

Residents Raise Concerns About Uptown Dumpster Ordinance

By Jessica Dillon
City officials hosted a public meeting to discuss a proposed Uptown refuse ordinance that would change how trash is handled. The ordinance is designed to reduce street litter and streamline waste disposal by requiring businesses and residents to use city-designated dumpsters, accessible via key fobs. Failure to comply could result in misdemeanor charges. City officials initially considered providing individual trash cans for each business but struggled with storage logistics. The dumpsters will be placed in city-owned or leased parking lots within half-block radiuses to improve accessibility. "The locations of these can still be determined," said Greg Maggard, director of public works. "But we hope



Director of Public Works Greg Maggard explains the ordinance and speaks with citizens about garbage solutions.

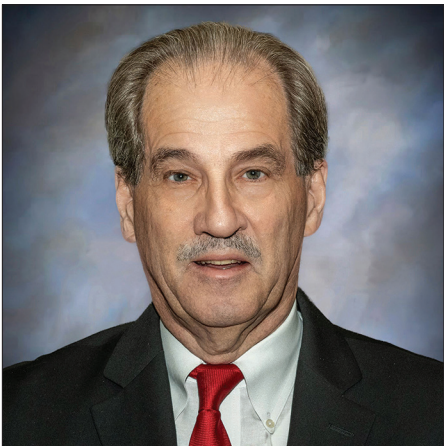


City Manager Aretha Ferrell-Benavides discusses workforce shortages in refuse services.

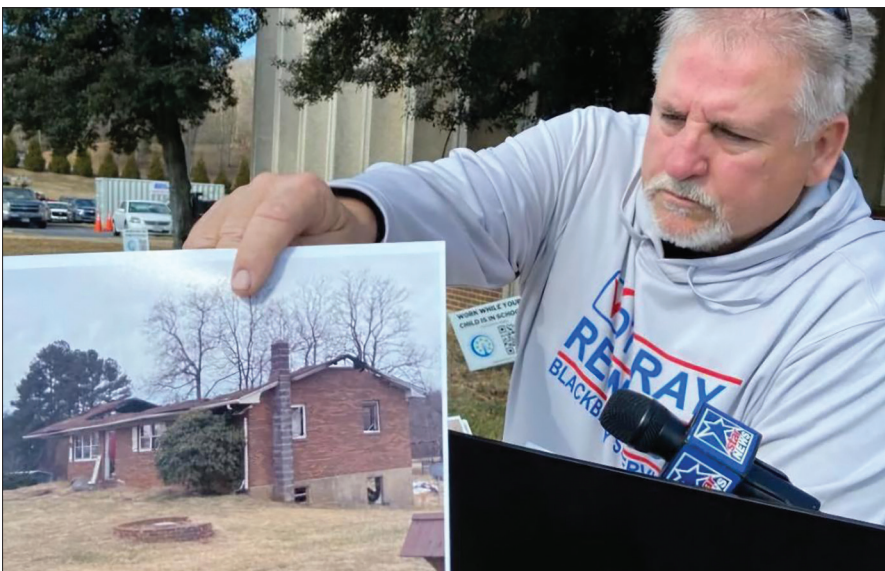
Businesses currently using private dumpsters will be allowed to keep them. The city's new dumpsters will be accessible via key fobs, which can be deactivated if a bill goes unpaid or if a business opts out of the service. Some residents raised concerns about the potential burden the new system would place on businesses and individuals. "It would be a transition to us fully doing the service," said one resident, worried about taking on more responsibility for garbage disposal. Currently, trash is collected five days a week, but inefficiencies in pickup times have led to inconsistencies. One resident questioned whether the change was necessary. "Where in the world can you go and not find

Adams to Seek Seventh Term on Board of Supervisors

By Taylor Boyd
Jim Adams announced his candidacy for a seventh term as the Henry County Board of Supervisors' Blackberry District representative in the upcoming November election against challenger and local businessman Ray Reynolds. Adams, who has held the position since 2002, is currently serving his 13th year as the board's chairman. He previously served as vice chairman for four nonconsecutive years. He said he is seeking reelection to continue work on several ongoing projects that he hopes to see through to completion. "I feel we've got a lot of positive



things that we've worked toward...." (See Adams p. 2)



One of the properties Reynolds believes should be removed from the Blackberry District.

Reynolds Announces Bid for Blackberry District Post

By Jessica Dillon
Local business owner Ray Reynolds has announced his candidacy for Blackberry District supervisor, challenging longtime incumbent and current board chairman Jim Adams, who has held the position for 24 years. Ad-

ams is seeking reelection. Reynolds' campaign will focus on cleaning up the district, restoring resident's pride in the community, supporting the effort to reopen the long-closed Bassett Community Center, (See Reynolds p. 2)



Draper to Seek Reelection in November

After serving the community for 30 years, Martinsville Sheriff Steve Draper has announced his intention to seek reelection in November. Draper expressed gratitude to the citizens for allowing him to serve, calling it a "great job" and noting that he has enjoyed the role. He said his decision to run again came after careful consideration, particularly following encouragement from several citizens

who asked if he planned to seek another term. Reflecting on his tenure, Draper said he is proud of the work accomplished and the team he has built. He credited his staff, describing them as dedicated professionals who care deeply about the people they serve and the community as a whole. He also emphasized the diversity within (See Draper p. 2)

Lawless Announces Bid for Collinsville Supervisor Seat

By Jessica Dillon
Chris Lawless has announced his candidacy for the Collinsville District supervisor seat currently held by Joe Bryant in the upcoming election. Bryant has not yet said whether he will seek reelection. Lawless, a 39-year-old business owner, made his bid official on Jan. 28, emphasizing his commitment to the community and acknowledging his potential opponent, Joe Bryant, who initially encouraged him to run. A Collinsville resident, Lawless lives near the post office and founded (See Lawless p. 3)



Chris Lawless holds a press conference using a stand made by workers at his company.

