



The Henry County Food Pantry is stocked with goods to provide assistance to individuals and families in need.

# Food Pantry Provides Essential Support for the Community

By Jessica Dillon

The Henry County Food Pantry plays a vital role in supporting the community, assisting between 2,500 and 2,700 individuals each month. Fueled by donations, the pantry supplies food, clothing, and basic necessities to families facing hardship, working to help them regain stability after crises. “We get referrals every single day, sometimes four or five a day,” said Sharon Mills, the pantry’s director. “Our purpose is to help people get back on their feet.” The pantry offers several programs tailored to meet residents’ needs and takes referrals from

various sources. While most of the assistance provided is income-based through United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) guidelines, the pantry also supports individuals with higher incomes who face emergency circumstances. “They can receive food here if they’re dealing with an extenuating situation,” Mills said, emphasizing that the pantry’s mission is to address short-term crises and prevent further destabilization. A key indicator of the pantry’s success is the improvement seen among those it serves. “There has

(See Food Pantry p. 3)

# Personal property tax deadline extended until February 5



Martinsville Henry County Chamber of Commerce President Brenell Thomas; Debra Buchanan, of the Horsepasture District; Appalachian Power (AEP) External Affairs Manager Amanda Cox; Clay Campbell, of the Campbell Foundation; Garrett Dillard, of the Iriswood District, and representatives of the Martinsville Walmart celebrate the donation of over 200 new coats.

The Henry County Board of Supervisors approved a motion Tuesday night to extend the county’s personal property tax deadline until February 5. Tiffany Hairston, the Commissioner of Revenue, requested an extension due to a delay in generating the file needed for billing this year. According to Henry County Code, Deputy County Administrator JR Powell said all personal property levies and taxes are due by December 5 of each year. “However, Ms. Hairston has indicated that her office faced challenges over the past year causing a delay in generating the file needed for billing,” he said. In light of this, Powell said staff recommend the board extend the payment deadline by two months.

“We are not requesting the board to change the due date for the personal property taxes. Per code, that date is still December 5. However, we are asking the board to consider extending the payment deadline date. In other words, if it’s not paid by February 5 then” it’s late, Powell said. County Attorney George Lyle said there’s typically a penalty for personal property taxes paid after December 5. “What you’re doing today is just waiving the penalty for personal properties to be paid after December 5. You’re not changing the date, it’s just no penalty,” he said. Hairston wrote in a memo that a significant part of the delay was from ensuring that unregistered vehicles weren’t being charged the motor vehicle

(See Tax Deadline p. 2)

# Two Henry County School Board Members Honored by Virginia School Boards Association



Teddy Martin, center, holds the 2024 Advocate for Education Award.

Two members of the Henry County School Board were recognized with top honors by the Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA). Chairman Teddy Martin received the 2024 Advocate for Education Award, while Ridgeway District representative Champ Hardie was named the Henry County School Board Member of the Year and the VSBA Blue Ridge Region School Board Member of the Year. Martin expressed gratitude to the board for nominating him, stating, “I am deeply grateful for the honor of serving Reed Creek as School Board Member,” Henry County as chairman, and as past president of the VSBA. He also thanked his



Champ Hardie was named Henry County School Board Member of the Year and VSBA Blue Ridge Region School Board Member of the Year.

family and employers, Patrick & Henry Community College and GENEDGE, for supporting his public service. Hardie received recognition during the VSBA’s Award of Distinction Luncheon and the opening session of the association’s Annual Convention. Martin praised Hardie for earning the highest individual award achievable over a two-year period. Martin also extended his thanks to Elizabeth Durden for representing Henry County as a delegate at the convention and participating in its 5K tradition.

# Holiday program brings hope, joy to families in need

By Jessica Dillon

For families across Martinsville and Henry County, the annual Christmas Cheer program has become a beacon of hope during the holiday season. The program provides toys, food, and household items to families in need, ensuring children experience the magic of Christmas and families have a meal to share. Christmas Cheer collects toys throughout the holiday season and opens its office to process applications from families seeking assistance. Parents can apply in person, detailing their family’s needs in a thorough screening process. “We go over them thoroughly and get all the numbers right,” said Wendy Prilliman, who has led the pro-



The Christmas Cheer Office is accepting donations for the 2024 holiday season.

gram since the passing of her husband, Roy Prilliman. “We have a small group that goes through them to make sure everything is right, and we approve as many as we can.” Those who don’t qualify receive letters

notifying them of the decision, but Prilliman emphasizes the effort made to help as many families as possible. One of the cornerstones of Christmas Cheer is providing age-appropriate toys for children. Volun-

(See Holiday Program p. 3)

# Christmas Parade Kicks Off Holiday Season

By Jessica Dillon

Holiday spirit filled the streets of Uptown Martinsville as the Martinsville Henry County Christmas Parade, sponsored by Crown Holdings, delighted thousands of attendees on Nov. 23. This year’s parade, the largest in its history, ran for nearly two hours with over 130 entries, including several first-time participants like Bassett Furniture. Families, children, and community members lined the streets to enjoy the festive event. “I love the parade. I think it’s good for the community and brings everybody together,” said attendee Zoie Shough. Martinsville’s Deputy Police Chief Chad Rhoads agreed, adding,



The Martinsville Henry County Christmas Parade, hosted by STAR News, was sponsored by Crown Holdings.

“It’s good to see everybody come out and have a good time. The kids love it, and the adults love it too.” Kaden Lucas, who was promoting a local event, noted the parade’s strong sense of community. “It’s such a community type of event. You can see that

it’s filled out down here. It’s just a beautiful type of event,” he said. Kicking Off the Festivities The parade began with a color guard presenting the flags, setting a patriotic tone. Soon after, a lively float featuring “Squawkers the Turkey”



Council Member Kathy Lawson and incoming City Council member Julian Mei.

rolled through, dropping off hosts Devin Pendleton and Tammy Pearson in front of the iconic Big Chair to provide live commentary on the parade. “Everyone always talks about how our Christmas

parade is before Thanksgiving, so now we have Squawkers to welcome Thanksgiving,” said Pearson, nodding to the tradition of the parade preceding the holiday. Local leaders and no-

table figures joined the celebration, including Henry County Sheriff Wayne Davis, Martinsville Police Chief Rob

(See Parade p. 2)

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UPDATES





# Parade

(cont. from page 1)

Fincher, Martinsville Sheriff Steve Draper, Martinsville Speedway President Clay Campbell, City Manager Aretha Ferrell-Benavides, Council Member Kathy Lawson, and incoming City Council member Julian Mei.

Dr. Greg Hodges, President of Patrick & Henry Community College, served as the parade’s grand marshal, while high school bands from Magna Vista, Martinsville, and Bassett kept the crowd entertained with their spirited performances.

## Festive Vehicles and Holiday Wishes



Parade goes bundled up for the crisp air to enjoy the festivities.

The parade featured an eclectic mix of vehicles, including motorcycles (with the Grinch as a surprise rider), ATVs, a parade of lawnmowers from The Mower Store, and a classic red firetruck carrying Sparky the Fire Dog. Go-karts and other floats added to the spectacle, drawing cheers and smiles from the crowd.

In the midst of the festivities, Chris Lawless, owner of Lawless Welding, used the opportunity to share a heartfelt holiday wish, that “we find a final home for the warming shelter that they can call their own,” he



The parade celebrated its biggest year ever, with more than 130 participants, spreading holiday cheer across Uptown Martinsville.

said, encouraging the crowd to applaud Ariel Johnson and the work of the warming center.

## A Special Guest

The evening ended with a surprise appearance by Charles Roark, who delighted spectators by donning a Santa Claus costume to close the parade.

As the event concluded, organizers reflected on its success and looked ahead to next year. The Martinsville Henry County Christmas Parade will return in 2025, continuing a beloved tradition that unites the community in holiday joy.



130 participants, spreading holiday cheer across Uptown Martinsville.



Martinsville Police Chief Rob Fincher (right to left), Henry County Sheriff Wayne Davis, and Martinsville Sheriff Steve Draper walked the parade route.



High school bands and others were among the participants.



Bassett was one of the first year participants.



The kick off of the Martinsville Henry County Christmas Parade.



Floats decked out for the season delighted the young and old alike, including the “Squawkers the Turkey,” which was a playful nod to Thanksgiving.



Sparky the Fire Dog waved to parade goers from his perch on a red firetruck.

# Tax Deadline

(cont. from page 1)

SCOTT B. GRINDSTAFF, TREASURER  
P.O. BOX 235  
COLLINSVILLE, VA 24748-0235  
PHONE: (276) 634-4690  
WWW.HENRYCOUNTYVA.GOV  
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16091014-0 1 2  
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• The Due date is February 5, 2025. You will be assessed a late charge of 10% if not paid or postmarked on or before February 5, 2025.  
• Interest on delinquent accounts will be charged 6% per year six months from due date.  
• All unpaid taxes may be referred to an outstanding firm for collection action. Additional collection fees may apply and a vehicle registration stop may be placed on your account with the DMV.  
• 2024 PERSONAL PROPERTY TAX RELIEF IS 25.00% OF TAX AMOUNT.  
• "Y" Denotes a qualifying vehicle for State Tax relief.  
• The County Treasurer has no authority to make assessments or adjustments. If you feel there is an error in the assessments, please address your inquiry to the Commissioner of Revenue Office (276) 634-4690.

See the back of this notice for payment options and additional information.

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Credit Cards accepted online only.

