

MERRY Christmas

Board approves electronic participation policy

By Taylor Boyd

The Henry County Board of Supervisors received an audit report and approved a document allowing board members to participate in meetings by remote electronic or telephone access at a December 17 meeting.

This policy will be part of the bylaws the board adopts at its organizational meeting.

Before the meeting, the board had no policy regarding electronic participation in meetings, County Attorney George Lyle said.

“So, by default members of this body can dial in, and monitor the meeting, and speak remotely from other locations, but they cannot make motions or vote,” he said.

The policy adopted by the board provides two categories in which board members can tell the chairman they cannot attend the meeting in person: due to a personal reason or a temporary/permanent disability, Lyle said.



Chief Financial Officer Darrell Jones reviews a draft of Henry County's fiscal year 2024 audit, conducted by Creedle, Jones & Associates, P.C.

Those members referring to the personal reason can attend electronically “up to three meetings, or 25 percent, because this board has 12 regular meetings a year. You can do that three times a year - that could be vacation, that could be anything,” he said.

However, in the temporary/permanent disability or other medical condition that prevents a member's physical attendance category, Lyle said from his reading of the Code of Virginia members are not limited by the three meeting limit.

“Those could be more if a person's disability or reason for not being able to be here goes longer,” Lyle said.

At the start of a meeting Lyle said a board member that participates electronically will give the reason they are not physically attending the meeting, and their location. The board would (See Board of Supervisors p. 2)

A visit from the North Pole



Mr. and Mrs. Claus (Gale Buck and his wife Christy) stopped by Piedmont Arts in Martinsville to help local students decorate the Christmas tree. (Contributed)

Sewer project, traffic changes get nod from council

By Jessica Dillon

Martinsville City Council adopted a resolution and approved a bond package for sewer improvements, approved new traffic calming plans, heard comments from several residents and concerns from outgoing member Tammy Pearson (related story), and Vice Mayor Aaron Rawls.

The council also approved a resolution after holding a public hearing on revenue bonds for the Doe Run Sewer Project.

In 2021, an inspection of the Doe Run, Smith Lake Road, and Industrial Park sewer interceptors was completed, and a preliminary engineering report was prepared based on the condition assessment that identified the project needs. An application was submitted in 2022 to the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) requesting project funding.

The DEQ identified Martinsville's project as a priority project for funding through the Virginia Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund (VCWRLF). Construction plans have since been completed, the project is ready to go out to bid, and the City recently received drafts of the funding and financing agreements.

In September the council approved entering into VCWRLF loan and appropriated \$559,610 from the Water/Sewer Fund Balance for the Doe Run, Smith Lake Road, and Industrial Park Sewer Improvements. Bids were opened Novem-



Vice Mayor Aaron Rawls discussed some issues at the Dec. 17 meeting of Martinsville City Council.

ber 4, with the low bid coming in about \$2 million more than the engineer's estimate, and with (See City Council p. 3)

Pearson calls on council to prioritize residents over drama in farewell speech

By Staff Reports

At the end of her last meeting as a member of Martinsville City Council Tammy Pearson offered further insight into her decision not to seek reelection, and offered an impassioned plea to other council members.

“I thought a lot about what I should say. Should I go out blazing, right all the wrongs and spill the beans and all that kind of stuff,” she said, adding that she decided “that's probably not quite the right thing.”

Rather, “I thought I should kind of rise above that and maintain a certain level of decorum and decency and I think I've tried to go with that my whole time on council. I first want to share my thanks. I know a lot of people do this but first of all, I'm really bad at saying ‘thank you.’ It's not something that comes easy to me ... I apologize that I haven't done it more in my four years.”

Pearson also thanked God, her husband, Will Pearson, her children, and others. She said her husband has “stood by me no matter what,”



even “when I came home screaming and crying and throwing things and all that.” She added that “he was unnecessarily dragged into” certain issues, and “risked his businesses when I had to take a stand. He took great care of not only me, but also our children. I also want to thank my children.”

“Before I ran for office, Will and I sat down with the kids to make sure they were okay with it. They gave me love and encouragement and support I can't repay. We definitely lost some time (See Pearson p. 2)

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Board of Supervisors

(cont. from page 1)



Rita Shropshire was honored with a resolution by the Henry County Board of Supervisors for her over 60 years of service on the Henry County Electoral Board.

then have the option of voting to allow that board member to participate remotely.

“The only reason the board would vote not to allow to remotely participate is because they can’t be heard or clearly or seen to participate,” he said.

Lyle noted a quorum, or the majority of four of the six board members, must physically attend the meeting to consider another member’s request to participate electronically.

During a meeting’s closed session, Lyle said a second motion for electronic participation is not required because any member electronically participating would simply disconnect the call and reconnect in the meeting room.

Joe Bryant, vice-chairman, and of the Collinsville District, asked if there is a limit on the number of meetings a board member could miss even if they don’t vote under normal circumstances.

Lyle said state law doesn’t require supervisors to attend board meetings.

“I think it’d probably be a poor decision not to, but there’s no attendance requirement if you miss many meetings, you don’t lose rights or privileges. You might not get reelected, but you lose no rights or privileges by the Code of Virginia,” Lyle said.

“If our bylaws state something else, I don’t think they do, there is no attendance requirement and there’s no consequence to missing meetings at all, except you are not present to vote,” Lyle said, adding this policy change would make is easier for board members to participate when they can’t physically attend meetings.

County Administrator Dale Wagoner said he recently received an email from the Virginia Association of Counties (VACO) inquiring about the county’s board policies on attendance.

“Your bylaws do not have an attendance policy. However, as a board, you could adopt an attendance policy. Typically, any consequence for failing to abide by that policy would result in censure, not a dismissal,” Wagoner said.

He also noted the technology in the board’s meeting room is currently limited.

“It will take us some more time to come up with a better solution than what we have now. We can make it work, but it’s not an ideal situation. We don’t have a true video conference capability in this conference room,” Wagoner said.

Travis Pruitt, of the Ridgeway District, said he requested Lyle to bring this potential policy change up to the board as he travels for his full-time job.

“There are occasions that I’m out of the county, but I could very well participate from my hotel room. That’s why I personally asked him to do this because the two I missed this year are both work related,” Pruitt said.

The board also heard the results of an audit conducted by Creedle, Jones & Associates, P.C.

The audit found that the county’s net position grew by \$24 million in fiscal year (FY) 2024. Kim Jackson, a representative of the accounting firm, presented the results.

Net position refers to an entity’s assets and deferred outflows of resources minus any liabilities or deferred inflows of resources. Over time, increases or decreases in net position can be an indicator of that entity’s financial health.

“These findings demonstrate that the county is on solid financial footing,” said Darrell Jones, Chief Financial Officer. “We always have to be mindful of current trends and we have to put in place the necessary contingencies to address both anticipated and unexpected future expenditures but these are certainly good indicators for the county’s financial health. A lot of that can be attributed to the Board’s financial policies, investment strategy, and asset management.”

A significant portion of the growth in net position this year is due to the acquisition of the Monogram Foods Smith River Sports Complex. Additionally, the county paid off a “balloon note” during the year which was used to finance the construction of the



Del. Eric Phillips, R-Martinsville, presented a Virginia General Assembly Commending Resolution to Tommy Slaughter for his 16 years of service as a Henry County Board of Supervisor member.

