of any community to have a thriving, vibrant school division that serves to meet the physical, intellectual, emotional, and social needs of children.

"When business and industry are seeking new areas for relocation or expansion, the quality of the school division is always a key factor and point of discussion," she said.

Mary Martin said she heard earlier that day that the board was not going to approve a tax increase but decided to come just in case.

"I'm very happy we're not going to tax the citizens because a tax increase this year on top of a reassessment next year would have been egregious for every taxpayer. I'm glad that you found another way to do it and with your \$40 million fund that you have, I refer to that as the taxpayer's fund, that's their fund," she said.

Walt Shaw and Kellie Mann also signed up to speak, but chose not to because Wagoner answered their questions when he discussed the history of the situation.

In other matters, the board:

*Scheduled a public hearing for the Tuesday, July 23 meeting at 6 p.m. to consider an ordinance change that would move the county's assessment to a five-year period. Commissioner of Revenue Tiffany Hairston requested this as her office will not be able to make the 2025 reassessment deadline of January 1, 2026.

"I am asking today for an extension until January 1, 2026, to complete this reassessment, and also to open it up to bids from contractors or appraisal service, just parts of the reassessment, not the whole thing," she said.

According to the Code of Virginia, Hairston said localities are allowed to extend the reassessment by five or six years depending on population.

"As of Sunday night, the economic development has our population as 49,926, so we just made the cut" of 50,000 "to be able to extend it. We do need to kind of move quickly on this because August 1 is when this needs to start in order for us to make our deadline of 2026," she said.

(See Board p. 3)

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

IDA Meeting, 4 p.m. to 5 p.m., Municipal Building, 55 W Church St. Martinsville.

Events

Saturday, June 29

Cookbook Showdown, 2:30 p.m., Martinsville Main Library, 310 Church St. E, Martinsville.

Public Donation Drop Off, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., 242 Franklin St., Martinsville.

Auditions for The Shape of Things, 10 a.m., TheatreWorks Community Players, 44 Franklin St., Martinsville.

Thursday, July 4

Independence Day Parade, 9 a.m., Downtown Fieldale, Fieldale VA.

Saturday, July 6

Community event with free food off the grill (10 a.m. – 1 p.m.) and free clothes (8 a.m. – noon), Love and Hope Ministry, 1844 Virginia Ave. parking lot, Martinsville.

Sunday, July 7- Friday, July 12

Vacation Bible School, 6:16 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., Fort Trial Baptist Church, 170 Oak Level Road, Bassett.

Friday, July 12

Feeding Southwest Virginia's Mobile Marketplace visits the HJDB Event Center, 3289 Riverside Dr., Bassett from 12:30 to 2 p.m.

Friday, July 12-Saturday, July 13

The Friends of the Blue Ridge Regional Library are hosting a book sale in the basement of the main branch, 310 E. Church St., Martinsville. The "Members Only" is on Friday, from 2-5 p.m. (you can join at the door). The sale on Saturday, from 9:30 a.m. -2 p.m., is open to the public. ALL paperback books are .50 cents, and ALL hardback books are \$1, unless otherwise

marked. All proceeds go back into the library system. Next sale: Sept. 28.

Saturday, July 13

The 10th Annual Brenda Riggins Memorial Christmas in July Blood Drive with the American Red Cross, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Bassett High School Auditorium, 85 Riverside Drive, Bassett, VA 24055. Walk-ins are welcome, but appointments have priority. You may schedule an appointment by contacting the American Red Cross at 1-800-RED-CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or online at www.redcrossblood.org, Sponsor Code: Brenda, or in the Red Cross Blood Donor App.

Saturday, July 29 – Sunday, July 30

Former Globetrotter George Bell will return as a coach for the 6th annual Michael C. Jarrett Basketball Clinic, which will be held at Fort Trial Baptist Church from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 5 to 7 p.m. for youngsters aged 6 to 16. The cost is \$20 per day or \$30 for both days. For more information, call Jarrett at (757) 237-5644 or email mcjarrett4833@gmail.com.

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 will be open Tuesdays 5-7 p.m. 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.

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.

Board

(cont. from page 2)

If there are additional delays, Hairston said she would ask for an additional extension until 2027, "which is something that we really do not want to have happen."

Hairston said the county's Public Service is going to take a big hit this year from the sales ratio study.

"It is at 72 percent, and it's going to drop down to 61.11 percent, so that's where our revenue comes from - our Public Service. We don't want any further delays than we need to have," she said.

Hairston said the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the state, or the Virginia Department of Taxation, perform the assessed values based off of sale ratio studies.

"They send us what those values are and then we tax it according to our rate. So, it's going to drop, like 11 percent in assessed value in 2025. I don't know that that means to revenue as we just deal with assessed value in our office," she said.

Hairston said the Commissioner's Office is looking at a 45 percent average increase in assessed value once the reassessment is complete.

*Approved a resolution honoring the Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC) National Champion Softball Team.

*Approved its items of consent.

*Heard the monthly report on delinquent tax collection efforts.

*Heard an update from the Martinsville-Henry County Economic Development Corp.

*Approved the local performance agreement and the Commonwealth Opportunity Fund performance agreement for the Press Glass expansion project.

*Heard general highway matters from Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) Resident Engineer Lisa Price-Hughes.

*Heard from James Cox about the reassessment and his opposition to having an outside firm do it.

*Awarded a contract to J.L. Culpepper & Company, Inc., to provide food at the Adult Detention Center (ADC).

*Approved an additional appropriation of grant and county funds totaling \$180,000, and awarded a sole-source contract of \$110,000 to the National Fitness Campaign to purchase a Fitness Court® for the Smith River Sports Complex.

*Approved an additional appropriation of \$40,000 received from vehicle insurance settlements to repair existing vehicles for the sheriff's office.

*Approved a transfer appropriation totaling \$627,000 to cover projected overages for various cost centers. The sheriff's office will use funds from vacancy savings to cover overages at the ADC and unspent funds in employee benefits, legal services, and fuel will be used to cover the other overages.

*Approved an additional appropriation of \$90,000 received from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Thriving Communities Program to fund an active transportation plan and to promote the county's trails.

*Approved an additional appropriation of \$28,000 from the Board's contingency funds to the unsafe structures and property maintenance line items. These funds will be used to address ongoing costs associated with mitigating unsafe structures and addressing violations of the property maintenance ordinance.

*Approved an additional appropriation of \$4,770 from state asset forfeiture funds to cover overtime expenses and office equipment for the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office.

*Approved an additional appropriation of \$54,280 received from the Return to Locality Funds. Each volunteer rescue squad will receive \$10,856, and the Department of Public Safety will receive \$10,855.

*Approved a request to rezone approximately 1.6-acres of the Reed Creek District to Agricultural District. The applicant wishes to build additional accessory buildings on the property.

*Approved the county's participation in a proposed settlement of opioid-related claims against Kroger and its related corporate entities.

*Approved an additional day off for non-essential county employees on July 5.

Water Line Break

(cont. from page 1)

to move forward," Jones added, and also praised city workers and media for helping to communicate the water line issue with the public.

In other matters, the council: Approved Yvonne Givens and Cathy Carter for three year terms on the Martinsville School Board. Both terms will end in 2027.

*Additionally, \$100,000 in ARPA funding will be used to fund lead piping inventory.

*Confirmed the appropriation of additional grants and revenue to close out the fiscal year.

* Recognized employees who earned Service Awards.

* Recognized First Savings Bank for 100 years of service.



Julian Mei, who is among the candidates vying for a seat on Martinsville City Council, raised concerns about communications with some population sectors during a recent water line break. He hopes to improve communications between the city and residents.

School Board

(cont. from page 1)

attorney for the division. He elaborated on the legitimacy of fundraising liability waivers that students sign when taking on fundraising activities.

"It is my opinion that those waivers would be invalid for two reasons. One injury. Personal injury cannot be waived prior to the injury in the Commonwealth of Virginia," Gardner said.

Injury waivers are commonly found to be invalid when an injury takes place. However, the waiver can be of some limited value for defense in the case of an adult stating that they understand a potential risk. When talking about children, this becomes much harder to uphold in court, he said.

"Children do not have the ability to waive any kind of injury, and they do not have the ability under the law to quote on quote, assume the risk of the activity in which they are engaging," Gardner said.

"To your point, we are functionally on the hook because it's our approved activity," board chairman Teddy Martin Jr. asked.

"I think the risk is significant. I will put it that way," said Gardner.

Concerns about the accounting side of fundraisers that require cash contributions also have been raised. The in-



Henry County Schools attorney Mike Gardner warned of potential liabilities related to fundraisers.

tent to cancel these types of fundraisers has already been addressed with principals and by email.

Blake-Lewis said she realizes the importance of sports and programs, and she will be working to launch a new program to provide support. Fundraisers will be reviewed for approval, with the goal of student safety at the forefront of each decision.

In addition, the board also decided to return the former bus garage to the county. The board held a public hearing before the bus garage was returned, but no one spoke for or against the decision.

The board also nominated Martin for the annual Advocate of Education Award.

See more at
www.henrycountyenterprise.com

OPINION

What we've lost

WILMINGTON, NC — Dennis Lee Ray pats the hood of his Peterbilt 359, a wistful smile playing across his weathered features.

"Had a lot of good memories in this ol' truck," he says. "It's amazing what we've lost. What they've taken from us."

Ray, 64, began his career as a long-haul trucker in 1978. It was, he said, a very different time.

"It wasn't like it is now," he said. "There were different expectations. Men were men and women were women, and nobody saw anything wrong with that. Now everyone is woke and folks like me don't have a place in the world anymore."

This year, Ray has decided to hang up his hat and retire. It wasn't a decision that came easily.

"I wanted to keep doing what I do until the day I died," he said. "I guess it just wasn't in the cards."

Ray isn't retiring from the trucking industry, however. He's retiring from his true passion:

Murdering hitchhikers.

"No, I'm still hauling up and down the eastern seaboard," he said. "They'll still let you do that, at least. But when it comes to murdering young women I find on the side of the highway, it looks like the nanny-state liberals have won."

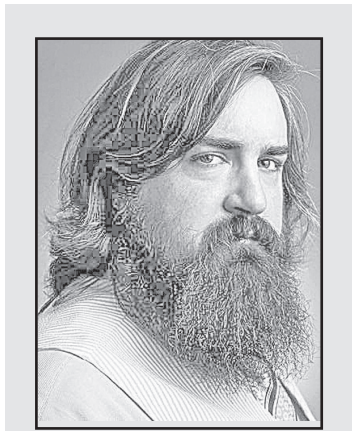
Back when he was a younger man, Ray said, murdering hitchhikers was just a part of life.

"Some guys were blue-collar, some guys were white-collar, and some guys like me were what we called 'red-collar,'" he said. "Hitchhikers went missing all the time, no one thought twice about it. You wanted to go see the Pink Floyd laser show at the planetarium and you didn't have a car, you knew you were rolling the dice."

Now, Ray said, "wokeness" has all but destroyed the pursuit he loves so dearly.

"These cowardly Millennials have had it drilled into them that you shouldn't trust anybody," he said. "'Stranger danger,' you know. And they're too lazy to hitchhike. The ones that do, you pull up next to them and say something like, 'Hey sugar, I hate to see you go but I love to watch you leave,' they just ignore you, maybe even pepper spray you. That's feminism for you."

"I used to be called 'The Nightmare Angel of I-95,'" Ray added.



By Ben R. Williams

"Now they call me an example of toxic masculinity. Back in my day, it was just called masculinity. Boys growing up, they wanted to be firemen, cowboys, boxers, murderers. Can't have that anymore on account of woke."

"Wokeism" has had a chilling effect on public discourse, Ray said.

"If I go up to the average person and say, 'Hey, my name is Dennis, and I murdered 28 hitchhikers between 1977 and 2015,' I'm getting cancelled," he said. "These liberals will drag up stuff you did years ago just to find something to get upset about. I sometimes feel like I'm the Louis C.K. of killing young women in a swamp."

What's most troubling, Ray said, is that the woke agenda has caused America to experience a loss of innocence.