CUSTOMER NAME	CUSTOMER NUMBER	BILL NUMBER	SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER	DATE DUE		
SUBJECT OF TAXATION	QTY	ASSESSED VALUE	TAX AMOUNT	STATE CREDIT	MVL FEE	AMOUNT DUE
BIG TRUCKS & TRILRS 2024		64,875	1,005.56		1,005.56	
COMPUTER EQUIPMENT 2024	411	6.37	6.37		6.37	
TOOLS/EQUIPMENT 2024	24,784	384.15			384.15	

Return this stub with payment

CUSTOMER NAME	CUSTOMER NUMBER	BILL NUMBER	SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER	DATE DUE		
SUBJECT OF TAXATION	QTY	ASSESSED VALUE	TAX AMOUNT	STATE CREDIT	MVL FEE	AMOUNT DUE
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COMPUTER EQUIPMENT 2024	411	6.37	6.37		6.37	
TOOLS/EQUIPMENT 2024	24,784	384.15			384.15	
TOTAL TAX						
DELINQUENT TAXES						
TOTAL INTEREST						
TOTAL PENALTY						
MVL FEE						
TOTAL DUE						

25202400019875260241

The Henry County Board of Supervisors approved extending the payment deadline for personal property taxes to February 5, 2025. Residents can expect their personal property bills to look different this year, as shown in the sample bill above.

license (MVL) fee. The MVL fee is charged to every motor vehicle, trailer and semitrailer capable of being operated on the roadways in the county. The fee is \$20.75 per vehicle, except motorcycles and trailers which are charged \$12.

Hairston said there were approximately 4,000 vehicles that still needed to have the MVL fee removed as of October 25. In addition, approximately 3,000 vehicles needed to be assessed via manual lookup.

Hairston said there were approximately 4,000 vehicles that still needed to have the MVL fee removed as of October 25. In addition, approximately 3,000 vehicles needed to be assessed via manual lookup.

According to Hairston, her office has evaluated more than 76,000 pieces of personal property this

year which is an increase of nearly 5,000 vehicles from the year prior.

Residents can also expect their personal property bills to look different this year. The primary difference is that machinery and tools have a breakdown of items that are taxed. Mobile homes and the vehicle identification number will also be listed.

Hairston expects to have the bill file ready for the Treasurer’s Office no later than December 13.

Residents are encouraged to contact the Commissioner of the Revenue’s Office at (276) 634- 4690 if they receive a bill that includes an MVL fee for a vehicle without registration tags.

In other matters, the board:

- Recognized and thanked Clay Campbell, of the Campbell Foundation, Appalachian Power (AEP) External Affairs Manager Amanda Cox, and representatives of Walmart for their donation of 240 brand new coats to Debra Buchanan’s annual children coat drive.

- Approved an additional appropriation of \$66,200 for expenses related to the drug court program in the Commonwealth Attorney’s Office.

- Approved an additional appropriation of \$50,000 to the School Nutrition Budget for the purchase of a walk-in freezer for Fieldale-Collinsville Middle School.

- Approved an additional appropriation of \$332,701 received from an Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Teacher Apprenticeship Grant Program. The grant will allow school employees to complete their bachelor’s degree and teacher certification through Longwood University.

- Awarded a \$195,000 contract to Daniel Builders, LLC for the renovation of six bathrooms on the first floor of the Administration Building to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

- Approved a request to carry over \$94,453,402.40 from fiscal year 2024 funds to the next year for items that were encumbered but the item was not received, or the service was not rendered before June 30.

- Approved a resolution authorizing the county’s participation in the Virginia Municipal Investment Trust and affirmed the role of the county treasurer

as the Chief Investment Officer for the county. By joining the trust, the county will have access to lower fees and more investment options, even if it does not put county funds into the trust.

- Approved its 2025 legislative agenda.
- Conducted a public hearing and approved an application to rezone approximately 2.67- acres of the Blackberry District to allow the applicant to use the property for agricultural purposes.

- Conducted a public hearing and approved an application to rezone a lot in the Blackberry District to allow the applicant to place a manufactured home on the property.

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# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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

## Meetings

**Thursday, December 5**  
Henry County School Board School Board Meeting, 5:30 p.m., followed by closed session, 1st floor, Summerlin Room, County Administration Building, Collinsville.

## Events

**Saturday, November 30**  
Martinsville Uptown Small Business Saturday, 7 a.m. to 10 p.m., Uptown Martinsville.

**Tuesday, December 3**  
Giving Tuesday, The Spencer-Penn Center.

Open House for Pregnancy Care Center, 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., 314 Fairy St., Suite E, Martinsville.

**Thursday, December 5**  
Christmas Tree Lighting, 4 p.m., Piedmont Arts, 215 Starling Ave. Martinsville.

Holiday Business After Hours, 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m., URW Community Federal Credit Union, 796 Commonwealth Blvd. Martinsville.

Blood Drive, 4-9 p.m., Scuffle Hill Brewing Co., 2620 Virginia Ave., Collinsville. Donors will receive \$40 in TBC rewards.

**Saturday, December 7**  
Bow Making Class at the New College Institute, 9 a.m. to noon. Cost is \$20. Registration required by Dec. 2 at <https://newcollegeinstitute.org/event/life-bow-making>, or call (276) 403-5605.

**Sunday, December 8**  
Roanoke Symphony Holiday Pops, 3 p.m., Martinsville High School Auditorium. David Stewart Wiley conducts the Holiday Pops. Lobby and box office will open at 1 p.m., the auditorium opens at 2 p.m., and the concert begins at 3 p.m. Altrusa will collect non-perishable food items for Grace Network in the lobby during the concert.

## Food Pantry

(cont. from page 1)

been a 34% increase in individuals served, but 49% of those served only came once in two months,” Mills explained. “Seventy-eight percent of the people we assist come to the pantry three times or less each year.” This data suggests that the resources provided are helping individuals regain independence.

### Beyond Food: A Comprehensive Approach

The pantry’s reach extends beyond providing food. It assists foster families by supplying essentials such as diapers and car seats, while its clothes closet offers clothing, hygiene items, and home staples.

The organization also collaborates with other local entities to expand its impact. Partnerships include the MHC Warming Center, Lawless Welding, and the local Elks Lodge, which are working together on an upcoming fundraiser. Other partnerships, such as one

## Holiday Program

(cont. from page 1)

teens sort through donated toys, ensuring each child receives something special.

“The toys come by age,” Prilliman said. Over the years, she’s witnessed countless touching moments from the program’s recipients.

She recalled one story about a mother who casually mentioned her son needed a bicycle for Christmas. By coincidence, a few bicycles had been donated to the program, and the team decided to surprise the family with an extra gift.

“They took it out there and put it in her car. She got to crying so bad they had to pull her out of the line,” Prilliman said. “She was talking about how her son was going to have the best Christmas she could imagine.”

Beyond toys, Christmas Cheer supports families with practical items. In one instance, a mother who had lost her home to a fire came

ing the symphony’s performance. Tickets are on sale for \$30 for reserved seating, \$20 for general admission, and \$10 for K-12 students. Family or individual adult WIC cardholders with ID receive free general admission. Tickets can be purchased online or at [PiedmontArts.org](http://PiedmontArts.org).

**Wednesday, December 11**  
Holiday Citizens Police Academy, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Piedmont Regional Criminal Justice Training Academy, 1024 Dupont Road, Martinsville.

**Friday, December 13**  
First ever Christmas Extravaganza, Spencer Penn Centre, 5-9 p.m. Free admission and free photos with Santa and Mrs. Claus. More than 20 vendors. Live music, tree lighting, other activities.

**Monday, December 16**  
Master Plan Public Information Meeting for the Mayo River State Park, 6-8 p.m., Spencer-Penn Centre, Lester Banquet Hall, 475 Spencer Penn Road, Spencer.

## ONGOING

All branches of the Blue Ridge Regional Library are hosting the annual “Food for Fines Food Drive,” with \$1 waived from overdue fines for each non-perishable food item donated. All food items collected will be donated to the Salvation Army of Martinsville VA, Service Center and the Patrick County Food Bank. This will run through November 30.

Book sale, hosted by the Friends of the Blue Ridge Regional Library, in the basement of the main branch, 310 E. Church St., Martinsville. The “Members Only” portion of the sale is Friday, Dec. 6, 2-5 p.m. (those interested may join at the door), and Saturday’s sale, 9:30 a.m.-2 p.m. on Dec. 7, is open to the public. Civil war, children’s books, and puzzles are among those highlighted, with a special sale on shelved hardback and paperback fiction-buy 2/get 1 free. Each group of 3 must be either hardback or all paperback. All proceeds go back into the library system.

The 29th annual Coats for Kids Drive is un-

established with Connect Health + Wellness, bring additional services like a mobile dental clinic and nutrition classes directly to those in need. Piedmont Community Services provides mental health support on-site.

“Everything from budgeting to pregnancy care and Medicaid questions is right here,” Mills said. “You’re not just dialing a number—you’re getting direct support.”

### Helping the Most Vulnerable

The pantry’s mission is rooted in the idea of reducing the need for its services by empowering individuals to achieve self-sufficiency.

“Our job as a food pantry is to basically be in business to go out of business,” Mills said.

The pantry also steps in to aid vulnerable populations, including mothers in domestic violence situations. In these cases, it helps them find housing and connects them with other resources.

to the office seeking help. The team stepped in to provide her with a new refrigerator.

“This time of the year people get really nice,” Prilliman noted, highlighting the generosity the program inspires.

Each family also receives a food box, packed with holiday essentials, including hot chocolate with marshmallows.

“We’ve got more compliments on our box,” Prilliman said. The boxes are designed to help families create a warm holiday meal and support them through the season.

Household items like blankets are also distributed to make life more comfortable during the colder months.

The program is sustained entirely by donations and volunteer efforts. Events like the 2024 Christmas Cheer Toy Run on Dec. 7 play a vital role in funding these initiatives.

derway through Nov. 29. For more information, call Debra Buchanan, (276) 358-1463. Drop off new or gently used coats at Hollywood Cinema or One-Hour Martinizing on Rives Road, Martinsville.

The Martinsville-Henry County Lions Club regularly meets on the second and fourth Tuesday 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 on Tuesdays at 5:30-6:30 p.m. at the Bassett Public Library, 3969 Fairystone Hwy, Bassett. New members are welcome. For more information, please call Patti Farmer (276) 358-0489.