Adult Detention Center (ADC). This combination of asset gains and decreased liabilities contributed to the increase in the county’s overall net position.

The county’s unassigned fund balance also increased by approximately \$6 million even though its overall fund balance decreased by nearly \$8.9 million, according to the audit. The overall decrease in fund balance is tied to the payment of the “balloon note” for the ADC.

Funds in the unassigned fund balance are available to be spent at the county’s discretion. The county’s total unassigned fund balance amounted to \$44,168,078 at the end of FY24. However, the Board has adopted a self-imposed limit on its unassigned fund balance to assist with acquiring long-term bonds rather than relying on tax increases to fund potential future capital projects. Due to this policy, only \$17.3 million of the unassigned fund balance is available to spend. This figure does not account for any current or future debt obligations that may be incurred.

In other matters, the board:

*Scheduled the board’s 2025 organizational meeting for Monday, January 6 at 1 p.m.

*Heard Del. Eric Phillips, R-Martinsville, read a Virginia General Assembly Commending Resolution honoring Tommy Slaughter for his 16 years of service as a member of the Board of Supervisors.

*Approved a resolution honoring Rita Shropshire for her over 60 years on the Henry County Electoral Board.

*Recognized Pruitt for being a member of the VACO Supervisors’ Program Class of 2024.

*Approved the items of consent.

*Heard the monthly report on delinquent tax collection efforts.

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

*Heard an update on the Blue Ridge Regional Library from Director Rick Ward.

*Approved an additional appropri-



County Administrator Dale Wagoner (left) presented a plaque to supervisor Travis Pruitt, of the Ridgeway District, for being a member of the VACO Supervisors’ Program Class of 2024.

ation of \$26,398 received from vehicle insurance settlements to go towards the purchase of a replacement vehicle for the Department of Public Safety.

*Approved an additional appropriation of \$49,975 received from Ford Motor Company to purchase a replacement vehicle for the Parks & Recreation Department.

*Approved an additional appropriation of \$14,489 received from the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant to pay for overtime hours deputies.

*Awarded a contract to Haley Ford in the amount of \$215,871 to purchase five 2025 Ford Police Interceptor Utility vehicles.

*Recognized the winning teams from the Parks & Recreation football and girls basketball seasons.

*Approved a request to rezone approximately 0.23-acres of the Reed Creek District from Commercial District B-1 to Mixed Residential District M-R.

*Reappointed Jeanette Hurd, Pamela Randall, and Bonnie Favero to the ANCHOR Commission for terms set to expire Dec. 31, 2028.

*Reappointed Charlie Martin, Rodney Clark, Bruce Adkins, Eddie Light, and Larry Wright to the Building Code Board of Appeals for terms set to expire Jan. 31, 2029.

*Reappointed Daryl Emberson, H. William Martin, Jr., Ken Adkins, Joe Scarce, and Joel Barnes to the Fire Code Board of Appeals for terms set to expire on Jan. 31, 2029.

*Reappointed Barry Jarrett to the Ninth District Development Financing, Inc., for a term set to expire Dec. 31, 2026.

*Executed a deed conveying 19.64 acres of property containing Phase 6A of the Dick & Willie Passage from the Board to itself. The purpose of the conveyance is to enact deed restrictions on the property in compliance with the Land and Water Conservation Act of 1965

Garrett Dillard, of the Iriswood District, attended the meeting via Zoom.

Pearson

(cont. from page 1)

together, but we knew that would happen, and they gave that to me so I could focus on the city.”

Pearson said her children have given her “the most high fives” and “shown maturity beyond their years.”

She also thanked her parents and in-laws, “close family members and friends. You know who you are. You’ve seen every facet of this council, from the highest to the lowest, and you always listen. You offered advice and good wine. I also want to thank the city employees, and that is something I definitely did not do enough, and I wish I had, because you’re the ones who took a lot of our ideas and you’re the ones who put them into action and you’re the ones out there day in and day out working for our city.”

Pearson also thanked former mayor and council member Danny Turner, who was “the first to approach me about running” for of-

fice. She said Turner “gave me the confidence I needed to give it a try. We respectfully disagreed on some things when I was on council, but I always knew I could go to him for advice and he would give it willingly and truthfully.

“Last but not least, I do want to thank the citizens of Martinsville. I am so humbled you gave me the honor and privilege of serving as your City Council member. I can assure you I did not take this responsibility lightly sorry and I always tried my best though I don’t think I’ll ever feel like I did enough,” Pearson said. “Did I make mistakes? Sure, who doesn’t? But did I learn from them? You absolutely know I did, and I took action. You trusted me to be your voice. That’s why you always hear I’m a research nerd because it’s on my shoulders to make sure that I understood what was going on. I did research locally, statewide, and na-

tionally” as well as talk to subject matter experts and city residents.

My goal was to always put your needs and interests first and ensure a city would thrive and prosper. I’ve reflected quite a bit upon the last four years. I’ve thought of the accomplishments and the ups and downs. After Danny and Will talked with me about running, I researched and talked with others, and I knew I wanted to be part of that change along with many of you. I felt like there was a lack of transparency and deals being made behind closed doors.

“I was very concerned about reversion, but I didn’t know a lot about it to be honest, until I got on council. I didn’t feel like we were getting all the facts and a clear financial status, and I did feel like fundamental services and some of our economic development was being ignored because of the focus to revert to our town,” she said, adding that once the reversion effort ended, “we started focusing on infrastructure improvements, housing, economic vitality. We had actually started to revitalize our relationships in Richmond and other local support resources, and I really felt like” the council was getting a lot done, Pearson said, adding that while she wanted to continue, “on what I thought was a positive trajectory ..., I thought it was more important to spend additional time with my family” and opted not to seek reelection.

“...Honestly, there were two oth-

er reasons. The first one has to do with what Will tells me a lot. I’m too naive and I’m too trusting. He’s right because I always want to see the good in people. What I’ve seen over and over in office is when you are doing what people want, they are your friend. The minute it’s done, and they maybe don’t agree with you on the next thing ..., then they’re not your friend any longer.

“Secondly I want to get away from all the drama that’s so draining,” Pearson said. “What worries me the most is that overshadows and sabotages the good work that the few are doing and that you our citizens want to be done. Unfortunately, my feelings on the state of our city have changed since the last several months. I feel like we’ve stepped back in time.”

Noting there is “lots of drama, there’s divisiveness, there is lack of transparency, which scares me to death, and a shortage of accountability — which I’m so scared has derailed such hard work, not only by our employees but by some council members” as well, Pearson said.

“To my fellow City Council members, I want us to stop focusing on personal gains and remember you took an oath to do what is best and what is right for our city,” Pearson said. “It’s up to all of us to hold each and every one of the people on this council accountable with what they do with their words and actions.”

She ended simply, with “I love all of you and I just want to thank you.”

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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.)

Meetings

Happy Holidays!

ONGOING

Uptown Pub Run, every Monday at 6 p.m., meets at Renewal Brewing 32 Franklin St, 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

City Council

(cont. from page 1)



Rozine Baig was denied an opportunity to address the council during the public comment portion of the December 17 meeting.

other “soft costs” such as survey, acquisition, etc., added, the budget shortfall increased to \$2,732,000.

