

SATURDAY, AUGUST 31, 2024

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## SOL results are 'mixed bag' of progress



Dr. Zebedee Talley addressed Martinsville High School graduates last year. (Contributed)

By Taylor Boyd and Jessica Dillon

Although Henry County and Martinsville City schools performed lower than the state averages on the 2023-2024 Standards of Learning (SOLs), students are gaining ground.

In Henry County, the SOL score for reading was 68 and a writing score was not received as of August 26. The state average for reading was five points higher at 73, and writing was 76.

The division scored 58 in history, and the state average was 65. In mathematics, county schools scored 66. The state average is 71. Science received a score of 59, and the state average was almost 10 points higher at 68.

However, the 2023-2024 SOL scores are an improvement from the 2022-2023 scores. In reading the division's

score increased three points from 65 to 68.

In writing, the school system's score was 41 for 2022-2023. There is no score for this current year, but the 2021-2022 score was 50, or a nine percent drop.

The history score in county schools dropped three points, from 61 to 58, but it improved by one point in mathematics. The division has also maintained an SOL score of 59 for the past three school years.

County Schools Superintendent Dr. Amy Blake-Lewis said the school division's teachers, support staff and school-based leadership should be commended for their hard work and dedication to students.

"Our division staff prioritized collaboration within our schools this year, and

(See SOL p. 5)

## Historic Collinsville Buffet Reopens at Dutch Inn



Diners flowed into the Dutch Inn for a recent Saturday brunch buffet.

By Jessica Dillon

The Quality Inn Dutch Inn, once a beloved dining destination, has reopened its historic brunch buffet under the leadership of 22-year-old Austin Boyd and his partner, Josh Haley. The duo, who own several local restaurants including Chopstix and the soon-to-open restaurant at Renewal Brewing, have breathed new life into the restaurant and buffet after it closed around 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"This used to be the spot back in the day," Boyd said, reflecting on the establishment's rich history. "We have pictures from the 1940s."

He saw the potential in the brunch buffet and wanted to bring it back. Initially, Boyd and Haley

(See Collinsville Buffet p. 3)



Austin Boyd stands next to the new Dutch Inn Restaurant's entrance.



The Henry County Board of Supervisors awarded the Community Connected Citizen Award to Miss Martinsville-Henry County Teen Meagan Durham, and Miss Martinsville-Henry County Jenna Adams.

## Energy plan approved in majority vote

By Taylor Boyd

A majority of the Henry County Board of Supervisors voted to adopt the Henry County Energy Action Plan as presented at an August 27 meeting.

Pam Cobler cast the dissenting ballot in the 5-1 tally.

"There were things in the plan that at this time I couldn't approve," Cobler, of the Reed Creek District, said.

County Administrator Dale Wagoner explained that "localities are encouraged to have a plan in place in order to apply for certain federal grants that could help and approve the chance of getting certain federal and state grants in the future."

Public Information Officer (PIO) Brandon Martin and George Mason

University (GMU) worked to craft the draft plan, which was presented in May, and then posted to the county's website for public input, Wagoner said, adding residents were encouraged to comment. The county received a few comments, and in the majority of cases, was able to answer specific questions.

"I feel that they did a great job developing the plan ... I have a lot of federal grant experience, and I understand that it is good for the county, and especially in rural counties to utilize federal dollars that are available, but some of the green energy requirements are not things in which I agree," Cobler explained.

Wagoner said that the county is

(See Energy Plan p. 3)

## Council learns city's fund balance has increased

By Jessica Dillon

At its meeting Tuesday, Martinsville City Council members learned the city's total fund balance has grown by \$2.8 million, from \$6.2 to \$9 million, during a report about the capital plan provided by Ben Wilson, associate vice president at Davenport & Company LLC.

The city's operating revenues have exceeded operating expenditure in the past three years. Its existing tax-supported debt profile is \$5,165,568 for the schools, and \$546,847 for the city. The city has fixed interest rates that should pay off in about 8 years at a ratio of 100 percent, Wilson said.

There are 34 rated cities and towns in Virginia, Wilson said, and "there are no localities in Virginia that are rated below an A. The city is not currently rated by any of the national credit rating agencies," nor has it to issue bonds.

The debt services versus expenditures ratio stood at 2.3 percent, with the existing debt-to-asset value at 0.7 percent, Wilson said. The real estate assessed value of Martinsville is \$651,746,786, with a debt-assessed limit value



Ben Wilson, associate vice president at Davenport &amp; Company LLC, presented information about the city's financial status at a meeting Tuesday.

of 10 percent, which places Martinsville way below the legal debt limit.

Currently the water and sewer fund are considered to be "in very good shape," said Willson. The re-

(See Council p. 2)

## Smith River Fest makes a splash

By Jessica Dillon

An estimated 500 partook of the offerings that included a magic show and beer garden during the 16th annual Smith River Fest, held Aug. 24 at Monogram Foods Smith River Sports Complex.

"We had so many activities all day long. We started off with yoga by the river class," Roger Adams, director of the county's Parks and Recreation Department, said.

The event featured animals from Infinity Acres on-site, and the Helgramite Hustle 5k Mud Run was a success, with some impressive times.

The top three male contestants came in at just under 30 seconds apart, Adams said. James Smith came in at 00:22:06.00, Cory Lucas took second place, and Jackson Gunter came in third.

The female division also had impressive numbers. Ali Woolstenhulme came in first at 00:26:52.15, Morgan Axtell came in at 00:26:52.39, and came in third at 00:30:35.73.

(See Smith River Fest p. 2)



Contributed photo from last year's event.

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# Smith River Fest

(cont. from page 1)

"The demo pool was always one of the highlights of the event," he said, adding the annual Boys & Girls Clubs of the Blue Ridges' Duck Race was held at the demo pool. "They let some of the kids come in and pull out the winning ducks."

Proceeds from the run are earmarked for the Boys & Girls Club of The Blue Ridge. The top three ducks also received cash prizes starting at \$3,000.

Fest attendees also could check out the new-

est canoes, kayaks, and paddleboards. River tubing was also available, with river shuttles available to move visitors up and downstream, Adams said, adding vendor spaces typically sell out each year, with some activities rotated every couple of years.

"There's always something different each new year. We try to keep it fresh by having at least one new activity," Adams said, adding this year's fest "was just an awesome day." His favorite part was "seeing all the people come out,

a lot of new folks, and get exposed to the outdoor recreation in our area. We are just blessed to have such beautiful scenery."

There are many benefits to being outdoors, including better mental health, Adams said, and the festival included "something for everyone."

The fest will return next year, Adams said. Until then, he reminds residents to attend other events, including the Henry County Fair, which will be held September 25-28.

# Council

(cont. from page 1)

fuse and electronic funds are also doing well.

Willson also showed different options if the city needs to borrow money to fund projects, with the stipulation that Davenport needs to look further into the finances to see how much debt the city could realistically and comfortably afford.

Davenport will be working with the city to create a more concrete report.

In other matters, the council:  
\*Approved \$697,000 from the

Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) Good Repair Grant Fund.

\*Discussed the racial makeup of the Martinsville Police Department, and learned that the department is nearly fully staffed, with four officers in the academy and one in the process of recruitment.

"There is a national problem recruiting minority and women police officers," said council member Lawrence Mitchell. He added that he doesn't want un-

qualified officers hired and he understands how demographics can change.

\*Learned that the city's Industrial Development Authority (IDA) will change its name to the Economic Development Authority (EDA). "The IDA actually voted in favor of this action last month," City Manager Aretha Ferrell-Benavides said.

\*The city was awarded a \$2.8 million loan to assist in rehabilitating the property at 1 Ellsworth St., also known as the former BB&T building. The city manager was also given the ability to negotiate on the acquisition of property in Uptown Martinsville.

\*Alexis Heavner, the aunt of Iviyan Dandridge, urged the council to look into more safety

precautions and asked for suggestions to help push for better safety in the city. Dandridge was shot to death July 7 at what was described as a large gathering at a home on Rivermont Heights. Dandridge was 19. Two other people also sustained gunshot wounds.

"I wanted to ask that the city hold some sort of curfew until we have some answers about Ivy's death," Heavner said.

Ordinances have been discussed to help deter crime at late hours, city officials said.

"We've got to figure out what we are doing with policing," Vice Mayor Aaron Rawls said. "It's going to be a delicate balance," and Rawls is open to considering solutions to increase safety.

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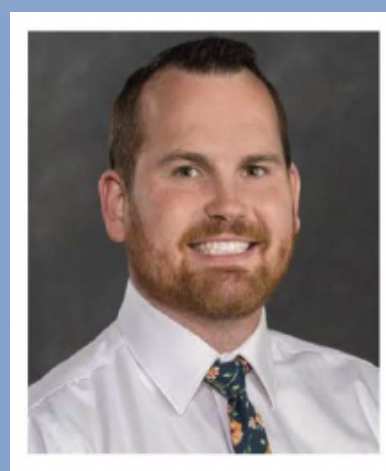
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# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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

## Meetings

### Monday, September 2

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

### Thursday, September 5

Henry County School Board Meeting, 5:30 p.m., 1st Floor, Summerlin Room, County Administration Building, 3300 Kings Mountain Road, Collinsville.

## Events

### Thursday, September 5

Feeding Southwest Virginia Mobile Marketplace, 12:30 – 2 p.m., HJDB Event Center, 3289 Riverside Drive, Bassett. Call (540) 290-0990 for more information.

### Friday, September 6

Sounds on the Square: The Ghosts of Liberty, 6 to 10 p.m., 1 East Main Street, Martinsville. Free admission. All ages welcome.

### Saturday, September 7

Bassett Heritage Festival, 12 to 6 p.m., Bassett.

### Friday, September 13

Harvest Moon Run 5K-8K and Dancing on Depot, 7 p.m., Gazebo on Depot Street

## ONGOING

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

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

The Martinsville-Henry County Lions Club regularly meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Pacific Bay Restaurant, 530 Commonwealth Blvd, Martinsville.

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

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

The Bassett Ruritan Club hosts Rook Music & More on Fridays 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](http://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

A series of classes on genealogical research will be held from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Bassett Historical Center each Tuesday in September. Genealogy 1 and Genealogy 2, offered on September 3 and 10 respectively, are for those just beginning their family research. Genealogy 3 and Genealogy 4, offered September 17 and 24, will cover the use of several different genealogical websites. To benefit from the 3rd and 4th classes, participants will need to have taken the first two classes and/or have a basic understanding of computer use. There is no charge for the classes. Call (276) 629-9191 to reserve your spot.

## Energy Plan

(cont. from page 1)



Bassett High School - Fieldhouse rendering (Contributed)



Magna Vista High School - Fieldhouse rendering

“under no obligation to implement any of the action items” identified in the document, nor is it mandated to follow any portion of the plan.

While she understands both points, Cobler said she prefers to vote on individual projects or plans that arise instead of casting a “carte blanche” vote for a single plan in its entirety.

“I could not in my heart do a carte blanche thing just to say, ‘it’s okay,’” Cobler said, adding that she supports hybrid plans for energy, and is a “fossil fuel person.” With respect to the plan, “I know we need some of it, but the percentages and the numbers were just a little much for me, and I just couldn’t do it.”

Jim Adams, board chairman, said he heard from several board members and residents asking if the county would be forced to follow the plan.

“We’re not forced to do anything, but at least we have it on the books that we have an energy plan, which might benefit things like the weatherization of homes,” Adams, of the Blackberry District, said. “Someone that’s struggling otherwise would be able to put the windows and/or weatherization of a home, and along with numerous other things that affect individual homeowners.”

Wagoner said Adams’ statement is a good example of how the plan could help residents make their homes more energy efficient, and perhaps create “opportunities to replace high-energy light fixtures in our county buildings with energy-efficient lighting. Those are some practical examples” of saving energy.

Wagoner noted that many have likened the Energy Action Plan to the county’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy that’s approved every few years. In that plan, economic development strategies are identified, along with potential projects and other goals are listed.