The Henry County Adult Learning Center offers free in-house and online classes to help prepare for college, career, or earn your high school equivalency or GED. Call (276) 647-9585.

Additionally, the pantry is extending its reach to support victims of Hurricane Helene by sending care packages containing hygiene products, pillows, and other essentials.

### How to Support

The pantry welcomes donations of all kinds, including used furniture, household goods, hygiene products, pet supplies, linens, and nonperishable food. Smaller items can be dropped off directly, while larger donations can be arranged by calling (276) 629-1369.

Mill emphasized that community support is essential to the pantry’s mission. “One of the sayings on the back of our T-shirts is, ‘No one can do everything, but everyone can do something,’” she said. “When we work together as a community, we can change lives and help people through their hardest times.”

For those in need of assistance, the pantry can be reached at the same number.

Families who are approved for assistance visit a pick-up location, where sheriff’s deputies and inmates help load their cars with holiday gifts and supplies.

“The inmates work down at the farm, my husband got it approved. The inmates help a whole lot!” Prilliman said, emphasizing their contributions to spreading holiday cheer.

The program also relies on younger volunteers, including school-aged children, to keep operations running smoothly.

### How to Help

Christmas Cheer continues to accept donations and welcomes volunteers to join their efforts. To volunteer, call (276) 618-7121. Donations can be mailed to P.O. Box 540, Martinsville, VA 24114, or dropped off at the Christmas Cheer office in the Patrick Henry Mall near Wild Magnolia.

## Medicaid, Medicare enrollees may qualify for expanded benefits

**Trimmel Gomes**  
*Virginia News Connection*

Virginians enrolled in both Medicare and Medicaid may be able to get expanded health benefits through what are known as Dual-Eligible Special Needs Plans.

Commonly called D-SNPs, these plans provide additional services to those who qualify. They go beyond standard health coverage to address broader needs, such as food and utility assistance.

Marian Cabanillas, health-plan CEO at UnitedHealthcare Community & State, said her company puts some of those benefits on what it calls a “UnitedHealthcare U-Card,” which allows members to pay for essentials beyond health care.

“And you can use it to pay for a variety of different things, including things like healthy food,” she said. “You can buy fruits and vegetables, and meat, seafood - those kinds of things.



You can also use it to buy over-the-counter products like toothpaste or Tylenol.”

Only 25% of eligible individuals in Virginia were enrolled in a dual-eligible plan in 2021. This year, the enrollment deadline is Dec. 7.

Cabanillas said she thinks people tend to put off health care because they’re unsure if they

can afford it. A dual plan could help alleviate that fear and go further by supporting preventive care.

“We not only encourage people to make sure that they’re regularly going to those visits and making sure that they’re taking care of that,” she said. “But we also encourage them by ensuring that they have no co-pays associated with any of those preventive services.”

Cabanillas added that D-SNPs can also help cover utility bills for those who qualify. In 2023, more than five million people were enrolled in D-SNPs. However, millions of eligible people remain unenrolled - possibly because they are unaware of this option.

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



OPINION

Thanksgiving

Households throughout the Ninth District, our greater commonwealth and the country are preparing for Thanksgiving.

Discussions are occurring over the method of cooking the Thanksgiving turkey and ensuring enough of the right food is available. The dining room table is organized for a feast, and maybe even a guest bedroom or couch is tidied up for incoming family.

On Sundays around Thanksgiving, it is customary to hear the hymn “We Gather Together” in churches.

The Christian song’s history is rooted in the Dutch war of liberation against the king of Spain. The Spanish were strong supporters of Roman Catholicism. The Spanish king was attempting to restrict the Protestant Dutch from exercising their faith and gathering at places of worship.

The Dutch were engulfed in years and years of battles.

In reference to the struggles of the Dutch people during this time, the hymn reads: “the wicked oppressing now cease from distressing...Let thy congregation escape tribulation.”

The hymn underscores the importance of community and faith centered around the Lord.

Meanwhile, people in England dealt with domestic problems of their own. Overpopulation with no room in the peerage for second, third and fourth sons, coupled with concerns of an overbearing government, caused people to reconsider their lifestyle options. Eager to improve their lives, the New World presented an opportunity for renewed fortune, promise and often religious freedom.

In 1607, the first permanent English settlement at James-



Morgan Griffith

Representative

town was founded in the colony of Virginia.

In 1619, others followed suit. That September, Captain John Woodlief and 36 men embarked on their own journey to Virginia. They battled stormy conditions sailing aboard the Good Ship Margaret from Bristol, England.

The wearied sailors and passengers arrived at their destination in December. They founded Berkeley Hundred, a settlement further up the James River from Jamestown.

Arrival at their colonial destination following the months-long journey became cause for celebration and prayer: “We ordain that this day of our ship’s arrival ... in the land of Virginia, shall be yearly and perpetually kept holy as a day of thanksgiving to Almighty God.”

While many children are taught in school that the Pilgrims held the very first Thanksgiving in Massachusetts two years later in 1621, Virginia is credited with being a foundational player in establishing the tradition, which is why I believe all the common Thanksgiving imagery is merely Massachusetts envy towards Virginia. The Berkeley tradition was celebrated annually until the community was destroyed in an Indian conflict. I should note the Massachusetts Pilgrims only celebrated their Thanksgiving feast once.

In his 1963 Thanksgiving Proclamation, President John F. Kennedy recognized

Virginia’s role: “Over three centuries ago, our forefathers in Virginia and in Massachusetts, far from home in a lonely wilderness, set aside a time of thanksgiving. On the appointed day, they gave reverent thanks for their safety, for the health of their children, for the fertility of their fields, for the love which bound them together and for the faith which united them with their God.”

U.S. Senator Harry F. Byrd, Jr. entered the story of the Virginia First Thanksgiving into the Congressional Record in 1969.

The modern annual Virginia Thanksgiving Festival at Berkeley Hundred, known better to some as Berkeley Plantation, pays homage to the contributions of Captain Woodlief and the original settlement. This year, the festival celebrated its 63rd year commemorating America’s first Thanksgiving.

Berkeley Plantation also is the ancestral home of two U.S. presidents: 9th President William Henry Harrison, which is where he was born, and 23rd President Benjamin Harrison.

Aside from issuing proclamations, presidents engage in other customs around Thanksgiving time. One such custom is the pardoning of turkeys.

This practice allegedly stems from Abraham Lincoln. Legend holds it that Lincoln spared the life of a turkey at the behest of his son. Later presidents like Kennedy and Ronald Reagan held turkey pardon events before it became an annual tradition in 1989.

The National Thanksgiving Turkey Presentation takes place at the White House. During the Obama and Trump Administrations, some of the pardoned turkeys ended up at Virginia Tech!

While I will not be granting any clemency to the turkey my wife cooks, I will be thanking God for all the blessings I have received.

In my house, like the Dutch and Captain Woodlief, we will gather together and place our trust and thanks in the Almighty.

No matter what your religious tradition is, I wish all a happy Thanksgiving!

If you have questions, concerns, or comments, call my Abingdon office at (276) 525-1405, my Christiansburg office at (540) 381-5671, or via email at [www.morgangriffith.house.gov](mailto:www.morgangriffith.house.gov).

The spirit of Christmas

Our rhythm of the year goes kind of like this:

This time of year, we’re all about peace and goodwill toward men, along, of course, with materialism, gluttony and glitz.

After Christmas is over, we’ll enter into isolation, a sort of hibernation, huddled up alone in the dark against the cold. Our habits and meals are stark, in match with the environment, as we scale back in reaction to the excesses of the holiday season.

Then spring comes and we are full of life and promise, ready to begin again.

Summertime is a sort of free-for-all when anything goes.

Then we arrive at fall, when we slow down to enjoy the cozy embrace of sweaters and warm drinks and crackling fires.

We have been through all that cycle, and now we’re back.

Now, and only now, with Thanksgiving properly and respectfully behind us, is it time to haul out the boxes, adorn the house, cut and bring in and decorate the tree.

Our hearts fill with good feelings toward others as we wish friends and strangers alike a merry Christmas or happy holiday.

What is this phenomenon of Christmas spirit?

Throughout the Christmas season, we are more pleasant with others. Our hearts are gentler. Our smiles are quicker to come.

Why can we not have Christmas spirit all year long? Well, I suppose we’d get a little tired of always having to be nice and pleasant,

Breaking the Rules

By Bryan Golden

We all grow up being indoctrinated with rules that limit us. The purveyors of this information are not malicious. They are simply passing along what they themselves have been taught.

You are probably aware of one or more of the following rules. Decide for yourself if you have been limited by any of them.

**Don’t rock the boat** -- This rule encourages conformity. Conformity offers a protection from criticism. But those who succeed don’t care about criticism. They become adept at new or better ways of doing things in spite of opinions.

**Nice guys finish last** -- According to this maxim, being nice is a recipe for failure. Therefore, if you want to succeed you may have to compromise your ethics. In actuality, those who consistently do the best are nice, considerate, and concerned about the well being of others.

**It takes money to make money** -- There are so many examples of wealthy individuals who have started from scratch, that it’s odd this rule still persists at all.

**It’s not what you know but who you know** -- Granted, networking with the right people can accelerate goal achievement. However, if you connect with the right people but have no expertise, any edge will be lost and you will develop a reputation as a fraud. You don’t have to start with connections. With persistence, you will meet the right people.

**Be concerned about what others think** -- You have to do what is right for you. It doesn’t matter what others say, think, or do. Follow your own path.

**Don’t take chances** -- Living is taking a chance. Nothing is guaranteed. If something doesn’t work out as desired, adjust your strategy and keep going. Virtually all achievement is the result of taking chances.

**It’s the way things have always**

Black Friday/Cyber Monday Scams

The holiday deals have already begun, but not all those great deals you see online are legit. The start of the online holiday shopping season means that online scams intensify with it. Here are the two simple steps you can take to stay a step ahead of the online Grinch this holiday shopping season.