The city contacted the VCWRLF and has secured additional loan proceeds to resolve the shortfall, according to Greg Maggard, director of Public Works.

“We’re required by the requirements of the loan to have a public hearing on this, and then if we approve the resolution, we’ll move forward,” Maggard said of the upgrades that will increase capacity when transporting wastewater from homes and businesses to the treatment plant.

Maggard also presented upcoming changes to streets after a 2023 Uptown Survey identified the need to control speeding in the Uptown District. Previous attempts to address this issue have failed. Raised crosswalks were recommended in the 2023 study but were not used in a previous attempt.

The installation of raised pedestrian crosswalks at mid-block crossings has been proven to provide increased visibility and safety for pedestrians. Additionally, the elevated crosswalks provide a “speed bump” effect in these areas, naturally slowing traffic. The intersection of Church and Broad streets was identified as a critical point for speed control and will be an “all-stop” intersection. This includes six raised crosswalks, with only one extra being added in front of city hall, flashing red lights at the intersection of Broad St. and Church St., and three stop signs that will be placed along Moss St and Walnut St.

The project is meant to control speeding and make the area more pedestrian-friendly. The crosswalks are meant to create more visibility. “They are about three to four inches

wide, they are not speed bumps,” Maggard said, but the new crosswalks will have the impact of a smaller speed bump. The stop sign placements on Moss St. and Walnut St. came from positive feedback, and “that light right there on Walnut (Street) will go away,” Maggard said.

“What I was trying to do is break this up into segments to try to control the acceleration rate,” Maggard said, and explained that he believes the key to reducing speed will be the red flashing lights at the intersection of Broad St. and Church St.

The changes will cost an estimated \$30,000, and are expected to be completed in the spring.

In a follow-up report about cameras at red lights, Police Chief Rob Fincher said localities “are allowed to have one red light camera per 15,000 residents.” This would allow only a single red light camera to be placed in the city, and companies that Fincher contacted weren’t interested in placing a single camera.

In other matters:

*Susan Tyler raised concerns about racism. “I see the divide between blacks and whites in this community, and now I see it in city council. We must learn how to better communicate and understand each other. I love you all and I pray for the best community can be, we can do this together.”

*Benjamin Bailey, owner of Skyline Tree Service, offered a public apology about a recently viral video that showed discriminatory speech by a former employee. “I am appalled by the words and language that was captured online,” said Bailey, adding the worker had been removed from the company.

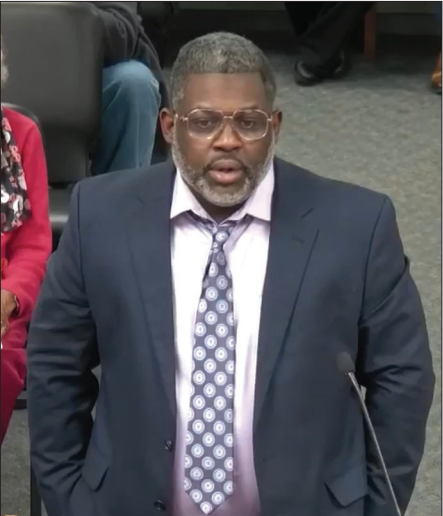
“This is my community, and I’m committed to serving this community, once again please accept my

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.



Rico Johnson was among speakers to raise concerns.

apologies again for all that occurred. I truly am sorry they do not represent my views,” he said.

*Denied one person to speak. Rozine Baig was denied an opportunity to address the council during the public comment portion of the December 17 meeting.

Before that portion began, Mayor LC Jones said “all we ask” from speakers “is to state your name at the podium. Keep your business relevant.” He added that on advice from the city’s attorney, comments were not to include “pending legal or personnel issues.”

Council members did not elaborate, however, Martinsville Police Chief Rob Fincher went to the podium after Baig repeatedly tried to be heard.

*Council members Kathy Lawson, Mayor LC. Jones and Rawls thanked Pearson for her service, and during his comments, Rawls detailed what he believes to be current issues in the city.

“To be quite frank, we are probably walking into the worst council we’ve had in history.”

Rawls said that the city is backtracking, and that people are looking down on Martinsville due to internal issues. “We saw ridiculous absurd lies on people who are in public office. People from outside of Martinsville want to help Martinsville more than the people of Martinsville.”

Noting former charges and allegations of racism leading up to the November election cycle, Rawls said, “the world does not have time for these silly problems.”

Issues with water infrastructure were also pointed out with Rawls ex-

TOPS FIELD 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.

Neighbors in the Know. Join staff and volunteers in the Hylton Library at the Spencer Penn Centre for activities and socializing on the first and third Monday of each month. A different presentation and activity weekly, followed by a way to get you moving. The program is an hour long and activities for children will be provided. Every third Monday, 10-11 a.m., a music program will be provided. This free program is perfect for all ages. No registration is required.



Vice Mayor Aaron Rawls discussed personal accountability.

pressing concern about funding for repairs. “Now we don’t have people wanting to do projects here anymore. Now people are going to go 600 feet outside of the city limits because the counties are better to work with than the city. Guess what, your taxes are going up, your rates are going up.”

Rawls asked voters to support change in the next election.

“I think a lot of people got race-hustled into silliness, and now you are all going to pay for it,” Rawls said, adding “frankly, I’m about the only person that a lot of people in here trust.”

*After thanking outgoing council member Lawrence Mitchell for his service — Mitchell did not attend the meeting, Jones said:

“A lot of different comments tonight, different various topics. It’s been a turbulent year, a rollercoaster sometimes” and regardless of who says what and how you feels, you are the victim circumstances that you create yourself, and a lot of times individuals have to look themselves in the mirror before they start pointing the finger at anybody and accept responsibility for their own actions.”

Jones also thanked city employees, who have worked hard despite changes and turnover. “The he guys, the boots on the ground, from the fire department, police department, sheriff’s department, public works, electric, every department, HR, thank you for everything you’ve done. I look forward to 2025.”

Julian Mei and Rayshaun Gravely, who were elected in November, will begin their first terms in January.

The Greatest Story Ever Told

By Dr. Glenn Mollette

No story can match the Christmas story.

Mary was just an ordinary girl but she was special in the eyes of God. She was someone God knew he could choose to enter the world as the baby Jesus. Mary and husband to be Joseph followed the leadership of God and were willing vessels to be used of God.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem and placed in a cow’s trough. This young couple had to sleep in a barn because the town was crowded and there was no room for them in the inn.

They were poor people and hey had a new baby. The conditions were less than ideal for the care of a mom and a newly delivered baby.

God took care of them. Even when an evil king was paranoid by the birth of Jesus, God directed them to relocate to Egypt for period of time.

Jesus grew up and at the young age of 12 was confounding the religious leaders with his knowledge and wisdom.

This young man would grow up to be the greatest man who has ever lived. He was different. He was a man but He was God in the flesh. Yes, he hurt just like we hurt, bled like we bleed, and was tempted as we are tempted, but He was God.

John the Baptist recognized Him as the lamb of God. The disciples recognized they were living in the presence of deity.

No one else has ever lived the way Jesus lived.