“As you know, we have those items that will never come to fruition in that document, and we’ve changed those documents when a new opportunity came up during the year. We could change that document to add a prospective industry that we’re recruiting here,” Wagoner said, adding the energy plan would serve a similar role.

“We can change it as we go along. If we see other opportunities, we need to add to it or take

away, we could certainly do that in the future,” Wagoner said.

In other matters, the board:

\*Approved a funding request from the Henry County School Board to build new athletic field houses at Bassett and Magna Vista high schools. Funding for the \$4.7 million project will come from the additional 1% sales tax fund designated for new construction and major renovations of school facilities. This constitutes the largest construction project to be financed using the fund.

The new field houses will be used for sporting events and to provide shelter for players in the event of severe weather. In addition, the project at Magna Vista will include the construction of an alternate gravity flow sewer line to accommodate restrooms and concessions.

Quality Construction, of Danville, will be awarded the contract for Bassett High School based on their lowest bid of \$1.94 million. Concrete Foundations, of Gretna, was chosen for the contract at Magna Vista High School based on their lowest bid of \$2.79 million. Following the appropriation, there is approximately \$6.8 million left in the additional 1 percent sales tax fund. The fund accumulates approximately \$5.5 million per year.

Mary Martin and Ray Reynolds voiced their support for the fieldhouse projects.

After the meeting, school officials said it recently concluded a major renovation project at Bassett High School. The 1 percent sales tax funds were used for ceiling replacement and final updates to the HVAC system. The division is currently in the process of design in preparation for installation of elevators at Drewry Mason, George Washington Carver, and Campbell Court elementary schools. The addition of elevators at these multi-story facilities will ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Additional plans for the 1 percent sales tax funds include a roof replacement at Laurel Park Middle School.

“The board is pleased with the work of our division superintendent and her staff in the use of the 1 percent sales tax funds,” said Teddy Martin II, chairman of the school board. “The HVAC project at BHS has been a journey, and we are happy to see the work finally completed. The field houses at our high schools have been a

long-time dream of many board members, community members, coaches, and our students and staff. We look forward to the groundbreaking, but even more to the ribbon cutting when the facilities open.”

Groundbreaking ceremonies are set to be held on Wednesday, September 4. The ceremony at Magna Vista is set for 3 p.m., and at Bassett at 4:30 p.m.

\*Approved the items of consent.

\*Heard an update on the county’s delinquent tax collection efforts.

\*Awarded a \$118,500 contract to RRMM Architects for architectural and engineering services related to the Public Safety Campus master plan.

\*Awarded a \$73,033 contract to the Berkley Group, LLC, to prepare an Active Transportation Plan for the county.

\*Awarded a \$106,850 contract to RRMM Architects for architectural and engineering services related to electrical upgrades at the Administration Building.

\*Approved an additional appropriation of \$6,046 from the Virginia Department of Elections to purchase a Ballot-on-Demand printing system.

\*Approved an additional appropriation of \$100,000 from the Virginia Department of Transportation Economic Development Access grant program to update plans and specifications for improvements to Beaver Creek Drive.

\*Approved an additional appropriation of \$45,000 from the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice School Resource Officer (SRO) grant program to provide an SRO for the Career Academy.

\*Approved an additional appropriation of \$510,396 received from recreation fees, concession sales, and the transient occupancy tax to reconcile the operating budget for the Monogram Foods Smith River Sports Complex.

\*Approved an appropriation of \$163,000 from the special construction fund to cover expenses related to the Villa Heights Housing Project.

\*Presented the Community Connected Citizen Award to Miss Martinsville-Henry County Jenna Adams and Miss Martinsville-Henry County Teen Meagan Durham.

\*Heard a general highway update.

## Collinsville Buffet

(cont. from page 1)

were focused on their brewery project, but they were drawn to revitalize the Dutch Inn buffet after the brewery’s owner suggested they take on the restaurant instead.

Since its reopening, the brunch buffet has seen a positive reception from the community. Boyd mentioned that while there have been a few minor complaints, the overall response has been enthusiastic. “I think people are happy to see it back,” he said.

Looking ahead, Boyd plans to introduce a dinner buffet, though he emphasizes that it’s “a little way out.” His immediate focus is on ensuring the success of the brunch buffet before expanding further.

Boyd’s dedication to the community drives his efforts to restore the Dutch Inn to its for-

mer glory. “I like giving back to the community,” he said, noting that the success of the restaurant is closely tied to local support. His involvement in the area has deepened his understanding of the importance of community engagement in sustaining a business.

Despite his relatively short time in the restaurant industry, Boyd has shown a strong commitment to improving the local business landscape. After starting as a food runner at Chopstix, he quickly rose through the ranks, ultimately becoming one of its owners. His decision to drop out of college to pursue his passion for the restaurant business has paid off, leading him to his latest venture at the Dutch Inn.

Boyd and Haley are also working on their

next project, a restaurant at Renewal Brewing, which will reflect the building’s “past, present, and future” theme. This new endeavor is still in development, but it promises to bring a fresh concept to the area.

The Dutch Inn’s brunch buffet is available every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. The all-you-can-eat buffet is priced at \$14.99 for adults and \$7.99 for children, with a 10% discount offered to seniors. Additionally, a normal menu is also available for those who prefer to order à la carte.

See more at  
[www.henrycountyenterprise.com](http://www.henrycountyenterprise.com)

## OPINION

# On Gus Walz and toxic masculinity

There was a moment during the Democratic National Convention that made the news in both the best and worst ways.

While Democratic Vice-Presidential hopeful Tim Walz was speaking, his son Gus burst into tears, rose from his seat, and pointed at the stage. "That's my dad!" he said.

When I first saw this moment, my initial thought was that it was sweet. Gus Walz loves his dad! And who wouldn't? When Tim Walz was announced as Vice-President Kamala Harris' pick, I went from "who the hell is Tim Walz?" to "I would follow Tim Walz into Hell" within the span of about 24 hours.

But there was another part of me — a part that's been beaten down and consistently disappointed on a daily basis for the last decade or so — that knew what was coming.

Sure enough, the worst people in the world began to chime in.

Ann Coulter, the conservative political commentator perhaps best known for battling Lieutenant First Class Ellen Ripley shortly before being jettisoned from an airlock, retweeted an article about Gus Walz being overcome with emotion. "Talk about weird..." she commented.

Conservative Wisconsin radio host Jay Weber, who resembles an egg with a drinking problem, took things a step further.

"Sorry, but this is embarrassing for both father and son," he tweeted. "If the Walzs represent today's American man, this country is screwed; Meet my son, Gus. He's a blubbing b\*\*\*\* boy. His mother and I are very proud."

Various conservative voices tweeted other criticisms of this innocent young man who made the mistake of showing visible human emotion, and somehow, many of their takes were even worse than Weber's.

And then these hateful voices were informed of some more information about Gus Walz: in addition to being 17 years old, he is neurodivergent and has a nonverbal learning disorder.

Many of these hatemongers then deleted their comments, and Jay Weber issued a groveling apology, which some said resembled that of a blubbing b\*\*\*\* boy. Not me, though. I'd never say a thing like that.

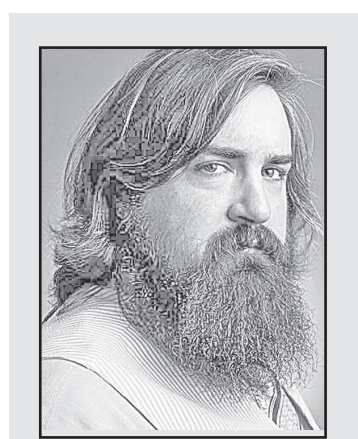
Now here's the thing: the fact that Gus Walz has a relatively minor learning disability is totally immaterial to this discussion. It changes nothing.

You know what prompted him to cry? His dad was on stage discussing how he and his wife had needed IVF treatments to have children and the stress they endured during that time. He said that when his eldest child was born, he and his wife Gwen named her "Hope."

"Hope, Gus, and Gwen, you are my entire world, and I love you," Tim Walz said.

I am a 39 year old man. If one of my parents was on the world stage, having recently accepted the Vice-Presidential nomination, and told a roaring crowd of 20,000-some people that I was their entire world, it's safe to say I'd find myself overcome with emotion. That strikes me as a natural human reaction.

It's tempting to say that the



By Ben R. Williams

reason so many of these hateful commenters mocked Gus Walz is because they have never done anything to inspire pride in their children, nor did their parents ever do anything to inspire pride in them. That assessment, however, is as irrelevant to the greater point as it is searingly accurate.

To me, the telling detail is that Tim Walz' daughter Hope was also overcome with emotion during her father's speech. However, no one criticized her for weeping.

We expect women to weep. When men weep, it's an aberration, a sign of weakness.

There is a toxic mindset that's been seeping into the groundwater of this nation for generations. It's supported by a certain subsection of both men and women. The mindset can be boiled down to two main points.

1. If a man experiences any positive emotion and reveals it to the world, he's basically a woman.

2. Being a woman is the worst thing in the world you can be.

Obviously, both points are untrue. The worst thing in the world you can be is Jay Weber.

Nonetheless, this mindset is profoundly damaging. How many men do you know who lock up their feelings so tight that they don't even understand themselves? How many men do you know who would rather cut off their own finger than do something that might be perceived as even slightly feminine? How many men do you know who would rather have someone call them a human monster than call them gay?

Toxic masculinity isn't borne out of thin air. It's drilled into people by their families, by their friends, by media, and by public discourse. And over time, the men who fall victim can no longer process or understand their own emotions, causing their emotions to become deformed and aberrant.

They can't reveal their depression, so they try to drink and drug it away. They can't deal with stress at work, so they beat their wife and/or children. They can't express their loneliness, so they commit acts of violence against strangers. They can't accept that they're gay, so they devote themselves to making life harder for gay people.

If more men had the emotional maturity of Gus Walz, the world would be a better, safer place for everyone. The hateful can laugh at the young man all they want; the joke's on them, and the punchline isn't funny.

## CDC issues health advisory for viral disease

Clinicians are warned to be on the lookout for cases of Oropouche, a viral disease spread by small flies and certain mosquitoes that causes sudden fever, severe headaches and chills. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a health advisory about the virus to notify public health authorities about an increase of the virus after travel-related cases were identified in the U.S.

The virus originated from endemic areas in the Amazon basin and new areas in South America and the Caribbean. Between January 1 and August 1, more than 8,000 cases were reported, including two deaths and five cases of vertical transmission associated with fetal death or congenital abnormalities.

Countries reporting cases include Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, and Cuba.

In the U.S. and Europe in 2024, travel-associated cases have been identified in travelers returning from Cuba and Brazil. As testing and surveillance for Oropouche virus disease increase in the U.S., reports of cases from additional countries are expected.

The Health Advisory advises evaluating and testing travelers who have been in impacted areas with signs and symptoms consistent with Oropouche virus infection. It also raises awareness of the possible risk of vertical transmission (e.g., from gestational parent to fetus during pregnancy) and associated adverse effects on pregnancy and highlights prevention measures to mitigate additional spread of the virus and potential importation into unaffected areas, including the United States, according to the CDC.

# Coming of Age

In most houses there is an item or items the children are absolutely not allowed to touch.

In fact, finally having access to them amounts to a rite of passage.

In our house, it is with the fabric scissors and the iron pans.

The fabric scissors ban rankles my teenager, because there are times they'd come in handy to her. She loves the iron pan ban, though: When it's her turn to wash dishes and she is expected to leave the kitchen perfectly clean, the iron pan is not included in that rule.

I have ended up with the most responsible daughter in the world, whether by sheer fortune, or solid training paired with strict upbringing, or I suspect, a combination of the two.

Given that, I felt it was safe to allow her to use the fabric scissors this past spring, after, of course, she acknowledged understanding and agreeing to the terms outlined in the lecture she was subjected to before them being handed over to her, to wit: 1 – Only use these to cut fabric, nothing else; and 2 – Return them immediately to the sewing basket.