Type – don’t click. The safest place to shop online is with retailers you trust by using their app or typing their web address into your browser rather than clicking on a



Holly Kozelsky

wouldn’t we?

Or perhaps the goodwill of Christmastime would not be as pronounced during this season had it not been a bit blunted during the rest of the year.

And maybe it’s just plain easier to be nice during a time we have more days off work or school, and we are getting presents and eating tasty foods.

While the changing of the seasons is constant, the company with whom we enjoy them is not. As each year passes, and beloved faces are more wrinkled and hair more sparse and grey, we wonder how much longer we will be able to relish this combination of loved ones.

Parents, children, aunts, uncles, the elders gather around the same table that has hosted them for years.

As each new holiday rolls around, places may be vacant, and hearts heavier and emptier for those absences.

Though some are missing, new babies have come along. New little children warm our hearts. And the changing of the seasons will continue on.

As you finish up the Thanksgiving leftovers this weekend, allow me to wish you an early Merry Christmas.

**been done** -- If mankind had followed this rule, we would still be living in the Stone Age. Doing things differently leads to improvements. Ask questions. Don’t perpetuate behavior that makes no sense.

**Good things never last** -- Life has its ups and downs. With the right attitude, effort, action, and perseverance, you can have a lot more good than bad. Take an active role in what happens to you. Don’t settle for what you don’t want.

**Don’t put all your eggs in one basket** -- This isn’t necessarily a bad rule. The danger is that it detracts from your focus. Often it is better to put your eggs in one basket, and then put all of your energy into guarding that basket.

**You have to be lucky to succeed** -- Of course luck helps. But the harder you work, the more luck you’ll have. Luck determines lottery winners. Effort determines success in life. Passively sitting around waiting for circumstances to improve won’t yield any positive results.

**Money is the root of all evil** -- People use this one to justify why they are not earning as much as they would like. The original statement is that love of money is the root of all evil. Money is simply a tool that can be used for constructive or destructive purposes. Money is earned as a result of one’s service to others.

**Don’t daydream** -- Dreams are the foundation for all accomplishment. Thoughts of situations that don’t yet exist are a great motivator. Dreams give a person a vision of what could be. All that has been accomplished throughout history started with a dream.

Don’t hesitate to break any rules that limit your success. If a rule doesn’t help you or someone else, ignore it.

*Bryan is the author of “Dare to Live Without Limits.” Contact Bryan at [Bryan@columnist.com](mailto:Bryan@columnist.com) or visit [www.DareToLiveWithoutLimits.com](http://www.DareToLiveWithoutLimits.com) Copyright 2024 Bryan Golden*

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Letters must be signed and have a telephone number where you can be reached to be considered for publication. All letters will be verified before publication. The Henry County Enterprise reserves the right to deny publication of any letter and edit letters for length, content and style.

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

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OPINION

One small act a time

The following is excerpted from “Shirley Temple’s Strange Loot” by Matt Weinstock, which appeared in The New Yorker on April 8, 2013:

“Of course, Hollywood has been trying to forcibly reincarnate (Shirley) Temple for sixty years. ... In 1956, even ‘The Diary of Anne Frank’ joined the fleet of retroactive Temple vehicles: the film presented a sugary, Americanized vision of Frank, and the director George Stevens wrote that he’d hoped to cast a Shirley Temple type. I recently mentioned this blasphemous bit of dream casting to a friend, who said that he’d always pictured Shirley as the adorable Nazi youth who points to the attic and yells, ‘They’re in there, Mister Hitler!’”

In the rare moments that I think about Shirley Temple, I always think of this darkly hilarious line from Matt Weinstock’s article about Temple’s legacy and her 1988 autobiography. It is increasingly popping into my head when I think about America.

According to The Guardian (among countless other news sources), last week, Texas land commissioner Dawn Buckingham wrote a letter to President-elect Donald Trump stating that her office “is fully prepared to enter into an agreement with the Department of Homeland Security, Immigration, and Customs Enforcement (ICE), or the U.S. Border Patrol, to allow a facility to be built for the processing, detention, and coordination of the largest deportation of violent criminals in America’s history.”

The facility in question would be built on 1,402 acres of land, offered freely to the federal government, positioned in the Rio Grande Valley on the U.S.-Mexico Border.

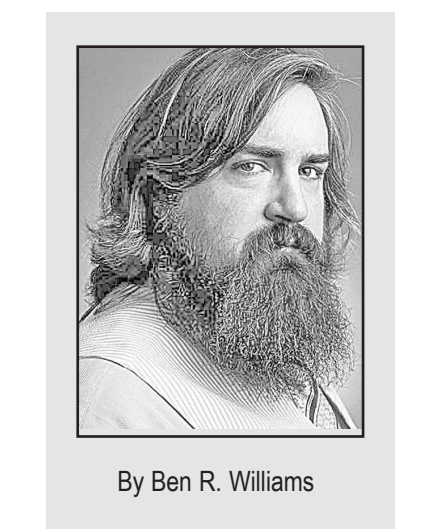
Against the backdrop of this generous offer, Trump has appointed former ICE Director Tom Homan as his “border czar.” Homan has promised to carry out “the biggest deportation this country has ever seen.” When questioned on “60 Minutes” about policies he had overseen which had previously led to migrant families being separated, he offered a solution: “Families can be deported together.”

And against the backdrop of THAT, Trump has publicly stated that during his second term, he’s hoping to pull off his long-held dream of ending birthright citizenship. If a case involving 14th Amendment protections of birthright citizenship comes before the Supreme Court, they’ll likely side with Trump’s perspective; after all, it hasn’t been that long since the Supreme Court decided that the 14th Amendment didn’t protect a woman’s right to terminate a pregnancy.

I don’t want to seem reactionary, but we’re talking about building a concentration camp for migrants, right?

Of course, it wouldn’t be the first time we’ve built concentration camps in this country; there were the internment camps built by the U.S. Government during World War II to house Japanese people living in the U.S. For a long time, it seemed like we all generally agreed that was one of the most shameful moments in our nation’s recent history. While our nation wasn’t mass executing the citizens that were forced into these camps, nearly 2,000 American citizens of Japanese descent died from tuberculosis and other medical issues while in the camps, so America can’t exactly pat itself on the back.

“But wait!” someone says. “This land being donated in Texas is not for a concentration camp! It’s for a deportation facility! It’s simply a



place where undocumented immigrants can be briefly held before being deported!”

When Adolf Hitler created the first concentration camp at Dachau shortly after being appointed Chancellor in 1933, the purpose was to imprison and intimidate perceived enemies of the party. By 1939, the camps were used to house Jews that had been rounded up for mass deportation. By 1941, it had become clear that mass deportation was not a feasible solution, and that’s when the mass executions started.

The problem with the way that we understand history is that when you’re looking at a situation that took place decades in the past, it’s easy to see the big shocking moments but it’s difficult to see the hundreds of small, almost imperceptible steps that led to those moments. Hitler didn’t start a genocide on day one; it took him almost a decade to work up to that point. You can’t convince ordinary people to commit atrocities overnight. You have to work up to the atrocities, one small act at a time, until the atrocities become business as usual.

There’s another problem we face, and I hear it a lot from people who think I’m overreacting to current events. There is a sense, I believe, that because our nation has survived so many difficult moments, it is destined to survive every difficult moment that comes its way. And maybe it is. But if I met someone who had managed to survive five devastating car accidents with barely a scratch, I would conclude that they’re lucky, not that they’re immortal.

If the federal government does indeed build a mass deportation facility on the Texas-Mexico border — a stretch of land known as “Mexico” up until about 200 years ago — I can all but guarantee that it won’t be solely used to harbor violent criminals. The powers that be will go after law-abiding, tax-paying undocumented immigrants with equal fervor.

To be fair, that’s exactly what a whole lot of people voted for. But whatever temporary joy they get will likely be overshadowed when food prices begin to skyrocket. Nearly three-quarters of farm laborers in the U.S. are migrants. It’s hard enough for fast food restaurants to find employees willing to work for the pitiful wages they’re offering, but slinging burgers for minimum wage is a far sight better than picking tomatoes in the summer heat for 50 cents per bucket. Finding replacement labor will cost farmers a comparative fortune, and that price hike will be passed along to the consumers.

At least this situation won’t cause the food we import to increase in price. The new tariffs will be the cause of that.

No matter how this all ends, at least we can agree on one thing: three dollars is just too much to ask for a dozen eggs.

Average price for a Thanksgiving meal in VA is \$10 less than last year

The average price for a 10-person Thanksgiving meal in Virginia is \$81.07, down from a record-high \$91.30 in 2023.

According to an informal survey conducted by the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation, the average cost to prepare a traditional Thanksgiving meal for 10 is \$8.11 per person.

The survey’s menu consists of turkey, ham, stuffing, sweet potatoes, russet potatoes, rolls, carrots, celery, cranberries, green beans, peas, milk and pumpkin pie with whipped cream.

This year’s statewide average decreased by \$10.23—11% less than the 2023 average of \$91.30 for a 10-person meal.

A dinner without ham, russet potatoes and green beans costs \$58.41, or \$5.84 per person. Last year’s meal without those three ingredients was \$66.88, or \$6.68 per person.

Prices reported by volunteer shoppers were collected between Oct. 21 and Nov. 7—before major retailers began offering holiday discounts, promotional sales or coupons.

This year, the average per-pound price for a whole frozen turkey during the data collection was \$1.68, down from \$2.18 in last year’s survey.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Nov. 8 retail report indicated that the Southeast region’s average price for an 8- to 16-pound whole frozen turkey was \$1.19 per pound, down from \$1.28 per pound in the Nov. 1 report.

“Turkey is the centerpiece of a Thanksgiving meal and accounts for 33% of this year’s total price. Turkey prices have gone down significantly and that contributed to this year’s reasonable meal cost,” noted Elijah Griles, VFBF video content creator and producer of CattlePulse podcast.