"I want to go back to Mayberry," he said. "I want to go back to a time when people trusted each other, when they didn't bother locking their doors, when they didn't bother closing their windows, when they didn't wake up when you stroked their face while they slept. Now Antifa runs Portland and you have to use paper straws. Did this country lose a war?"

Now that he can no longer pursue his dream, Ray said, he feels he's lost his identity.

"What am I supposed to tell my family?" Ray said. "What am I supposed to tell my secret second family? What am I supposed to tell the man on fire behind the sun who says he'll stop shrieking at me if I offer him enough sacrifices? I'm at loose ends."

"I just feel like my life has been destroyed," Ray added. "I don't expect anyone I've ever met would understand that feeling."

A 'fowl' of the coop

Life is confusing enough when you're going through home renovations.

Especially so if you're a chicken.

We're somehow down to two hens. It's been a terrible year for accidents, predators and mysterious disappearances. The chicken coop has long been in need of a rebuild, and as they say, there's no time like the present.

Plus, if we get it done soon, there's still time to raise some chicks so they'd be big and feathery enough to be warm by the time cold weather returns.

It seemed simple enough: While we tore down and rebuilt the big coop, the two hens could stay in the adjoining coop overnight.

That is, unless you're a bird brain.

That smaller adjoining coop is great for when we have to separate chickens, such as the case of sickness quarantine or raising chicks or providing a temporary home for some stray animal here or there (we hosted a wandering duck a couple of years ago). When the little coop is not in use for those reasons, we open the partition between the two coops so all the chickens could use it.

Since they wander around free during the day (hence the mysterious disappearances), they don't bother going in there too often, other than one of them apparently likes to lay eggs in there.

We took down the fencing and chicken wire of the outer area of the big coop, leaving just the enclosed roosting coop. However, we closed the little door to it so they'd go into the small coop for the night. We closed the partition, set the food and water in there and left the big people-sized door open.

They had no problem going in and out of there during the day for food. It's when night fell that the problems began.

As twilight settled over, however, they went to the big coop, first walking around the missing fence area in apparent surprise. Then they hopped up onto the ledge they normally use to get into the roosting area, but the glass door (made from a window on its side), they stopped.

They'd hop down, then hop up again. After several tries with no luck, they wandered away.

Chickens go to roost before dark, so they'd have to settle soon.



Holly Kozelsky

Instead, they wandered aimlessly around the yard awhile, then returned.

Again, they stood in front of the glass door. Nothing had changed.

They'd go into the little coop, but only one at a time. The black one even walked into the small coop's roosting area and stayed a few minutes, but the yellow one was still wandering about. I'd need them both to be in there to shut the door.

It was nearly dark, and yet they wandered again around the yard.

Then they apparently got desperate: I started hearing clunking sounds.

The yellow hen had gotten back up on the ledge, and this time, she was lunging at the glass door.

The black hen got up there with her and also started throwing herself against the glass door.

I thought maybe I'd have to wait until they settled for the night in a tree, and I'd get them then, and move them into the small coop.

The black one figured it out again, and she walked into the small coop's roosting area.

The yellow one, meanwhile, was looking for a place to spend the night. She wandered about the vegetable garden (actually last year's vegetable garden, this year's wild chaos of weeds). I thought I'd corner her and pick her up. The dog, however, seemed to have the same idea, so a wild chase ensued.

We've had a couple of hens who, after all the other chickens had walked out the same regular door they did every day for years, would frantically run back and forth along the fencing, clucking out to them, without seeming to remember to walk through the open doorway on the next "wall" of the coop. Luckily, the yellow hen had the same lack of common sense on corners that those two hens had on doorways. She finally got herself stuck in a corner, where I picked her up and set her in the small coop to join the black hen.

As I write this, it's nearly nightfall, so this will repeat itself in a few minutes.

We'd better hurry up and finish that big coop, for their sake.

Are Biden Agencies His New Campaign Tool?



Morgan Griffith

Representative

The Committee on House Administration I serve on is trying to protect our elections, investigate weaknesses, and restore election integrity and voter confidence in our elections.

Last year I introduced H.R. 4460, the NO VOTE for Non-Citizens Act, requiring only eligible American citizens to participate in federal elections. The bill withholds some federal dollars that go to localities that allow non-citizens to vote in their elections.

Washington, DC and New York City are examples where non-citizen voting in local elections is being advocated.

I was one of six Members of the House who voted to send the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility (SAVE) Act to the full House for consideration. This bill prohibits non-citizens from voting by requiring states to obtain proof of citizenship when registering individuals to vote.

Further, the Committee explored the influence of "Zuckerbucks" on elections, where private entities funded voter mobilization efforts. An investigation showed that Democrat-likely districts received 90% of "Zuckerbucks" awarded, whereas Republican-likely jurisdic-

tions obtained 10%.

Last week, the Committee issued subpoenas to fifteen Biden Cabinet officials requesting documents related to a March 2021 Biden Administration Executive Order on Promoting Access to Voting.

The subpoenas target officials from various federal agencies, including the Department of Commerce, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health and Human Services, among others.

According to a Roll Call article, Executive Order 14019 instructs executive agencies to create strategic plans to partner with local officials:

"to protect and promote the exercise of the right to vote, eliminate

discrimination and other barriers to voting, and expand access to

voter registration and accurate election information."

That statement looks noble on its face. And the federal government does have a role in protecting the exercise of the right to vote, eliminating discrimination and voting barriers. But it should not have a role in pushing people to exercise their rights, or in deciding what is "accurate election information."

Again "accurate election information" sounds noble and benign on its face. But is it?

I don't know!

Why don't we know?

Because the Administration will not willingly hand over

what their agencies are doing under Executive Order 14019. This information was requested in early 2022. Outside groups have tried to get information. But the Biden Administration will not tell the American people what they are doing in regard to voter registration and "accurate election information" under the Order.

One must assume they have something to hide.

While I could be wrong, I fear that Biden's phrasing of "accurate election information" really means the government is going to decide what is misinformation in the upcoming Presidential election.

We have already seen the government trying to tell us what is accurate and what is misinformation during COVID-19 and currently on the southern border. Freedom of the press means freedom, not government manipulation or control of non-classified information.

While Congress passed the "Motor Voter" National Voter Registration Act in 1993, it was limited to specific areas but NOT voter turnout and "accuracy of information."

In this case, Congress has not debated or passed any legislation delegating specific or explicit authority to these executive agencies. Particularly, authority related to pushing voter turnout in various regions and making determinations on "election information accuracy."

Any activity by these agencies to directly or secretly affect the election is wrong.

How can Americans have confidence in their elections if

federal government agencies are ordered by one candidate (Biden) to seemingly use the power of the federal government to turn out the people they want to vote?

I am a believer that everyone should get out to vote. I have never failed to vote in an election where I was eligible.

It is the role of activists to encourage everyone to vote. Government agencies, however, should not be directly involved in what is essentially a campaign activity. It is unacceptable for any administration to use their government agencies to push targeted areas to go to vote.

Accordingly, I wonder how agency plans will affect rural areas. Are rural areas even considered in these federal government strategic plans? Or are federal agency campaigns focused on urban areas, where more Biden and Democrat votes tend to be concentrated?

As we saw with "Zuckerbucks", rural areas did not receive a fair shake.

Without full disclosure, this Biden Executive Order feels to me like it serves a similar purpose.

Congress is entitled to answers and the Administration must account for what it is doing with taxpayer dollars to perhaps influence this year's Presidential election.

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

Bryan's Corner

(cont. from page 1)

their way to Philpott Dam.

"A lot of the people go to the outlook over there and have family get-togethers and birthday parties. This place can be a great location to pick up buns, hot dogs, or desserts to go with your lunch," said employee Nikki Coats.

The kitchen staff confirmed that fresh offerings like vegetables, macaroni salads, and cakes will be available for purchase. Additionally, ice cream and slushies will be available.

"That will be a great treat on the way to the lake," said Coats.

During the first week, Patel is working on getting the food menu together but hopes to add Indian food options in the future. "We are trying to bring in Indian food too, so if anyone has any suggestions, we can definitely bring in some Indian food too."

Patel said he appreciates the support provided by the Bassett area. The store will be active on Facebook, with regular posts about



Bryan's Corner Gas N Grub has a country flavor for diners to enjoy.

its offerings. This includes stock, new products, and information about their restaurant's home-cooked food.

Patel said feedback from customers is also welcome.

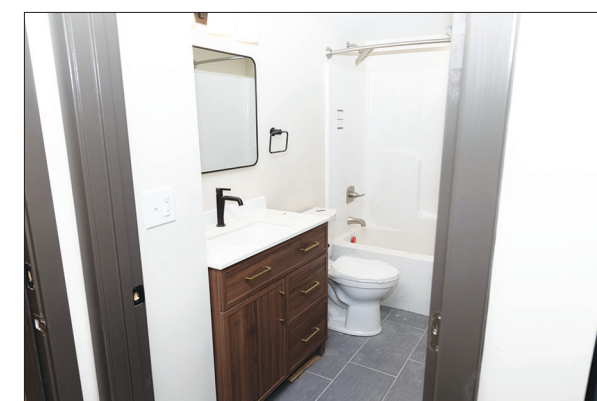
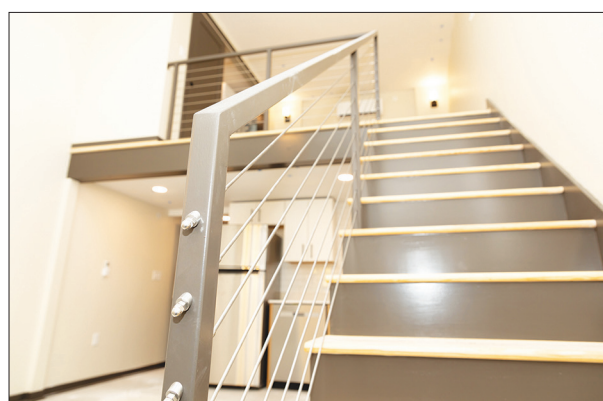


Nikki Coats, a store employee, said she is excited to serve food to the Bassett community.

"We take a lot of their advice. At the end of the day, we are serving the community," Patel said, and added that he is looking forward to the future of the store and what it can bring to the Bassett community.

Historic

(cont. from page 1)



LightLofts, feature a soaring skylight.

This project complements the community's shared vision for Uptown's future, bringing with it a financial infusion to local Uptown businesses. "This addition of twenty-five apartments will inject new life into Uptown Martinsville, complementing the upward momentum we've been experiencing," Mark Heath, president and CEO of the Martinsville-Henry County Economic Development Corp. (EDC), said, adding that "With these new residents comes new spending in the Uptown district."

The lofts, described by the developers as being "in the center of it all," are located a short walk to many of Uptown's most popular businesses, including restaurants, bars, and workout facilities. The building is located across the street from Prillaman's Market, less than a block from the Farmer's Market, and a five-minute walk to The Ground Floor. There is a small public park across the street and public

parking next-door. The property will feature an outdoor grill and picnic area for tenant use.

In addition to the apartments, nine new work-space units will be located on the lower level of the building, to be called "Make Your Space Studios." Currently pre-leasing for occupancy in August, the ample and affordable units are specifically designed for small businesses, nonprofits, and local artists.

"These large spaces will provide infinite flexibility to the 'doers and dreamers' of our community, like start-ups fulfilling online orders, an instructor needing a larger studio, or the professional looking for a new office outside the house," said JRS Realty Partner, Jim Cherney.

Other projects of the Historic Collective include the recently completed School Drive Apartments in Collinsville (formerly the John Redd Smith School), and the Fieldale School Apartments. The next project on track, on the opposite side of Up-

town, is located on the corner of Church and Ellsworth streets. The former BB&T building will be reimagined as "One Ellsworth," a mixed-use project providing 63 apartments, and over 21,000 square feet of commercial space, well-suited for retail businesses, such as a restaurant, sandwich shop, wine bar, city market, speakeasy, health club, daycare center, etc.

Those interested in loft rentals or with questions concerning retail opportunities may contact the Historic Collective Property Manager, Hunter Clark, by email at hclark@cherneydevelopment.com or by text or calling (276) 732-3126.