He healed the sick. He gave the blind sight. He enabled the lame to walk. He raised the dead. He fed masses of people with a few loaves of bread and fish. He was the greatest teacher who ever lived.

More books have been written about Jesus than any other person. The Bible is the best-selling book of all time. Every week billions of people worship him publicly and privately.

Jesus loved like no other person but he had great opposition. Sadly, most of the opposition was from the religious crowd of his day. They weren’t satisfied until they convinced the political leadership of that day to execute Jesus publicly on a cross. His execution was brutal, humiliating, shameful, and repulsive. The way Jesus was treated fully exposed the wickedness of mankind and the literal cruelty of religion.

The story of Jesus does not end at the cross or his burial. The story of Jesus doesn’t end at all. Three days later the stone was rolled away from his burial tomb and he emerged alive as the victorious Son of God who conquered death, hell, and the grave. He spent time with his followers teaching and equipping them before his departure into heaven right before their very eyes.

As he ascended into heaven the angels told the disciples, “Why do you stand here gazing up into heaven. This same Jesus shall come again in like manner.” From that day forward the disciples

became the greatest group of missionaries of all time. Everywhere they went they told the story of Jesus. Everyone who heard the story and believed the story were forever changed.

Do you believe the story? Have you heard this story? Maybe you’ve heard it many, many times. Possibly, you never grow tired of hearing the story. It’s an old, old story but it’s the story that gives us hope. This story of Jesus keeps us going, looking forward to better things and better times.

The story of Jesus is the story of life, peace, hope, and forgiveness of all of our sins. It’s the story about heaven and seeing our loved ones again. It’s the story that often turns houses into homes, lifts drug addicts out of ditches, gives people a sense of direction and purpose in life.

Do you love the Christmas story? Do you love who this story is about? The story is about Jesus. If you don’t know him, ask him right now to come into your heart and life and he will.

A heavenly host of angels proclaimed to shepherds watching their flocks, “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.” Luke 2:11

May the greatest story ever told become the greatest story you know personally.

Find books by Glenn Mollette at Amazon.com Learn more about his books, columns and music at GlennMollette.Com. Email is gmlollette@aol.com.

OPINION

What’s Next for Syria?

Throughout the tenure of the Biden Administration, conflict and turmoil have only gotten worse in the Middle East.

A recent flareup in the region is the collapse of Bashar al-Assad’s regime in Syria.

Syrian rebel forces struck quickly at the beginning of December, taking control of major cities in Syria before advancing on the country’s capital, Damascus.

The regime’s army could not withstand the rebel advance. Some of the regime’s soldiers fled to Iraq, and al-Assad was forced into exile in Russia.

This marks a momentous event in Syrian history. The Assad regime in Syria lasted for more than half a century.

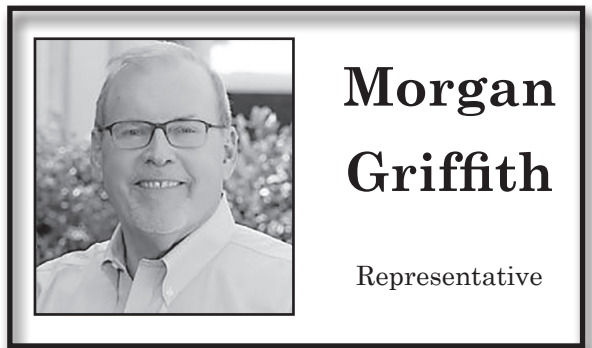
Bashar al-Assad’s father, Hafez, was a ruthless dictator who seized power in a coup in 1970. Hafez exercised power and repression in terrible forms. He ordered brutal crackdowns on various groups in the country and the media was state-controlled.

As leaders of the Baath political party, the Assads adhered to pan-Arab socialism. All walks of life in Syria revolved around the Baathists. Around the same time, the Baath party movement in Iraq was led by Saddam Hussein.

Under Bashar al-Assad, the government continued its human rights abuses, going so far as to have reportedly used chemical weapons on the Syrian people. The country was plunged into a civil war in 2011, and millions of Syrians have been displaced.

Many are celebrating the Syrian rebel victory over al-Assad. It is with good reason to cheer for the triumph of people who topple an oppressive government.

However, not every triumph over an oppressive government has the good outcome that the United States



Morgan Griffith

Representative

of America had after its revolution.

One of the most well-known revolutions of the 20th century took place in the Russian Empire. As Russia stared down the armies of the Central Powers in World War I, the Russian Czar was dealing with domestic turmoil.

Czar Nicholas II, who at one time exercised personal command of the Russian army, abdicated his throne in March 1917 in response to intense protests. The Duma, a parliamentary body, formed a provisional government under Alexander Kerensky.

That government embraced freedom of speech and political participation from all groups, including the communist Bolsheviks.

The Bolsheviks capitalized on the new republic’s political process. They routinely denounced the provisional government for Russia’s continued involvement in World War I and the effects it had on food shortages and inflation.

By October, the provisional government fell apart. The Red Revolutionaries, led by Bolshevik Party leader Vladimir Lenin, seized power and formed the Soviet Union.

Like the state of affairs of 1917 Russia, Syria appears headed for significant upheaval.

The Syrian rebels are led by a group known as Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS).

As of this writing, HTS is designated as a foreign terrorist group by the United States and several other Western nations. Members of HTS associate themselves with the Sunni sect of

Islam.

BBC reports that at one time, the HTS leader, Abu Mohammad al-Jolani, was linked to the ISIS leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and supported al-Qaeda, the group responsible for orchestrating the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

One significant issue in forming a stable government will be respecting religious liberties. Assad is an Alawite. Many Druze, another faith, also live in Syria, along with Shiite Muslims, Christians and other religious minorities.

Al-Jolani’s family supposedly has roots in the Golan Heights, a territory divided between Israel and Syria. Thousands of Israelis and Syrians now live in the area.

Following the collapse of the Assad regime, Israel sent troops into Syrian sections of the Golan Heights to create a buffer zone with Syria. Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu explained his decision, saying Israel will not allow any hostile force to establish itself on Israel’s border.

This move by Israel suggests it is preparing for the worst.

While the US has long opposed the Assad regime, how the US approaches HTS remains to be seen.

To President Trump’s credit in his first term, American troop presence in Syria was dedicated to the annihilation of ISIS. President Trump also ordered the 2019 strike that killed al-Baghdadi.

After years of instability and turmoil, the Syrian people now face one of the best opportunities to establish democratic institutions and principles in the country.

My desire is that the United States supports the institutions of democracy and freedom, including religious freedom, in Syria. It is important to encourage the stabilization of the country as much as possible in order to hopefully foster a free and harmonious Syria.

Call the Abingdon office at (276) 525-1405, the Christiansburg office at 540-381-5671, or email by visiting www.morgangriffith.house.gov with questions or comments.

Farewell to Tradition: Letting Go of the Cranberry Mold (For Now)

It’s hard to recognize when it’s time to say good-bye.

That’s especially the case with our traditional family holiday foods, when leaving one off the dinner table seems sacrilegious, a slap in the face to the women of generations past who made and served them without fail.

However, I now see that after years of inescapable proof, it’s time to loosen the hold on the cranberry mold.