Lo and behold, those fabric scissors were not seen for several stress- and sorrow-filled months. She swore she had put them back in the sewing basket, but one day I found them on the floor, under something, in her room.

Yesterday she asked to use the sewing scissors again.

"Sure," I said, "Go get what you need to cut, and I will go get the scissors."

"But I need them in my room," she said.

"Just bring down what you want to cut to me here in the kitchen," I replied cheerfully.

"It's a shirt," she replied. "I need to cut a little and keep checking the mirror and make sure it's cut to the right length."

"The last time you took the scis-



Holly Kozelsky

sors, they were gone for months," I said. "You may use them in the kitchen here in front of me, and that is a step up above in privileges over what you've had for most of your life except for this past spring, when you were granted full access; that, however, has been brought down a peg."

She prattled on and on and on and on about the importance of using the scissors in her room. I kept polishing the stove as she went on.

Yakkety yakkety yak.

Finally, she concluded her spiel, drew herself up to full height and said, "So? Can I get the fabric scissors?"

"I have given my answer. Do you remember what it was?"

"You mean I have to use them here in the kitchen with you?"

I smiled, nodding that she understood what I had told her from determined to work her project the beginning.

"OK," she said, slightly defeated but polite.

As the mother of a teenager, it is with a sense of shock that I realize it seems out of proportion that I do not allow her free rein with the fabric scissors or iron pans even though she'll be starting driving lessons soon and have her driver's license within the year.

Even so.

My rules are my rules.

Some things are all the sweeter when earned.

She, like I did decades ago, will one day know the joy and satisfaction of having her own pair of fabric scissors, and her own perfectly seasoned iron pans to use as her heart desires.

## Bassett High School grad one of two Carter Bank associates to complete VBA's School of Bank Management

Bassett native Danielle Atwood is one of two Carter Bank associates who recently completed the Virginia Bankers Association's School of Bank Management at the University of Virginia.

Atwood, an alumna of Bassett High School, and Katrina Huerth not only graduated, but did so as class leaders.

Atwood served as class president, while Huerth was co-honor grad, meaning she tied for the highest GPA in the class.

"Danielle and Katrina's achievements at the Virginia Bankers Association's School of Bank Management exemplify the dedication and leadership that Carter Bank values," Carter Bank CEO Litz Van Dyke said. "Their success as class leaders, while managing their demanding roles and personal responsibilities, speaks volumes of their commitment and capabilities. They are not just exemplary individuals but also vital assets to our team, leading by example and inspiring others to strive for excellence in their careers."

Atwood, a project manager in Martinsville, and Huerth, a Charlottesville-based loan review officer, both said the School of Banking helped them better understand the whole organization and how each department must work together to ensure the bank's success.

"There is so much more to a bank than just what the customer sees, and in my role, I work with every department," Atwood said. "Banking School helped me gain a better understanding of the functions of each area, so I can be best prepared to work with them."

"Bank School helped me to see that it takes all parts of the bank working and growing together to be successful," Huerth added. "The key to our success is realizing we rely on one another. It's not a 'one-man' show. We have to move out of silos and reach across



Bassett native Danielle Atwood (right) stands with Carter Bank CEO Litz Van Dyke and associate Katrina Huerth at the Virginia Bankers Association School of Bank Management graduation. Atwood, class president, and Huerth, co-honor grad, both recently completed the program with leadership roles.

to help each other on new initiatives, processes, and building the best bank in the communities we serve."

Both also touted the growth of the personal networks and relationships they built, both in and out of class.

"I've had the opportunity to meet with so many executive leaders and department heads that I wouldn't have otherwise had the opportunity to talk with, especially one-on-one," Atwood said. "These relationships will prove invaluable as I grow in my role and work to grow within the organization and industry."

"Banking is a relationship business and banking school gave me the opportunity to build relationships with bankers across Virginia and with my fellow associates at Carter Bank," Huerth said. "These relationships will be extremely helpful as I continue to grow my role at the bank"

In addition to Atwood and Huerth, two Greensboro-based associates, Chris Babcock and Matt Welborn, graduated from the North Carolina Bankers Association's School of Banking.

# SOL

(cont. from page 1)

our students have made great strides in a full return to in-person learning. We know that recovery from the pandemic is a long road, but we are continuing to focus on the foundational skills that will promote student success as we move forward," she said.

Blake-Lewis said the 2023-2024 scores indicate that all Henry County schools are accredited, and noted Bassett High School is accredited with conditions.

She said there were also gains made regarding student attendance.

"The HCPS division's chronic absenteeism rate dropped from 25.03 percent to 18.79 percent. In our elementary schools, chronic absenteeism dropped from 20.34 percent to 14.02 percent. In our secondary schools, chronic absenteeism dropped from 29.52 percent to 22.90 percent.

"We are continuing our Attendance Campaign because we know the value of having our students in school every day. Parents have been provided with a School Calendar Magnet this year to aid in tracking absences. This visual reminder is one more effort that we are utilizing to boost daily attendance," she said.

In response to the Governor's ALL In VA initiative, Blake-Lewis said the school system is adding a Saturday School option to support intensive tutoring, academic enrichment and attendance recovery. More information is expected to be made available to parents in the coming weeks.

"We had some great points and it's a mixed bag," Martinsville Schools Superintendent Dr. Zebedee Talley said of the city schools SOL scores. "We will have some areas where we will need some improvements."

In city schools, the reading average was 64 compared to the state average of 73, the writing average was not listed except for the < symbol, and the mathematics scores was 61, or 10 points lower than the state average of 71.

In history, Martinsville schools scored 51 compared to the state average of 65, and 50 in science, 18 points lower than the state average.

These scores reflect a drop compared to the 2022-2023 SOL scores when history and mathematics averages were 53 and 63 respectively, and the science score was 53.

In reading, the average increased one point from 63 to 64, and the writing average was 40.

Assistant Superintendent of Instruction Dr. Angilee Downing said while the division's scores have not yet returned to its pre-pandemic levels of success, it is encouraged by student progress in key areas, particularly among economically disadvantaged students, English learners, and Black students.

"In Martinsville, these subgroups have matched or outperformed their peers statewide in" some areas. "Our rate of growth across the board mirrors that of the state, indicating that we are on the right track. Science in particular will continue to be an area of focus for us," she said.

Talley, who has served as the superintendent since 2016, has dealt with the system both pre and post-covid. Now, he is helping tackle the lasting effects of the pandemic while pushing the city schools into a new era.

While he agrees that "we are seeing students overcome and gain ground," and he anticipates city schools to be accredited, Talley said those, and other improvements, are "thanks to the quality of great teachers."

The quality of teachers in Virginia has caused the state to rank as one of the best states to educate children, he said. "It's the teachers that are turning the tide against COVID-19, and yes, we are starting to see gains," but he also believes that student mental health is another piece of the puzzle that has been impacted by the pandemic.

Both Talley and Downing said that

absenteeism remains a concern, and the school system recognizes that chronic absenteeism continues to be an issue in schools nationwide.

The current absentee numbers for school year 23-24 were 17.76 percent, with the current rate at 20.95 percent. "Kids need to be present," Talley said. "We are missing kids throughout the nation."

"Consistent school attendance is crucial for academic success, and we want to do all we can to support our students in getting to school every day. That's why, this year, we have hired a Chronic Absenteeism and Dropout Prevention Specialist to support our efforts in keeping students engaged in school," Downing said.

School Resource Officers (SROs) also are trying to help get students into classrooms, Talley said.

Incentives like Patrick Henry Elementary School's 'House System' have helped to bring children back to the classroom.

"The kids are really engaged, they take a lot of pride in attendance, and they are rewarded for a myriad of things," Talley said, adding that each school offers incentives to attract students, like free Chick-fil-a and passes.

Talley believes that students perform best when they are in an in-person setting.

"The research proves that students learn better in person than they do remotely," he said, and COVID helped to prove that online learning isn't as effective as a classical classroom setting.

Cell-phone use was banned during instruction hours last year, and Talley feels that the school division was "ahead of the curve," and proposed state guidance to ban cell phone use during the school day.

Cell phone use during school hours has been shown to distract students from instruction, and can negatively impact mental health, officials said.

"Cell phone usage is a tremendous barrier to student learning," Talley



Dr. Amy Blake-Lewis addressed the Henry County School Board this summer.

said. "We need our students focused on actual learning; what the teachers are teaching in the classroom."

Guidance counselors are able to talk to students who are experiencing problems with cell phone use, Talley said, and he would like to see more restrictions on students' use of social media, but that is up to parents.

"Students have suffered mentally" from using social media, Talley said, including cyber-bullying.

Outside of normal learning, Talley noted that the two student businesses - Stichify and The Kennel - "helps with the mental health of our teachers."

An apprenticeship program gives students the opportunity to both earn credits and work experience at the same time.

Other successes include "a new robotics teacher. Our kids competed in Iowa and Maryland last year. Our kids in robotics have competed nationally and internationally," Talley said.

Martinsville High School is home to a new student-built robotics lab. A new AI program is in development.

"There are a lot of things going on," Talley said, and noted that some of the school division's successes are reflected in the division's requests for speakers, with city school staff often asked to lead presentations all over the state.

## Health Brief

According to the West Piedmont Health District:

- The FDA has approved new coronavirus vaccines. The shots, made by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna, are tailored for the KP.2 variant, which, along with closely related strains, is causing most recent COVID cases. Everyone 6 months and older should get the shots, the CDC recommends. Health officials encourage annual vaccination as the virus evolves and our immunity to it wanes.

- The Federal Drug Administration (FDA) authorized the first at-home syphilis test as cases of the bacterial infection surge. Manufacturer NowDiagnostics expects the 15-minute test to be available in pharmacies, major retailers and online by September. The company

said it plans to work with federal, state and local health officials to make the tests available free at clinics and health departments.

- Monkeypox, or MPOX, cases are on the rise. To keep people safe, Virginia is offering vaccines that will be offered across the commonwealth, including the West Piedmont Health District. It's important for individuals who are potentially at risk to go ahead and get vaccinated, and to be sure to get both doses of the two-dose series. Appointments are required at WPHD health departments (Martinsville, Rocky Mount, and Stuart). Visit the CDC Mpox Vaccine Locator online at <https://mpoxvaccine.cdc.gov/>.

## Survey underway to gauge transportation needs

Residents are asked to share their commuter and general transportation needs in a survey that is being conducted by the West Piedmont Planning District Commission (WPPDC).

The purpose of the survey is to obtain regional input to best enable commission staff and RIDE Solutions to most effectively develop a Commuter Assistance Program Strategic Plan to serve the district by identifying strategies to improve work and non-work

transportation options in Franklin, Henry, Patrick, and Pittsylvania, the cities of Danville and Martinsville, and the Town of Rocky Mount (part of Franklin County).

Information gleaned from the survey will identify gaps and opportunities to more effectively allocate alternative modes of transportation.

Participate online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2BSWHP8>, before the survey closes on September 15.

## Applications accepted for Beehive Lottery

The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) is currently accepting applications for the 2024 Beehive Distribution Program. The program provides free equipment for assembling new beehives to Virginia residents. Recipients of the equipment are selected at random from qualifying applications received during the application period. Applications will be accepted through Sept. 6.

Only residents of the Commonwealth of Virginia, aged 18 years or older at the time of application, qualify for the random drawing. Entities such as businesses, non-profit organizations, and government agencies are not eligible to receive beehive units. Multiple individuals with the same mailing and/or physical address (household) may apply to the program; however, distribution of beehive units will be limited to no more than three beehive units per house-

hold in the same fiscal year, July 1 to June 30.

Recipients of beehive units must assemble the equipment and occupy it with a colony of honey bees within one year of receiving the equipment. VDACS does not provide honey bees or equipment for managing the hives, such as personal safety equipment or honey processing equipment.

To learn more about the Beehive Distribution Program or to submit an application before Sept. 6, please visit [www.vdacs.virginia.gov/plant-industry-services-beehive-distribution-program.shtml](http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/plant-industry-services-beehive-distribution-program.shtml). Individuals interested in applying to receive beehive units through the program should review the complete application instructions within the Guidelines & Requirements.