For more information, or to track the progress of all Historic Collective projects, visit the website at <https://www.historiccollective.com>, follow the Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/historiccollective>, or visit Instagram at <https://www.instagram.com/historiccollectiveva/>.

7 Tips On How To Stop Constant Worrying In Your Life

By Stan Popovich

Do you find yourself worrying about everything that is going on around you?

It can be very tiring and depressing to constantly worry about your family, your job, your health, and everything else that is happening. Having things out of your control is very scary.

As a result, here are 7 tips on how to overcome the cycle of worry and fear in your life.

1. Focus on the facts of your situation; not your thoughts: When people are stressed out, they rely on their fearful and depressing thoughts. Your fearful thoughts are exaggerated and are not based on reality. When you are anxious, focus on the facts of your current situation and not on what you think.

2. You can't predict the future: Remember that no one can predict the future with one hundred percent certainty. Even if the thing that you are afraid of does happen, there are circumstances and factors that you can't predict which can be used to your advantage.

For example, you miss the deadline for a project you have been working on. Everything you feared is coming true. Suddenly, your boss tells you that the deadline is extended and that he forgot to tell you the day before. This unknown factor changes everything.

3. Take a break: Take a deep breath and try to find something to do to get your mind off of your anxieties and stresses. A person could take a walk, listen to some music, read the newspaper, watch TV, play on the computer, or do an activity that will give them a fresh perspective on things. This will distract you from your current worries.

4. Take it one day at a time: Instead of worrying about how you will get through the rest of the week or month, focus on today. Each day can provide



us with different opportunities to learn new things and that includes learning how to deal with your problems.

5. Learn how to manage your thoughts: Challenge your negative thinking with positive statements and realistic thinking. When encountering thoughts that make you fearful, challenge those thoughts by asking yourself questions that will maintain objectivity and common sense.

6. Things change over time: Regardless of your circumstances, your current situation will not stay the same. Everything changes over time. Knowing that your situation will improve will help give you the confidence that things will get better.

7. Get some help: Sometimes, it helps to be able to talk to someone about your stressful situations. Talking to a trusted friend, counselor, or clergyman can give you additional advice and insights on how to deal with the fear of the unknown. Remember that there is nothing wrong in asking for assistance.

BIOGRAPHY

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

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Mobile Marketplace to visit HJDB Event Center on July 12

Feeding Southwest Virginia's Mobile Marketplace visits the HJDB Event Center, 3289 Riverside Dr., Bassett from 12:30 to 2 p.m. on the first Thursday of each month.

In July, the market will visit the center on July 12, due to the July 4th holiday.

The Mobile Marketplace is a grocery store on wheels meant to offer fresh and healthy foods while being

affordable and convenient. Anyone can shop at the market. There are no qualifications to meet and no paperwork to fill out. Debit/credit cards and SNAP/EBT are accepted. By partnering with Virginia Fresh Match, EBT users receive an additional 50% off fresh produce.

For more information, call (540) 299-0990, or email sim.mmp@feedingswva.org.

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BHS grad to play for P&HCC



Bassett High School grad Grace Naff committed to Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC) volleyball. She will join the Lady Pats while studying nursing at P&HCC. Grace Naff is pictured between her parents, Stephanie Naff (mom) and Noel Naff (dad)



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

Give us your view:

The Henry County Enterprise encourages letters from our readers on topics of general interest to the community and responses to our articles and columns. Letters must be signed and have a telephone number where you can be reached to be considered for publication. All letters will be verified before publication. The Henry County Enterprise reserves the right to deny publication of any letter and edit letters for length, content and style.

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

LEGAL

Reservoir Road Reconstruction Project
State Project: U000-044-081, P101, R201, C501
UPC 121894

Henry County, Virginia

Willingness to Hold a Design Public Hearing

Proposed Project:

The project's purpose is to reconstruct Reservoir Road (VA State Route 689) to ensure longevity of the road and compatibility with future development in the area, including ongoing development at Commonwealth Crossing Business Centre. The project consists of demolition of the existing roadway, placement of widened asphalt sections, fine grading for drainage conveyance, and installation of drainage infrastructure. The project will also install an improved cul-de-sac at the end of the road for improved vehicular access.

Plan review:

A map of the project plans and exhibits concerning the project are available for review at the Henry County Administrative Offices at 3300 Kings Mountain Road, Martinsville, VA 24112.

Written Request:

By this notice, Henry County is indicating its willingness to hold a Design Public Hearing for this project if individual concerns cannot be addressed. You may request that a Design Public Hearing be held by sending a written request on or before **July 29, 2024**.

Mail requests to:

Tim Pace, P.E.
Henry County Director of Engineering
P.O. Box 7
Collinsville, VA 24078

Further Notice:

If a request for a public hearing is received, and the concerns cannot be adequately resolved, a public hearing will be scheduled at a time and place to be advertised in a future notice.

Questions or Special Assistance:

Questions regarding this project should be directed to Tim Pace at 276-634-2559 or tpace@henrycountyva.gov. Henry County ensures non-discrimination in all programs and activities in accordance with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Any persons with questions on the accessibility of the facility or need for reasonable accommodations should contact Tim Pace at 276-634-2559.

LEGAL

Town of Ridgeway Board of Zoning Appeals Public Hearing Notice

Pursuant to Code 15-2-2204 of the Code of Virginia and Town of Ridgeway Zoning Ordinances a public hearing has been scheduled for July 15, 2024, in the conference room of the Ridgeway Mayor's office, Main Street, at 6:00 PM. The purpose of this hearing is to receive citizen input into the revoking Special Use Permit 02-02 issued by the Town of Ridgeway BZA on June 18, 2022.

Case 1-2024 Town of Ridgeway
A Request was received under Section 21-215 of the Town of Ridgeway Town Council to revoke Special Use Permit 02-02 issued by the Town of Ridgeway BZA on June 18, 2022.

Craig A. O'Der, Jr.
Mayor

LEGAL

ORDER OF PUBLICATION Case No. JJ018039-03-00

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
VA. CODE § 8.01-316
HENRY COUNTY J & DR - JUVENILE
Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court
Commonwealth of Virginia, *in re* DALTON, JANYAHA HENRY-MARTINSVILLE DSS v. BENJAMIN WASHINGTON
The object of this suit is to:
TERMINATE THE RESIDUAL PARENTAL RIGHTS OF PUTATIVE FATHER, BENJAMIN WASHINGTON AND THE RESIDUAL PARENTAL RIGHTS OF THE UNKNOWN FATHER AND IN THE EVENT BENJAMIN WASHINGTON IS NOT THE BIOLOGICAL FATHER OF JANYAHA DALTON, A CHILD BORN 9-17-2023 TO MOTHER, BRANDI DALTON.
It is ORDERED that the defendant appear at the above-named court and protect his interests on or before 07/29/2024 at 2:00 p.m..
06/18/2024

LEGAL

ORDER OF PUBLICATION Case No. JJ018040-03-00

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
VA. CODE § 8.01-316
HENRY COUNTY J & DR - JUVENILE
Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court
Commonwealth of Virginia, *in re* DALTON, JAYCE HENRY-MARTINSVILLE DSS v. BENJAMIN WASHINGTON
The object of this suit is to:
TERMINATE THE RESIDUAL PARENTAL RIGHTS OF PUTATIVE FATHER, BENJAMIN WASHINGTON AND THE RESIDUAL PARENTAL RIGHTS OF THE UNKNOWN FATHER AND IN THE EVENT BENJAMIN WASHINGTON IS NOT THE BIOLOGICAL FATHER OF JAYCE DALTON, A CHILD BORN TO MOTHER, BRANDI DALTON.
It is ORDERED that the defendant appear at the above-named court and protect his interests on or before 07/29/2024 at 2:00 p.m..
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Farmers brace for drought as hot, dry weather persists

While summer drought conditions are not uncommon in pockets of Virginia, farmers statewide are expressing concern about the forecast. An ongoing string of hot days with low humidity will likely affect their crops.

Those abnormally dry drought conditions are persistent throughout the commonwealth, according to a recent crop progress report from the National Agricultural Statistic Service's Virginia Field Office. Temperatures are expected to reach highs in the upper 90s in the coming weeks.

"We were getting rain, rain, rain every weekend," said Danielle Bappert, regional crop agent for Virginia Farm Bureau Crop Insurance. "Then it just cut off. The farmers I talk to are nervous, looking at their weather apps, with not a drop of rain in sight."

However, some crops thrive in this weather. "There was a very good first cutting of hay around the state, and some farmers have al-

ready gotten a good-quality second cutting," noted Robert Harper, Virginia Farm Bureau Federation grain division manager.

Since Virginia's wheat and hayfields received significant rain in the spring, they are faring well.

"Everyone is telling me it's their best hay crop in years," explained Bappert. "And it's ideal for wheat to be dry when it's cut. Last year it rained a lot during that time frame, which lowers quality. But for most farmers, corn and soybeans are the big money makers."

With long summer days, "photosynthesis is wide open," Harper said. "When water cuts off, it puts those crops under stress."

The lack of rain already has prevented some growers from double-cropping—growing two or more crops in the same area during a single crop year, like planting soybeans after harvesting winter wheat.

"Farmers are telling me they are not planting

them," Harper said. "They are waiting for rain because they can't hammer seed into ground that's hard as a brick!"

The unusual weather may be attributed to the shift from El Niño to La Niña.

The summer will bring a climatic pattern change, said U.S. Department of Agriculture meteorologist Brad Rippey. El Niño is the climate phenomenon warming equatorial waters in the Pacific.

"The transition has already begun to the opposite conditions, known as La Niña, with colder-than-normal waters in the same region," he said. "The shift is coming."

The climate transition can result in "super-dry conditions" followed by a highly active hurricane season predicted this year, Bappert noted.

VFB has added hurricane coverage to its multiple crop insurance options. For more information, visit vafb.com/insurance/crop.

FSA seeks nominations for local county committees

Nominations are now being accepted for farmers and ranchers to serve on local U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committees. These committees make important decisions about how federal farm programs are administered locally. All nomination forms for the 2024 election must be postmarked or received in the local FSA office by Aug. 1.

Elections for committee members will occur in certain Local Administrative Areas (LAA). LAAs are elective areas for FSA committees in a single county or multi-county jurisdiction and may include LAAs that are focused on an urban or suburban area.

Customers can locate their LAA through a geographic information system locator tool available at fsa.usda.gov/elections and determine if their LAA is up for election by contacting their local FSA office.

Agricultural producers may be nominated for candidacy for the county committee if they:

Participate or cooperate in a USDA program.
Reside in the LAA that is up for election this year.

A cooperating producer is someone who has provided information about their farming or

ranching operation to FSA, even if they have not applied or received program benefits.

Individuals may nominate themselves or others and qualifying organizations may also nominate candidates. USDA encourages minority, women, urban and beginning farmers or ranchers to nominate, vote and hold office.

Nationwide, more than 7,700 dedicated members of the agricultural community serve on FSA county committees. The committees are made up of three to 11 members who serve three-year terms. Committee members are vital to how FSA carries out disaster recovery, conservation, commodity and price support programs, as well as making decisions on county office employment and other agricultural issues.

The 2018 Farm Bill directed USDA to form urban county committees and make other advancements related to urban agriculture, including the establishment of the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production. The FSA established county committees specifically focused on urban agriculture that work to encourage and promote urban, indoor and other emerging agricultural production practices. Additionally, the county committees may address food access, community engagement, support of

local activities to promote and encourage community compost and food waste reduction.

Urban committee members are nominated and elected to serve by local urban producers in the same jurisdiction. Urban county committee members provide outreach to ensure urban producers understand USDA programs, serve as the voice of other urban producers and assist in program implementation that support the needs of the growing urban community.

The 27 cities with urban county committees are listed at fsa.usda.gov/elections and farmers.gov/urban. Of these, ten urban county committees will hold an inaugural election this cycle.

Producers should contact their local FSA office today to register and find out how to get involved in their county's election, including if their LAA is up for election this year. To be considered, a producer must be registered and sign an FSA-669A nomination form. This form and other information about FSA county committee elections are available at fsa.usda.gov/elections.

All nomination forms for the 2024 election must be postmarked or received in the local USDA Service Center by the Aug.1 deadline. Election ballots will be mailed to eligible voters in November.