Lifelong advocate, businessman passes away

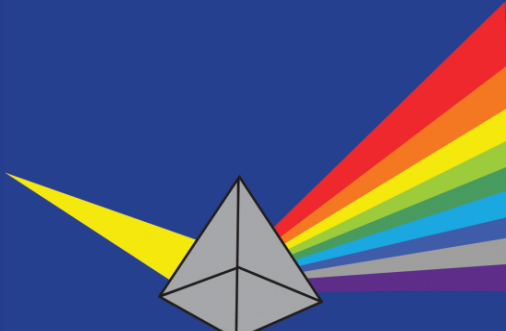
By Taylor Boyd
George W. Lester II, a steadfast advocate for the Martinsville-Henry County area, passed away Friday, January 31 at the age of 85. Known as a business leader, executive in the building materials business, and community advocate, Lester's life can be summed up by his personal philosophy: Luke 12:48 - "From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded." Lester is survived by his wife and their five children. A lifelong resident of Henry County, Lester graduated from Martinsville High

School and North Carolina University, where he majored in Industrial Engineering. In 1963, he started working full-time in the family business before he became its president in 1974. The family businesses would eventually become the Lester Group, Inc, and Lester served as President and CEO of the Group from 1983 until 2019 when he became Co-Chairman of the board. Jim O'Brien, Co-Chairman of the Lester Group's Board of Directors, said Lester's love of his community and the Group, and his care of the employees was obvious to all that worked with him. "His legacy of generosity and dedication will continue to inspire us all," he said. More than just a businessman, Lester

Group CEO Jay Dickens noted Lester was a mentor, community leader, and friend to many. "His legacy of integrity, innovation, and commitment to excellence will continue to influence today's culture," Dickens said. Since 1975, Lester led Lester Development Corporation as its President. He was also one of the pilot organizers of Carter Bank, where he served on the Board of Directors. Carter Bank CEO Litz Van Dyke said Lester's legacy will forever be intertwined with the community. "He will always be remembered for his sharp business acumen and his kind and generous spirit. During his 44-year (See Lester p. 3)

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Uptown Dumpster

(cont. from page 1)

trash out first thing in the morning?” the resident asked. Maggard responded that reducing visible trash, particularly in hot weather, was a priority as Martinsville’s population continues to grow.

A suggestion was made to redesign collection routes for earlier pickups. “I don’t understand why they can’t go through at a set time,” one citizen asked. Maggard explained that a rigid schedule could create issues. “If we are there really early, are you going to miss that window of time?” he said, adding that business hours also factor into pickup schedules. A business owner noted that early morning pickup would not be feasible for his weekend operations.

City Manager Aretha Ferrell-Benavides highlighted staffing challenges in the refuse department. “There is a workforce shortage,” she said. “We would be in trouble without the orange jumpsuits right now,” referring to inmate labor used for city services.

Concerns were raised about potential hazards from flammable or explosive items in dumpsters, as well as increased waste from new apartment developments.

Maggard warned that reducing labor could lead to increased service rates. A resident countered by asking if rates would decrease if fewer workers were needed. “We should be getting rid of employees and getting rid of trucks,” the resident argued. Maggard responded that resources would be reallocated elsewhere in the city.

Some residents proposed a hybrid approach, incorporating both dumpsters and limited traditional trash pickup. “A hybrid approach might work,” said council member Aaron Rawls. He noted that other munici-

palities were studied to determine best practices. “We have not seen any city that just puts it out on the sidewalk.”

Rawls also pointed out that Martinsville’s service rates are comparable to cities with twice-weekly pickup, despite providing service five days a week. “That doesn’t capture the costs properly,” he said, adding that the city spends \$60,000 annually to maintain the current system. The physically demanding nature of the job has made it difficult to fill positions.

A business owner expressed concerns that the ordinance would disproportionately impact small businesses while attempting to attract larger investors. “How genuine is the ordinance in being business-friendly,” the business owner asked.

“I don’t think this change is predicated on one or two groups,” Rawls said, adding that liability concerns—especially regarding Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance—must also be considered. If there was an ADA issue with trash, he said the city would be liable.

“To what extent do we address the issue that people get this five-day-a-week service for a two-day-a-week rate?” Rawls questioned, noting inefficiencies in the city’s billing system. Ferrell-Benavides added, “We’re looking at it economically, we are looking at it future-wise.”

Council member Julian Mei acknowledged the range of opinions from businesses and residents. “There’s countless other people saying, ‘I don’t want trash on the street,’” Mei said. “It’s great to see so many people caring about something in Martinsville.”



A diagram shows dumpster use area and dumpster location.

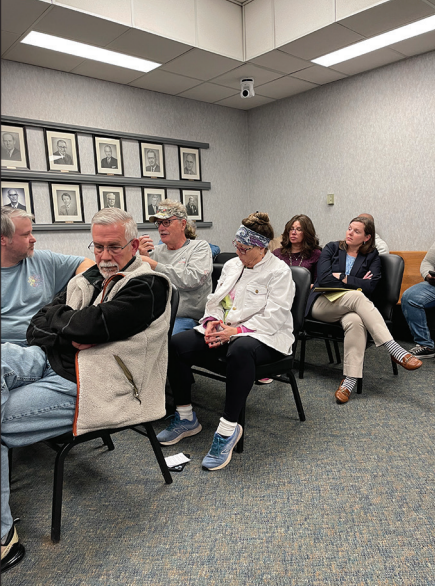
Concerns were also raised about long-term costs associated with the key fob system, particularly as Uptown’s population grows. Maggard said that the BB&T building would have its own dedicated dumpster.

Some residents suggested testing the dumpster system in high-problem areas before implementing it city-wide. Others worried that physically impaired individuals would struggle with trash disposal.

Rawls emphasized that accommodations would be made for residents with mobility challenges. “We do have some folks in Uptown who can’t walk their trash to the dumpster,” he said. Maggard echoed his sentiment. “If it doesn’t work, we will pivot,” he said. “I don’t care; I just want it to work.”

Additional concerns were raised about trash spillage from broken bags. While some acknowledged that trash bags are often neatly stacked rather than scattered, Maggard suggested that enclosed dumpsters could help mitigate rodent issues. “To counteract any issues, we will need to see it happen,” he said.