For more information, contact the VDACS Office of Plant Industry Services at (804) 786-3515 or [vabees@vdacs.virginia.gov](mailto:vabees@vdacs.virginia.gov).

## IALR seeks recruits for AmeriCorps program



Koda Thompson, a 2023-2024 Dan River Year AmeriCorps member, helps a young student complete his homework at the afterschool program run by the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Danville Area. Thanks to a continuation grant from AmeriCorps, the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research is currently recruiting 31 AmeriCorps members for the 2024-2025 school year (the 10th year) to serve as STEM and Literacy Tutors in Danville, Pittsylvania County and Martinsville.

The Dan River Year AmeriCorps program is recruiting 31 part-time STEM and Literacy Tutors and Coaches for the 2024-2025 academic year to build and introduce curriculum and activities for students. AmeriCorps members will support upper elementary and middle school student gains in literacy, math and social-emotional learning by providing direct service in Pittsylvania County, and the cities of Martinsville and Danville at local elementary and afterschool partner sites.

In-School and Out-of-School Tutors will provide direct and indirect support to site(s) during school and after school and for family science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) activities. Members work with 4th- and 5th-grade students individually and/or small groups at school sites as well as upper elementary/middle school students at informal learning locations. They focus on building and introducing curricu-

lum and activities for students, helping prepare them for middle school by improving their literacy, math, STEM and/or social-emotional skills.

The Institute for Advanced Learning and Research (IALR) administers the Dan River Year AmeriCorps program. The agency received a \$231,275 continuation grant from AmeriCorps to help fund the 10th year of operation.

Service dates are September 2024-August 2025 and range from five to 30 hours weekly. Stipends range from \$4,200 (300 hours) to \$13,500 (900 hours). Segal Education Awards for successful service completers range from \$1,565 (300 hours) to \$3,697 (900 hours).

The program is ideal for recent high school graduates or college students seeking a gap year, those entering the education field, career switchers and retirees.

For more information, visit <https://www.ialr.org/dan-river-year-ameri-corps>.

## Maternal health care gets funding boost

A partnership project of the Virginia Department of Health, the CDC, and United Way of Henry County-Martinsville. "Moms Under Pressure" will distribute blood pressure cuff kits to pregnant mothers and birthing persons who are diagnosed with preeclampsia, HELLP syndrome, gestational hypertension, or who are at risk for those disorders.

A training session for those who work directly with those who are pregnant and/or postpartum is set for Thursday, Sept. 19 from 12 -2 p.m. The location has not yet been announced, but space will be limited. To register for the training, contact [christa@UnitedWay-ofHCM.org](mailto:christa@UnitedWay-ofHCM.org). To learn more about Moms Under Pressure, or MUP, visit Huddle Up Moms.

# CLASSIFIED

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Case No. CL24001014-00  
COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
VA. CODE §§ 1-211.1; 8.01-316, -317, 20-104  
HENRY CIRCUIT COURT  
3160 Kings Mountain Rd., 3rd Floor, Martinsville, VA 24112  
Commonwealth of Virginia, *in re*  
FELIPE TORRES v. GLORIA ALICIA HOLLAND  
CALLE ALESANDRO PRIETO 202 PTE  
COLONIA ZONA CENTRO 89800  
ELMANTE, TAMAULIPHS, MEXICO 89802  
The object of this suit is to:  
OBTAIN A DIVORCE A VINVULO MATRIMONII  
It is ORDERED that GLORIA ALICIA HOLLAND appear at the above-named court and protect her interests on or before OCTOBER 20, 2024.  
AUGUST 21, 2024  
*Joseph A. Roberts*  
JUDGE CLERK

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Contractors must submit their application on the electronic M7B bidding site at <https://plov4va.vdot.virginia.gov>. All new and returning Contractors must be active in the Virginia eProcurement Portal (eVA) in order to do business with the Commonwealth of Virginia (<https://eva.virginia.gov>).  
Applications received by 7:00 PM on Wednesday October 2, 2024, may be eligible for a bonus payment. See the EVA posting for additional information, including contract requirements.  
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# OBITUARIES

## Douglas L. "Doug" Martin



Douglas L. "Doug" Martin, 83, of Charlotte Court House, Virginia, passed away Tuesday, March 12, 2024. Born in Bassett, Virginia, he was a son of the late Roy Martin and Sallie M. Martin. He was also preceded in death by an infant brother, Kenneth Wallace.

Doug graduated from Bassett High School Class of 1958. He also attended various classes in computers over the years. He retired from Sara Lee Corporate Office in Winston-Salem, North Carolina in 2003 as IT Director.

A man who loved life, Doug enjoyed the mountains where he shared 14 beautiful years with his wife in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Stuart, Virginia, the most beautiful time of our lives. He also loved the solitude of the beach where he would spend a lot of time reading. He was an avid reader. He was a lover of animals, especially cats and dogs, all of which were rescues. We have fostered many over the years.

Left to cherish his memory are the love of his life for 35 years, Shirley Holley Martin; two beautiful daughters, whom he cherished, Dawn (Dawnie) Michelle M. Orga and

her husband, Robin; Consuela Yvonne (Cookie) Christian and her husband Brian; a grandson, Matthew Boothe; grand-daughter-in-law, Marina Boothe; one precious great-granddaughter, Alison Grace Boothe all of Williamsburg, Virginia; two sisters, Carolyn Martin Dandridge and her children, Clay of Richmond, and Sarah Minart and husband, Mark of Columbus, Ohio and their son, William Jamerson Minart; Sylvia (Syl) Martin Skeen of Richmond and her two children, Ginny of New York and Lloyd of Richmond and his children, Nicholas, Autumn and Lil' Lloyd; and one brother, Jeffery Randolph Martin (Randy) whom he often referred to as "son" and his wife, Tammy Martin of Blairs, Virginia; brother-in-law and sister-in-law, Fred and Phyllis Holley Reyes of Maricopa, California and sister-in-law, Ann Holley of Henry, Virginia.

Doug had a lot of

health issues in the later years of his life, but death was unexpected. For someone who spent a lot of time confined at home, he never lost his spirit for life and the beauty of this world.

If you wish to make a memorial contribution in memory of Doug, please consider Liberty Baptist Church, 1709 Church Street, Appomattox, Virginia, 24522; or Southern Welfare Animal Group, 15081 Thomas Jefferson Highway, Pamplin, Virginia 23958.

A memorial service was held at 1 pm, Saturday, April 6, 2024, at Liberty Baptist Church with, Dr. Rusty Small officiating.

For all who prayed for us, sent cards, messages, especially faithful friends of Liberty Baptist Church, we are eternally grateful. He knew many people were praying for his recovery.

Second Timothy, 1:12 For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless, I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.

My tribute to you Douglas, Love, Your Little One.

# D.C. attorney tapped to serve in Martinsville

Martinsville City Council members appointed Eric W. Payne, Esq. as the City Attorney Designee during a special called meeting on August 15.

Payne is currently an Attorney at Law in the District of Columbia. Once he is admitted to the bar in Virginia, he will receive the title of City Attorney, and also serve as the acting Managing Director of Development until that position is filled.

Payne brings more than 30 years of legal and government experience to Martinsville, according to a release from the city. Throughout his career, he has earned a reputation for integrity, leadership, and a deep commitment to public service. He has held significant roles in various governmental and legal institutions, including serving as the Director of Contracts for the District of Columbia's Office of the Chief Financial Officer, Chief of Staff at the United States Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration Bureau, and a senior role at the Chicago Housing Authority.

As the former Contracting Officer for the District of Columbia's Office of the Chief Financial Officer, Payne was crucial in ensuring accountability and ethical standards in public procurement. His efforts led to significant legal victories and reforms, underscoring his commitment to public service and the rule of law. Payne is widely recognized for his role as a whistleblower in the District of Columbia, where he exposed corruption and advocated for transparency in government operations, the release stated. His integrity and courage in the face of adversity earned him respect and national attention.

Payne's long history and love of public service began early in his career, the release stated. He was among the youngest aides to serve in the Clinton presidential administration, where he contributed significantly to national policy discussions and initiatives. His role as a Staff Assistant in the Office of Communications Research at the White House demonstrated his ability to navigate the complexities of federal governance at a young age, earning him recognition as a rising star in the public service arena.

Following his early experiences in Washington, D.C., Payne continued to build an impressive legal career. He has held significant roles in various governmental and legal institutions, including international stints in South Africa and Saudi Arabia. His work has consistently been marked by a commitment to ethical governance and transparency. In addition to his public service, Payne has operated his own law practice, successfully representing clients in complex governmental and commercial legal matters. His experience in managing high value contracts and his work in interna-



Eric W. Payne will begin his tenure in Martinsville on Sept. 1.

tional settings, such as managing several multi-billion-dollar foreign military sales contracts during his tenure in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, have equipped him with the skills necessary to navigate the multifaceted legal challenges that may come with the role of City Attorney.

A graduate of the University of Arkansas School of Law, Payne has completed coursework toward a Master of Law in Government Procurement Law at the George Washington University Law School. He is admitted to the Bars of Illinois (inactive) and the District of Columbia and is eligible for Virginia State Bar admission.

"I am honored to have the opportunity to serve the City of Martinsville as its City Attorney," said Payne. "I look forward to working closely with the City Council, the City Manager, and all city departments to ensure that we uphold the highest standards of legal and ethical governance for the good of the citizens of Martinsville."

"We are extremely fortunate to have Mr. Payne join our staff, bringing his knowledge and expertise to our City," said Mayor LC Jones. "Bringing high-caliber talent to our staff has been a priority, and this hire shows we can attract that caliber of talent to our city."

"It could not have worked out better for the City of Martinsville," said Vice Mayor Aaron Rawls. "We really need his experience; it's almost like fate how this worked out."

"He was very impressive during the process and is knowledgeable, he has vast experience in many different areas that we certainly have a void," added council member Kathy Lawson. "He will make a wonderful addition to our staff here."

"I'm looking forward to having someone here in person, especially Mr. Payne," said council member Tammy Pearson. "I think he'll be a wonderful addition to our City with his background."

"I was very impressed by Mr. Payne, this is an excellent solution to our vacancy as we very much need a city attorney," said council member Lawrence Mitchell.

Payne will begin his role as acting Managing Director of Development on September 1.

# Dance Espanol program educates and empowers elementary students



Pedro Szalay leads the G.W. Carver students through their rehearsed dance.



Students at Axton Elementary School wait patiently to begin their performance.

Piedmont Arts hosted the Southwest Virginia Ballet's Dance Espanol as part of its educational outreach programming this week in area elementary schools. The program, designed for fourth graders, blends dance education with Spanish vocabulary, to help students learn Spanish through movement. This fall, students from Axton Elementary School and G.W. Carver Elementary school participated in the program. They spent this week learning from Pedro Szalay, the artistic director of Southwest Virginia Ballet. Their lessons culminated in a performance on Friday afternoon for parents, teachers, administrators, and their classmates.

On Friday at G.W. Carver, Szalay addressed the crowd before the performance started. He spoke about the mission of the program: to teach children to feel comfortable in their bodies, how to respect others and be self-aware, and the importance of learning new languages. Szalay also spoke on how important it is to keep arts in the schools and how opportunities like

this foster relationships and build important skills for the future.

Three Carver Elementary students who participated in the program, Sadie Morris, Kayla Ayers, and Ella James all agreed. They gushed about the friendships they made in the program, how they were excited about the new vocabulary they learned, and how they are excited to continue dancing. Morris and Ayers expressed how nervous they were to perform, but James mentioned that she had been dancing for years and doesn't get stage fright anymore. Morris and Ayers said that seeing their families and friends in the audience helped ease their nerves.

In addition to new skills, friends, and vocabulary words, all participants in Dance Espanol get a t-shirt to commemorate their participation in the program. These shirts, representing the hosting school's colors, are a great source of pride amongst the students. Dance Espanol will be coming to Martinsville City Schools in the spring.