New program would increase access to healthy foods in underserved communities

At the recent National Rural Grocer's Summit, U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced the USDA and Reinvestment Fund are launching a new program under the Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) to increase access to healthy foods in communities underserved by grocery stores. Funding for the new Food Access and Retail Expansion Fund (FARE Fund) is made possible by President Biden's American Rescue Plan Act.

"People across this country deserve fresh, healthy and affordable foods," Vilsack said. "Through this program, the Biden-Harris Administration is partnering with food retailers to ensure that everyone has access to affordable, delicious foods while also supporting local farmers and ranchers. We are revitalizing the food systems in this country and increasing access for those that need it."

Through the HFFI FARE Fund, USDA and the Reinvestment Fund are making available \$60 million in loans, grants and technical assistance for food retail and food retail supply chain projects that increase

access to healthy food in communities underserved by grocery stores. Funding will be available for the next five years.

Eligible organizations include food retailers and food retail suppliers.

Applicants may apply for loans ranging from \$500,000 to \$5 million to implement healthy food projects. Funds may be used to support pre-development, land acquisition, renovations and equipment purchases.

Applicants may also apply for grants up to \$250,000 to implement healthy food projects. Funds may be used to support project management, equipment purchases and construction.

The program also offers funding for business support, or technical assistance, to support projects in their early stages. Funds may be used to support market and feasibility studies, business planning and store design.

Potentially eligible projects can check for eligibility now and sign up to be notified when the program begins accepting applications at: www.investinginfood.com/fare-fund.

Remember: Early Deadline set for July 6 edition

Due to the July 4th holiday, we have an early press deadline for the July 6th edition. Submissions for the July 6th edition **MUST** be received no later than 1 p.m.

on Tuesday, July 2. Email to dhall@theenterprise.net or submissions@theenterprise.net. Call (276) 694-3101 for additional information.

Student Briefs

Cardarelli Graduates from University of Hartford

Cassandra Cardarelli, of Bassett, has received the degree of Artist Diploma from the University of Hartford's The Hartt School. Cardarelli is one of 964 students who received graduate and undergraduate degrees this spring as part of the class of 2024.

Collinsville student makes Dean's List at RIT

Shenyiah Fuller, of Collinsville, was named to the Dean's List at Rochester Institute of Technology for the spring semester of the 2023-2024 academic year. Fuller is in the pre-baccalaureate science program.

Full-time degree-seeking undergraduate students are eligible for Dean's List if their term GPA is greater than or equal to 3.400; they do not have any grades of "Incom-

plete", "D" or "F"; and they have registered for, and completed, at least 12 credit hours.

Rochester Institute of Technology is home to leading creators, entrepreneurs, innovators, and researchers. Founded in 1829, RIT enrolls more than 20,500 students in 200 career-oriented and professional programs, making it among the largest private universities in the U.S.

Hollins University Announces Dean's List for Spring 2024

Several local students earned Dean's List honors during the spring 2024 semester at Hollins University.

Lidia Soto Minter of Martinsville.
Naomi Hairston of Bassett.

Olivia McNepp of Martinsville.
To attain this distinction, students must earn at least a 3.5 average on a 4.0 grading scale.

Martinsville school division earns national recognition for Excellence in Writing

Martinsville City Public Schools (MCPS) recently received national acclaim for its storytelling. The National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) honored MCPS with an Award of Excellence in Writing for the article "Martinsville High School Among Top Schools in Area for College and Career Readiness."

The piece, authored by MCPS Communications & Community Outreach Coordinator Callie Hietala in collaboration with Assistant Superintendent of Instruction Dr. Angilee Downing and Coordinator of Humanities and Advanced Programs Cary Wright, appeared on the district's website and social media platforms earlier this school year.

The award-winning article was crafted in response to U.S. News and World Report's rankings of U.S. high schools and subsequent local media coverage. It provides a comprehensive explanation of how the data used in these rankings favors schools with high Advanced Placement (AP) test participation, potentially overlooking other indicators of student success.

"We recognized that the U.S. News and World Report rankings didn't fully capture the achievements of our staff, teachers, and students," Hietala said. "This motivated us to dig deeper into the data and share a more accurate picture of our successes with our community."

The article highlights the school division's partnership with Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC), which allows students in AP courses to concurrently enroll at the college. Students in the district's Accelerated College Education (ACE) and Governor's School programs are dual-enrolled, earning college credit without the need to take AP tests.

In their review of data for the Class of 2023 (the most recent year for which data is currently available on the Virginia Department of Education's School Quality Profiles), the team found that 28.5% of Martinsville High School students took AP courses, 64% of students enrolled in higher education institutions after graduation, and 26% of students earned industry certifications.



Callie Hietala



Cary Wright

"We are very proud of the research produced by Dr. Downing, Mr. Wright, and Mrs. Hietala," said Superintendent Dr. Zebedee Talley. "Our students are receiving quality education and will be able to compete within a variety of educational industries and fields for important occupations. We continue to strive for academic excellence!"

"Receiving recognition from NSPRA, a national organization of school communications professionals, is an incredible honor," Hietala added. "This

award reinforces the value of clear, concise, data-driven storytelling in showcasing MCPS's achievements. We're excited to continue sharing our district's success stories with our community."

The NSPRA Awards of Excellence celebrate outstanding education communications and public relations initiatives across North America. This recognition underscores MCPS's commitment to transparent, effective communication with its community.

Celebrate Independence Day in Fieldale

Entries and volunteers are being sought for the Fieldale Independence Day Parade, which will take place at 9 a.m. on July 4.

There is no entry fee. The parade is free to attend and is being funded by Hollywood Cinema and Star News.

The parade begins at Fourth St. and circles around to Marshall Way, in front of the Fieldale Community Center.

In a release, Joey Arrington stated that the Fieldale Club-

house will be a main participant in the event.

Col. George Waller's plantation is where the Marshall Field's Company built the town of Fieldale and the Fieldcrest Clubhouse in 1918. Waller, who also trained the Virginia Militia there, is buried in Martinsville, according to the release.

Those interested in participating in the event are asked to email Michael Jarrett at mcjarrett4833@gmail.com.



A healthy lawn thrives with the right amount of water and nutrients. Lawn care is a year-long process.

Is your lawn getting enough water?

As the likelihood of storms increase over the next few days, the scant rain so far this month underscores the notion that lawn care is a year-long process, particularly because a healthy lawn thrives with the right amount of water and nutrients. Even when the sun isn't very strong and the temperatures are cold, a lawn still needs water. That water requirement multiplies when higher temperatures lead to increased evaporation.

The experts at LawnLove.com, a lawn care and landscaping resource, say grass needs between 1 and 1 1/2 inches of water a week. Many times, precipitation will take care of all of a lawn's water needs. But in times of drought or infrequent rain, it's up to homeowners to provide the water a lawn requires.

If homeowners ask a dozen lawn experts what they recommend in terms of watering, they're likely to offer 12 different answers. The type of soil and grass affects how frequently a lawn needs to be watered. According to the lawn care company Organo Lawn, it's better to do a deep watering two or three times a week to promote strong grass roots and maintain a healthy microbial composition in soil than to water the lawn daily, which leads to shallow roots and can wash away nutrients. But it is important for homeowners to recognize when their lawns are not getting ample water. Here are some signs a lawn needs

a drink.

· Visible footprints: Elasticity of the grass blades decreases when the lawn is not getting enough water. If you walk on the lawn and footprints do not bounce back in a short amount of time, you likely need to water.

· Gaps between lawn and sidewalk: Lawn Pride says that the soil can shrink in drought conditions. This may be visible where the lawn abuts a driveway, sidewalk or even planting beds. If you walk along the perimeter of a lawn and notice a gap between the grass and hardscape, it is time to water.

· Clumps of grass: It is a sign of drought stress when grass grows in clumps rather than uniformly across a lawn.

· Presence of dollar spot fungus: Grass can become susceptible to this fungus, which also is called *Ascochyta* leaf blight. It only develops in lawns with shallow grass roots caused by improper lawn watering. It's noticeable when damage to the turf begins in the middle of the grass foliage.

· Slow growth: A lawn that doesn't seem to be growing well, or doesn't need to be mowed as frequently, likely isn't getting enough water.

Adequate watering can help a lawn develop strong roots and maintain grass health. Homeowners who have questions about their lawns and watering can consult with a landscaper or a lawn care service.

July Fourth celebrations coincide with troubling traffic safety statistics

The first week of July is typically one of the busiest American travel periods of the year. It's also one of the deadliest.

Seven individuals lost their lives in Virginia traffic crashes during the two-day statistical counting period over last year's July Fourth holiday, according to data from the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles Highway Safety Office.

Virginia State Police urge motorists to practice safe, sober and distraction-free driving to avoid becoming a statistic in 2024.

"We are in the height of the summer travel season, so traffic safety should be of the utmost importance for all Virginians," said Col. Gary T. Settle, state police superintendent. "Excessive speeding, drivers and passengers failing to buckle up, and distracted driving continue to put all at risk traveling on our highways. We need Virginians to put forth the extra effort and comply with speed limits, buckle up and put the phone down, and avoid distractions."

During 2023's holiday period, state police investigated 377 total traffic crashes statewide. Troopers cited 2,051 speeders and 980 reckless drivers. They also issued 254 citations to individuals for failing to buckle up, and another 74 citations for improperly secured children.

Virginia troopers cited 124 drivers for

being in violation of Virginia's "hands-free" law that took effect in July 2021. To limit distractions, motorists are advised to program GPS and hands-free devices before departure.

"Pull over to a safe place when you are doing something that will take your eyes or mind off the road," said Virginia Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Co. senior actuarial manager David Tenenbaum. He serves as treasurer for DRIVE SMART Virginia, a nonprofit partner charged with raising awareness and changing behavior to improve roadway safety.

"When free of distractions, a driver can be prepared for the unpredictability of other motorists who may be distracted themselves," he said.

Arranging sober transportation is another preventable action motorists can take to keep themselves and others safe during the celebratory weekend.

Troopers arrested 36 drivers for operating under the influence of alcohol or drugs during the July Fourth holiday period last year. DRIVE SMART reported that 4,400 people were injured and 293 were killed as the result of alcohol-related traffic crashes in Virginia during all of 2023.

"With just a few drinks you could be too impaired to safely drive," Tenenbaum noted. "So, designate before you celebrate! Plan to use a rideshare app or designate a sober driver before kicking off the holiday weekend."



Former inmate and motivational speaker addressed inmates at VADOC facilities

National public speaker Andre Norman visited several Virginia Department of Corrections (VADOC) facilities in late May to share his lived experience and offer coaching and hope.

Norman was joined by fellow speakers Trell Donk Webb and Hasan "Giant" Bradley during the tour through Greensville Correctional Center, Sussex I State Prison, and Virginia Correctional Center for Women.

Stops were made to meet with inmates in classes, the law library, kitchens, work locations, and housing units. The messages Norman, Webb, and Bradley shared were powerful and inspiring. The group's messages to the inmates were focused on realizing their potential to accomplish amazing things and the importance of a positive attitude.

Norman's stops were well-received by the inmates at all sites and several of the inmates recognized Norman, Webb, and Bradley from watching videos of them on their assigned tablets.

Norman, Webb, and Bradley also

had the opportunity to share messages with VADOC corrections team members. Their message to staff was that they are appreciated for their hard work and that their role as corrections staff really does impact inmates' chances of changing and having success upon being released.

"It was great to have Andre Norman and his team come speak to large numbers of our corrections team and inmate population," said VADOC Director Chad Dotson. "I echo his important message to our corrections staff. What they do every day seriously matters for the Commonwealth. Additionally, helping to keep our inmate population motivated and focused on a successful reentry is crucial for long-term public safety across Virginia. I thank Andre, Trell, and Hasan for sharing their uplifting message with the VADOC."

See more of the group's messages to correctional team members and inmates via the VADOC YouTube channel <https://youtu.be/QtL4-7sjPeA>.