The controversial stop sign changes



Some of the residents attending the community input session.

from the previous year were cited as an example of a city policy that was quickly reversed, raising concerns about whether the dumpster initiative would also fail and become a financial burden. Maggard remained open to adjustments. “I’m here to do what’s best for you guys,” he said.

Adams

(cont. from page 1)

including “a good, strong fund balance. Henry County’s strong financial position allows it to participate in economic development, match grants, and solidify infrastructure that puts us in front of other localities,” Adams said.

He said the board prioritizes securing grants to fund infrastructure projects in order to minimize the need to draw from the county’s reserves.

“It’s also used as an economic incentive on occasion,” he said.

Adams noted that ongoing site development at Commonwealth Crossing Business Centre will provide space for expansion and create opportunities for new businesses.

“The two that we have been game changers. Press Glass, of course, liked the work ethic of people, liked the location. In August 2023, they announced another addition to it that was a \$155 million addition,” he said.

The presence of Press Glass and Crown Holdings at Commonwealth Crossing has contributed to economic

growth, Adams said, as local businesses have increased wages to remain competitive.

“So, that’s a good thing. Wage levels are up, jobs are still plentiful, our unemployment is low, and as with anything else, there are always opportunities month in, month out,” he said.

One of the financial challenges the board will face in the coming years is the debt service associated with the Henry County Detention Center.

“It carries quite a bit of debt on it that we haven’t had to face for the first couple of years, so a good, strong, healthy fund balance is part of that,” he said.

Adams said housing is another key issue that will require attention is localities must focus on providing quality housing to retain residents.

“Or if they’re attracted by the job, come live here and spend your money versus carrying it across the state line or another county and living there,” he said. “So, we’ll be working on some

housing initiatives, and continue to keep our eye on infrastructure, keep a hand in to making sure we stay fiscally responsible in what we’re doing.”

Despite occasional differences of opinion, Adams said the board works well together and maintains a productive and respectful dynamic.

“At least we’re civil in our discussions. The board members come well prepared with the background information, and they ask questions, and it’s a pleasure to work with them. It’s a pleasure to work with citizens,” he said.

As part of his platform, Adams said he will continue efforts to stabilize the county’s fire and emergency medical services (EMS) system through supplemental staffing and refining service needs.

“This is important to our area, as the needs for service increase. Support of public safety through our fire departments, rescue squads, 911 Center, as well as our sheriff’s department ensures timely response to the

needs of the community,” he said. Adams serves on the Executive Board and is chairman of the West Piedmont Planning District Commission. He is also the chairman of the regional Transportation Technical Advisory Committee. He has previously served on the Henry County Board of Zoning Appeals, the Henry County Schools Facilities Improvement Committee, and the Executive Board of the Smart Beginning for Early Childhood Development. Adams has been a member of the Sanville Ruritan Club since 1979, serving as Zone 1 & 3 Governor as well as several other club offices. He is a past recipient of the Ruritan DRM award. He is a member and serves on the Board of Directors of the Bassett Kiwanis Club, Patrick Henry Volunteer Fire Department, Marc Workshop and Habitat for Humanity. He is a member at Stella Christian Church. Adams is married with two children and two grandchildren.

Reynolds

(cont. from page 1)

and addressing water quality issues on Fairmont Drive.

Reynolds highlighted areas in the district that have fallen into disrepair, with abandoned homes contributing to an unkempt appearance. “I’ve had people reach out and say it’s like a third-world country when they go through that neighborhood sometimes,” Reynolds said, displaying photos of deteriorated homes, including one severely damaged by fire. “They have funds to take care of this,” he added, referencing the county’s financial resources.

Community involvement, Reynolds emphasized, will be key in cleaning up the district. He acknowledged that the county does not have a dedicated department for trash cleanup but believes residents will step up. “If we live here, we want to keep our place clean,” he said.

One of Reynolds’ priorities is helping the effort to reopen the Bassett Community Center, which has been closed for several years. He expressed a willingness to collaborate with groups advocating for the center’s reopening and help secure grants for renovations.

Reynolds believes revitalizing the community center and removing di-

lapitated homes would significantly improve the district. “You could do tiny houses on these properties if you had to. You could do duplexes,” he suggested, adding that increasing affordable housing options is another priority.

Reynolds also pledged to support efforts by the Public Service Authority (PSA) to improve water quality on Fairmont Drive, where residents struggle with unsafe drinking water despite using multiple filters. He said residents have been raising concerns since before the COVID-19 pandemic but have been met with inaction. “They get a ‘deaf ear,’” he said he was told.

Following his campaign announcement, Reynolds spoke with County Administrator/General Manager of the PSA Dale Wagoner. Reynolds said he learned that the Public Service Authority (PSA) is awaiting a preliminary engineering report about service to areas that include Fairmont Drive. Once the report is received, officials will determine the project’s cost and put it out for bids.

Reynolds also addressed the status of a solar farm project at the former Bassett Country Club. Noting that while the Board of Zoning Appeals

originally approved it, he said recent changes now require approval from the Board of Supervisors. He expressed concern over state efforts to remove permitting authority from local governments, warning that if such efforts succeed, localities will have no control over the placement of solar farms.

He further explained that the solar farm at the former Bassett Country Club was allowed because it was considered a small-scale project, generating less than five megawatts. Under current regulations, any solar project exceeding that threshold must go through the Board of Supervisors for approval.

Since his announcement, Reynolds said he learned that two dilapidated structures on Blackberry Road were set for demolition after being found uninhabitable. One of the buildings has a tree growing through it, while the foundation of the other has rotted. Both are located approximately 1,000 yards from his driveway. He noted that such actions by the county only occur if an adjacent homeowner or the district’s supervisor files a formal complaint. The county does not independently inspect properties to determine if they should be condemned

unless prompted by a complaint regarding safety or habitability.

Reynolds said he is opposed to city-county reversion, warning that such a move would result in higher taxes. “It wouldn’t be the right move for the county,” he said.

He also stressed the importance of increasing school funding without diverting money from essential services like law enforcement and public safety.