# Former educator's family creates scholarship fund

The family of Harry D. Hensley, a dedicated and beloved teacher who served Martinsville City Public Schools for 43 years, announced the establishment of the Harry D. Hensley Memorial Scholarship Fund at Patrick & Henry Community College. This fund will honor Hensley's legacy by providing financial assistance to deserving students pursuing higher education.

"Patrick & Henry Community College Foundation is honored to assist the Hensley family in honoring Harry through a scholarship that will support his legacy of inspiring students to do great things," said Tiffani Underwood, Foundation executive director.

Harry Hensley, who passed away on August 22, 2024, was a passionate educator committed to nurturing and inspiring students, leaving a lasting impact on the community. Hensley devoted his life to education, fostering a love for learning and serving as a mentor to countless students and fellow teachers. His unwavering support and dedication to his students and colleagues have left an indelible mark on the Martinsville community.

"We hope this scholarship fund will continue my father's mission of supporting and inspiring stu-



dents," said Hensley's daughter, Elizabeth Hensley Wood.

For more information or to donate to the fund, please contact P&HCC Foundation offices at 276-656-0281. Donations can be mailed to P&HCC Foundation, 645 Patriot Avenue, Martinsville, VA 24112 (please write Harry D. Hensley Memorial Scholarship in the memo line) or made online at Patrick & Henry Community College Foundation (patrickhenryfoundation.com) by clicking Make a Donation and including Mr. Hensley's name in the memo.

See more at

[www.henrycountyenterprise.com](http://www.henrycountyenterprise.com)

# VMNH mammal curator reflects on 35 year career



Dr. Nancy Moncrief conducts fieldwork in Virginia's Barrier Islands in the 1990s.



By **BEN R. WILLIAMS**

After 35 years of service to the Commonwealth expanding our scientific knowledge of Virginia's mammals, Dr. Nancy Moncrief is enjoying her retirement.

Moncrief, who had served as the Virginia Museum of Natural History's (VMNH) Curator of Mammalogy since 1989, retired from the museum in May. The VMNH Board of Trustees voted to name Moncrief Curator Emerita at its May 18 meeting. She is one of five curators to receive the honor.

## Early days

"There was no 'a ha!' moment in my life," Moncrief said, regarding her decision to pursue a career studying mammals. She said that she grew up in Memphis, Tennessee with a fairly suburban upbringing, but spent a few summers in northeastern Arkansas spending time with her uncles who owned farms, riding horses and being immersed in nature.

"I was always interested in looking at differences between breeds of dogs and horses and cows and seeing subtle variations within species," she said. "I had kind of an eye for looking for differences between individuals."

Moncrief went to Memphis State (now the University of Memphis) for her undergraduate education. It was during a college field trip to Mexico that she realized she wanted to pursue a career in natural history.

"We went to central Mexico, which has an incredibly high diversity of bats and rodents," she said. "I learned how to prep specimens there, and when we came back, I did more field work in the Smoky Mountains. I was doing survey work, trapping mostly mice and shrews. From there, I realized I needed to go to graduate school."

Moncrief went on to earn her M.S. in Biology at Fort Hays State University and her Ph.D. in Zoology from Louisiana State University (LSU). At these institutions, she realized that her attention to detail made her perfectly suited for proof-reading and interpreting data, a skillset that has been a constant thread throughout her career.

Another constant thread throughout her career: squirrels.

"LSU has a big squirrel collection," Moncrief said. "That's where I got interested in fox squirrels and gray squirrels because both of those species occur throughout the lower Mississippi River Valley. My dissertation was looking at geographic variation in fox squirrels, which is very dramatic in that region of the country ... very striking color patterns and size differences in a very

short east-west distance."

## Squirreled away

Moncrief has spent a large portion of her career studying squirrels, and it's safe to say they're her favorite animal.

However, she said, it's not because they're cute; it comes from an admiration for their unique skills, such as their ability to remember where they buried nuts for the winter or their ability to navigate the complex three-dimensional space of the treetops with ease.

"Their lifestyle is kind of interesting," Moncrief said. "The real interesting thing to me is looking at coat color and size variation. What's driving that? What caused it? What is it the result of? I've answered some of those questions ... until someone comes along with a more precise technique than I had."

Moncrief's work has long been at the cutting edge of technology; for her Ph.D. dissertation in the 1980s, she used early forms of DNA analysis to compare the genetics of squirrels from different geographical regions. Within the last few years, she published a paper using much more advanced DNA sequencing to analyze the genetic reasons for coat color variations in fox squirrels and gray squirrels. This work provided the first evidence that these two species had hybridized in the past, a phenomenon called ancient introgression.

"I'm still working on squirrels using newer technology as it has become available and the price has come down," she said. "Back in the day, I probably could have done DNA sequencing of squirrels if I'd had many millions of dollars. Waiting 20 years made it affordable."

## The Virginia Museum of Natural History

After earning her Ph.D., Moncrief collaborated with a colleague who worked at the University of Virginia.

"He happened to know (VMNH founder) Dr. Noel Boaz," she said, "and he knew that Noel was establishing a natural history museum. He wrote me a good letter of recommendation, and I guess it worked," she said with a laugh.

Boaz hired Moncrief as the VMNH Curator of Mammalogy in the fall of 1989, putting her among the first batch of curators to be hired at the museum.

When asked what has changed the most about museums over the course of her 35 year career, Moncrief said that the biggest change has been "the fact that I'm carrying around a supercomputer in my pocket."

"Social media didn't exist," she said. "We had personal computers



Dr. Nancy Moncrief, Curator Emerita, Virginia Museum of Natural History.

and we had databases, but the ability to get on websites like VertNet and do searches for records of specimens in other museums ... it's so much easier now than it was."

One useful technological advancement has been the ability to use game cameras mounted in bucket camera traps to photograph and identify mice and other rodents in the field without the need to collect live specimens.

"We can do the same level of survey work that used to be much more labor and time intensive," she said.

However, she said, "there's still a lot of information you get from live trapping or collecting specimens. A picture may be worth a thousand words, but for me, a picture is not worth a museum specimen. With physical evidence ... we can examine it, archive it, and let somebody else come back and examine it 50 years later using their technology."

## The Barrier Islands

Throughout her career at VMNH, Moncrief spent a great deal of time conducting field work and research on Virginia's Barrier Islands, specifically studying the population genetics of these unique environments. She said that it's some of the work that she's most proud of. "Islands are natural laboratories for studying ecology and evolution because it's a simpler system," she said. "You don't have as many species of predators and you don't have as many species of prey. ... Darwin worked in the Galapagos for a reason."

During her time in the Barrier Islands, Moncrief studied rodent populations, conducted surveys of the mammal populations on the islands, and even worked to protect the rare shorebirds that nest on the islands.

"Because the islands are prime nesting habitat for endangered and threatened shorebirds, some of our

colleagues who study birds wanted us to study the mammals that prey on birds, mostly raccoons," she said. "We used our expertise in ecology and genetics to look at movement of raccoons and raccoon population dynamics. ... The question is, is there something you can do to control the raccoons? Part of the answer to that is, where are the raccoons coming from?"

The islands that were the best habitats for nesting shorebirds were generally flat and lacked large vegetation, making them unsuitable for permanent raccoon populations. If the raccoons were traveling to these islands from other islands, it would be possible to control their populations. If they were coming from the mainland, however, it would be all but impossible to control them.

Moncrief and colleagues were able to determine that the raccoons were mostly coming from other nearby islands, which has allowed other colleagues to control the raccoon populations and thereby protect the endangered shorebirds.

## Looking ahead

Moncrief said that now that she's retired, she's most excited to be able to spend more time with her husband Phil — that, and sleep in on occasion.

With more than 40 peer-reviewed publications under her belt which have been cited more than 1,800 times, you might think that Moncrief would be ready to take down her shingle. However, in what will not come as a shock to those who know her, she has no intention of completely stepping away from the scientific work that has defined her career.

"There are several projects that I started that I really want to get finished," she said.

"And there may be new projects, too," she added.

## Red Cross reports national blood emergency

The American Red Cross continues to experience a national blood emergency as remnants of Hurricane Debby and other severe weather events across the country have further complicated efforts to rebuild the nation's blood supply. Those in unaffected areas are urged to make an appointment to give now.

Weather in recent weeks has added to the summer shortfall in donations by forcing the cancellation of nearly 60 blood drives throughout the country, many of which were caused by Debby, causing approximately 1,500 lifesaving blood products to go uncollected. Annually, severe weather — such as blizzards, tornadoes, floods and

hurricanes — impacts about 90,000 blood donations made to the Red Cross. In the month of August, Tropical Storm Debby led to several blood drive cancellations in the North Carolina region, causing about 500 donations to go uncollected. Because blood has a short shelf life and can only come from volunteer blood donors, any disruptions in the ability to collect lifesaving blood can have serious consequences for hospitals and patients.

First-time donors and those who give regularly are critical to blood supply recovery. To make an appointment, download the Red Cross Blood Donor App, visit [RedCrossBlood.org](http://RedCrossBlood.org) or call 1-800-

RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767). In thanks, all who come to give through Aug. 31 will get a \$20 Amazon.com Gift Card by email. See [RedCrossBlood.org/Help](http://RedCrossBlood.org/Help) for details.

Those who come to give Sept. 1-15 will receive an exclusive Red Cross raglan T-shirt, while supplies last.

## Be ready for emergencies

September is National Preparedness Month, and a strong blood supply is key to preparedness for disasters and medical emergencies. As disasters occur more often and become more powerful due to the climate crisis, the Red Cross also encourages people to get their households ready for emergencies.

This year the country has already seen the earliest Category 5 storm ever recorded with Hurricane Beryl, and wildfires have burned 2.7 million more acres compared to all of 2023.

Disasters can happen anywhere, at any time, often without warning. Get ready by making a plan to stay safe, gathering important supplies and knowing how you'll stay connected. To learn what disasters may affect your community, visit [redcross.org/hazardmap](http://redcross.org/hazardmap) and then download the free Red Cross Emergency App for step-by-step guidance, real-time weather alerts and expert preparedness and safety advice in both English and Spanish.

Call 276-694-3101 or email [submissions@theenterprise.net](mailto:submissions@theenterprise.net) for more information.



# Crossing the Lines

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

## School division ranked 9th in state for second year in a row



Patrick Schools Superintendent Jason Wood earlier this month at Patrick County High School.

For the second year in a row, the Patrick County School division ranked 9th in the state for Standards of Learning (SOL) performance, according to Superintendent Jason Wood, who noted that the division's total pass rate improved from 81.4 percent to 82.4 percent.

"We are very proud. Of the top ten schools, three of those are in Southwest Virginia, and all three of us have an economically disadvantaged number, over 50 percent," he said.

While there is typically a correlation between SOL performance and the economically disadvantaged number, Wood said Patrick County and two other school divisions in Southwest Virginia with more than 50 percent are overcoming that barrier.

In English, Wood said the division is nine points above the state average at 82, and 14 points above the state average in Writing at 90. In math, the county received 90, which is 12 points above the state average of 71.

Wood said the score for science was 13 points above the state average at 81, and 15 points above the history state average at 80.

"Speaking with the director of the Instructional Consortium. He wants to come present at a school board meeting to showcase. I'm hoping he comes to our next school board meeting to show the trendline" compared to typical SOL performance based on economically disadvantaged numbers, "and Patrick County is one of the top three outperforming that trend line," he said.

Despite the high SOL scores, Wood said he believes the school system still has room for improvement, especially in returning to pre-COVID-19 standards.

"I think every school has room to continue improving," Wood said, but "I think we are approaching pre-pandemic performance faster than most of our surrounding school divisions. I think that's just a testament to the hard work of every employee."

## Council approves support for Spooktacular



Stuart Mayor Ray Weiland signed a proclamation recognizing Constitution Week in Stuart. He is pictured with members of the Daughters of the American Revolution - Col. Abram Penn Chapter.