Enhanced resources will support businesses interested in USDA procurement opportunities

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced resource enhancements designed to simplify and streamline access to contracting information for businesses interested in selling their products and services to USDA. These substantial updates include the addition of new and targeted contracting information on [USDA.gov](https://www.usda.gov), along with improved functionality that makes it easier for businesses and individuals to quickly find and access procurement opportunities, and a portal for businesses to share the scope of their capabilities with USDA more easily.

"Doing business with the U.S. Department of Agriculture should be straightforward, particularly for our nation's small businesses," said Agriculture Deputy Secretary Xochitl Torres Small. "Unfortunately, researching and identifying relevant procurement opportunities can be extremely challenging, confusing, and time-consuming. That's why the Biden-Harris Administration is announcing new tools and resources that will make it easier to contract with the USDA to serve American farmers and all of us who count on the food they grow."

Spearheaded by USDA's Office of Contracting and Procurement (OCP) in collaboration with the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU), these improvements include:

The creation of a new "Contracting with USDA" site that offers information, resources, and links for businesses that want to contract with USDA, in a helpful Q&A format. The site addresses commonly asked questions such as "What does USDA typically buy?", "What are the most common ways USDA buys what it needs?" and "How do I find current opportunities to contract with USDA?"

An updated Vendor Capability Submission Portal that allows suppliers and merchants to submit their business capabilities to USDA via a web form. Portal submissions are shared with contracting officers across the Department.

Updates to the previously deployed USDA Procurement Fore-

cast, a tool that assists businesses and individuals with identifying procurement opportunities with USDA. Launched in June 2023, the Procurement Forecast now has a user-friendly way to search and filter procurement opportunities. Currently, the tool includes nearly 6,000 planned contract opportunities for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024.

"USDA has a long history of contracting with a wide variety of businesses to help us deliver our mission to the American people. In addition, we have unwavering support for businesses, large, mid-size and small. We hope the deployed contracting resources will help even more businesses navigate the complex process of contracting with the federal government," said Malcom Shorter, USDA Assistant Secretary for Administration.

In FY 2023, the USDA obligated more than \$11 billion in 67,000 contract activities spanning a wide variety of industries and contract types. In FY 2024, the USDA estimates a comparable obligation amount and contract awards to our industry partners.

USDA purchasing extends well beyond agricultural commodities. Last fiscal year, the Department awarded contracts to nearly 12,000 businesses from a wide range of industries for \$4.9 billion in food, \$4.2 billion in services, \$1.7 billion in Information Technology contracts, a half a billion in goods, and nearly a half billion in construction contracts.

The department strongly supports procurement initiatives that promote equity and remove barriers to procurement opportunities. To encourage growth, USDA plans to award 57.5% or more of its contract dollars to small businesses this year, including 27.85% to small, disadvantaged businesses. USDA's collective efforts to support small businesses garnered an A+ Rating on the U.S. Small Business Administration's FY2023 Small Business Procurement Scorecard.

Businesses interested in contracting with USDA can visit <https://www.usda.gov/da/ocp/contracting> for access to these and other resources.

Lost Wallet? What's Next

We've all been there; you reach for your wallet and find nothing in your pocket or purse. The panic we feel in that moment is real because our wallet can be a treasure trove for criminals, who can go on to perpetrate credit card fraud or identity theft. Most times that feeling is short lived but sometimes that wallet really is gone. Here's what to do if this happens to you.

First, cancel all debit or credit cards. By reporting them lost or stolen ASAP you may be able to avoid illegal charges. This is especially important for debit cards which are gateways to your bank account.

Next, file a fraud alert. With your driver's license in hand, identity thieves can do a lot of damage. You can request that

the credit bureaus — Experian, TransUnion and Equifax — place a fraud alert on your credit. (Contact one and the others will add the fraud alert, too.) A fraud alert notifies creditors, lenders or anyone viewing your credit report that someone may be trying to apply for credit in your name.

Lastly, if you think your wallet has been stolen, call your local precinct to get a police report on record. Even though the police may not be able to recover your missing wallet, it's a crucial piece of documentation to have on hand.

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

Martinsville's GENEDGE Alliance awarded an NIST Grant

The U.S. Department of Commerce's National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) has awarded a \$2,140,321 grant to the Martinsville-based GENEDGE Alliance through their Manufacturing Extension Partnership Program.

"GENEDGE Alliance has an established track record of supporting Virginia's manufacturing industry, including firms in Virginia's Ninth Congressional

District," 9th District U.S. Rep. Morgan Griffith, R-Salem, said. "This \$2.1 million grant helps GENEDGE foster economic activity and growth across the Commonwealth."

According to NIST, the Manufacturing Extension Partnership Program aims to "provide manufacturing extension services to primarily small and medium-sized manufacturers in the Commonwealth of Virginia."

Va. takes top slot for customized workforce training

Virginia is ranked No. 1 in the United States for Customized Workforce Training in the 20th annual Business Facilities Rankings Report, according to Gov. Glenn Youngkin. This is the second year in a row that the Virginia Talent Accelerator Program has earned the No. 1 recognition. Business Facilities is a national publication that has been a leading location source for corporate site selectors and economic development professionals for more than 50 years.

"The Virginia Talent Accelerator Program enhances Virginia's competitiveness to win major projects and is often the deciding factor on investment in Virginia," Youngkin said. "Virginia is building workforce talent for the future through education, attracting talent across the country through measures like universal licensing legislation, and customizing skills to the needs of companies. Virginians are joining the workforce in record numbers and it's critically important to ensure our workforce development matches the needs of today while building a workforce for the future."

"Virginia's talent advantage is powered by best-in-class programs like the Virginia Talent Accelerator," said Virginia Secretary of Commerce and Trade

Caren Merrick. "This recognition reinforces that Virginia is a reliable, sustainable business partner, and sends the message that we are the clear choice for new investment."

The Virginia Talent Accelerator Program is a workforce initiative created by the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) in collaboration with the Virginia Community College System, with funding support from the Governor's administration and the Virginia General Assembly. The program accelerates new facility startups through the direct delivery of recruitment and training services that are fully customized to a company's unique products, processes, equipment, standards, and culture. All program services are provided at no cost to qualified new and expanding companies as an incentive for job creation.

The Virginia Talent Accelerator Program has helped to secure more than 13,000 jobs across Virginia since the program commenced operations for projects such as the LEGO Group, Tyson Foods, Inc., Church & Dwight Co., Inc, Tate Inc., Northrop Grumman Corporation, Haleon, Framatome, and Condair Group AG.

"The breadth and speed with which this VEDP program begins to deliver for

companies is a highlight that Business Facilities is pleased to recognize in this year's ranking," said Business Facilities Editorial Director Anne Cosgrove. "The capability to provide training for businesses across a variety of industries to meet their specific needs is a feature that stands out with the Virginia Talent Accelerator Program."

"The Virginia Talent Accelerator Program is a primary reason why so many companies choose to invest in Virginia instead of any other state," said VEDP President and CEO Jason El Koubi. "Virginia's customized approach is unique to each company's needs. We determine priorities in close collaboration with company leaders and then deliver truly customized recruitment and training services to ensure their operation is successful from the startup phase to full operation. I'm proud that, once again, Business Facilities has recognized that Virginia has the best customized workforce training program in the country and salute Mike Grundmann and the entire Talent Accelerator team for their dedication and impact in earning this distinction for the second year in a row."

Crossing the Lines

News snippets from outside the city/county lines ...

Solar facilities and tall structures top ordinance priority list



The Patrick County Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission met on June 18.

Solar power, including batteries, and tall structures, like windmills and communication towers, were at the top of the priority list of ordinances to be reviewed and created during a joint meeting between the Patrick County Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission on June 18.

Festival special events, short-term rentals, manufactured homes,

derelict homes, and a subdivision ordinance also were among the priorities discussed.

The creation of the ordinances will be handled by the Berkley Group, a local government consulting firm which specializes in providing direct services like land use and planning, capital project management, community engagement, and group facilitation.

New YouTube series highlights county



James Houchins (right), director of Tourism, interviewed Danny Martin (left) in one of the episodes of "The People, Places, and Performers of Patrick County." To watch, visit www.YouTube.com/PatrickCountyTourism.

A fairly new YouTube series was started to help promote the county and its tourism efforts, with Patrick County Tourism's start of "The People, Places, and Performers of Patrick County."

James Houchins, director of Tourism, said the idea to create the series came about when he and Assistant Tourism Director Grace Cooper were brainstorming ways to do more with online mediums like YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook, to help market the county.

"The reason that we started it was Patrick County has such a unique background, history, and diversity. So, we were talking about ways that we promote the county to get people out and bring people in, either here at Visitor's Center, or going to particular places," he said.

Houchins said the main premise of the series was to either have either showcase the people, places, or performers to show how unique the county and its residents are.

Health care among top industries reported by initial filers

The 2,325 unemployment insurance weekly initial claims were filed during the week ending June 15, 2024, which is 8.1 percent lower than last week's 2,531 claims and 6.5 percent lower than the comparable week of last year (2,486), according to Virginia Works. Nearly 82 percent of claimants self-reported an associated industry; of those reported, the top five industries (59 percent) were Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (2,413); Administrative and Support and Waste Management (2,201); Health Care and Social Assistance (1,545); Retail Trade (1,343); and Accommodation and Food Services (1,300).

A person who has already filed an initial

claim and who has experienced a week of unemployment files a continued claim to claim benefits for that week of unemployment. On a weekly basis, continued claims reflect a good approximation of the current number of insured unemployed workers filing for UI benefits, and are a good indicator of labor market conditions. While continued claims are not a leading indicator, they provide confirming evidence of the direction of the economy.

A person who has already filed an initial

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Job Openings in Va. Up Nearly 50,000 in April

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' April 2024 Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS) showed that the job openings rate was up a full percentage point, according to Virginia Works (the Virginia Department of Workforce Development and Advancement).

According to the BLS JOLTS survey data and the most recent available, the number of April 2024 hires in Virginia rose by 4,000 over the month and up by six percent from five years earlier. BLS JOLTS data provides information on all the pieces that go into the net change in the number of jobs. These components include job openings, hires, layoffs, voluntary quits, and other job separations (which includes retirements and worker deaths). Putting those components together reveals the overall change in payroll employment. JOLTS data is seasonally adjusted and describes conditions on the last business day of the month. The current month's data are preliminary and the previous month's data have been revised.

On the last business day in April, there were 283,000 job openings in Virginia, seasonally adjusted, a 46,000 increase from March's revised figure. The number of U.S. job openings changed little at 8.1 million; this measure was down by 1.8 million over the year. Job openings decreased in health care and social assistance (-204,000) and in state and local government education (-59,000) but increased in private educational services (+50,000). The largest decreases in the job openings level occurred in California (-81,000), New York (-71,000), and Illinois (-65,000). The largest increases occurred in Virginia (+46,000), Arizona (+36,000), and Tennessee (+18,000).

In Virginia, the April job openings rate was 6.3 percent, up a full point from March. The U.S. rate

was little changed at 4.8 percent in April. The largest decreases in job openings rates occurred in Illinois, Kansas, and Vermont (-0.9 percentage point each). Significant increases occurred in Arizona and Virginia (+1.0 point each) and in Idaho (+0.8 point).

The number of hires in Virginia rose to 172,000 in April, an increase of 4,000 over the month and up by a similar amount from April 2023. JOLTS defines hires as all additions to the payroll during the month. The number of hires was 37 percent lower than the series high of 271,000 set in June 2020. In April, the number of U.S. hires was little changed at 5.6 million. Hires significantly increased in durable goods manufacturing (+52,000), but decreased in arts, entertainment, and recreation (-45,000) and in federal government (-8,000). The largest increases in the hires level occurred in North Carolina (+30,000), Louisiana (+15,000), and Oklahoma (+13,000). Large decreases occurred in New Jersey (-36,000) and Massachusetts (-23,000). In Virginia, the 4.1 hires rate was little changed from March's revised 4.0 percent rate. The U.S. rate, at 3.6 percent, changed little in April. The hires rate increased for establishments with 5,000 or more employees. The largest increases in the hires rate occurred in Idaho (+1.0 percentage point) and in Louisiana and Oklahoma (+0.7 point each). The decreases occurred in New Jersey (-0.8 point) and Massachusetts (-0.6 point).