(I had no such compunction about cancelling out that awful green bean casserole, which my grandmother made and my mother made and I never could stand – and I am aware it’s still somewhat popular today.)

My mother and I always loved cranberry mold. It’s a ringed Jell-o salad shaped in a metal mold with a pretty pattern. The bottom was a dense raspberry-flavored gelatin of chopped walnuts, cranberries and celery flavored with crushed pineapple, and the gelled top was a delicious tangy-sweet mayonnaise-sour cream mixture sweetened with pineapple juice.

I made cranberry mold and all my mother’s other classics without fail for all my holidays at home from my very first year of being independent.

Oddly, my cranberry molds in those first years always came out perfectly formed and glistened enticingly on the table. It’s only been over the past five or 10 years that I’ve had trouble getting the gelatin out of the mold and once or twice even getting the gelatin to set properly, so the presentation has not been as flawless.

Also over the past several years, fewer and fewer dinner guests even eat it. Some get slim slices -- just to be polite, I guess.

So after every holiday dinner I’m stuck with a very large cranberry mold ring that takes up too much space in the refrigerator and gets mostly thrown out after a few days since there isn’t anyone besides me who eats it anyway.

Last week Davis Scott made ambrosia for the Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society’s board of



Holly Kozelsky

directors Christmas dinner. Davis is the Historical Society’s youngest board member – a college student – so for someone so young to make ambrosia counts indeed as a nod to history.

Ambrosia, supposedly the food of the gods, made the rounds in the 1970s. It is canned fruit cocktail, Mandarin oranges and maraschino cherries stirred with flaked coconut and perhaps halved grapes, mini-marshmallows and maybe some cream. A few weeks ago, I saw it listed in a cute little online article called “15 Food from the 1970s No One Eats Anymore.”

I told Davis about that article and reminisced about my mother making ambrosia that long ago, and I hadn’t seen it since.

“Like Waldorf salad!” he chimed in. Wait – what?! Is Waldorf salad out, too?

My mother always made Waldorf salad by combining chopped apples, grapes, celery and walnuts and stirring in mayonnaise.

Waldorf salad was the other cold dish on my childhood Thanksgiving and Christmas tables all those years ago, and like the cranberry mold, I’ve been making it religiously ever since. And unlike the cranberry mold, some guests at my dinner table do eat it.

But come to think of it, I don’t believe I’ve ever come across Waldorf salad on anyone else’s table, though I’ve seen a sweeter version of it at a restaurant or two.

Well, we can still take a break from cranberry mold but don’t have to leave the cranberry mold off the holiday table forever. Perhaps it can reappear every few years, just to keep that memory alive.

It can swap turns with Waldorf salad.

National Association of Adults announces we’ll open presents after coffee

By Ben R. Williams

In what’s widely been regarded as a contentious move, the National Association of Adults (NAA) announced this week that we’ll open presents after coffee.

Jim Patterson, President of the NAA, said that he understands the news may come as a disappointment to some as we rapidly approach the holiday season, but he was unwilling to negotiate.

“C’mon, sport,” Patterson said at a press conference which took place in the kitchen. “Another hour won’t kill you. The presents will still be there after we all have a cup of coffee. Maybe two cups.”

Patterson explained that after eating the turkey dinner grandma prepared, everyone will need a little time to digest their food and relax. Additional extenuating circumstances underscored the importance of delaying the present-opening, he added.

“We haven’t had a chance to talk to Aunt Margaret about the home renovations yet,” he said. “I heard she added a whirlpool tub to the master bath, and everyone is going to want the full review. Also, Uncle Elmer just got that RV and I really want to hear about his vacation to Delaware.”

Billy Chambers, designated spokesperson for the Brotherhood of Gift Enthusiasts (BGE), said that talks between his organization and the NAA are at a standstill.

“I won’t lie, the negotiations have gone pear-shaped,” said Chambers, age 9. “I brought forth several reasonable arguments, but Patterson remains steadfast and unyielding.”

For example, Chambers said, he struggles to see a reason why members of the NAA cannot simultaneously drink coffee and open presents. Furthermore, he said, he fails to see why the members of the BGE must remain in the kitchen during the coffee session and listen to stories that have little application to their lives.

“As a nine year old, a discussion of how Grandpa Bob is navigating his ideal retirement package as weighed against his future Social Security benefits is abstract at best,” Cham-

bers said.

Despite suggestions from Chambers that members of the NAA start the coffee machine before dinner is completed, Patterson said that they will only begin brewing coffee a minimum of ten minutes after the last person has finished eating. Patterson added that the coffee maker in question is an exceedingly slow 5-cup Mr. Coffee drip coffee maker that will need to be refilled at least once in order for everyone to have a cup and three times if everyone wants two cups. Which they will.

“Patterson and his ilk would have you believe that the coffee-enjoying process will take 45 minutes to an hour,” Chambers said. “Past experience suggests the actual length of time will be an hour and a half minimum. Members of my organization have been burned before.”

Chambers added that the NAA is giving no consideration whatsoever to the gifts that could potentially be waiting under the Christmas tree and the importance of opening and enjoying them as soon as possible.

“I have reason to believe that the smaller gift with my name on it is a copy of Donkey Kong for Game Boy,” Chambers said. “My friend told me that you think the whole game is just going to be the same four levels from the arcade game but then it opens up and it turns out there’s about a billion different levels. That is — and I say this from a purely objective and clinical viewpoint — substantially more interesting than anything that has ever taken place in the kitchen.”

“Tests are still inconclusive,” Chambers added, “and we’re still taking measurements, but early reports indicate that the larger box reportedly concealed by the china hutch could contain a Nintendo 64. If that is the case, any further delay from gift-opening is not merely an inconvenience, but possibly a human rights violation.”

Patterson did not respond to this accusation by press time as he was busy having a beer with Uncle Mike and discussing whether or not Tom Kite would ever win The Masters.

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Published Each Saturday

USPS - 6

PUBLISHER

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The Henry County Enterprise (USPS-6) is published weekly for \$52 per year in state, \$53 per year out of state, by Virginia Media, Inc., P.O. Box 429, Lewisburg, WV 24901. Periodical postage paid at Martinsville, VA.

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Sports Schedule

Following are the dates and times of local high school teams and their games for the week of December 23-30:

12/26 TBA Boys Basketball Magna Vista vs TBA (at Bonner M.S.)
TBA Boys Basketball Martinsville vs TBA (at George Washington)
12/27 TBA Girls Basketball Magna Vista vs TBA (at Northern Guilford H.S.)

TBA Girls Basketball Martinsville vs TBA
TBA Boys Basketball Magna Vista vs TBA (at Bonner M.S.)
TBA Boys Basketball Martinsville vs TBA (at George Washington)
12/28 TBA Girls Basketball Martinsville vs TBA
TBA Boys Basketball Martinsville vs TBA (at George Washington)

LEGAL

ORDER OF PUBLICATION Case No. JJ017611-13-00
COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
VA. CODE § 8.01-316
HENRY COUNTY J & DR - JUVENILE
Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court
Commonwealth of Virginia, *in re* STOKES, LATRELL
HENRY MARTINSVILLE DSS v. UNKNOWN FATHER
The object of this suit is to:
PURSUANT TO VA CODE SECTION 16.1-283, TERMINATE THE RESIDUAL PARENTAL RIGHTS OF THE UNKNOWN FATHER OF LATRELL STOKES, A CHILD BORN MAY 29, 2020 TO ROLITA STOKES.
IT IS ORDERED that the defendant UNKNOWN FATHER appear at the above-named Court and protect his interests on or before 02/05/2025 at 3:00 p.m.
12/17/2024
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From our family to yours, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

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Crossing the Lines

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

Board vacates FOIA charge amid contentious debate on transparency



More than two dozen residents attended the December 9 Patrick County Board of Supervisors meeting.