Reynolds said he has no interest in participating in a debate, but is committed to advocating for positive change, regardless of the election outcome. “I’m not going to trash Jimmy (Adams) on a public forum,” he said, emphasizing that while they may have differing opinions, he respects Adams’ long tenure.

If elected, Reynolds said he would work collaboratively with fellow supervisors to pass measures that benefit the county. He pointed to his leadership role as president of the local Kiwanis Club as evidence of his ability to work with others.

“I’m proud of what I’ve done in the community. I want to do more,” Reynolds said. His campaign, he emphasized, will be focused on “the truth and the facts.”

Draper

(cont. from page 1)

his office, saying it reflects the broader community and its values.

Draper said he was humbled by the number of citizens who reached out to encourage him to continue in his role. He reiterated his love for both the job

and the city.

Although he has no children, Draper noted that he has a wonderful niece and a fiancée. He said his commitment to public service remains strong and that serving as sheriff is a role he

deeply values.

He called on citizens to support him in the upcoming election, asking for their votes on Nov. 4.

Draper’s announcement was supported by a range of individuals, in-

cluding state, county, and city law enforcement officials, constitutional officers, friends, and city officials. Many members of his staff also attended the event, underscoring the support he has within his department.

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

Tuesday, February 11
City Council Meeting, 7 p.m., Municipal Building Council Chambers, 55 W. Church Street, Martinsville.

Wednesday, February 12
Henry County Planning Commission meets at 5 p.m., with public hearings held at 6 p.m., Henry County Administration Building, Collinsville.

Thursday, February 13
Architectural Review Board Meeting, 4 p.m. to 5 p.m., Municipal Building Council Chambers, 55 W. Church Street, Martinsville.

Friday, February 14
Arts and Culture Committee Meeting, 1 p.m. to 2 p.m., Municipal Building Council Chambers, 55 W. Church Street, Martinsville.

Wednesday, February 19
Planning Commission Meeting, 4 p.m. to 5 p.m., Municipal Building Council Chambers, 55 W. Church Street, Martinsville.

Events

Saturday, February 8
African American Read-In + Family Day, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Piedmont Arts, 215 Starling Avenue Martinsville.

A Walk in the Park, hosted by All Vets, 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., Jack Dalton Park, 130 Jack Dalton Road Collinsville.

SPCA FURBowl, 6 p.m., Chatmoss Country Club, 550 Mt Olivet Road, Martinsville.

Sunday, February 9
Sweetheart Social, 2 p.m. to 5 p.m., Spencer-Penn Center, 475 Spencer Penn Rd, Spencer.

Thursday, February 13
Piano Bar – The Un-Valentine Show, 7 to 10 p.m., Blackbox Theatre, 44 Franklin Street Martinsville.

Friday, February 14
Music Night: Smith River Ramblers, 5 p.m., 2 p.m. to 5 p.m., Spencer-Penn Center, 475 Spencer Penn Road, Spencer.

ONGOING

Martinsville High School’s spring musical program, Zombie Prom, show dates are February 16, 17, 19, 7 p.m., and February 18, 3 p.m. Ticket information will be released soon.

The Friends of the Blue Ridge Regional Library are hosting a book sale in the basement of the main branch, 310 E. Church St., Martinsville. “Members Only,” Friday, Feb. 14, 1-5 p.m.; sale on Saturday, Feb. 15, 9:30 a.m.-2 p.m., is open to the public. All proceeds go back into the library system.

A series of four classes on genealogical research will be held from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Bassett Historical Center on each Tuesday in February (4, 11, 18, 25). There is no charge for the classes, but a reservation is needed. When you sign up for the first class, you will automatically be signed up for the other three classes. The classes are limited to 12. Call the center now (276) 629-9191 to reserve a spot.

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, 277 Philpott Dam Road, Bassett, hosts breakfast on the 2nd Saturday of each month, \$9 for adults, and \$4 for children under 12. All you can eat, sausage, fried bologna, eggs, cooked apples, sausage gravy, 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.

Book Bingo on the 4th Tuesday of the month at the Martinsville Branch of the Blue Ridge Regional Library, 11 a.m. to noon. Call (276) 403-5430 to register.

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

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

TOPS FIELDVALE 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. Registration is not required.

Lawless

(cont. from page 1)

Lawless Welding in 2016. Since its inception, the business has grown from two employees to 30. He said his motivation for seeking office stems from a desire to give back to the community that has supported him.

“Ninety percent of my business is in Martinsville, Henry County, and I want everybody to know that my community has been good to me and it’s time to give back to my community,” he said.

Lawless has been involved with several local charities, a commitment he attributes to his wife’s work with the United Way. He has supported initiatives such as the Warming Shelter, local food pantries, and Boy Scouts programs, offering welding classes for young participants. He has also made contributions to the Henry County Sheriff’s Office and assists members of the community whenever possible.

In June 2024, Lawless spoke with Bryant about running for the supervisor seat. At that time, Bryant indicated he had no plans to seek reelection in 2025 and advised Lawless to secure his place on the ballot early. Taking that advice, Lawless used the recent snowfall as an opportunity to gather signatures while Collinsville residents were home.

During his outreach efforts, Lawless said he received a warm reception, with some residents inviting him into their homes. He noted that his biggest concern while going door to door was not the people but the dogs behind the doors.

Although Lawless initially believed Bryant would not seek reelection, he later learned that Bryant was reconsidering after being encouraged by influential supporters. Lawless questioned Bryant’s level of commitment to the race, stating that a candidate should be fully invested in serving the community.

Regarding Bryant’s legal issues, Lawless said they do not factor in his campaign.

“In my personal opinion, a person is innocent until proven guilty, that’s number one. Also, that’s a personal matter. We’re here for business,” he said.

Lawless emphasized that his campaign will focus on local issues rather than personal attacks. He intends to prioritize community improvements, including addressing litter, assisting elderly residents, and tackling infrastructure concerns.

He also cited the need for affordable housing as a major concern.

“Mobile homes now cost over \$100,000, how’s that affordable?”

he said, expressing his desire to find solutions that make housing more accessible.