The Virginia hires-per-job-openings (HPJO) ratio fell to 0.61. This was different from nationwide, where hires rose as a percentage of openings. This measure shows the rate of hiring compared to open jobs and is a proxy for time to fill positions.

In April 2024, there were 0.5 unemployed per job opening in the

Commonwealth, compared to nationwide, with 0.8 unemployed per job opening nationwide. In Virginia, the unemployed per job opening ratio (sometimes called the 'job seekers ratio') peaked at 4.4 unemployed per job opening in February 2010 during the Great Recession, while the number of unemployed workers per job opening stood at 3.2 in April 2020 during the height of pandemic employment impacts.

Total separations in Virginia increased by 2,000 to 156,000. Nationwide, the number of total separations changed little at 5.4 million. Over the month, the number of total separations significantly increased in durable goods manufacturing (+49,000). The largest increases in the total separations level occurred in Colorado (+48,000), Arizona (+32,000), and Louisiana (+18,000). The decreases occurred in Massachusetts (-19,000) and Idaho (-6,000). The Virginia total separations rate edged upward to 3.7 percent. The U.S. total separations rate changed little at 3.4 percent. Significant increases in total separations rates occurred in Colorado (+1.6 percentage points), Arizona (+1.0 point), and Louisiana (+0.9 point). The decreases occurred in Massachusetts (-0.6 point) and New York (-0.4 point).

An estimated 100,000 workers quit jobs from Virginia employers in April. The number of quits was unchanged from March's revised figure. That was little-changed over-the-year and little-changed from five years earlier. Quits, a component of total separations, are voluntary separations initiated by the employee. In April, the number of quits nationwide was little changed at 3.5 million. The number of quits decreased in professional and business services (-131,000), but increased in other services (+67,000), durable goods

manufacturing (+39,000), and state and local government education (+32,000). The largest increases in the quits level occurred in Colorado (+38,000), Ohio (+22,000), and Arizona (+18,000). A significant decrease occurred in Massachusetts (-14,000). The quits rate in the Commonwealth was unchanged at 2.4 percent and remained at levels seen over the last two years. The U.S. rate was 2.2 percent for the sixth month in a row in April. The largest increases in quits rates occurred in Colorado (+1.3 percentage points) and in Louisiana and South Dakota (+0.7 point each). The decrease occurred in Massachusetts (-0.4 point).

The number of layoffs and discharges in Virginia was unchanged at 44,000 in April. This was down by a quarter over the year, and down by twelve percent from five years earlier. Layoffs and discharges are countercyclical, which means that layoffs typically increase during economic contractions and decrease during economic expansions. In April, the number of U.S. layoffs and discharges changed little at 1.5 million. The number of layoffs and discharges significantly decreased in arts, entertainment, and recreation (-37,000). The largest decreases in the layoffs and discharges level occurred in Florida (-27,000) and in Michigan and New York (-24,000 each). The increases occurred in California (+39,000), Connecticut (+10,000), and Maine (+3,000).

The Virginia layoffs and discharges rate was little changed at one percent, while the U.S. rate was little changed at 1.0 percent. The largest decreases occurred in North Dakota (-0.7 percentage point) and Indiana (-0.6 point) as well as in Michigan and Oklahoma (-0.5 point each). The increases occurred in Connecticut (+0.6 point) and California (+0.2 point).

Inmate indicted in plot targeting staff members

A Virginia Department of Corrections (VADOC) inmate is facing charges related to soliciting the murder of two VADOC corrections team members and violations of a protective order filed for an employee's safety.

Richard Joseph Bottoms, 49, was indicted on two counts of solicit felony – murder and four counts of violation of a protective order by a Powhatan County grand jury on Wednesday, June 5.

An indictment is merely an allegation - a grand jury's determination that evidence exists to warrant a trial.

Bottoms allegedly filed a later-unfounded Prison Rape Elimina-

tion Act (PREA) claim against a VADOC employee at State Farm Correctional Center in June 2023, and continually harassed the employee following the claim. As a result, a court in Henrico County issued a protective order, prohibiting Bottoms from contacting the employee.

Bottoms allegedly violated the court order through third-party contact in November 2023, which prompted the VADOC Victim Services Unit to open an investigation that resulted in Bottoms and two additional inmates receiving institutional infractions.

Following the institutional charges, Bottoms allegedly solic-

ited another inmate to murder both the State Farm CC employee and the lead investigator from the Victim Services Unit for monetary gain. Thankfully, the two VADOC corrections team members were physically unharmed.

A trial date has not been set.

"Harassing members of our correctional team will not be tolerated and our Department will seek prosecution of employee harassment to the fullest extent of the law," said VADOC Director Chad Dotson. "Corrections employees face difficult situations every day and do so with professionalism and pride. They should not face harassment and

retaliation from inmates at any point. I thank Powhatan County Commonwealth's Attorney Rob Cerullo and his office for investigating this matter and holding this inmate accountable for such dangerous actions.

"Additionally, the Virginia Department of Corrections has a zero-tolerance policy regarding violations of the Prison Rape Elimination Act," Director Dotson continued. "Making an unfounded claim for retaliation, or for any reason, wastes valuable investigation time for any claims that need to be examined."

No further information will be provided at this time.

NY man sentenced to 25 years in Lynchburg incidents

A New York man, who drove 8 hours in an effort to have sex with a 14-year-old Lynchburg, Virginia, girl with whom he had been chatting online, was sentenced recently to 25 years in federal prison.

Derrick Loi, 27, of Lakeville, New York, pled guilty earlier this year to one count of coercion and enticement.

According to court documents, in early February 2023, Loi met a 14-year-old girl from Lynchburg on Twitter (now known as X), and, in the early morning hours of February 14, 2023, began chatting

with her on Discord. Loi told the young girl that, not only was he interested in buying sexually explicit images and videos of her, but he also wanted to meet her in person to have sex.

Ultimately, Loi agreed to pay the victim \$300 to have sex with him and to provide him with sexually explicit images.

Loi and the victim agreed that Loi would become the victim's "sugar daddy" and that he would get unlimited access to sexually explicit content of the victim for a weekly fee of \$50, which would

increase to \$100 after the first month. On February 15, 2023, Loi sent the victim a payment in line with that agreement.

On February 22, 2023, Loi and the victim began discussing plans for Loi to travel to meet the victim, including a discussion on specific sex acts and how he would film them.

After reserving a hotel room in Lynchburg, Loi chatted periodically with the young girl throughout his 8-hour drive from New York and also took time to send her a picture of items that he had

brought with him for their sexual encounter.

Just as Loi arrived at the pre-arranged location, an officer from the Lynchburg Police Department drove up and began questioning Loi. Initially, Loi provided a false name and lied to law enforcement about why he was in Lynchburg.

A subsequent search of Loi's vehicle revealed sex toys, a box containing "morning-after" contraception pills, and a bottle of pink vodka, which Loi had previously told the victim he was bringing for her.

Permit Transparency website expanded, more user friendly

The Virginia Permit Transparency (VPT) website, an online resource featuring the vast majority of permit applications considered by Virginia agencies, is expanded, and now the centralized platform can be used to track the daily status and timeline of critical steps for Commonwealth of Virginia permits.

Users can search permit applications or filter results by fields such as agency, application number, locality, and more. VPT can be accessed at Permits.Virginia.Gov, according to Gov. Glenn Youngkin who announced the expansion.

VPT allows agencies to track how long each step of the process is tak-

ing. The Department of Environmental Quality, which first developed the pilot program that VPT is based on, already has reduced its average permit processing time by over 70% since 2022. VPT will enable other participating agencies to identify opportunities for improvement in permitting time as well.

VPT launched with three agencies (Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Virginia Marine Resources Commission, and Department of Energy) earlier this year. With this expansion, it now also includes permits from the Department of Health, Department of Transportation, and Department of Conservation and Recreation. With

the new agencies added, Virginia citizens will now have access to more than 100,000 permits issued by these six agencies every year.

With this expansion, Virginia is again proving to be a trendsetter in the regulatory modernization space. No other state government nor federal agency offers anything nearly as comprehensive. The DEQ pilot program that inspired VPT has won several awards, and prominent commentators have praised VPT for its accessibility and user-friendliness.

"The expansion of the Virginia Permit Transparency website reaffirms our ongoing commitment to enhancing government transpar-

ency and ensuring it serves all Virginians effectively," said Youngkin. "The latest expansion of the VPT website innovates the permit application process by prioritizing accessibility and efficiency. It enables agencies to monitor the duration of each step and identify opportunities to expedite the permitting process for Virginians."

"VPT is a game changer for Virginia businesses and citizens as well as state agencies," said Director of the Office of Regulatory Management Reeve Bull. "It brings an unprecedented level of transparency to the permitting process and is already making life much easier for anyone tracking a Virginia permit."

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

Virginia Late Model Triple Crown Prepares to Heat Up Historic Trio of Tracks

South Boston Speedway, Langley Speedway and Martinsville Speedway set to host 11th season of most prestigious trio of Late Model Stock Car races

As the summer heat cranks up, so does the action in the NASCAR Advance Auto Parts Weekly Series with a trio of historic Virginia tracks preparing to host the most prestigious series of Late Model Stock Car races of the year.

The Virginia Triple Crown rewards the driver with the best average finish over the contests at three famed short tracks – South Boston Speedway, Langley Speedway and Martinsville Speedway. The winner receives \$7,000, while second place gets \$2,000 and third earns \$1,000.

The Thunder Road Harley-Davidson 200 at South Boston opens up the Virginia Triple Crown this weekend on Saturday, June 29, with the drivers ready to chase glory once again. Langley Speedway follows with the Hampton Heat 200 on Saturday, July 20. The Triple Crown champion will be decided at the ValleyStar Credit Union 300 at Martinsville Speedway on Saturday, Sept. 28.

In 2023, Bobby McCarty (South Boston) and Brendan “Butterbean” Queen (Langley) won the opening two races of the Virginia Triple Crown, and held the top two spots in the standings heading into the finale at Martinsville. But in the end, it was the driver who sat third in the standings entering the finale who walked away with the title. Trevor Ward had a patient late-race move to post the come-from-behind victory in both the race and the Triple Crown title chase at Martinsville.

“The Triple Crown is something I’ve always thought was a huge accomplishment,” said Ward. “Having the opportunity to chase the

title last year was a great experience. Martinsville is something my family has dreamed of winning for many years and to have been able to win that race is a feeling that will never be able to be replaced! Winning the triple crown was just that much better! We have put a lot of work into preparing for these races this year. It would mean so much to me and my team to put ‘two-time winner’ on the resume.”

However, another key driver from the 2023 season – reigning NASCAR Advance Auto Parts Weekly Series national champion and current points leader Connor Hall – wants to add his name to the consideration set and include the Triple Crown title in his list of achievements.

“To go into the Triple Crown as the 2023 national champion means a ton,” said Hall. “It was an honor to have my name placed into that conversation. We’re working hard towards having a good showing in this year’s Triple Crown and we are excited to get going with the first event at South Boston this week!”

The 11th iteration of the Triple Crown is led off by South Boston, and it’s a major event for not only the competitors such as Hall, but the fans as well.

“This race is our showpiece and to kick off the prestigious Virginia Triple Crown here at South Boston is special,” said South Boston General Manager Brandon Brown. “We take a lot of pride in it being a crown jewel event not only here in the Commonwealth, but in all of grassroots racing. You can tell how much the Thunder Road Harley-Davidson 200 means just

by talking to the drivers and fans. This race always delivers the action, and sets the tone for what’s to come at Langley and Martinsville.”

Ward is hoping to join four-time Virginia Triple Crown winner Peyton Sellers (2013, 2014, 2018, 2022) and two-time winner Lee Pulliam (2015, 2019) as the only the third multi-time winners of the Virginia Triple Crown. Other fan-favorite drivers, such as “Butterbean,” are chasing their first Triple Crown payday.

“The Triple Crown is the best of the best going at it for three crown jewel events,” said “Butterbean.” “Last year was a heartbreaker to be so close to winning it, but also, I was super proud to come out in second with all the competition involved. It gets harder and harder each year, and I’m sure that will be the case this year.”