The Stuart Town Council approved donating \$2,000 in financial assistance and in-kind support to One Family Productions for the 9th annual Spooktacular at its Wednesday, August 21 meeting.

Sarah Wray, president of One Family Productions, said after the Patrick County Young Professionals disbanded at the end of 2023, One Family was approached about continuing the annual event.

"We said yes because we love Stuart and Stuart Spooktacular. We are looking forward to moving forward

with that. I think this event has brought a lot of community members and organizations together. Regardless of who's doing the planning, people have kind of come together to rally behind its success," she said.

Currently, Wray said One Family is looking forward to continuing that legacy and growing it in a way that is sustainable, safe, and efficient for businesses and visitors on Main Street.

Spooktacular is set to be held Thursday, October 31 from 5:30-8 p.m.

## Solar project nixed due to 'fatal flaw'

The solar project on Commerce Street in Stuart has been canceled, and is no longer viable due to inter-connection issues, according to Energix Vice-President of Development Seth Christman.

The project, proposed by Fairy Stone LLC, a subsidiary of Energix Renewables, was deemed to have a fatal flaw in its connection to the grid, he said.

"This was only learned after the condition of use permit was granted for the project earlier this year. Unfortunately,

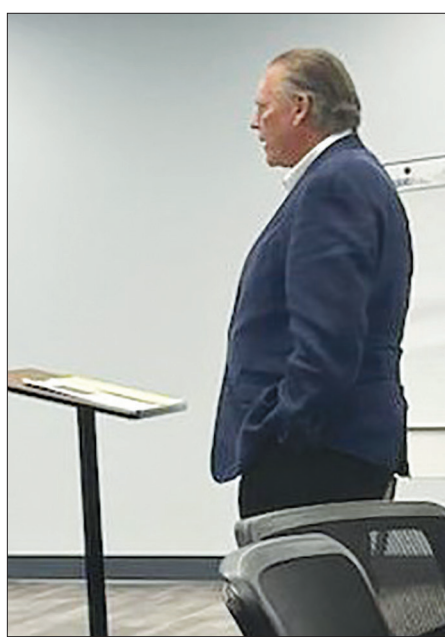
the project would have triggered an unacceptable voltage change where it interconnected to the Stuart substation," he said.

The Patrick County Board of Supervisors approved the siting agreement in a hotly debated 3-2 vote at its March 11 meeting. The project was to encompass approximately 170-acres.

Christman said continuing the project would defeat the purpose of putting energy on the grid to create reliability.

The issues "was learned between

## Economic development guidance offered at joint meeting



Sanford Holshouser Managing Partner David Denny presented 18 actions in four categories that he and others believe the county should take to improve economic development efforts.



Economic Development and Tourism Director James Houchins requested input on his areas of focus.

Consultants offered more than a dozen recommendations to improve the county's economic development efforts during a recent joint meeting of the Patrick County Board of Supervisors and the Economic Development Authority (EDA) Board.

The recommendations, presented on August 19, were split into four categories – Economic Development Operations, Business Retention and Expansion, Project Development, and Economic Development Toolkit - and included 18 actions.

Liz Povar, principal of RiverLink Group, one of the consulting organizations, said one purpose of the recommendations is to help facilitate a conversation between the boards about what each thinks needs to be done and potentially facilitate changes. Another goal is to get the boards to decide what Economic Development and Tourism Director James Houchins should focus on with his duties regarding the county's economic development.

"He needs your help to help focus time, resources, energy, staff support," she said.

## Clinic celebrates 20 years of service to community

The Caring Hearts Free Clinic (CHFC) of Patrick County celebrated its 20th anniversary of serving the community on August 13.

Executive Director Christie Fain said the clinic was started in 2004 by a group of individuals that noticed there was a healthcare disparity. "They wanted something to have for the community that people that were uninsured could go to," she said, adding CHFC proudly continues to keep the vision of its original supports and Executive Directors alive in order to serve the countless working indigent, uninsured individuals who are struggling in communities across Virginia with much needed healthcare.

Fain said CHFC sees patients who are 18-64 years old, are residents of Virginia, are completely uninsured, and are 300 percent or below the Federal Poverty Level.

"We have a formula, and we have a little cheat sheet, so when somebody calls or comes in, we kind of plug their numbers in.

Sanford Holshouser Managing Partner David Denny said the meeting was just the beginning of trying to develop a longer-term vision and get established groups like the county and other stakeholders all working together to come up with the longer-term visions and action items.

"The recommendations that we have, we try to be cognizant of the fact that you can get overwhelmed with too many things to tackle. You get too overwhelmed with too many complex things to tackle," he said. "So, what we wanted to do is to recommend some very meaningful things that could be done and tackled, but things that are low-hanging fruit."

Under the Economic Development Operations category, Denny said one thing the county should focus on completing the EDA bylaws.

"The bylaws really are a guideline" to explain how the agency operates and conducts business, he said. "It's extremely important to have those bylaws finished and implemented," he said.



Christie Fain, executive director of Caring Hearts Free Clinic at the clinic's 20th anniversary celebration.

I can't give an exact answer for that, it depends on how many family members you have, how much you make, and then we plug that in and that kind of gives us the number for that," she said.

tion to that project.

"We pulled it from consideration. We have not terminated that LLC, that project, or the land positions, we just did not move it forward at that time because of the organized opposition to the project and kind of relooking at the project and the viability in that location," he said.

To read more about these and other stories, check out *The Enterprise*, [www.theenterprise.net](http://www.theenterprise.net).

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1-3-5-7-9PM

# Bassett man held with no bond

The Henry County Sheriff's Office SWAT Team executed a narcotics search warrant on Tuesday, August 20, at 25 Raceway Dr. Bassett. The search warrant was based on a joint narcotics operation between the Franklin County Sheriff's Office and the Henry County Sheriff's Office.

During the execution of the search warrant, Steven Mathew Holt was taken into custody without incident.

Officers searching the property seized suspected methamphetamine, a firearm, ammunition, and an undisclosed amount of US currency, packaging materials, and a digital scale, according to a release from the Henry County Sheriff's Office.

All the items seized are consistent with the distribution of illegal narcotics, Capt. Sandy Hines alleged.

The firearm and suspected narcotics will be sent to the Virginia Department of Forensic Science for analysis.

Holt, 39, of the residence, was charged with possession with the intent to distribute a Schedule I/II drug, 3rd or subsequent offense



Steven Mathew Holt

and possess ammunition by a convicted felon. He is currently held in the Henry County Adult Detention Center with no bond.

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

# Fieldale man charged, held with no bond

The Henry County Sheriff's Office SWAT Team executed a narcotics search warrant at 290 Dillons Fork Road, Fieldale, on Friday, August 23. During the search of the property, investigators located suspected methamphetamine and fentanyl. All items were seized and will be sent to the Virginia Department of Forensic Science for analysis.

Christopher Brian Wright Jr., 36, 290 Dillons Fork Road, was charged with possession Schedule I/II Drug (suspected methamphetamine); possession Schedule I/II Drug (suspected fentanyl).

Wright is currently held in the Henry County Adult Detention Center with no bond. The investigation is ongoing.

Anyone with information about the incident is asked to contact the Henry County Sheriff's Office



at 276-638-8751 or Crimestoppers at 63-CRIME (276-632-7463). The Crimestoppers program offers rewards up to \$2,500 for information related to a crime. The nature of the crime and the substance of the information determine the amount of reward paid.

## Great Value Apple Juice recalled

Virginia is among 25 states covered in a recall from Refresco Beverages US Inc., in Tampa, Fla. For Great Value Apple Juice.

Inorganic arsenic above the action level set in industry guidance spurred the recall, according to the company.

The affected products include Great Value 8oz Apple Juice in 6 pack; 100% Juice; packaged in 8 oz. PET plastic bottles; UPC 0-78742-29655-5.

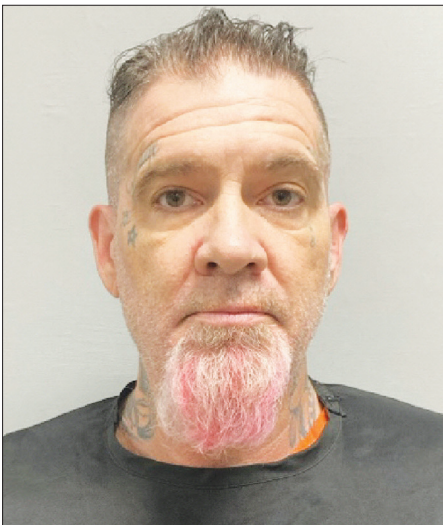
The Best if Used by date is DEC2824 CT89-6.

# Stuart man charged after pursuit

A Henry County Sheriff's Office deputy initiated a traffic stop August 24 on a 2006 silver Volkswagen on A.L. Philpott Hwy heading towards Patrick County. The driver allegedly disregarded the deputy's emergency lights and siren and accelerated speed. The driver of the vehicle allegedly was recklessly operating the vehicle and traveling at speeds well over 100mph. As the pursuit neared Gordon Trent Golf Course on A.L. Philpott Hwy., the deputy had an opportunity to use the Precision Immobilization Technique (P.I.T maneuver) to safely end the pursuit. The suspect vehicle tires lost traction and slid into a ditch in the median of the roadway.

The driver of the Volkswagen was identified as Gary Lawrence Johnson, Jr., 54, of 3824 Big A School Road, Stuart. Johnson was wanted on an outstanding fail-to-appear warrant out of Henry County.

Johnson was also charged with felony eluding police - Henry County, driving without a license, expired inspection, fail to display tag, fictitious registration, and fail to signal in connection with the Aug. 24 incident.



Johnson was taken into custody at the scene and held in Henry County Adult Detention Center with no bond.

The investigation is ongoing, and anyone with information about the incident is asked to call the Henry County Sheriff's Office at (276) 638-8751 or Crimestoppers at 63-CRIME (632-7463). The Crimestoppers Program offers rewards up to \$2,500 for information related to a crime. The nature of the crime and the substance of the information determine the amount of reward paid.

# Danville is site of new RBW Sports & Classics facility

RBW Sports & Classics, the United Kingdom's only manufacturer of hand-built electric classic sports cars, will invest \$8 million to establish a manufacturing facility at Cane Creek Centre, an industrial park jointly owned by the City of Danville and Pittsylvania County, Gov. Glenn Youngkin said Thursday, Aug. 22. The new facility will produce the company's first left-hand drive RBW EV Roadster and GT models for the U.S. market. The project will create 144 new jobs.

"Entrepreneurial, innovative companies like RBW Sports & Classics are helping put Virginia on the map for cutting-edge industry and jobs," said Youngkin. "The talented workforce in the region is a perfect fit for RBW Sports & Classics' plans. The company's decision to invest in Virginia reflects the strength of our manufacturing sector, the skill of our workers, the quality of life in the Commonwealth, and the strength of our business climate."

"This expansion is a testament to Virginia's top-notch technology and manufacturing workforce and competitive business climate," said Secretary of Commerce and Trade Caren Merrick. "We are proud to see RBW Sports & Classics add its name to the growing list of high-tech automotive companies in Virginia. Virginia is for innovators."

"Over seven years, RBW (named after my children Rose, Becs, and Wesley) has established itself as a quality manufacturer of new, yet classic/vintage, electric cars and a designer of EV systems," said Chief Executive Officer of RBW Sports & Classics Peter Swain. "Already selling in Europe, Asia, and even Bermuda, the new facility in Virginia supports RBW's entry to the U.S. market. We are both excited and honored to have been offered support from Virginia, and we look forward to making a positive, long-term contribution to the community."

The announcement was "a milestone moment for Danville and Pittsylvania County," said Danville Mayor Alonzo Jones. "RBW Sports and Classics' choice to es-

tablish its first U.S. manufacturing facility here highlights the strength of our workforce and the appeal of our region. This investment brings valuable new jobs to our community and introduces us to the exciting and evolving world of electric vehicle manufacturing. We are pleased to welcome RBW and look forward to the opportunities this partnership will create."