Lawless wants to see increased support and better compensation for first responders. He also advocates for expanding trade job opportunities to help retain residents and strengthen the local workforce.

“What you do is you build a strong workforce that way. Jobs that can’t go overseas. Jobs that have to stay over here because you have skilled labor doing it,” he said.

He believes Henry County must adapt to remain competitive and pointed to Danville as an example of a locality making significant progress.

“Danville’s soaring past us like never before,” he said.

Engaging younger generations is another priority for Lawless. “We need some new schools because we need our population to grow,” he said, and pledged to stay active in the community regardless of the election outcome.

He also vowed to be present at as many community events and photo opportunities as possible, not for personal promotion, but to help raise awareness for the organizations he supports.

As part of his outreach efforts,

Lawless plans to visit the Chatham Heights and Leatherwood areas within the Collinsville District that he said often receives little attention. He made it clear that his campaign is not about promoting business interests.

“I’m not selling fiber optics. The only thing I’m doing is trying to sell myself to get your vote,” he said.

Lawless believes Henry County is facing an identity crisis and must address wage disparities to remain viable. While he did not criticize the current board, he said maintaining the status quo is not enough for the county to thrive.

“The board is maintaining, I have nothing bad to say about those guys,” he said.

Lawless also intends to help resolve issues surrounding sound competitions at Bryant Radio in Collinsville. Rather than shutting down the events, he suggested alternative locations, such as the local Smith River Sports Complex, that could better accommodate them.

“I don’t want to stop business, I want everybody to understand that. Why can’t we use the sports complex? Why can’t we make it a bigger event? Why can’t we do it somewhere else besides the middle of Collinsville?” he said.

Lester

(cont. from page 1)

tenure as a director of Carter Bank his leadership and wisdom were an integral part of making our company successful. I am honored to have worked with George in his role as a director for our company, but more importantly my life was enriched by having known George as a friend. He will be sorely missed,” Van Dyke said.

In business, he also served as chair of the National Lumber & Building Materials Dealers Association in 2015, and was a past president of the Independent Builders Supply Association, the Virginia Building Materials Association, and the Virginia Forestry Association.

In his work to serve the community, Lester chaired United Way, the Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce, the Martinsville-Henry County Economic Development Corporation, and was a trustee of Memorial Hospital of Martinsville and Henry County.

In 1993, Lester founded Job-Link, a committee of leaders from

Henry, Franklin, and Rockingham Counties working to get an interstate highway to connect Roanoke and Greensboro.

In 2024, Lester committed \$2.5 million for the creation of a new YMCA facility in Uptown Martinsville. Because of this donation, the Martinsville-Henry County YMCA’s proposed building will be named The Lester Family YMCA.

He founded the Cap’n Til and Lottie Shelton Lester Fund at the Community Foundation Serving Western Virginia in 2015. The fund provides ongoing financial support to entrepreneurs, small businesses, and educational organizations in the community, for college scholarships to Martinsville-Henry County students, and to assist in transportation development.

Henry County Chairman Jim Adams, of the Blackberry District, said Lester played an important role in the development of Martinsville and Henry County through his work with The Lester Group and through his leadership

and advocacy in various local organizations.

“His role in business and economic development was significant, and he will be remembered for his impact on our community. On behalf of the Henry County Board of Supervisors, I extend my condolences to his family and loved ones during this difficult time,” Adams said.

Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society member Mervin King said he’d known Lester for a long time.

“He was really supportive of the community,” King said.

King said he worked with Lester to fund the New College Institute (NCI) before its extension was built.

“He was associated with the construction of NCI, he was very much involved in that, and he worked to promote the college,” he said.

King said Lester also had ties to the Museum of Natural History as his wife served on the board.

“He gave a lot of financial support to that board,” he said.

Lester was also dedicated to the Martinsville-Henry County Heritage Center & Museum.

“He would visit us and talk with us, that was after he had his stroke. He was a great individual, he really helped support the community” in any way he could. “I was really impressed with him,” he said.

King will miss being able to talk and work with Lester.

“Some people you just really enjoy working with, he was a great person. He and his wife were great people to work with,” he said.

In addition to remembering everything Lester’s associated with, King said he’ll also remember that Lester worked to name the NCI’s King Hall after him.

“He was a really dedicated, supportive, and successful individual. We will miss him, and he will be remembered. I hope everyone remembers all the great things he’s done for the community and appreciates him for it, that’s very important,” he said.

OPINION

New Committee Assignments

The 119th Congress shapes up to be a busy Congress, particularly for me.

The increase in activity is both because of the bold initiatives Republicans hope to pass and additional committee assignments that I have been given.

In the last term, I was selected for the first time to serve on the House Committee on Administration.

The Committee has jurisdiction over most of the activities occurring at the U.S. Capitol. The U.S. Capitol complex is larger than the Capitol itself.

It includes the Library of Congress, the U.S. Botanical Gardens and the world-famous Smithsonian Institute Museums. Jurisdiction naturally includes oversight of the Capitol Police and committee budgets.

What many people do not know is that the Committee has jurisdiction over federal election administration.

While an important committee, House Administration does not take up as much of my time as the House Committee on Energy and Commerce.

As you know, I have served on Energy and Commerce since first being elected. The Committee holds scores of hearings related to important issues, such as the country's health care system, domestic energy production and broadband.

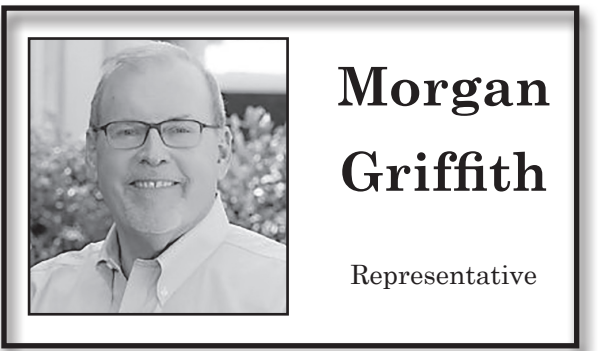
Further, the Committee holds discussions and briefings that require my attendance.