It was “Butterbean” who won the middle race, the Hampton Heat 200, at Langley Speedway in 2023. He snapped an 11-race winning streak by eventual NASCAR Advance Auto Parts Weekly Series national champion Connor Hall, who had been undefeated at Langley until that point in the year.

“I am excited about entering the second decade and 11th season of the Virginia Triple Crown with Brandon Brown and his team at South Boston, and Clay Campbell at Martinsville Speedway,” said Langley Speedway Owner Bill Mullis. “When the three-track series started, we had high hopes. But to see where it is today is great, as with NASCAR’s support and the Advance Auto Parts Weekly Series, these races have been sought out by sponsors, race fans and driv-

ers. Watching the best of the best at these tracks continues to showcase the ever-increasing popularity of Late Model Stock Car racing.”

The final race in the Virginia Triple Crown, Martinsville’s ValleyStar Credit Union 300, also offers up one of the most unique trophies in motorsports with the Grandfather Clock. Ward won the clock and the Triple Crown check while holding off Landon Huffman in a dramatic finish.

“Last year’s Virginia Triple Crown provided exactly the entertainment and on-track drama for the fans that makes this challenge so prestigious in the Late Model Stock Car community,” said Martinsville Speedway President Clay Campbell. “We share in the passion that our colleagues at South Boston and Langley put into this series of three races, and take great pride in hosting a fantastic finale and crowning the winner in the ValleyStar Credit Union 300 at Martinsville Speedway each September.”

The three races at South Boston on June 29, Langley on July 20, and Martinsville on September 28 will be streamed live on FloRacing.

Tickets for the opener of the Virginia Triple Crown at South Boston may be purchased at southbostonspeedway.com. Tickets for the second leg of the series at Langley are available at langley-speedway.com. For tickets to the finale at Martinsville, fans can go to martinsvillespeedway.com.

Fans can stay connected to NASCAR Advance Auto Parts Weekly Series action, including Virginia Late Model Triple Crown updates, at nascar.com/regional.

Sparklers are not child’s play

Did you know that the average primary flame blowtorch burns at around 2,000 F?

The USFS National Technology and Development says wildland fires typically burn between 1,600 and 2,000 F. Aluminum, brass, bronze, copper, and cast iron also can reach melting points at or slightly below 2,000 F.

It’s likely safe to say that parents would never let their children handle a blowtorch, wander into a forest fire nor touch molten metals, yet many seemingly have no concerns about children playing with sparklers during July 4 celebrations. The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia says people often treat sparklers much too casually, even though they can burn at temperatures of about 2,000 F. Children are allowed to hold and wave these red-hot metal rods like toys.

Sparkler sticks pose a serious burn risk, and the sparks can cause additional burns and eye injuries, warns the CHOP. Young children who would not be trusted with other hot materials should not hold sparklers, warn health experts. Older children should



Those who want to avoid any possible injuries on July 4 and during other summer celebrations would be wise to avoid sparklers in favor of safer forms of entertainment.

be carefully supervised around sparklers and other fireworks.

Those who want to avoid any possible injuries on July 4 and during other summer celebrations would be wise to avoid sparklers in favor of safer

er forms of entertainment. Here are some ideas.

· Glow sticks light up in the dark and can be worn or waved around safely.

· Fill water balloons with a mixture of glitter and water. When the balloons pop, it is a festive display.

· Send children around with canned string products that they can spray on one another. If making a mess isn’t an issue, shaving cream ‘fights’ also can be fun diversions for children.

· Adults can lead by example and leave the fireworks displays to the professionals. Take a ride over to the seaside or where a town is hosting a fireworks display and enjoy the sights from a distance.

· Purchase battery-powered blinking lights, such as those sold at circuses or concerts. Kids can spend hours running around with them in hand. Less expensive flashlights purchased at a dollar store can create the same effect.

· Let children play with confetti cannons.

· “Snappers” or “poppers” could be an option if they are sold nearby. These are small noisemakers that explode and pop when they are thrown at a hard ground surface.

Sparklers may be festive and beautiful to behold, but they are not designed to be handled by children. Alternatives to sparklers are equally fun and much safer.

Report indicates VA public college policies can help student parents

Edwin J. Viera
Virginia News Connection

A new report examines how Virginia public colleges can help student parents.

The Urban Institute report reviews three policies schools can implement so student parents can thrive in college, and looks at the return on investment for each one.

The policies were a comprehensive student-parent support program, expanded grants, and on-campus childcare.

Theresa Anderson, principal research associate with the Urban Institute, said a comprehensive support program provides many benefits.

“A lot of time parents need to complete their education efficiently,” said Anderson, “because there’s a large opportunity cost in going to the school - because they’re missing out on time with their children, they’re missing out on time they could be working more.”

Other benefits include helping student parents break feelings of isolation. The scholarship and grant program helps student parents make ends meet while they get their education.

On-campus childcare also helps student parents enroll, since other studies show not having childcare is a massive

barrier they face.

The comprehensive student-parent support program had the highest return on investment of all the policies studied.

Every dollar invested in it could yield almost \$6 in tax revenue and public-benefit savings. By 2035, this could benefit the public by an estimated \$1.9 billion.

Anderson said lawmakers can easily put these policies into action.

“Appropriating resources for student-parent support programs on college campuses would be very feasible,” said Anderson. “Texas did part of this by requiring colleges to establish student-parent liaison positions across the state, but this would be a step further where Virginia would be a leader in actually setting up programs across every campus.”

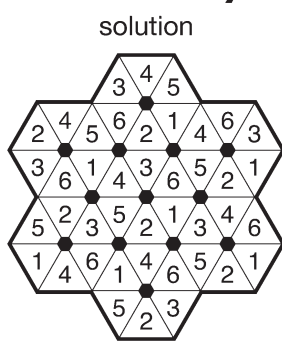
She added increasing the college scholarship program would also be easy, since it creates a new option for parents on an existing program.

For on-campus childcare, Anderson cited New York as an example - since that state uses Federal Childcare Development funds, with Gov. Kathy Hochul allocating additional money.

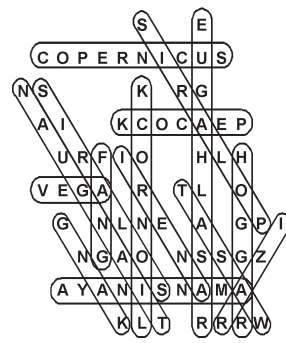
Support for this reporting was provided by Lumina Foundation.

Puzzle Answers!

SNOWFLAKES



STARS IN THE SKY

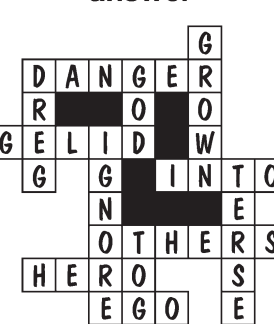


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Z	O	N	E	D	E	F	R	O	S	E	N	O	N	V	I	S	T		
Y	E	O	M	E	N	K	I	N	E	T	I	C	E	N	E	R	G		
I	L	O	N	A	S	S	R	G	O	D	E	E	P						
P	H	Y	S	I	C	A	L	E	D	U	C	A	T	I	O	N	R	D	S
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E	D	D	Y	S	A	P	S	A	T	E	A	M	S	T	O	P	S		

SCRAMBLERS

solution
1. Dismay; 2. Drain;
3. Binge; 4. Feast
Today's Word
AMNESIA

FEAR & KNIGHT



Weekly SUDOKU

Answer

4	9	3	8	5	2	7	6	1
6	5	2	3	7	1	4	9	8
1	7	8	4	6	9	3	2	5
3	2	6	1	8	7	9	5	4
9	5	4	5	3	6	1	7	2
5	1	7	2	9	4	8	3	6
8	6	5	7	1	3	2	4	9
7	4	1	9	2	5	6	8	3
2	3	9	6	4	8	5	1	7



PUZZLE TIME

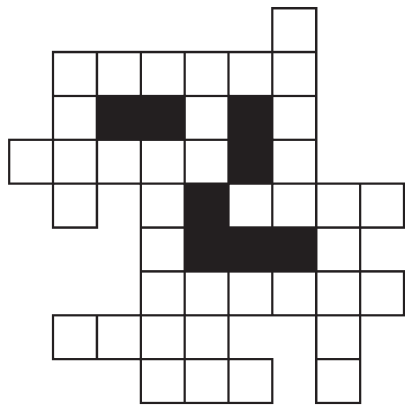


FEAR KNOT

By: rj Johnson

DOUBT? ... OR DARE!

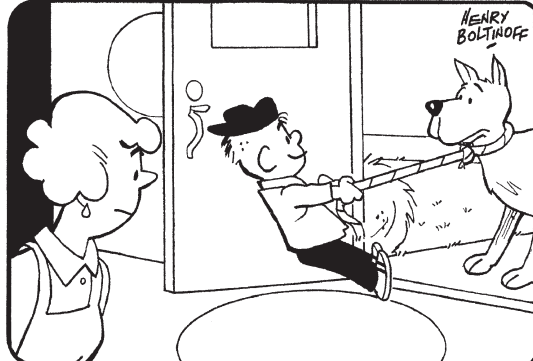
- OEG
- ♥ HOSTER
- ♥ IGDLE
- EDGR
- ♥ ORINGE
- ♥ OTG
- NOTI
- ♥ ERTSE
- ♥ DGO
- ♥ NAGERD
- ♥ RNWGO
- OHRE



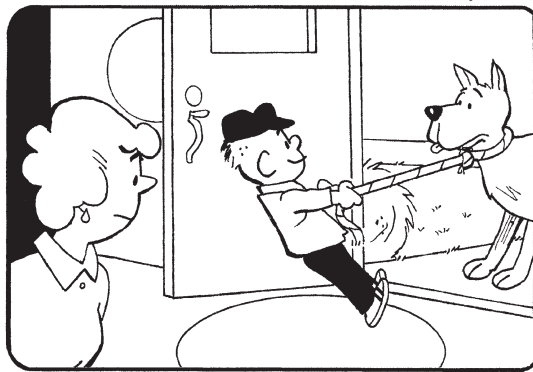
Unscramble these twelve letter strings to form each into an ordinary word (ex. **HAGNEC** becomes **CHANGE**). Prepare to use only **ONE** word from any marked (♥) letter string as each unscrambles into more than one word (ex. ♥ **RATHE** becomes **HATER** or **EARTH** or **HEART**). Fit each string's word either across or down to knot all twelve strings together.

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Legs are moved. 2. Hair is different. 3. Dog's leg is moved. 4. Cap is turned around. 5. Tongue is added. 6. Apron is missing.