Patrick County’s Board of Supervisors tackled issues of transparency, personnel, and community concerns during its meeting on Monday, Dec. 9. Among the most debated items was the decision to vacate a \$1,294.71 Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) charge incurred by The Enterprise newspaper.

The motion to vacate the fee, introduced by Dan River District Supervisor Andrew Overby, passed in a 4-1 vote after a lengthy discussion.

Overby, who won a special election in November and began his term at the December meeting, wasted no time addressing transparency concerns, adding to the meeting agenda a discussion on FOIA processes. He also asked for a discussion regarding County Administrator Beth Simms to be held in closed session.

The motion to amend the agenda passed 4-1, with Blue Ridge District Supervisor Steve Marshall abstaining.

Overby questioned County Attorney John Fitzgerald and Assistant County Administrator and FOIA officer Donna Shough about the FOIA process, specifically why a recent request from Debbie Hall in her capacity as editor of The Enterprise, was sent to Fitzgerald for review.

“Normally, we do send them through the

county attorney unless it’s something very, very basic,” Shough said.

Fitzgerald said there was a question for him as to what should be produced. “So, I conducted a review of the documents to determine whether anything should be exempted. We made certain redactions, and produced as much as was required,” Fitzgerald said.

“When you do a response to a FOIA request, you’re required to note the exemptions on the request” when information is redacted, as is required by law, Overby said.

Fitzgerald said he didn’t note exemptions; Shough added there were redactions, with no exemptions noted.

Overby said that doesn’t follow the requirements of the law.

“I wasn’t aware that we needed to note where the redactions” were, Fitzgerald said, and asked for specific examples.

“I don’t have them in front of me, but I’ve reviewed them and there were several areas where there were redactions and there were no notations at all. So, I’m just wondering why it was redacted,” Overby said. “You’re our legal counsel. You don’t know that you’re supposed to put an exemption or a redaction?”



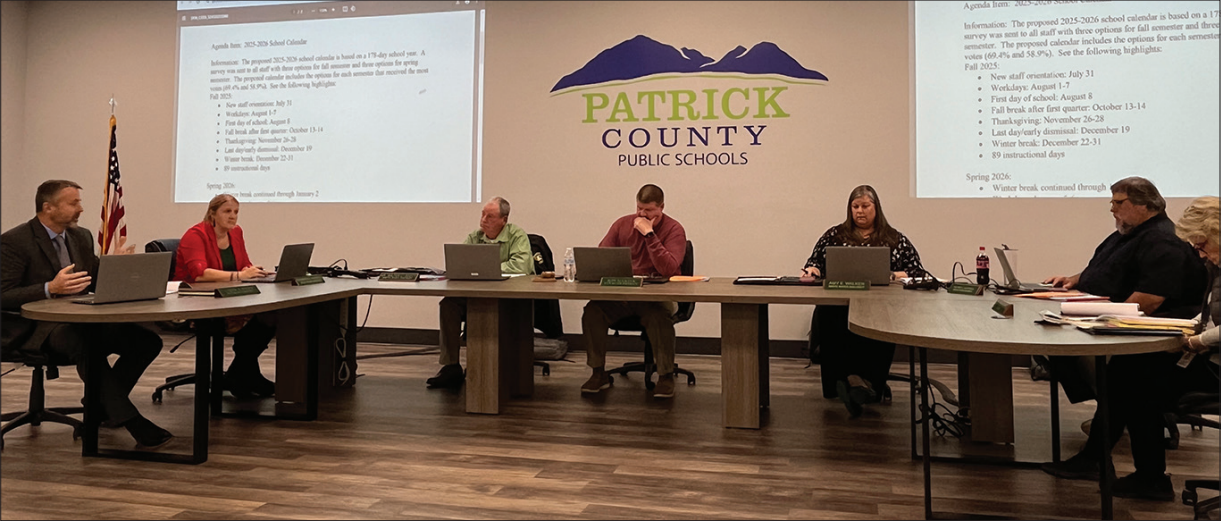
Andrew Overby, of the Dan River District, (left), attended his first Patrick County Board of Supervisors meeting as a board member. Jonathan Wood, vice chairman, is seated to the right.

Fitzgerald asked Overby to point him to the part of the Virginia FOIA Code he referenced.

“You’re the expert on the Code, right,” Overby said.

“You’re the one telling me that I’m supposed to provide the exemption,” Fitzgerald said.

School division receives \$77,000 School Security Equipment grant



The Patrick County School Board heard it received a School Security Equipment grant at its December 12 meeting.

Patrick County Schools Superintendent Jason Wood announced during the School Board’s meeting on Thursday, December 12 that the division received the School Security Equipment grant.

“This is a 75-25 percent grant, so we are receiving 75 percent of the grant total. We’ll receive \$77,000 or more than that towards security equipment,” Wood said.

The grant funds will be used to purchase window films to limit visibility in the schools, additional surveillance cameras at the Patrick County High School (PCHS), and weapons/metal detectors.

“We’ve went through several vendors, and

we saw several presentations. The OPEN-GATE system is the one that we have chosen,” he said.

Wood said this grant will be combined with the over \$1250,000 School Safety & Security Grant the division received in June 2024 to get the OPENGATE weapons/metal detectors for PCHS.

“With that combination of those two dollars, we’ll have to purchase two additional OPEN-GATE systems out of local dollars to have enough to every entrance secured at the high school. So really good news that we were able to combine two grants to get most of that paid for with grant dollars,” he said.

Safety Rope offers last-resort aid to county residents

For 30 years, Safety Rope has provided a critical safety net for Patrick County residents who find themselves with nowhere else to turn. The local nonprofit organization, founded in 1994, offers financial assistance for essential needs that often fall through the cracks of other aid programs.

“When people are having issues, a lot of times they go to the Department of Social Services (DSS) or other organizations for assistance,” said Peggy Rakes, the organization’s treasurer. “Light bills, car repairs, plumbing issues—just different things they don’t have the money to deal with. But most of those organizations have applications and limits, and people can only get

certain things covered.”

That’s where Safety Rope steps in.

“What Safety Rope does is we try to help with some of the bills that you don’t have anywhere else to turn for,” Rakes explained. “If your car is in the shop and that’s your only means of transportation to work, we try to help cover the cost of the car repairs. It’s just another avenue to turn to when you’ve been denied from everything else. We’re going to throw them a lifeline.”

In 2023, Safety Rope distributed more than \$25,000 to assist roughly 40 people, providing support for a range of needs, including utility bills, rent, and car repairs.