Chairman Guthrie asked me to take on the responsibility of chairing the committee's Environment Subcommittee.

The Subcommittee will be focused on the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), government regulations and overreach, and the country's environmental policies.

Additionally, in early January, Speaker Johnson appointed me to serve on the House Committee on Rules.

The Rules Committee exercises great



influence over the legislative process in Congress. Members of the panel contribute to the advancement of legislation, control the length of debate on a measure, and may even alter the content of legislation.

Excluding circumstances where there is a suspension of the rules, every bill usually goes through the Rules Committee before a floor vote is taken by the entire House.

Given there are 435 lawmakers in the House, many in the chamber historically offered numerous amendments to a single piece of legislation. Accordingly, this practice consumed large amounts of time and prolonged debate on legislation.

The Rules Committee is supposed to streamline the legislative process to avoid unnecessary delays. The Committee is empowered to place limitations on the number of amendments and establishes the amount of time of debate for each bill.

I hope to work to assure the Committee does not eliminate debate on important issues.

Chairwoman Virginia Foxx (R-NC), who chairs the Rules Committee, will be serving her first term as Chairwoman of the Committee.

Following my appointment to the Committee, Chairwoman Foxx selected me to serve as Vice Chairman of the Committee!

As Majority Leader in Virginia's House of Delegates, I was a staunch advocate for making sure the rules of the chamber reflected the principles of Jefferson's Manual of Parliamentary Practice and Procedure.

This appointment to the Committee will

give me an opportunity to move the House towards a process that is both efficient and fair.

I have already seen important bills come before the Committee.

Given the trust placed in me by Speaker Johnson and others for these committee assignments, I will dedicate a great deal of my energy and time to these bodies.

But that does not mean I will not take time to listen to your concerns.

Folks from Virginia's Ninth District are some of those who will come to DC and meet with my DC office.

Generally, I try to make myself available to meet with folks when the schedule permits. To do so, I often must step off the dais and briefly leave a committee hearing to see a constituent in the hallway.

This practice will obviously continue, and unfortunately be more commonplace, during the 119th Congress.

The Rules Committee meets in the U.S. Capitol, while Energy and Commerce meets in the Rayburn House Office Building, and House Administration meets in the Longworth House Office Building.

Accordingly, when coming to my office, you may have to be escorted to one of these three locations. Regrettably, the three locations are not easy to get to from each other, so it may take a few minutes.

Nonetheless, I will continue to listen to you and advocate for you in Washington, whether that involves me seeing you in the district, or in the hallways of Congress.

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.

The architect of our modern age

There are many, many people on both sides of the aisle who could be assigned credit and/or blame for our present moment, but in my opinion, one of the towering architects of 2025 is a man who never even lived to see the 21st century: Harvey LeRoy "Lee" Atwater.

For those too young to remember Lee Atwater and those who only half-remember him as a Doonesbury punchline, allow me to take you on a brief and upsetting journey into the past.

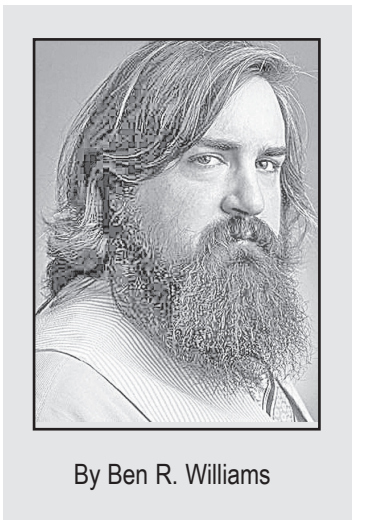
Born in 1951 in Atlanta, Georgia, Lee Atwater would grow up to become one of the preeminent Republican campaign consultants of the 1980s. He started his political career with the South Carolina Republican Party in the 1970s, becoming an active participant in campaigns for folks like Sen. Strom Thurmond. It was here that Atwater began honing his greatest skill: manipulating voters by appealing to their emotions with controversial wedge issues.

For example, in 1980, Atwater was a campaign consultant to South Carolina Republican Congressman Floyd Spence, who was running against Democratic nominee Tom Turnipseed. Atwater sent out fake surveys to suburbs that served as a Trojan horse meant to inform white voters that Turnipseed was a member of the NAACP. He sent out letters from Strom Thurmond shortly before the election stating that Turnipseed would disarm the U.S. and hand it over to Communists and liberals. He also planted a fake reporter at a press briefing who rose from his seat to ask about Turnipseed's history of psychiatric treatment. Floyd Spence won the race.

After that, Atwater headed to Washington and became an aide to Ronald Reagan. By 1984, he was the Reagan campaign's deputy director and helped run a smear campaign against Democratic VP pick Geraldine Ferraro, publicizing that her parents had been indicted for running numbers in the 1940s. The day after the '84 election, he became a senior partner at the consulting firm of Black, Manafort, Stone, and Kelly. By the way, the "Manafort" and "Stone" at that firm were Paul Manafort and Roger Stone, so that should give you some idea of Atwood's peers.

Perhaps Atwater's greatest claim to fame is the infamous Willie Horton ad of 1988, in which Atwater managed to inextricably link Democratic Presidential nominee Michael Dukakis to William Horton (he never went by "Willie," contrary to the ad), a black convicted murder who committed rape, assault, and armed robbery while on a weekend furlough from prison. That race-baiting ad may well have cost Dukakis the election (Atwater also spread rumors that Dukakis' wife Kitty had burned a flag to protest the Vietnam War and that Dukakis himself was mentally ill, which also didn't help).

Atwater played a significant role in legitimizing the use of half-truths



and outright lies on the campaign trail and punching below the belt whenever possible. Perhaps most importantly, he was a pioneer when it came to winning votes by playing to racist voters without actually using overtly racist terminology.

What do I mean by that? I'll let Atwater speak for himself. The following is a direct quote from a once-anonymous interview that Atwater gave to political scientist Alexander Lamis in 1981. In the interview, Lamis asked Atwater about Reagan's Presidential campaign and how Reagan managed to capture George Wallace voters (read: racists) in predominantly southern states without being perceived as overtly racist himself.