“And as it gets closer to the holidays, shoppers may find deals on frozen turkeys and other holiday foods, so the average cost of a Thanksgiving meal could actually be even less.”

This is the 21st year Virginia Farm Bureau has conducted the survey, which is based on an annual survey organized by American Farm Bureau Federation. Volunteer shoppers checked prices online and in person at 50 grocery stores throughout the state—from the Northern Neck to the far Southwest.

The VFBF survey showed the average cost of a 16-pound turkey was \$26.92, or \$1.68 per pound. This represents a 23% decrease in price versus the 2023 average of \$2.18 per pound.

The Farm Bureau survey discovered the average price for a 4-pound boneless ham was \$17.56, while last year’s average price was \$18.45.

As for the other ingredients for a traditional Thanksgiving meal, the survey showed that the average cost of a gallon of whole milk was \$3.66; frozen peas, \$1.70; frozen green

beans, \$1.80; three pounds of sweet potatoes, \$3.56; a 5-pound bag of russet potatoes, \$3.30; fresh celery, \$1.72; fresh carrots, \$1.32; two pie shells, \$3.40; whipping cream, \$3.41; canned pumpkin pie filling, \$4.09; fresh cranberries, \$2.09; stuffing mix, \$3.13; and a dozen dinner rolls, \$3.41.

Most items decreased in price versus 2023 values except for carrots, sweet potatoes and whole milk, which all cost more this year. A 3-pound bag of sweet potatoes was 50 cents higher than the same quantity last year.

According to Nov. 13 Consumer Price Index data, fruits and vegetables increased 0.4%, which could account for the higher carrot and sweet potato prices in this year’s Farm Bureau survey.

“But the big story is that CPI data shows energy commodities like transportation are down 12.4% year over year, which is likely a significant factor in this year’s lower Thanksgiving food costs,” Griles noted.

The locality with the highest cost for a traditional Thanksgiving meal was Essex County at \$121.55. The locality with the lowest cost was Pittsylvania County at \$57.29 for a 10-person meal.

While the average price of a 15-item Thanksgiving meal is lower than last year, inflation still continues to affect families across the country, including the nation’s farmers.

“Farmers are efficient and effective in how they provide food for our tables, even when there is a great deal of volatility and unpredictability in both production costs and marketing of agricultural products,” noted VFBF president Wayne F. Pryor.

Nationally, American Farm Bureau Federation’s survey found the average cost of its classic Thanksgiving meal for 10 was \$58.08, a 5% decrease from 2023. The basic AFBF survey does not include ham, russet potatoes and green beans, which were added to the survey in 2018 to reflect more Thanksgiving favorites. With these items included in the AFBF findings, the national average cost for a traditional meal was \$77.34—\$3.73 less than the average cost of those items in Virginia.

Bernt Nelson, an AFBF economist, said that the decreased overall price for a meal is a “solid reflection of the overall economy.” He said inflation has slowed a little, but it’s not gone.

He also noted that even though turkey supplies were down this year because of avian influenza, demand also was down, which led to decreased turkey prices.

AFBF also reported that volunteer shoppers checked prices Nov. 1-7, before most grocery store chains began featuring whole frozen turkeys at sharply lower prices. Details about the AFBF survey findings are available at [fb.org/newsroom](http://fb.org/newsroom).

Axton resident wins 2024 Betty Jane France Humanitarian Award

The NASCAR Foundation announced Judy Simmons as the winner of the 14th annual Betty Jane France Humanitarian Award during a recent NASCAR Awards Banquet in Charlotte, N.C. As the award winner, Simmons will receive a \$100,000 donation from The NASCAR Foundation to God’s Pit Crew, a non-profit dedicated to providing disaster relief services to children and families.

“This award means so much to God’s Pit Crew and me, and it will make a tremendous impact for the children we strive to provide healing to in the midst of disaster,” said Simmons. “With this award, we will be able to provide more hope and comfort to the young lives that need it most.”

Simmons, of Axton, is a volunteer at God’s Pit Crew, a local non-profit disaster relief organization that works to provide aid and hope to communities all over the country in the face of a major weather event. She has been a member of the God’s Pit Crew disaster response team of more than 1,500 volunteers for six years, leading volunteer teams to provide essential needs to families and children in their time of crisis, including Play Pails that contain toys, games and hygiene items for children who have lost everything.

“Judy is an incredible person doing impactful work for families that have experienced hardship due to natural

disasters, especially during the difficult times faced in Western North Carolina this year,” said Nichole Krieger, vice president and executive director of the foundation. “The \$100,000 she won for God’s Pit Crew will allow them to continue providing essential items for kids and families in need in times of major weather event or crisis. Both Judy and her organization are very deserving of this award.”

Simmons earned the most online votes from a pool of nominees, including Tammy Raulerson with the Periwinkle Foundation in College Station, Texas; Carlos Washington with Boys and Girls Clubs of the Pee Dee Area in Florence, S.C.; and Julie Woolridge with Hope of Mooresville in Mooresville, N.C. Each of these charities will receive a \$25,000 donation from the foundation.

In its 14 years, the Betty Jane France Humanitarian Award has recognized 56 NASCAR fans who are dedicated volunteers working for children’s causes in communities nationwide. More than 553,288 children’s lives have been affected by the program with 2.56 million contributed to children’s charities.

To learn more about The NASCAR Foundation’s programs, including the Betty Jane France Humanitarian Award and Speediatrics Children’s Fund, please visit [www.NASCARfoundation.org](http://www.NASCARfoundation.org).

Transactions Offered Online During DMV’s Thanksgiving Closure

All Virginia DMV full-service customer service centers will be closed for the Thanksgiving holiday from Thursday, November 28 through Saturday, November 30,

and will reopen on Monday, December 2. During the closure, customers can still access more than 50 DMV services online at [dmv.virginia.gov](http://dmv.virginia.gov).

Correction

Paula Wood is the interim director of The Pregnancy Center of MHC. Her name was incorrect in last week’s edition. We regret the error.



# CLASSIFIED

## PUBLISHER'S NOTICE

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

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## Health Notes

From the West Piedmont Health District:

### Statewide Outbreak of Meningococcal Disease

From June 2022 to June 2024, 39 outbreak-associated cases of Neisseria meningitidis serogroup Y have been reported in Virginia, with most cases (27) occurring in the eastern region.

Meningococcal disease is a rare, but very serious illness caused by a type of bacteria called Neisseria meningitidis. When illness occurs, it is often severe, can be deadly, and include infections of the lining of the brain and spinal cord, (called meningitis), and the bloodstream (septicemia). People at increased risk include household contacts of a person known to have had this disease, people with weakened immune systems (e.g., those with HIV or those without a spleen), people in congregate settings (e.g., college campuses), and people traveling to certain parts of the world where meningococcal disease is more common.

Meningococcal meningitis is characterized by a sudden onset of fever, headache, stiff neck, muscle aches, sensitivity to light, confusion, nausea, and vomiting. A less common but more severe form of invasive meningococcal disease is septicemia, or bloodstream infection. The symptoms of septicemia include fatigue, fever, nausea/vomiting, cold hands and feet, cold chills, severe pain in the muscles, joints, chest or abdomen, rapid breathing, diarrhea, and a dark purple or brown/black rash.

Meningococcal Disease Vaccination: All 11 to 12 year olds should receive one dose of MenACWY. Teens should receive a booster dose of MenACWY when they are 16 years old to continue having protection during the years when they are at greatest risk for getting meningococcal disease (16-23 years of age). MenACWY vaccine is also recommended to specific groups at increased risk due to certain medi-



Community Health Worker, Ariel Johnson, addresses an audience of health leaders at the Virginia Rural Health Conference in Abingdon November 20. Her work as both a community health worker and peer support specialist with the Virginia Harm Reduction Coalition is focused on removing misconceptions about people who use drugs while normalizing harm reduction measures.

cal conditions, including people with HIV, those whose spleen is damaged or removed, people with sickle cell disease, anyone with a rare immune condition called complement deficiency or anyone taking a type of drug called a complement inhibitor. <https://www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/>

### Two New VDH Dashboards Available

Hepatitis. The purpose of these external dashboards/webpages is to serve as a comprehensive resource, offering essential information about hepatitis B and C disease in Virginia including surveillance statistics. <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/disease-prevention/disease-prevention/hiv-aids-sexually-transmitted-disease/std-hepatitis-reports/hep-b-2023/>

Adolescent Vaccine Dashboards. These new dashboards provide vaccine recommendations, school grade requirement indication, and vaccination coverage for adolescents in Virginia for Tdap, HPV, MenACWY, and MenB vaccines. Data and Statistics - Immunization ([virginia.gov](http://virginia.gov))

### ER Visits for Undiagnosed Pneumonia, Pertussis Spike

Since September 2024, the VDH has observed a significant rise in emergen-

cy department and urgent care visits involving diagnosed pneumonia. During the week of November 10-16, there were 2,029 emergency department and urgent care visits with diagnosed pneumonia among children aged 0-17 years. This is more than triple the weekly peak observed in the past two years. There are also increases in visits among adults aged 18-64 years. In addition to this upward trend, numerous K-12 schools have reported clusters of students with pneumonia and unspecified respiratory illness.... Consider routine and seasonal immunizations and other healthy respiratory habits (e.g., staying home when sick, covering coughs and sneezes, frequently washing hands) to help prevent respiratory infections that can lead to pneumonia.

The VDH continues to respond to an increase in cases of pertussis (whooping cough). This trend was first reported in August and is linked to outbreaks in group settings, including universities, schools, religious communities, and childcare settings. Providers are encouraged to ensure all patients are up to date on DTaP and Tdap vaccination.

### Childhood Vaccination Rates Continue to Decline

Routine vaccination rates for kindergarten children continue to decline across the country, an analysis of data compiled by the CDC shows. During the 2023-2024 school year, fewer than 93% of kindergarten children were up to date on their state-required vaccines, down from 95% during the 2019-2020 school year just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Most states (39) now have vaccination rates below the 95% target needed to prevent community transmission of measles, a highly contagious and life-threatening illness. The share of kindergarten children with non-medical exemptions from one or more required vaccination has also increased during this period.