"We are excited that RBW Sports and Classics has selected our region for manufacturing their first left-hand drive electric classic sports cars for the U.S. market," said Del. Danny Marshall. "They have put together a great blend of classic cars with modern technology. We appreciate the economic boost of 144 new jobs for the community. And, as a car enthusiast, I know there will be much excitement as these sports cars roll out of the manufacturing facility at Cane Creek."

RBW Sports & Classics Limited was founded in 2017 with the mission of creating and selling the first classic electric sports car. It delivered its first cars in the United Kingdom and internationally in 2022 and opened its first factory in the United Kingdom in 2023 registered as a new EV car manufacturer. While the company currently manufactures electric Roadster and GT models, its patented EV architecture and systems can be installed under other body shells such as the Ford Mustang, Austin Healey, Jaguar E-Type, and many more. For more information, visit [www.rbwevcars.com](http://www.rbwevcars.com).

The Virginia Economic Development Partnership worked with Pittsylvania County, the City of Danville, the Danville-Pittsylvania County Regional Industrial Development Authority, and the Southern Virginia Regional Alliance to secure the project for Virginia. Youngkin approved a \$500,000 grant from the Commonwealth's Opportunity Fund to assist Danville-Pittsylvania County with this project. Funding and services to support the company's employee training activities will be provided through the Virginia Jobs Investment Program.

# Hedge distractions and risks on the road

The odds of having a fantastic Labor Day weekend are in your favor, though the chances of becoming a traffic safety statistic are something to keep in mind.

Virginia State Police stopped 4,475 speeders and 1,945 reckless drivers during 2023's four-day Labor Day weekend. State troopers also cited 491 seat belt violations and 150 child restraint violations during that time period.

According to Virginia Traffic Crash Facts, 673 injuries resulted from 1,216 crashes throughout 2023's holiday weekend.

Fourteen individuals died in 10 of those Virginia traffic crashes. Half of them involved motorcycles; seven motorcycle operators and passengers lost their lives.

The fatal crashes occurred in Virginia Beach, and Campbell, Hanover, James City, Montgomery, Nelson, Pittsylvania, Rockbridge, Scott and Wythe counties. Last year's 14 fatalities were up from 12 in 2022, and 10 in 2021.

Transportation officials, law enforcement and outreach organizations like Drive Smart Virginia work to push the number of crashes and fatalities toward zero. But it can't be done without motorists who are free of distraction or impairment, said David Tenembaum, senior actuarial manager at Virginia Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Co., who also serves as DSV treasurer.

"No matter where you are in Virginia, or how you plan to celebrate this long holiday weekend, we all share the responsibility of roadway safety," he said. "Part of that responsibility is knowing traffic safety laws recently adopted in Virginia."

In 2021, it became illegal in Virginia to hold a mobile device while driving. A "Do Not Disturb" app can block incoming correspondence while the vehicle is in motion. Otherwise, use your device's hands-free options carefully.

Virginia's Move Over law for emergency vehicles was amended in 2023. Drivers must now change lanes when possible or slow down for any vehicle on the roadside flashing amber or hazard lights, triangles or flares. This includes utility, tow and roadside assistance trucks.

The American Red Cross offers tips for safe Labor Day travel:

Be well rested and alert, use your seatbelts, and observe speed limits. Clean your headlights, and turn them on as dusk approaches or in inclement weather.

Don't drink and drive. Have a designated driver available.

Give your full attention to the road.

Use caution in work zones (Virginia's Move Over law does not apply in highway work zones).

Don't follow other vehicles too closely.

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# Post-pandemic learning loss improving, Youngkin said

Showing the start of learning recovery from the extended pandemic school closures and the most significant learning loss of students' nationwide, Virginia students in Grades 3-8 showed some improvement in the Standards of Learning testing in Math and Reading in the 2023-2024 school year, Gov. Glenn Youngkin said last week.

This year's improvements followed the extensive work done by many Virginia educators on Virginia's ALL In Virginia initiative initiated by Youngkin to improve attendance, accelerate literacy, and prioritize learning in Virginia classrooms in grades 3-8. Additionally, after intense focus from school divisions, parents, and community members as part of ALL In, Virginia's K-12 chronic absenteeism rate has decreased 16% since 2022-2023. 40,974 fewer students were chronically absent in 2023-2024 than in 2022-2023.

"Since day one, our commitment to Virginia's students has been a primary focus and last year, on a bipartisan basis, Virginia went ALL In to tackle core issues in K-12 education: attendance, literacy and learning loss," said Youngkin. "Virginia's students and parents were facing the worst pandemic learning loss in the nation from Virginia being 46th in reopening in-classroom learning, an 'honesty gap' between what the data told us and true student proficiency, and a systematic reduction of expectations by previous administrations on Virginia's historically high academic standards. It's clear our ALL In Virginia strategy is working, the signs are appearing, and Virginia's students and parents are benefiting from our collective efforts."

"These results show that Virginia students are beginning to recover from the post-pandemic learning loss they suffered after 2020 and 2021. But the results also show that we must continue to focus every day on helping

them catch up to pre-pandemic levels and move ahead," said Superintendent of Public Instruction Lisa Coons. "I'm proud of the way so many of our teachers and educators committed themselves to the ALL In high-intensity tutoring, and these results show that we are starting to make a real difference. With many more school divisions putting these proven measures in place this school year, we have more resources available to students than ever before, including the Virginia Literacy Act being implemented this year."

### Statewide Grades 3-8 Reading SOL Results

\* 70% of school divisions showed student improvement in Reading SOL scores (93 school divisions)

\* 10.7% of school divisions maintained their Reading SOL scores

\* 19.1% of school divisions showed decline in Reading SOL scores

### Statewide Grades 3-8 Math SOL Results

\* 75% of school divisions showed student improvement in Math SOL scores (99 school divisions)

\* 4.6% of school divisions maintained their Math Reading SOL scores

\* 19.8% of school divisions showed decline in Reading SOL scores

### Statewide High School SOL Results

\* In math, high school students raised their SOL results to 84% in 2023-2024 from 81% in 2022-2023, seeing increased pass rates on all 3 high school math end-of-course exams.

\* In reading, high school students showed a slight decrease in SOL results with 84% of students passing in 2023-2024 versus 85% passing in 2022-2023 on the reading exam.

\* In science, high school students showed slight improvement in their SOL results rising to 71% in 2023-2024 from 70% in 2022-

2023, seeing increased pass rates on all 3 high school science end-of-course exams.

### Statewide K-12 Chronic Absenteeism Reduction

Virginia's K-12 schools saw a 16% reduction in students who were chronically absent last year. The rate of chronic absenteeism fell to 16.1% in 2023-2024 from 19.3% in 2022-2023.

All K-12 students had 1,276,522 fewer absent days, which resulted in an increase of 8,935,654 hours of instruction.

Reinforcing the importance of regular school attendance, chronically absent students (attending less than 90% of the school year) performed 19 percentage points below their peers in reading and 26 percentage points below in math.

School division chronic absenteeism rates will be released later this fall.

Many student groups saw increases in their SOL 3-8 pass rates, many rising faster than Virginia students overall.

### In 3-8 Reading:

\* Economically disadvantaged students doubled the rate of growth of all students post-pandemic.

\* English learners' rate of growth in reading was more than 6 times the rate of growth of all students.

### In 3-8 Math:

\* Economically disadvantaged students more than doubled the rate of growth of all students post-pandemic.

\* English learners have almost doubled their performance in math post-pandemic.

\* Students with disabilities' rate of growth in math was 1.2 times the rate of growth of all students.

\* Black students rate of growth was 3 times the rate of growth of all students.

More detailed SOL Test Results can be found on the VDOE website.

# Stand Tall – Stay Strong initiative aims to prevent recidivism

Recently, Gov. Glenn Youngkin issued Executive Order 36, formally establishing the Stand Tall – Stay Strong – Succeed Together Initiative (Stand Tall Initiative), a first-in-the-nation proactive, dynamic, data-driven and comprehensive across-government approach, to support reentry success and prevent recidivism.

"Every single returning Virginian has the opportunity to be a testimonial of hope or a recidivism statistic. Today, I unveiled the Stand Tall – Stay Strong – Succeed Together Initiative, a comprehensive effort to help those Virginians succeed. The Stand Tall Initiative Executive Order formalizes the work we have been doing since April of last year, leading to over 3,000 more returning Virginians having gained employment and over 7,000 more having gained health insurance. Our approach is proactive, measuring the achievement of key metrics for success and strategically using state resources through cross-agency partnerships. We want more testimonials of hope in Virginia and that's what the Stand

Tall Initiative is all about," said Youngkin.

"Our focus must be on supporting the Commonwealth's most vulnerable," said First Lady Suzanne S. Youngkin. "By expanding assessments, improving treatment programs, and fostering strong partnerships, we are dedicated to providing the necessary resources for successful reintegration and healthier futures."

"Employment for returning citizens is more than just a second chance—it's a cornerstone of public safety and community well-being," said Attorney General Jason Miyares. "We must continue to improve the re-entry process, because effective re-entry is not just a matter of redemption—it's essential in keeping Virginia safe and strong."

"One could sum up our administration's commitment to prisoner re-entry as our belief that people deserve a chance to rebuild their life," said Lt. Gov. Winsome Earl-Sears. "So, we are restoring hope, reuniting families, and changing people's destiny for the better."

"Since taking over the Department of Corrections less than a year ago, Judge Chad Dotson and his team have consistently prioritized the safety and well-being of corrections staff and inmates as part of the core mission at VADOC," said Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security Terry Cole. "Despite numerous challenges, Judge Dotson has continued to innovate and enhance programming for those who are reentering society to ensure they are law abiding citizens following their release. I am grateful for the efforts of the entire VADOC team and for the leadership of Governor Youngkin in supporting our men and women in law enforcement."

"Public safety is our highest priority," said VADOC Director Chad Dotson. "Ensuring reentry success creates long-term, lasting public safety in our communities. Virginia already has the best probation officers in America, and I'm excited that the partnerships forged by this effort will provide even more tools to our dedicated team."

Each year, around 10,000

adults and juveniles are released from incarceration into supervision in Virginia. Fifty thousand returning citizens are managed by the Virginia Department of Corrections (VADOC) at any one time and remain on supervision for an average of three years. Unfortunately, one in two returning citizens is rearrested and reconvicted of a felony within three years of release and more than half of our prison and jail population was previously incarcerated.

Reentry success critically depends on returning citizens receiving effective support and their own individual engagement. Each failure is a wasted opportunity for a Virginian to reach their full potential.

The Stand Tall – Stay Strong – Succeed Together Initiative contributes to reentry success by addressing employment, benefit enrollment, reentry programming, parenthood and public safety efforts.

The Executive Order formalizes and builds on the Governor's reentry transformation efforts that began in April 2023.

# Initial unemployment claims continue to rise

The 2,702 unemployment insurance weekly initial claims filed during the week ending August 17, 2024, is 17.8 percent higher than last week's 2,294 claims and 16.9 percent higher than the comparable week of last year (2,311), according to Virginia Works.

Nearly 82 percent of claimants self-reported an associated industry; of those reporting, the top five industries (64 percent) were Manufacturing (401); Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (251); Administrative and Support and Waste Management (247); Health Care and Social Assistance (205); and Retail Trade (170).

Continued weeks claims (16,290) were 2.3 percent lower than last week (16,675) and were 18.8 percent higher than the comparable week of last year (13,715). Nearly 93 percent of claimants self-reported an as-

sociated industry; of those reported, the top five industries (59 percent) were Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (2,437); Administrative and Support and Waste Management (2,245); Health Care and Social Assistance (1,543); Manufacturing (1,363); and Retail Trade (1,297).

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.