Atwater replied: "Y'all don't quote me on this. You start out in 1954 by saying, 'n****, n****, n****.' By 1968, you can't say 'n****'—that hurts you. Backfires. So you say stuff like forced busing, states' rights and all that stuff. You're getting so abstract now, you're talking about cutting taxes, and all these things you're talking about are totally economic things and a byproduct of them is blacks get hurt worse than whites. And subconsciously maybe that is part of it. I'm not saying that. But I'm saying that if it is getting that abstract, and that coded, that we are doing away with the racial problem one way or the other. You follow me? Because obviously sitting around saying, 'we want to cut this' is much more abstract than even the busing thing, and a hell of a lot more abstract than 'n****, n****.' So, any way you look at it, race is coming on the back-burner."

I realize that's an upsetting quote. If it makes you feel any better, Lee Atwater has been dead for 34 years.

However, Atwater's legacy lives on, as I'm sure you'll agree. Politicians generally don't use racial slurs anymore — for the moment, at least. Instead, they use the same abstract, coded language that Atwater addressed.

Woke.
CRT.
DEI.

The next time you hear a politician talking about how we need to root out any of these three things, just mentally slot in the word they're really using. Finally, you'll have heard an honest politician.

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King's Grant Earns 2025 Customer Experience Award for Excellence in Senior Care

King's Grant, a Sunnyside Community, was honored with the 2025 Customer Experience Award from Activated Insights, formerly Pinnacle Quality Insight. This prestigious recognition highlights King's Grant's outstanding commitment to excellence in senior care across all three levels of care: Independent Living, Assisted Living, and Skilled Nursing.

"It is our pleasure to congratulate King's Grant on this well-deserved achievement," said Bud Meadows, Chief Executive Officer of Activated Insights. "Their dedication to providing high-quality care is truly commendable, and this award serves as a testament to their unwavering commitment to their residents."

This recognition places King's Grant among the top 15% of senior care providers nationwide. Acti-

A photograph showing a person riding a bicycle on a paved path that runs along a calm body of water. The water reflects the surrounding trees and the sky. In the background, there are more trees and a small gazebo-like structure on the grassy bank.

vated Insights collaborates with over 3,500 senior living communities across the United States. These partnerships involve gathering data to assess and enhance the quality of care and services provided to residents.

"At King's Grant, we prioritize creating a supportive and compassionate en-

vironment where residents thrive," said James Souter, Executive Director. "Receiving this award validates our team's hard work and dedication to delivering top-tier care."

For more information about King's Grant, visit www.sunnyside.cc/our-communities/kings-grant.

See more at www.henrycountyenterprise.com

Letter To The Editor

The Great Self-Deception

The American public has just voted in the 2024 presidency with a completely different set of values through which they had lived their personal lives and raised their children. It is a safe bet to say that a clear majority of Trump voters neither would have excused compulsive lying, bullying and tearing people down in the development of their children, tolerated it in a school or workplace setting nor practiced it in their relationship with their spouse.

I wish all the success for Trump, but I could not vote for a man who

- a. declared 6 companies bankrupt and avoided paying his bills impacting many families.

- b. earned the ultimate disrespect by his White House staff including Kelly, Bolton, McMaster, Mattis, Esper, Grisham, Griffin, Hutchinson and Matthews.

- c. had affair with a porn star while his wife was home with their newborn baby and was convicted by a jury of his peers in a civil judgment for sexual abuse and defamation in the amount of 88 million.

- d. campaigned at the site of weather disasters (Hurricane Helene) and at a train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio in the face of human suffering and tragedy

- e. instigated an assault on the U. S. Capitol on the day of the transfer of power, used the Department of Justice to cover it up, placed the life of his VP Mike Pence at risk and admitted in post event conversations that he had indeed lost the 2020 election.

- f. believes that “if you keep saying something (untruths) long enough,

Questioning declaration

This letter is in regard to Mayor LC Jones’ public declaration of Black History month at the Jan. 28th City Council meeting:

“The City of Martinsville acknowledges the importance of honoring and celebrating Black History Month each February as a time to reflect on the profound contributions, rich history, and enduring legacy of African Americans...”

Black History Month creates strange optics. Is it about celebrating black people or villainizing white people? Of course, all of the white people who could be villainized are all dead. None of today’s white Americans have ever owned slaves.

It’s strange that during the remaining eleven months of the year we are encouraged to ignore skin color, but in this month, we are commanded to observe our neighbors with darker pigmentation. Does anyone know when Jewish History Month or Hispanic Heritage Month is? I don’t.

More strange optics in the fact that the Martinsville City’s Facebook profile recently made its profile image a capital “M” between two closed fists. A citizen commented on the image, “Perhaps two closed fists does not send the best message.” Low and behold the Facebook image was changed to a capital M with faint images of MLK and Malcolm X in the background. Two closed fists. Is this a fight? Who’s fighting, black on black or black versus white?

Another strange optic is the colors yellow, green, and red. Various flags within the African content use these colors. Asking Google why these col-

people will believe you.”

- g. mocked Jesus by selling the Bible (made in China for Trump) and other merchandise with Christian images/themes for campaign purposes.

- h. tears people down by expressing hatred for people including Hillary Clinton, Taylor Swift, Megyn Kelly, Carly Fiorina, Marco Rubio, “a clown,” on women said “grab them by the p_y” and on immigrants said “poisoning the blood.”

To utter hatred for people and to threaten other countries is not in conformance with God’s expectation to be like him. To threaten is not a negotiating tactic nor a leadership characteristic. A leader is expected to bring out the best in us...to lift people up. Trump brings out the worst instincts in people by tearing people down. One cannot love God and not love people. (Proverbs 6:17-23)

“You live your life by a code, it’s your shore line – it’s what guides you home. And trust me, you’re always trying to get home.” (Act of Valor)

As a former school leader, to have voted for a man who mistreats, lies to people, pursues retribution and/or condones similar behavior in my spouse, child or employee would be a rejection of my past, an admission that integrity is unimportant and a rejection of “Jesus as my Savior.” If I had voted for Trump, I would have earned the title of hypocrite and found myself “far from home” without a spiritual compass.