## LEGAL

ORDER OF PUBLICATION Case No. CL24000320-00  
COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
VA. CODE §§ 1-211.1; 8.01-316, -317, 20-104  
MARTINSVILLE CIRCUIT COURT  
55 W CHURCH STREET, MARTINSVILLE VA 24112  
HOLLEY NICHOLE WIMBISH v. MATTHEW STEPHEN WIMBISH  
The object of this suit is to:  
TO OBTAIN A DIVORCE  
It is ORDERED that MATTHEW STEPHEN WIMBISH appear at the above-named court and protect his interests on or before JANUARY 30, 2025.  
11/14/24

## LEGAL

### COUNTY OF HENRY REZONING PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Pursuant to Section 15.2-2204 of the Code of Virginia, the Henry County Board of Supervisors will conduct a public hearing on the following application **December 17, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.** in the Summerlin Meeting Room of the County Administration Building, Kings Mountain Rd, Collinsville, Virginia.  
**Case R-24-14 Jose Tiznado and Ma Rodriguez**  
The property is located at 37 Horsley Rd, in the Reed Creek District. The property is shown on Tax Map 5.8(10)B. The applicant is requesting the rezoning of approximately 0.23-acre from Commercial District B-1 to Mixed Residential District M-R. The property is occupied by a double wide structure that was previously used as a commercial office. The applicant wishes to bring the zoning into compliance for residential use and financing purposes.  
The application for this request may be viewed in the Department of Planning, Zoning & Inspection between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.  
Lee H. Clark, AICP  
Director of Planning, Zoning & Inspection

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# Sports Schedule

The following are the dates and times of local high school teams and their games for the week of December 2-7:

12/3 7pm Girls Basketball Bassett at Franklin County  
7pm Boys Basketball Franklin County at Bassett  
7pm Boys Basketball Carlisle at Virginia Episcopal  
12/4 5pm Wrestling Bassett at Mecklenburg County  
5pm Wrestling Martinsville at Mecklenburg County  
6pm Wrestling Magna Vista at Tunstall

6pm Girls Basketball Carlisle at Virginia Episcopal  
7pm Girls Basketball Patrick County at Bassett  
7pm Boys Basketball Bassett at Patrick County  
7pm Boys Basketball McMichael at Magna Vista  
12/5 7pm Girls Basketball Martinsville at Carroll County  
12/6 12pm Wrestling Bassett at Hidden Valley  
5pm Swim & Dive Bassett at Hargrave Military Academy  
5pm Swim & Dive Magna Vista at Hargrave Military Academy

5:30pm Girls Basketball Martinsville at Morehead  
7pm Girls Basketball Magna Vista at Pulaski County  
7pm Boys Basketball Floyd County at Magna Vista  
7pm Boys Basketball Martinsville at Morehead  
12/7 9am Wrestling Bassett at Hidden Valley  
3pm Girls Basketball Appomattox County at Carlisle  
4:30pm Boys Basketball William Fleming at Carlisle  
TBA Girls Basketball Magna Vista at Patrick Henry HS

## Operation Christmas Child Spreads Holiday Cheer Worldwide

By Jessica Dillon

Volunteers at Blackberry Baptist Church have been hard at work this holiday season, participating in Operation Christmas Child, a global initiative to bring joy and essential resources to children in need. The program, which encourages individuals to pack shoeboxes with gifts and supplies, officially began its drop-off period on November 18, with the church hosting a weeklong collection drive.

Volunteers unloaded cars, packed boxes, and prayed over the donations. Leading the effort was Melisa Janey, a 28-year veteran of the program and the drop-off leader at Blackberry Baptist Church.

“I have been serving Operation Christmas Child for 28 years. I love Operation Christmas Child,” Janey said. She recounted how she and her husband packed their first shoebox decades ago, sparking a lifelong commitment to the cause. “I grew up loving missions, but I’m not a missionary. This is an opportunity to send a special gift around the world to a special child and share the love of God with them.”

Operation Christmas Child asks participants to pack shoeboxes filled with practical items, like pencils and hygiene products, for the cost of \$10 per box. For many recipients, these small gifts are transformative.

“That was what Jesus was about, meeting our physical needs and our everyday needs,” Janey said, emphasizing the program’s mission to provide for children’s basic needs while sharing the message of God’s love.

The volunteers opened the church’s doors for eight days to accept boxes, and they organized a packing party where church members assembled shoeboxes.

### Packing Memories

For some, the effort was deeply personal. Volunteer Debra Elgin, a church relations coordinator, packed boxes in memory of her loved ones.

“It’s a way to continue to let their memory live on,” Elgin said. One special box, which included a light-up unicorn plush, was packed in memory of her mother, Esther Elgin, who passed away in 2021 at the age of 92.

The church also honored the memory of other loved ones by creating memorial shoeboxes.

“It’s an opportunity during the holiday season to give to people that we normally wouldn’t give to,” said volunteer Heather Putnam. “It’s a simple way to give to a child and hope it makes a lasting impression.”

Volunteer Chelsea Prevento, who has seen the impact of Operation Christmas Child firsthand, continued her work despite undergoing a kidney transplant in 2021.

“I’ve seen the impact it makes on these children. Many times, it’s the only gift they will



Debra Elgin packed a memory box in honor of her mother, Esther Elgin.



Volunteers at Blackberry Baptist Church unload shoeboxes from cars.



Shoeboxes are prepared for their journey to the Samaritan’s Purse sorting center.



Drop-off coordinator Melisa Janey organizes shoebox donations.

ever receive in their life,” Prevento said, highlighting how the boxes often include school supplies, which enable children to attend school.

Once the boxes are collected, they are sent to a central drop-off location in Rocky Mount before being transported to the Samaritan’s Purse center in Charlotte, North Carolina. There, volunteers inspect the boxes to ensure compliance

with guidelines.

“It will get donated,” Janey explained, adding that prohibited items are sent to local shelters, women’s centers, or food banks.

For Janey and the other volunteers, Operation Christmas Child is more than a seasonal event—it’s a mission to bring light into the lives of children worldwide.

## Martinsville’s GENEDGE Alliance to receive \$1.65 Million DOE Grant

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has awarded a \$1,650,000 grant to the Martinsville-based GENEDGE Alliance to support the Virginia Smart Manufacturing Accelerator Program.

“GENEDGE Alliance is a leading contributor and innovator in the manufacturing space, benefitting economic growth and manufacturing in Virginia’s Ninth Congressional District,” U.S. Rep. Morgan Griffith, R-Salem, said. “This \$1.65 million grant helps GENEDGE Alliance develop the Virginia Smart Manufacturing Accelerator Program.”

According to Virginia Smart Manu-

facturing Accerlator’s website, Smart Manufacturing is a technology-driven approach that uses internet-connected machinery to monitor and manage the production process. Goals include identifying opportunities for automating operations and using data analytics to improve manufacturing performance.

In June 2024, GENEDGE Alliance received a grant of more than \$2.1 million from the U.S. Department of Commerce’s National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). This grant came as a result of their Manufacturing Extension Partnership Program.

## VAB Approves Additional Funding for Blue Ridge Airport

Blue Ridge Regional Airport was among 18 Virginia airports to receive funding during the Virginia Aviation Board’s (VAB) quarterly meeting on Nov. 21.

The airport was awarded an additional \$53,052.71 for the Runway

Extension - Phase 2 Bid Additive (Construction), according to the board’s funding actions.

Overall, the VAB allocated \$2,431,569.47 to support 23 aviation projects statewide.

## 18-Year-Old Charged After Firearm Found on Bassett High School Property

An 18-year-old student was charged after a firearm was discovered on the grounds of Bassett High School, the Henry County Sheriff’s Office said.

Authorities were alerted around 9:45 a.m. on Nov. 20 when a student self-reported the presence of a handgun to school officials. The school resource officer located the weapon outside the building.

Charles Edward Mills, 18, was taken into custody and charged with violating Virginia Code Section 18.2-308.1, which prohibits possession of a firearm on school property. Mills was released on an unsecured bond of \$3,000.

Officials said no threats were made toward the school or individuals, and classes continued as scheduled.

“We understand that incidents of this nature heighten concerns for student safety,” the Sheriff’s Office and Henry County Public Schools said in a joint statement, emphasizing their commitment



Charles Edward Mills

to addressing safety concerns swiftly.

The agencies urged students, parents, and community members to remain vigilant and report suspicious activity to ensure a secure environment.



Crossing the Lines

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



Steve Marshall, who represents the Blue Ridge District, interrupted Galen Gilbert during his public comment time.

Tensions flare at board meeting amid calls for transparency and accountability

Concerns about communication and accountability reached a boiling point at the Nov. 18 meeting of the Patrick County Board of Supervisors, with some board members often talking over residents during the public comment period, despite early calls by the chairman for civility and respect.

“Is this power of thee or is this power of me,” Valerie Loy asked at one point of the three minutes she and other residents are allotted to address the board. She noted the rules read before public comment also include a section directing residents to address the board and not individual board members.

“This is stereotyping everybody on the board. Reasoning, chairman Doug Perry was upset with several citizens for questioning him that the county is \$29.7 million in debt, which he continues to deny. It’s still on the website, you can look it up,” she said.

Loy said Perry requests resi-

dents to give respectful comments with no personal attacks or insulting remarks. Individuals can also be removed from the speaker’s chair for breaking the rules.

“Some of us citizens come to the board with concerns over the inmates at the Transfer Station only to be ignored and we were told with pictures and videos by Mr. Marshall that this stuff was not true, and it was.”

When residents come to the board with concerns, Loy said they are shot down.

“But Mr. Perry, you called people liars, and you called me ignorant. Yes, you did. You can listen back, and I totally resent that, and that’s very uncomfortable,” she said.