Patrick County Sheriff’s Office Ranks Among Busiest in Virginia, Report Finds



Patrick County Sheriff Dan Smith


The Patrick County Sheriff’s Office (PCSO) remains one of the busiest law enforcement agencies in Virginia serving populations under 20,000, according to the 2023 Crime in Virginia Report. Released during the summer of 2024 by the Virginia State Police Data and Reporting Team (DART), the report confirms Patrick County’s continued position alongside Scott and Buchanan counties as the busiest jurisdictions in their category.

Despite the heavy workload, Sheriff Dan Smith pointed to a relatively low crime rate in Patrick County. “Even though we are very busy, our incident rate is still low, at 4.45 percent (per capita), compared to 4.24 in 2022, which is much lower than the state average,” Smith said.


Crime and Arrest Statistics

The report shows that Patrick deputies handled 715 reported incidents and made 468 arrests in 2023. Virginia State Police (VSP) contributed to local law enforcement efforts by investigating 18 offenses and making 16 arrests. DMV data reveals that Patrick deputies investigated 15 reportable traffic crashes, while VSP troopers assigned to the county investigated 142 crashes, including six fatalities.


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




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Members of P&HCC's Lady Pats softball team show off their national championship rings.

Lady Pats Softball Team Honored at National Championship Ring Ceremony and Fundraiser

Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC) Athletics celebrated a historic milestone as the Lady Pats softball team received their 2024 NJCAA Division III National Championship rings on Saturday, December 14. The ceremony and fundraiser at Virginia Museum of Natural History was a night filled with celebration and community pride.

The event marked the culmination of a remarkable journey for the Lady Pats, who captured the school's first-ever national championship in May under the guidance of Head Coach Roger Campbell. Surrounded by family, friends, alumni, and community supporters, the team was recognized for their hard work, resilience, and dedication.

"This was a night to honor the players and staff who made history, but it was also a night to reflect on what makes the Lady Pats so special—our sense of family and faith," said Coach Campbell. "We're grateful to everyone who supported us throughout this journey, and this ceremony was a chance to share this achievement with all of you."

In addition to the ring presentation, the event featured a catered dinner, heartfelt speeches, and apparel sales to raise funds for P&HCC

Softball. Highlights of the evening included reflections from Coach Campbell and the student athletes, who spoke about the challenges and triumphs that defined their championship season.

Assistant Vice-President for Student Engagement and Athletic Director Brian Henderson praised the team's accomplishments, saying, "This championship represents so much more than a trophy. It's a testament to the hard work, passion, and unity of this program. The Lady Pats didn't just win on the field—more importantly they won off of it."

Fundraising proceeds from the event will help provide vital resources for student-athletes, ensuring the continued growth and success of the college's athletic programs.

The Lady Pats' championship run has left a lasting legacy at P&HCC, solidifying their place in the college's history. The ring ceremony served as a tribute to their remarkable season and a reminder of the power of perseverance, teamwork, and community support.

For more updates on P&HCC Athletics and upcoming events, visit www.phccsports.com or follow us on social media.

Crash results in death of local man

A two-vehicle crash resulted in the death of a Ridgeway man, according to a release from the Virginia State Police.

The crash occurred on Greensboro Road, at Lee Ford Camp Road in Henry County, on Friday, Dec 13 at 9:10 p.m.

A 2001 Chevrolet Silverado failed to yield the right-of-way while en-

tering Greensboro Road and was struck by a 2015 Audi.

The driver of the Chevrolet was identified as Marvin Lee Jenkins, 84, of Ridgeway, Va. Mr. Jenkins was wearing his seatbelt and was transported to Roanoke Memorial Hospital where he later died.

The crash remains under investigation.

Free Flu Drive-Thru Vaccine Clinic set for Dec. 27

The Pittsylvania-Danville Health District will offer a free seasonal flu vaccine clinic on Friday, December 27. The clinic will be held from 2 - 4 p.m. at the Pittsylvania County Health Department, 200 HC McGhee Drive in Chatham.

This drive-thru event will offer influenza (flu) vaccinations for everyone age 3 and older. A limited supply of free influenza vaccine will be available for this event on a first-come, first-served basis. A parent or legal guardian must accompany anyone younger than 18.

The purpose of these exercises is to simulate a mass vaccination event in which the health department and local agencies would work together so community members could be vaccinated efficiently during a time of emergency. Near Southwest Medical Reserve Corps volunteers will assist health department staff with this exercise. The vaccine is provided by the Virginia Department of Health, Office of Emergency Preparedness.

"We've already documented cases of influenza this season in the area, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Virginia Department of Health recommend vaccination each year for everyone 6 months and older," said Scott J. Spillmann, MD, MPH, director, Pittsylvania-Danville Health District. "Vaccination is the best way to prevent influenza and its potentially severe complications."

All persons aged 6 months or older should be vaccinated against influenza each year. Particular effort should be made to vaccinate people at higher risk for influenza complications, including:

Pregnant and postpartum women, or those who will be pregnant during the influenza season;

- Persons 65 years of age or older, including residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities
- People who have chronic lung or heart problems, including asthma
- People who have other serious medical conditions, such as diabetes, kidney disease, cystic fibrosis, anemia, cancer, weak immune systems (including those with HIV) or a seizure disorder.

Influenza, commonly called "the flu," is a serious disease caused by the influenza virus that affects the respiratory tract. It is highly contagious and generally spreads from person-to-person when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The virus can be transmitted even before flu-like symptoms appear. A person usually becomes sick one to three days following exposure to the virus. Typical flu symptoms include fever, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headache, muscle aches and extreme fatigue.

To minimize your risk of contracting or transmitting the flu, follow these simple steps:

- Get vaccinated;
- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly, for at least 20 seconds;
- Cover your cough, either by using a disposable tissue or coughing into your sleeve, not your hand;
- Stay at home when you are sick.

For questions about the flu vaccination event, please call (434)766-9887 or for more information or visit www.vdh.virginia.gov/epidemiology/influenza-flu-in-virginia/.

Enroll in Health Plans by December 31 for Coverage to Begin January 1

December 31 is the deadline for Virginians to apply for health care coverage through Virginia's Insurance Marketplace to ensure coverage begins on January 1. Those who enroll after December 31 but before the Open Enrollment Period ends on January 15 will have coverage starting February 1.

Virginia's Insurance Marketplace, operated by the Virginia Health Benefit Exchange under the State Corporation Commission, serves as the Commonwealth's official platform for comparing and purchasing health insurance. Since its launch in 2023, the Marketplace has helped more than 400,000 residents secure health plans. According to officials, nine out of 10 households qualify for financial assistance through the program.

"We are pleased to see so many Virginians shopping for and finding high-quality, affordable plans on the Marketplace," said Keven Patchett, director of Virginia's Insurance Marketplace. "Our team is prepared to continue helping Virginians navigate the open enrollment process and receive the perfect health plan for themselves and their families."

After the Open Enrollment Period closes on January 15, Virginians can still apply for coverage if they experience a Qualifying Life Event,

such as getting married, having a baby, or losing other health insurance. Additionally, those who have lost Medicaid coverage during the Medicaid unwinding period can enroll in affordable Marketplace plans through June 30.