See more at [www.henrycountyenterprise.com](http://www.henrycountyenterprise.com)

## Puzzle Answers!

### SNOWFLAKES

solution

### PRINCE VALIANT CHARACTERS

### SCRAMBLERS

solution

- Shine; 2. Origin;
- Lucid; 4. Poison

Today's Word

### OPINION

### FEAR, KNIGHT

answer

### Weekly SUDOKU

Answer

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



# PUZZLE TIME



## FEAR KNOT

By: rj johnson

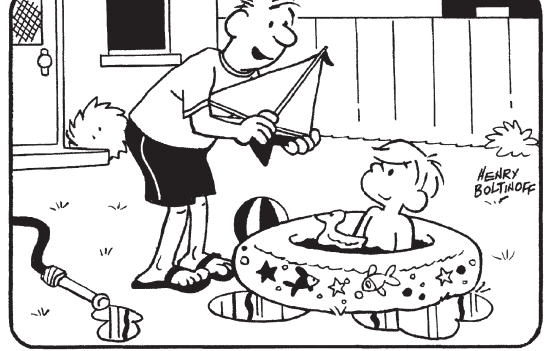
DOUBT? ...OR DARE!

DDO  
♥ TARINE  
DYGWE  
♥ TRSU  
ROSERD  
RYW  
♥ AGTO  
♥ ETVOR  
♥ AET  
♥ TWERSA  
♥ DYERA  
♥ ADNW

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. Ball is moved. 2. Sailboat flag is moved. 3. Puddle is added. 4. Hose is moved. 5. Window is wider. 6. Stripe on shorts is moved.

## MAGIC MAZE

● PRINCE VALIANT CHARACTERS

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

Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions forward, backward, up, down and diagonally. Unlisted clue hint: KING OF THE ROUND TABLE

- Aleta Ingrid Merlin Sligon
- Arn Karen Mordred Ulfran
- Cormac King Aguar Nathan Vanni
- Galan Maeve Sir Gawain

## Super Crossword THE ROD SQUAD

<b>ACROSS</b>	55 1950s-'70s defense gp.	93 Guitar's cousin, for short	2 Caesar's "vidi," in English	35 Pooch barks	74 Gawk
1 It's removed from skim	56 Weapon in a boxing ring	94 Actress Brigitte playing a Bohemian dancer?	4 1980s Chrysler	36 — gras (goose-liver paste)	77 — Haute
8 Guitar's cousin	58 MGM motto starter	96 "NFL Live" ailer	5 Unnerve	37 Singer — Del Rey	79 Links (with)
16 Nautical mop	59 Deliver, as a verdict	98 Disconnect	6 Jackie's hubby #2	38 Keats' "— Autumn"	81 Higher than
20 Be cautious	60 Politico Hatch	99 Sailor's "Roger!"	7 Choir male	39 Soak up	82 Country rocker Lovett
21 Conditionally free, in a way	62 "Sure thing, guv'nor!"	100 16-ounce drink from a Starbucks next to a bodega?	8 Irate crowds	41 Test centers	84 "I did it!"
22 Rock's ZZ Top, e.g.	64 "Somersby" star Richard	105 Quick on the uptake	9 Ortiz of "Kristin"	44 Shoot again, as a gun	85 "This is not —" (warning label)
23 Building full of periodicals for soldiers?	65 Cleo's snake	108 Frozen cubes Dutch	10 "Ask Me Another" ailer	86 Head, in Nice	88 — -ho (keen)
25 Outer edges	68 World's best singer of Venetian gondoliers' songs?	110 Tent securer	11 Risk-taking types	89 Raced	91 Blind as —
26 Cursed	72 Born, in Brest	115 Unleavened cornbread	12 Toothbrush brand	95 "Sauer" topping	97 Vanished, informally
27 Takes too much, in brief	73 South African	116 One-wheeled cart carrying supplies for a toga party?	13 Actress Sondra	98 Villains' looks	99 Topped
28 Moose cousin	75 First name of Dr. Oz	121 Guitarist Clapton	14 Type	100 Two-legged beast	101 Love a lot
29 Fries lightly	76 Cereal grass disease	122 Dining places	15 Moniker of a loch monster	102 Of an ancient alphabet	102 Of an ancient alphabet
31 Unit of work	78 Quick on the uptake	123 Perfume	16 Having a hard time	103 Ranch rope	104 Made believe
32 Body of water on which there are frequent haircutters' cruises?	80 Many eras	124 Marina fixture	17 Judges' orders	106 Amp (up)	109 Main idea
35 Not sinking	81 — Seltzer	125 Area with bad reception	18 Singer Mann	110 Curing stuff	111 Trampled
40 Smart — (wiseacres)	83 Suggest	126 Frankfurters	19 — nova	112 Mythical ship	113 Donkey or Hong follower
42 Safecracker, informally	87 Sticking the singer of "White Christmas" with a fishhook?	DOWN	24 Artist Degas	114 Some sheep	
43 Hailstorm on the highway?	90 Tell the story of	1 Relatives of zinnias	30 "Gemini Man" director	117 "Norma —"	
45 Deg. from MIT Sloan	92 Certain building brick		31 Capts.' guesses	118 Put a tear in	
47 "Anaconda" director Luis			32 Sired, biblical-style	119 — -noir	
51 Savoir faire			33 Aspire PC company	120 Ghostly cry	
52 Dumbbell selling for half off?			34 "French Kiss" co-star Meg		

## Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

- Have you ever thought that your dog's feet smell like corn chips? If so, you're not alone. In fact, the term "Frito Feet" was coined to describe the scent!
- The fastest knockout in pro boxing history occurred when Mike Collins floored Pat Brownson with his first punch and the match ended a mere four seconds after the bell.
- A person who enjoys doing crossword puzzles is called a cruciverbalist.
- Nestor Carbonell's portrayal of Richard Alpert on the hit TV series "Lost" led to an internet debate as to whether the actor was wearing eyeliner.
- During the Gemini IV missions in 1965, James McDivitt and Edward H. White were the first astronauts to have reportedly smuggled chewing gum into space without permission.
- On average, people in India spend 10 hours and 42 minutes a week reading, the most time of any country on Earth.
- Thumbs have their own pulse.
- The ringing of church bells at weddings can be traced to the Celtic heritage of Scotland and Ireland, when they were used to ward off evil spirits and grant wishes to the newlyweds.
- In 1965, Johnny Cash's younger brother, Tommy Cash, released a song titled "I Didn't Walk the Line."
- Upon hearing that the Great Fire of London might destroy his house, English diarist Samuel Pepys took care to bury his most prized possessions in his garden — including a wheel of Parmesan cheese.
- Ravens in captivity can learn to talk better than parrots.
- When your "inner voice" speaks in your head, it triggers small muscle movements in your larynx.
- Each year, 40,000 tons of space dust settles on Earth.

\*\*\*  
**Thought for the Day:** "Let us be grateful to people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom." — Marcel Proust  
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## Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

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

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

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## Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS

**YOU ARE PLAYING PERCENTAGE GOLF WHEN YOU TEE UP ON THE SAME SIDE AS THE WORST HAZARDS, THEN HIT AWAY FROM THEM.**

**THE BUNKERS ON THE LEFT ON THIS HOLE COULD COST YOU A STROKE IF YOU DRIVE INTO THEM BUT GOING OUT OF BOUNDS ON THE RIGHT WILL DEFINITELY COST YOU TWO STROKES.**

**THAT MAKES TEEING UP TO THE RIGHT, THEN HITTING FOR THE LEFT SIDE OF THE FAIRWAY, OBVIOUSLY THE SMARTEST STRATEGY.**

## 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!

"When I want your \_\_\_\_\_, I'll demand it."

Gloss  
ENSHI [ ] [ ]

Root  
RIGONI [ ]

Clear  
CUDLI [ ] [ ]

Infect  
SNOOPI [ ] [ ] [ ]

**TODAY'S WORD**  
[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

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# Ride proceeds to benefit local center

The 13th annual Bikers 4 Babies ride was held Saturday, with proceeds earmarked for the Pregnancy Care Center, in Martinsville. The event attracted both motorcycles and vehicles, with participants intent on raising awareness and soliciting donations for women experiencing crisis pregnancies.

“We know there’s a pregnancy crisis in this country,” said Patrick Rasmusel, one of the organizers. “We know that for a fact, and if we do not offer these young ladies a positive choice, they’re left with a negative choice. A place like the pregnancy care center is that positive choice.”

The center offers free abortion clinic alternative services and support to women facing unplanned pregnancies to clients from Henry, Patrick and Franklin counties, the City of Martinsville and some areas of North Carolina. For more information, visit [www.mhcbikersforbabies.com](http://www.mhcbikersforbabies.com) or call the center at (276) 634-5433.



(Photos by Dean Steele)



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**Sounds on the Square**  
2024

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

All ages welcome  
Food and other beverages available

Free admission  
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



# Vice Chairman of Smyth County School Board Arrested

Todd Stewart Williams, the vice chairman of the Smyth County School Board, was arrested at his home last week on federal criminal charges related to child exploitation.

A criminal complaint is merely an allegation, and all defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

Court documents allege that Williams spent more than \$10,000 between May 2022 and January 2024 to entice at least six juvenile victims into sending him nude images and sexually explicit videos of themselves and others.

“Sexual exploitation and abuse have grown exponentially

through the use of the internet, especially its online gaming platforms,” said Christopher R. Kavanaugh, United States Attorney for the Western District of Virginia. “The safety and well-being of children in our communities are top priorities of my Office, and we are committed to the joint efforts with our law enforcement partners to relentlessly pursue these perpetrators and ensure they are brought to justice.”

Williams’s alleged criminal activity came to the attention of law enforcement in September 2022 when a 15-year-old teenager living in Oklahoma reported to the FBI that Williams, allegedly using the Snapchat username “todd\_w3411” re-

quested nude images and videos of him.

During an interview with law enforcement, the teen allegedly told investigators the two met in a Snapchat group intended for gay teenage males. Soon after they began chatting, Williams allegedly reached out to the teen and offered to make in-app purchases in an online video game in exchange for nude pictures of the teen.

From May 1, 2022 through October 1, 2022, Williams allegedly sent the teen over \$2,000 in exchange for nude images and videos.

Based on the information obtained from the FBI investigation in Oklahoma, the FBI in Richmond began an investigation into the Snapchat activities of Williams’ username, “todd\_w3411.”

The FBI’s investigation uncovered multiple instances of Williams’s alleged exploitation of minors. In one instance, Williams allegedly used Snapchat to communicate with a then 12-year-old minor and offered to purchase items for an online game before eventually offering to buy nude pictures and videos from the boy.

Between August 2022 and January 2024, the young victim allegedly received nearly \$1,000 in exchange for nude images and videos.

In January 2023, Williams allegedly met another teen on Snapchat and paid the teen to take pictures and videos of him

sexually abusing his younger stepbrother, who was 10 years old at the time. As allegedly directed, the teen would approach his stepbrother in their bedroom at night and force his stepbrother to watch pornography. The teen would masturbate and take pictures.

Because the teen reached the \$600 monthly limit on Cash App transactions, he allegedly was mailed a debit card hidden inside a pair of shoes to ensure he was able to purchase his videos.

In a six-month period, Williams allegedly paid over \$3,500 for nude images and videos of the teen and his stepbrother.

In yet another interaction with a young teenage boy on Snapchat, Williams allegedly paid over \$3,000 in exchange for nude images and videos of him and his teenage boyfriend.

“This case is a reminder of the constant threat of child exploitation minors face online,” said Stanley M. Meador, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI Richmond Field Office. “Whether an offender sexually abuses a child in person or online, the FBI and our partners will continue to seek justice for innocent victims by holding offenders accountable.”

If you or someone you know have information about this matter or feel you may have been a victim, please contact the FBI Richmond Division. The Federal Bureau of Investigation is investigating the case.

## ★ AUCTION ★

### HUGE COIN & CURRENCY AUCTION

Saturday, September 7th, 2024 @ 10:00am  
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FROM STUART, VA - Take Hwy 58E into Henry County, turn right on Rt. 687 (Soapstone Road), 1st road to right just past Old Country Store & Hillcrest Baptist Church. LOOK FOR SIGNS

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