Perry, of the Smith River District, and Steve Marshall, of the Blue Ridge District, repeatedly engaged with residents during public comment.

Leaders highlight community projects at annual luncheon

Eight speakers shared updates on community initiatives and organizational goals during the Patrick County Chamber of Commerce’s annual Lunch with Leaders event on Nov. 20. The gathering, held in collaboration with the Reynolds Homestead, featured a catered lunch provided by Food Country USA and drew more than 20 attendees.

Kevin Brandt, Virginia Development Director for the foundation, outlined the organization’s efforts to strengthen connections between the parkway and surrounding communities. Highlighting the Blue Ridge Rising initiative, Brandt emphasized the importance of engaging localities and enhancing visitor access to gateway communities like Stuart and Meadows of Dan.

“We went out to all 29 counties” along the parkway “and asked what is important to your community, and then had regional meetings, and probably almost 1,000 people participated in either county meetings or online or at the regional meetings,” he said.

Brandt said there was consensus among all the counties on what was important to them and what could be done to improve their quality of life, economic plight, and overall connection to the parkway.

“When you think about people coming from outside the area, they’re not staying in the parkway anymore. These gateways that are represented by places like Stuart, Meadows of Dan are really how people are able to travel the entire length of the parkway,” he said.

From various studies, Brandt said the foundation knows that 90 percent of the people who visit the parkway do so for the views. “But they need places to get fuel,



Patrick County Economic Development & Tourism Director James Houchins was among the eight speakers to participate in the annual Lunch with Leaders event.

food, lodging, and they also come for arts and culture and things like that as well. So, we wanted to build stronger connections between the parkway and parkway visitors and the gateway communities,” he said.

Brandt said several themes that were common to every locality were discovered, including marketing communities for tourists.

“We want to get signs on the parkway telling them there’s a community like Stuart or like Floyd, but also use those international symbols so when people get off the exit of the parkway, they know where they’re going,” he said.

Enhancing education is another theme, Brandt said as many communities noted it’s hard to find and hire qualified employees.

Board greenlights Revolutionary War Monument, tackles FCC petition

The Patrick County Board of Supervisors addressed a request to petition the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for a market modification to Patrick County’s satellite network during its meeting on Monday, Nov. 18, and later approved the installation of a Revolutionary War Soldiers Monument at the Stuart branch of the Blue Ridge Library and Patrick County Museum.

Richard Landis, of Stuart, asked the board to petition the FCC to allow Patrick County residents to access Virginia-based news and weather through satellite providers like Dish and DirecTV.

“Right now, for most of us that currently (have) satellite, whether it’s Dish or Direct, we only get news from North Carolina. We live in Virginia. I don’t need North Carolina news; I’d really rather hear what’s happening in Virginia,” Landis said.

Landis noted this issue dates back to the 1960s when the FCC established broadcast zones. At the time, mountainous terrain blocked antenna reception of Virginia stations, forcing reliance on North Carolina programming.

The board unanimously approved the installation of a Revolutionary War Soldiers Monument at the Stuart library. John Reynolds, president of the Patrick County Historical Society, presented the proposal, which was initiated by board member John Wesley Martin, a descendant of a Revolutionary War soldier.

Reynolds said the monument, crafted from granite and standing approximately seven feet tall, will list 160 to 170 soldiers from the area who served in the war, with



Patrick County Historical Society President John Reynolds discussed the new monument.

space to add additional names if discovered.

“It will have printed 160 to 170 names on it with space to add more. The top of the monument will include ‘Patrick County Historical Society’ and a relief of a minuteman soldier,” Reynolds said.

The monument will be situated to the left of the walkway leading to the library, near the flagpole. Reynolds assured the board there would be no cost to the county, as the Historical Society would cover any maintenance needs.

“This will be a monument that lasts a long, long time for the county. Being a veteran myself, these Revolutionary War veterans need to be commemorated just like all the others,” Reynolds said, adding that the monument will coincide with the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution in 2026.

Local author debuts fiction novel

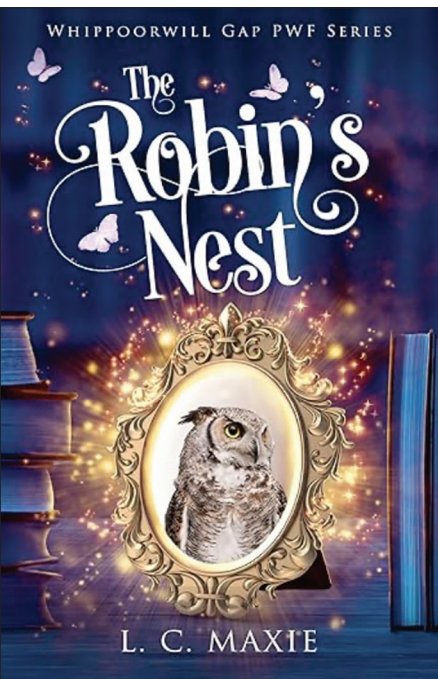


Linda “L.C.” Maxie published her first paranormal women’s fiction (PWF) book last summer.

Linda “L.C.” Maxie released her debut fiction novel, “The Robin’s Nest,” last summer. The book, which she plans to turn into at least a trilogy, belongs to the paranormal women’s fiction genre.

Maxie got the idea for the book after learning about the cozy fantasy genre. “I was a traditional librarian and always knew about the big genres like fantasy, sci-fi, realistic fiction, but I had never heard of these tiny sub-genres. When I heard about cozy fantasy, I thought, ‘that sounds really cool,’” she said.

The idea for the book came to Maxie almost fully formed. “I had to tweak a few things, but after talking to some book coaches, they told me, ‘oh no, your book is not cozy fantasy, this is paranormal




“The Robin’s Nest” is the first book in the Whippoorwill Gap PWF series.

women’s fiction.’ When I looked into it, I realized they were right. I followed the genre conventions pretty closely,” she said.


In paranormal women’s fiction, the main character is typically a woman over 40 who is either divorced or suddenly widowed and doesn’t know what to do with herself. Maxie’s book follows this trope.

“The character often moves to a new place and discovers it’s inhabited by paranormal creatures. These books are often dark and snarky, featuring vampires, werewolves, and the like, and the main character discovers she has magical abilities herself,” she explained.


To read more about these and other stories, check out The Enterprise, www.theenterprise.net.




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# Ground Beef Products Due to Possible E. Coli

Wolverine Packing Co., a Detroit, Mich. establishment, is recalling approximately 167,277 pounds of ground beef products that may be contaminated with E. coli O157:H7, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS).

The fresh products have a “use by” date of 11/14/2024 and the frozen products are labeled with production date 10 22 24. The products subject to recall bear establishment number “EST. 2574B” inside the USDA mark of inspection.

These items were shipped to restaurant locations nationwide.

Anyone concerned about an illness should contact a healthcare provider. E. coli O157:H7 is a potentially deadly bacterium that can cause dehydration, bloody diarrhea and abdominal cramps 2–8 days (3–4 days, on average) after exposure the organism. While most people recover within a week, some develop a type of kidney failure called hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS). This condition can occur among people of any age but is most com-

mon in children under 5-years old and older adults. It is marked by easy bruising, pallor, and decreased urine output. People who experience these symptoms should seek emergency medical care immediately.

FSIS is concerned that some product may be in restaurant refrigerators or freezers. Restaurants are urged not to serve these products. These products should be thrown away or returned to the place of purchase.

Consumers with questions can contact Don Tanner, company representative, at (248) 762-1533.

Consumers with food safety questions can call the toll-free USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 888-MPHotline (888-674-6854) or send a question via email to MPH hotline@usda.gov. For consumers that need to report a problem with a meat, poultry, or egg product, the online Electronic Consumer Complaint Monitoring System can be accessed 24 hours a day at <https://foodcomplaint.fsis.usda.gov/eCCF/>.

# Victim found dead in Sunday blaze

A deadly fire destroyed a structure and damaged neighboring buildings early Sunday on Fayette Street in Martinsville, officials said.

Martinsville Fire & EMS responded to the blaze at 214 Fayette Street at 1:53 a.m. Upon arrival, firefighters found the structure engulfed in flames, with the flames spreading to an adjacent building. Martinsville Police officers on the scene confirmed that an occupant was inside the burning structure.

Crews launched an aggressive fire attack, locating and removing the victim, who was pronounced dead at the scene. The individual’s identity has not been released pending positive identification by the Medical Examiner’s Office.

Firefighters brought the blaze under control by 6:10 a.m. and remained on-site until 7:14 a.m. to fully extinguish hotspots.

The original structure was destroyed, and an adjacent building suffered extensive attic damage. A

neighboring church sustained exterior heat damage and light smoke inside. The preliminary damage estimates are around \$70,000.

The cause of the fire remains under investigation.

Martinsville Fire & EMS received assistance from the Henry County Department of Public Safety, Martinsville Volunteer Fire Company, Collinsville Volunteer Fire Department, Ridgeway Volunteer Fire Department, and other city departments, including Public Works and Martinsville Electric. Southwest Virginia Gas assisted with utility control.

Officials urged residents to take precautions with space heaters, holiday lights, and decorations to prevent similar tragedies. Free smoke detectors are available for installation in Martinsville and Henry County. City residents can call (276) 403-5325, and Henry County residents can contact the Department of Public Safety at (276) 634-4660.

# IRS offers help to military members, veterans with tax needs

Members of the U.S. Armed Forces, veterans and their families may qualify for special tax benefits. Whether they have a simple or complex tax situation, the IRS provides information to make filing taxes easier to understand for those sacrificing so much for our country.

**Benefits for military members**  
Some of the tax benefits for service members include:

**Combat pay:** This pay is partially or fully tax-free. Service members serving in support of a combat zone or in a qualified hazardous duty area may also qualify for this exclusion.

**Combat zone tax deadline extensions:** Qualifying members of the military, such as those who serve in a combat zone or in contingency operations outside the U.S., can get additional time to file and pay their taxes.