All health plans offered through the Marketplace cover the 10 essential health benefits required by law, including emergency services, pregnancy and childbirth care, and prescription drugs. Individual and family plans are available to eligible Virginians, including self-employed individuals, unemployed residents, and those whose jobs do not provide affordable insurance options.

Virginians can visit Marketplace.Virginia.gov to browse and compare plans. For further assistance, residents can take advantage of the following resources:

Marketplace Help Center, at www.marketplace.virginia.gov, connects Virginians with in-person or phone support. Free translation services are available.

FAQ Page provides answers to common questions about the enrollment process and available plans.

With the deadline approaching, officials encourage Virginians to explore their options and secure coverage to protect their health and financial well-being.

Santa Brings Christmas Cheer at the pump

For those hitting the road ahead of Christmas or getting last minute gifts, Santa has delivered. Motorists will likely see a national average price of gas of \$2.95 per gallon on Christmas, the lowest we've seen on Christmas Day since 2020, according to GasBuddy, the leading fuel savings platform saving North American drivers the most money on gas.

After waiting years for the national average to fall back to levels more consistent with norms, gasoline prices are finally there, thanks to the Federal Reserve slowing the economy down with higher interest rates, a weak economy in China, the world's second largest oil consumer, and the ultimate healer: time. It has now been several years since the economy was growing at blistering pace, sending prices, including fuel, soaring across the globe, causing governments to increase borrowing costs, slowing the global economy, easing demand, which slowed inflation.

"This holiday season is shaping up to be a gift for American drivers, with gas prices presenting a stark contrast to the budget-breaking levels we've seen in recent years and a return to what feels like normal for many Americans filling their tanks," said Patrick De

Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy. "After waiting an exhausting two years for imbalances brought on by Covid and Russia's war on Ukraine to settle down, we're finally getting back to normal. Whether you're driving over the river and through the woods to grandmother's house or embarking on a longer holiday road trip, your wallet will feel a bit heavier, especially when utilizing the free GasBuddy app to find cheap gas."

States with the Most/Least Expensive Holiday Gas Prices in 2024

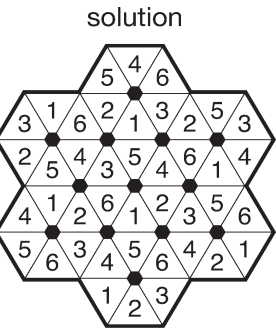
1. Oklahoma (\$2.46/gal) | Hawaii (\$4.58/gal)
2. Texas (\$2.53/gal) | California (\$4.31/gal)
3. Mississippi (\$2.55/gal) | Washington (\$3.93/gal)
4. Arkansas (\$2.54/gal) | Nevada (\$3.60/gal)
5. Tennessee (\$2.62/gal) | Oregon (\$3.47/gal)

GasBuddy recommends holiday road trippers always check fuel prices before filling up, especially when crossing state lines where gas taxes can cause prices to fluctuate. GasBuddy will also be releasing its 2025 Fuel Outlook later this month, forecasting gas prices for the year ahead to inform both consumers and fuel retailers of the top trends to watch for to save money.

See more at www.henrycountyenterprise.com

Puzzle Answers!

SNOWFLAKES



A	L	P	H	A	B	E	T		E	L	L	S		U	T	A	H	A	N	S
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E	S	S	E	N	C	E				A	B	L	E			P	H	O	N	E

SCRAMBLERS

solution

1. Deny
2. Soothe;
3. Master;
4. Refine

Today's Word

THINNER

FEAR & THE KNIGHT

answer



Weekly SUDOKU

Answer

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

Piedmont Arts kicks off the holidays with community celebrations



Piedmont Arts kicked off the holidays with three community events in December.

Preschoolers from Happy Feet Early Learning and Child Center in Martinsville helped deck the museum's halls on Dec. 3. With help from Mr. and Mrs. Claus — played by Gale Buck and his wife Christy — the students decorated the Christmas tree in the museum's lobby. The preschoolers also enjoyed cookies and hot chocolate with Santa.

The museum hosted 150 visitors for its annual tree lighting on Dec. 5 in the Gravely-Lester Art Garden. Buck, again dressed in full Santa regalia, entertained youth visitors with Christmas stories, choirs from First Baptist Church and Starling Avenue Baptist performed carols and members of the Piedmont Arts Guild served guests cookies and hot chocolate. The Art Garden Christmas tree is an art piece in itself. Created by Ian Hogg using more than 3,000 lights, it will illuminate the Art Garden through New Year's Day. This annual celebration was made possible by sponsors Chip Wyatt of State Farm,

Press Glass and Carter Bank.

The Roanoke Symphony Orchestra and Chorus led by Music Director and Conductor David Stewart Wiley returned for Piedmont Arts' annual Holiday Pops Spectacular on Dec. 8 at Martinsville High School Auditorium. Guest soloist Michael Lynche performed with the Symphony. He is best known as a contestant on season nine of "American Idol," where he won millions of fans with his powerful, soulful voice. More than 800 people filled the audience, setting a new attendance record.

"The Holiday Pops is always a community favorite," said Executive Director Heidi Pinkston. "This year, we saw more of the community come out than ever before to celebrate the holidays with us. We are so grateful for everyone who attended and to Mr. Wiley, Mr. Lynche, the Symphony and Chorus for their incredible performance."

The Holiday Pops Spectacular was made possible by sponsors Stifel and Stateline Aesthetics. The performance was partially supported by funding from the Virginia



Commission for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Guests are invited to visit the Christmas trees in the Art Garden and museum lobby through New Year's Day. Visitors can also enjoy the exhibits "The Art of the Quilt" and "Virginia Foothills Quilters Guild" on view through Jan. 11 in the Piedmont Arts galleries. These exhibits feature quilts and quilted accessories created by artists from across the Southeast. A tour of these colorful and innovative textiles is the perfect way to celebrate the holidays with friends and family. Exhibit admission is always



free.

Piedmont Arts is open to the public from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday. The Art Garden is open from dawn to dusk each day. The museum will be closed Dec. 24-25 and open from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Dec. 26-28. In celebration of the New Year, the museum will be closed Dec. 31-Jan. 1.

For more information on exhibits and events, visit PiedmontArts.org.

See more at
www.henrycountyenterprise.com

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savannah.mcnear@spectrummed.com

Nearly 20 attend December session of Citizens Academy



Those who successfully complete the Citizens Academy receive a certificate.



Ben Rea (left, at podium), Henry County Sheriff Wayne Davis (center) and Martinsville Police Chief Rob Fincher.

Several people attended the latest session of the Citizens Academy, held on December 11 at the Piedmont Regional Criminal Justice Training Academy in Martinsville.

“I am particularly grateful to

Martinsville City Police Chief Rob Fincher and Henry County Sheriff Wayne Davis for their willingness to engage with attendees and share their expertise,” Martinsville Mayor LC Jones wrote in a social media post. “Addition-



Attendees learn about fires and fire protection.

ally, I would like to acknowledge our gracious host, the academy staff, the public safety staff, and Director Benjamin Rea for their steadfast support throughout the event.”

Sponsors of the most recent

session include Brenda Stovall; Anthea Barbour; Latoya Preston, director of Empowering Voices; Councilman-Elect Rayshaun Gravely, and Carter Bank.

The next session will be held in March.

Season's Greetings & Best Wishes

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