MAGIC MAZE

STARS IN THE SKY

F J H E B Y V T Q O L I G D B
 Y W T R P M K S I F E D B Y W
 U S C O P E R N I C U S Q O M
 K N S I F D B K Z R G X W U S
 Q O A I N L K C O C A E P J H
 F D C U R F I O A Y H L H W V
 T S V E G A Q R P T L N O L K
 I H F G T N L N E E A C G P I
 B Z Y L N G A O W N S S G Z V
 U S A A Y A N I S N A M A R Q
 P S N M L J K L T I R R R W H

Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions forward, backward, up, down and diagonally. Unlisted clue hint: A BOOK OF MAPS

- Amansinaya
- Copernicus
- Fang
- Hoggar
- Irena
- Izar
- Kang
- Lionrock
- Peacock
- Polaris
- Rasalhague
- Solaris
- Tianguan
- Vega
- Wasat

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Super Crossword

- ACROSS**
- 1 Cha-cha's cousin
 - 6 Chain selling dog chains
 - 11 Honeycomb unit
 - 15 Molar point
 - 19 Ring around a lagoon
 - 20 Sag down
 - 21 Medley
 - 22 Concerning via e-devices
 - 23 Basketball guarding strategy
 - 25 Not dependent on eyesight
 - 27 U.S. Navy petty officers
 - 28 What a moving body has
 - 30 Massey of movies
 - 33 Lith. was one until 1991
 - 34 Run for a long football pass
 - 35 Gym class
 - 42 Sits. and aves.
 - 43 Remini of "Fired Up"
 - 44 Decorative wheel cover
 - 45 Put an — (cease)
 - 47 Higher-ranking
 - 49 Ballet garb
 - 50 Emergency removal, for short
 - 52 Construction girder
 - 56 Commoners, collectively
 - 58 Transaction of business
 - 61 Volcano in Japan
 - 63 — Jose
 - 64 "Luck Be a Lady" composer Frank
 - 65 Enter
 - 69 Work contrasted with a desk job
 - 73 To be, in Marseilles
 - 74 Belly
 - 76 Mao — tung
 - 77 Investments for later yrs.
 - 79 Nickname for Michigan
 - 83 Eggnog spice
 - 88 Typed (in)
 - 89 Trial run
 - 90 Supplies with a staff
 - 92 Oyster's prize
 - 93 Cars for VIPs
 - 95 Big arteries
 - 97 "Auld Lang —"
 - 98 Police alert, for short
 - 101 Flight travel
 - 105 Arab leaders
 - 107 Really cold
 - 108 Sparkly crown
 - 109 Fitting retribution
 - 114 Composer Jean-Philippe —
 - 118 Possess with shallow passion
 - 119 Eight U.S. ones are featured in this puzzle
 - 122 Fishing spool
 - 123 Eternally
 - 124 Verdugo of "Panama Sal"
 - 125 Art film, often
 - 126 Water swirl
 - 127 Maple fluids
 - 128 First-string athletic group
 - 129 Ceases
 - DOWN**
 - 1 Labyrinthine
 - 2 Dip — in the water
 - 3 Part of MSG
 - 4 Ugly blotches
 - 5 Nickname for Yale University
 - 6 Adobe file suffix
 - 7 Sooner than
 - 8 Honky- music
 - 9 Mozart's "— Fan Tutte"
 - 10 Loses one's inhibitions
 - 11 Iran- — Affair
 - 12 Race created by H.G. Wells
 - 13 "The Mod Squad" cop
 - 14 Amor, for one
 - 15 Scouted before a heist
 - 16 Loan shark
 - 17 Put on, as a play
 - 18 Corals, e.g.
 - 24 Cain's eldest
 - 26 Submitted by the deadline, say
 - 29 PC panic button
 - 31 Seagoing: Abbr.
 - 32 Egg-white protein
 - 35 Prune-to-be, perhaps
 - 36 Acronym for many vacuum cleaner filters
 - 37 Barks shrilly
 - 38 Outer: Prefix
 - 39 Paint crudely
 - 40 Audio equipment brand
 - 41 With a variety of hues
 - 46 Like sumo stars
 - 48 Ring official
 - 50 Israeli carrier
 - 51 — cava
 - 53 Once, quaintly
 - 54 PC brand
 - 55 Paltry
 - 57 Part of Babylonia
 - 59 Dot in the sea
 - 60 Erin of "Happy Days"
 - 62 Custodial worker
 - 65 Stare stupidly
 - 66 Double-reed woodwind
 - 67 In a lazy way
 - 68 Inventive
 - 70 Salt Lake City athletes
 - 71 Admin. aide
 - 72 "A —!" ("Adieu!")
 - 75 Press release packet
 - 78 Have dinner
 - 80 Hawk's home
 - 81 "Famous" cookie guy
 - 82 Pool cover
 - 84 Bible division
 - 85 Polite request beginner
 - 86 Cube creator Rubik
 - 87 Valley
 - 91 Agra dress
 - 94 Blunders
 - 95 "Got a guess?"
 - 96 Onset
 - 98 Reach for the sky
 - 99 Gave a buzz
 - 100 Bellyached
 - 102 Choir platforms
 - 103 Behave
 - 104 Partner of Athos and Porthos
 - 106 Rome's home
 - 110 Joe in a mug
 - 111 Lone Star sch.
 - 112 Ancient Brit
 - 113 Duel sword
 - 115 Prefix that's the opposite of 38-Down
 - 116 "Take — from me"
 - 117 Functions
 - 120 Comedian Gasteyer
 - 121 Arias' symbol

CABINET-MAKING

Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

On July 4, 1776, King George III wrote in his diary entry, "Nothing important happened today."

A 5-month-old fetus has 200,000,000,000 brain cells, but by birth half of them have been lost.

Superstitious folks understandably took note in Santa Clara, California, on Oct. 22, 1931, when the Gamma Eta Gamma legal fraternity was partially destroyed by fire: The house was located at 1313 Franklin Street, its phone number was Santa Clara 13, and the postman wore badge number 13! The damage sustained to the house was even estimated at \$13,000.

An AK-47 is depicted on the flag of Mozambique.

Einstein's ideas on relative acceleration were partly inspired by a guy who fell off a roof in Berlin. Surviving without injury, he told the physicist that he had not felt the effects of gravity.

Until the 17th century, the word "upset" meant to set up (i.e., erect) something.

The oldest recorded death sentence is found in the Amherst papyri, a list of state trials of ancient Egypt dating to 1,500 B.C. A teenage boy, convicted of "magic," was ordered to kill himself by either poison or stabbing.

Apart from humans, the Asian elephant is the only mammal that can stand on its head.

In 2002, the Nevada state legislature authorized a license plate depicting a mushroom cloud from an exploding nuclear bomb to commemorate nuclear weapons tests conducted in the state's desert between 1945 and 1992. The Department of Motor Vehicles, however, rejected it.

Soviet craftsman Nikolai Syadristy carved a set of chess figures that were so small they could only be distinguished when magnified 2,000 times with a microscope.

Thought for the Day: "In any given moment we have two options: to step forward into growth or step back into safety." — Abraham Maslow

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Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

	9		5					1
6			3			4		
		8			9		2	
3					7		5	
	4	5			1			
1			9					6
	5	1					4	
7				5	6			
	3	6						7

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦♦

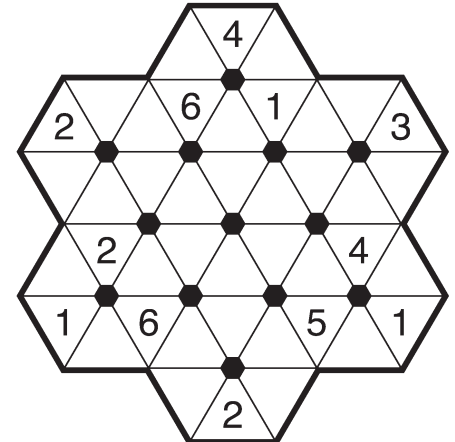
- ♦ Moderate
- ♦♦ Challenging
- ♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

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SNOWFLAKES

by Japheth Light

There are 13 black hexagons in the puzzle. Place the numbers 1 - 6 around each of them. No number can be repeated in any partial hexagon shape along the border of the puzzle.

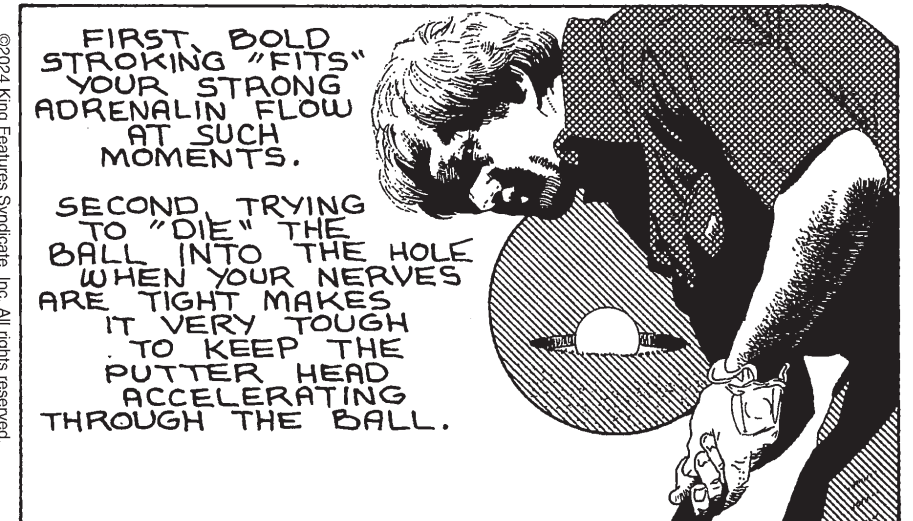
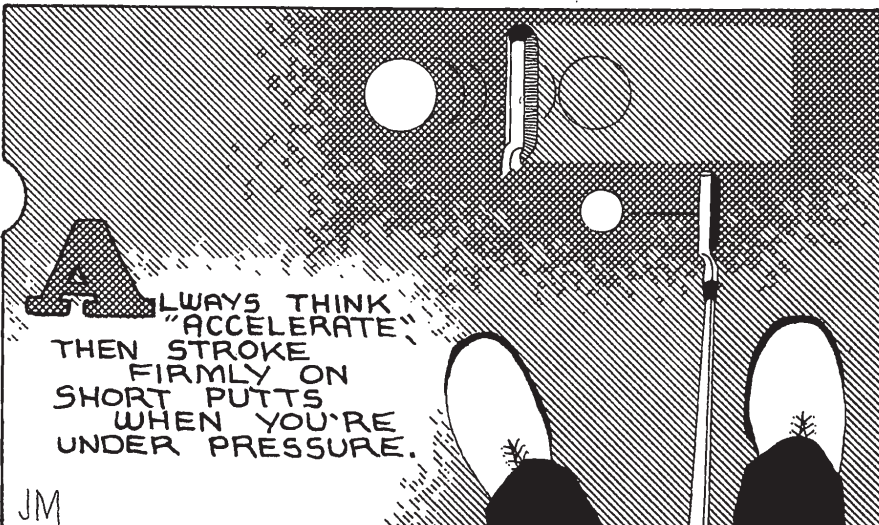


DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦♦♦♦

- ♦ Easy
- ♦♦ Medium
- ♦♦♦ Difficult
- ♦♦♦♦ Very Difficult

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Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS



SCRAMBLERS

Unscramble the letters within each rectangle to form four ordinary words. Then rearrange the boxed letters to form the mystery word, which will complete the gag!

- Distress
- MAIDSY
- Deplete
- RANDI
- Spree
- BEGIN
- Gorge
- FATES

TODAY'S WORD

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City employees honored for service



The City of Martinsville recently presented the 2nd Quarter Service Awards to several employees. Those honored include Mandy McGhee for 5 years of service, Shirley Belcher for 5 years of service, Audra Thomas for 5 years of service, Christopher Tyler for 5 years of service, Francisco Zapata for 5 years of service, Mark Price for 5 years of service, Cody Agee for 5 years of service, Joan Joyce for 15 years of service, Jason Biggs for 20 years of service and James Lovell for 25 years of service. Employees also were honored individually by city officials and members of Martinsville City Council. Each is pictured, third from left, with City Manager Aretha Ferrell-Benavides, (left to right), Vice Mayor Aaron Rawls, Mayor LC Jones and council members Kathy Lawson and Lawrence Mitchell.



Jason Biggs with Martinsville City Council.



James Lovell with Martinsville City Council.



Mandy McGhee with Martinsville City Council.



Shirley Belcher with Martinsville City Council.



Cody Agee with Martinsville City Council.

(See City Employees p. 14)



project hope

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Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society

Sounds on the Square

2024

7:00-10:00 P.M.
Opens at 6:00 P.M.

Free admission

All ages welcome

Food and other beverages available

Craft beers by Scuffle Hill Brewing Company

Bring a chair

Historic Henry County Courthouse, 1 East Main Street, Uptown Martinsville

Friday, May 3, 2024 • Andy Burdette Trio

Friday, June 7, 2024 • Barefoot Modern

Friday, July 5, 2024 • The League of Ordinary Gentlemen

Friday, August 2, 2024 • Forrest Taylor

Friday, September 6, 2024 • The Ghosts of Liberty

Friday, September 13, 2024 • "Line-Dancing on the Square"

Friday, October 4, 2024 • Andy Burdette Trio

City Employees

(cont. from page 13)



Audra Thomas with Martinsville City Council.



Christopher Tyler with Martinsville City Council.



Francisco Zapata with Martinsville City Council.



Mark Price with Martinsville City Council.

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Joan Joyce with Martinsville City Council.

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