**Armed Forces dependency allotments:** Assistance programs for dependent care allotments contributed by the government are excludable benefits and not included in the military member’s income.

**Earned Income Tax Credit:** The EITC is worth up to \$7,830 for tax year 2024. Low and moderate income service members who receive non-

taxable combat pay can use specific qualifications that may increase the amount of the EITC for which they qualify, meaning they may owe less tax or get a larger refund.

**Moving expenses:** Members of the U.S. Armed Forces on active duty may be eligible to deduct unreimbursed relocation expenses if their move was due to a military order and permanent change of station. Also, allowances paid to move members of the U.S. Armed Forces for a permanent change of station aren’t taxable.

For more details on benefits for military members, taxpayers can refer to the Military Family Tax Benefits page on IRS.gov.

**What to do when it’s time to file**  
The Department of Defense provides MilTax, a suite of tax services free for members of the military, qualifying veterans and family members.

Many military installations offer free income tax assistance in person through the military Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program. Military service members can contact their installation’s legal office for details.

# New order aims to protect children from addictive social media

Last week, Gov. Glenn Youngkin issued Executive Order 43, Empowering and Supporting Parents to Protect Their Children from Addictive Social Media & Establishment of the Reclaiming Childhood Task Force, to tackle a critical aspect of Virginia’s youth mental health crisis, the unrestricted use of cell phones and addictive social media platforms.

“Virginia and the nation’s children are facing a youth mental health crisis driven by the effects of unrestricted cell phone use and addictive social media platforms. The scope of this challenge is going to require all of us, private sector, non-profit organizations and government can support parents as they work to improve their children’s mental health,” said Youngkin. “Executive Order 43 will empower parents with the tools they need to protect their children and sets the stage for a statewide response to reclaim childhood and ensure the next generation can thrive.”

The Executive Order mobilizes state agencies to provide resources for parents, educators, and healthcare providers to combat the negative effects of excessive social media use.

It includes developing a “Social Media and Mental Health Toolkit,” a partnership with health providers to emphasize prevention strategies, and regional training for behavioral health professionals.

The Reclaiming Childhood Task Force will convene parents, educators, mental health experts, faith leaders, public safety officials, private sector technology experts, and community leaders to identify actionable solutions to improve youth mental health outcomes. It will provide recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly and build upon the efforts from Executive Order 33, which introduced Cell Phone-Free Education in Virginia’s K-12 public schools.

“Government cannot be the sole solution to this social media crisis, but our schools are on the front lines of supporting students’ mental health and well-being,” said Secretary of Education Aimee Guidera. “Executive Order 43 directs our state agencies to provide research, tools, and resources that can support educators and parents as they create healthy, nurturing environments where students can focus on learning and growth.”

# Security Equipment Grants awarded to local school divisions

The Virginia Department of Education announced \$12 million in School Security Equipment Grants were awarded to 96 school divisions and 472 schools to help protect students, faculty and staff, and visitors.

Henry County was awarded \$244,000 for Fieldale-Collinsville Middle, G.W. Carver Elementary, and Laurel Park Middle schools.

Patrick County received \$77,098, Meadows of Dan Elementary, Patrick County High, and Patrick Springs Primary schools.

Martinsville City received \$112,895, Albert Harris Elementary, Clearview Early Learning Center, Martinsville High, Martinsville Middle, and Patrick Henry Elementary schools.

Most of the equipment applied and approved for purchase include voice and video internal communication systems, mass notification systems, security card access systems, visitor ID badging systems, surveillance cameras, two-way radios, security vestibules, interior bus cameras, and bus two-way radios. The 2024-2025 school year grants have been awarded on a competitive basis, with each

awarded school division eligible to receive grant awards up to \$250,000.

The 472 schools were awarded funds based on a rank ordering of applications’ point total on the competitive application criteria. The criteria developed by VDOE and the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services gives priority to schools most in need of modern security equipment, schools with relatively high numbers of offenses, schools with equipment needs identified by a school security audit, and schools in divisions least able to afford security upgrades.

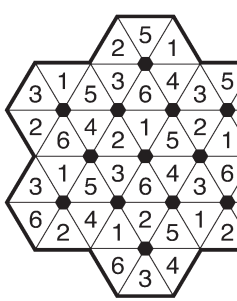
“The equipment purchased with these grants will help ensure the safety of all students and staff in Virginia’s public schools,” said Superintendent of Public Instruction Lisa Coons. “Every child deserves a high-quality education experience, one where they can deeply focus on learning and growing the minute they step onto a school bus or pass through the doors of their school. These grants help create safe, supportive environments, both on school grounds and while traveling to and from school.”

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# *Harvest Youth Board, Volunteers Serve Annual Thanksgiving Eve Dinner*



## Contributed photos

**By Jessica Dillon**

The Harvest Youth Board served its largest Thanksgiving Eve Dinner to date, providing meals for 4,000 individuals and families. The annual W. Dan Prince III Thanksgiving Eve Dinner was held on Nov. 27 at Martinsville High School, where community members were invited to enjoy a warm, festive meal. For those unable to attend in person, delivery services were available with advanced registration.

The Harvest Youth Board, established in 2015, began this tradition in 2016 after volunteering at Richard's Christmas Dinner. Inspired by the experience, they decided to create a similar community gathering for Thanksgiving. Since then, the event has grown every year, becoming a cornerstone of holiday giving in Martinsville and Henry County.

"I don't think we can stress how much this is a student-led initiative and organization. They come in after

school and do all the work. It's a really good learning experience for them," said India Brown, program officer at the Harvest Foundation.

## Months of Preparation

The dinner required extensive planning, starting as early as August. The students, under the guidance of Brown and grants manager Stacy Peters, manage the budget, order supplies, and organize logistics.

"They have a Thanksgiving Eve dinner budget; they order their own supplies," Brown said. The initiative teaches valuable life skills while fostering a spirit of giving among the youth.

This year as many in the past, cooking responsibilities were handled by Scott Norman, a volunteer who ensures the massive food preparation runs smoothly and safely.

"He graciously volunteered to handle the cooking portion of the Thanksgiving Eve dinner," said Brown. "This helps keep the teens out of the kitchen."

en, creating a safer environment.”

**Delivery Program Supports**  
**Community**

The delivery program has become a vital part of the dinner's success. Once orders are placed, Brown and Peters verify the information, clean up the delivery lists, and create routes for volunteers to ensure the meals reach their destinations.

"A little over 2,300 meals are being delivered," Peters said, noting the program's growth, especially after in-person dining resumed post-COVID-19.

Peters shared emotional stories from previous dinners, including one from a woman whose home had burned down just before Thanksgiving.

“She always had to provide Thanksgiving for her family, but her house had burned down prior to that. She was living in a camper, but this was going to help her still provide food for her family,” Peters said.

Another story involved an elderly couple who consistently attended the dinner. "This year (the husband) called to let us know he is coming, that she wouldn't be there, but that he wanted to come because they always enjoyed it," Peters said. The man's wife had recently passed away.

## Promoting Literacy and Community

In addition to the meal, families with children under 12 received a copy of *Charlie Brown Thanksgiving* by Daphne Pendergrass. The Harvest Youth Board also promotes literacy year-round through events like Books and Bunnies in April, furthering their mission of fostering a healthy, connected community.

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## CONTACT US



# Hike the Tobacco Heritage Trail with DRBA

The Dan River Basin Association (DRBA) invites you to hike the Tobacco Heritage Trail in South Boston, Virginia, on Saturday, December 7. The organization’s First Saturday Outing will take advantage of the rail-to-trail with a 5.2-mile round trip walk between South Boston and the Berry Hill Resort. Participants will meet at 10 a.m. at the Cotton Mill Park trailhead, 196 Railroad Avenue, South Boston, VA. The compacted crushed stone surface of the trail makes it an easy walk, and, like most rail trails, the path is relatively level. The History of the Trail DRBA enjoyed a preliminary walk on the rail bed back in 2008 before it was improved for hikers, bicyclists,

and equestrians. The pathway is clearly marked with the trail’s logo, a golden tobacco leaf in a red circle. The trail is part of a system planned ultimately to stretch 150 miles across Southern Virginia. According to Tom McLaughlin of SoVaNow, the trail has “scenery that’s more subtle than spectacular” and “exudes an aura of peace.” A small clearing high on the river bank enables one to pause and contemplate the flowing waters of the Dan. Closer to Berry Hill Resort is a duck impoundment habitat funded by the Game Commission and dedicated to the memory of the late Biggie Hunt. Naturally, sightings of



Courtesy of DRBA

waterfowl are common here. Construction of the trail was funded by the Virginia Department of Transportation along a former right of way of the Richmond Danville Spur Trail. At the old Halifax Cotton Mill, owned by the Town of South Boston, a botanical garden is planned for what will be Cotton Mill Park, near the trailhead. Tobacco Heritage Trail Coordinator Heather Susee recently met with interested volunteers in South Boston to establish a Halifax County chapter of “Friends of the Tobacco Heritage Trail.” Participants in DRBA’s outing are asked to bring lunch and water. Dress in layers of synthetic fabric or wool, wear hiking boots or walking shoes, and be prepared for wind or rain. If desired, bring a walking

stick or poles. All participants are asked to sign a waiver. Directions To reach the trailhead from the south, take US 58/US 360 to South Boston. Turn north onto US 501 (Main Street). Continue onto Broad Street and cross the Dan River. Take the first left onto Factory Street. Take the second left onto Seymour Drive. Seymour Drive will cross, then parallel, the railroad. Turn right onto Railroad Drive into the parking lot near the trailhead. From the north, take US 501 (Halifax Road) to South Boston. Continue onto Wilborn Avenue for 0.9 mile. Turn right onto Edmunds Street, and continue for 0.4 mile. Turn left onto Railroad Drive, and continue for 0.4 mile to the parking lot near the trailhead.

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**We Wish You & Your Family, Safe & Happy Holiday!!**

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# Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

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