Randy Scott,
Collinsville

ors are used will render the answer that it represents “The African Diaspora.” Africa? Who in Martinsville is from Africa? Why would Americans wave African colors? If they love America and are loyal to the Republic why not be happily fly the Red, White, and Blue?

Where does this put Councilman Rawls in the optics of the community? Rawls is not married, but he has made a baby with a black woman. Despite this fact people have called him a racist. His baby was sprinkled at a historically black Presbyterian church by a black Pastor. To call Rawls racist is absurd. However, when the room holds up fists representing “Black Power” does Rawls join in? What about Councilmen Lawson and Mei, do they raise their fists and say, “White Power”? How is it somehow less appropriate to shout, “white power” than it is to shout, “black power”?

Say it loud, “I’m black and I’m proud.” Say it with might, “I’m proud to be white!” As loud as you can, “I’m proud to be Mexican!” Let it bellow, “I’m proud to be yellow!” Isn’t it all a bit silly? Now, before you start calling me racist just know I am a white man married to a woman of Cuban and Peruvian descent, and English is her second language.

What was it Vice President Harris said, “Unburdened by what has been”? What “has been” was slavery, what “is currently” is shared opportunity! Let’s all thank God for where we are now – The Land of the Free!

Thank you for your consideration,
Ian Young,
Martinsville

Darwin & Black History

Are the public schools trying to erase “black history”? How would they go about that? Let’s say that a history teacher ignored that the Founding Fathers had slaves, it would be impossible to ignore slavery once they began to study the Civil War. A study of JFK, RFK, and LBJ would force a look at the Civil Rights Movement. I don’t think those discussions are avoidable, nor do I think anyone is trying to avoid them.

Our own city manager recently bemoaned that schools are attempting to erase black history. Well, Mrs. Benavides works in Martinsville now. Is she saying that someone in the Martinsville school district is attempting to erase Black History? Surely not Dr. Talley, Martinsville Superintendent, nor Dr. Dixon, Principal of Martinsville High School.

All of this talk of history and black history makes me wonder why people are not discussing biology textbooks and their damage of the “Black Psyche.” It’s no secret that American students are spoon-fed Darwin’s theory of Evolution which says that nothing existed, but suddenly gasses self-created and exploded into the known universe; a single celled amoeba came out of the water to become a who-knows-what, to become a thingamabob, which turned into a monkey, and the monkey finally turned into the black man. Here’s a long quote from Charles Darwin’s book, The Descent of Man:

“At some future period... the civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace throughout the world the savage races... The break will then, be rendered wider, for it will intervene between man in a more civilized

state, as we may hope, than the Caucasian, and some ape as low as a baboon, instead of as at present between the negro or Australian and the gorilla.”

“The American aborigines, Negroes and Europeans differ as much from each other in mind as any three races that can be named...”

Charles Darwin saw white men and black men as vastly different. Based on what? Darwin believed the black man to be more animalistic, closer to our monkey ancestors. Darwinism is still taught in the public school system.

Usually someone says that I’m taking Darwin out of context. Well, Klinghoffer writing for Evolution News agrees with my perception: “In any hierarchy, someone has to be at the bottom. As Darwin stated explicitly in The Descent of Man, that place was occupied by Africans.” Also, in his book, Ontogeny and Phylogeny, Gould says, “Biological arguments for racism may have been common before 1859, but they increased by orders of magnitude following the acceptance of evolutionary theory.”

Perhaps we should be paying more attention to what’s being taught to students in biology rather than history. What good does it accomplish to teach Black History to a black student if he has already been taught that he’s a lower species?

It’s ironic that February is Black History month, and Charles Darwin’s birthday is February 12.

Darwin, The Decent of Man, p.201, 1871.
2 Ibid. p. 232
3 Gould, Ontogeny and Phylogeny, p. 127, 1977
Caleb Robertson,
Martinsville

Student Briefs	
JMU announces fall 2024 dean’s list	is majoring in Music - BM.
Several local students were among those included on the dean’s list for the fall 2024 semester at James Madison University:	Sydney Witcher. of Martinsville, who is majoring in Engineering - BS.
Jordan Caldwell-McGhee. of Bassett, who is majoring in Nursing - BSN.	Summer Stone. of Ridgeway, who is majoring in Biology - BS.
Addison Belongia. of Collinsville, who is majoring in Elementary Education - BS.	Two local students named to JMU’s fall 2024 president’s list
Cole Curtiss. of Harrisonburg, who is majoring in International Affairs - BA.	James Madison University announced the following local students made the president’s list for the fall 2024 semester.
Dylan Royal. of Martinsville, who	Ian Betton. of Martinsville. who is majoring in Engineering - BS.
	Lara Hall. of Martinsville. who is majoring in Biology - BS.

Birthday Celebration Marked With Special Gift

By Jessica Dillon

Patrons and friends visiting the Martinsville Branch of the Blue Ridge Regional Library celebrated Dolly Parton’s birthday on January 25, during a special event with the help of the United Way of Martinsville-Henry County. The celebration aimed to promote early childhood literacy and introduce families to Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library, a program that provides free books to young children.

Among the attendees was former Martinsville Mayor Danny Turner, who brought a unique gift in honor of Parton’s birthday. Turner, who has a hobby of examining serial numbers on U.S. currency, discovered a dollar bill with a serial number matching Parton’s birthdate. He brought the bill to the library, where staff prepared it for shipment to Parton. “I wrote a little note, and I put it with the dollar,” said children’s librarian Janet Boucher. The United Way is coordinating the mailing of the special keepsake.

In addition to the gift, attendees created birthday cards for Parton, which the United Way will also send. Boucher noted that despite having only a week to plan the event, approximately 40 people attended, including about 20 children. Activities, snacks, and interactive elements kept the young guests engaged. She believes the event would have drawn an even larger crowd with additional time for promotion.

A life-size Dolly Parton cutout

was available for photo opportunities, adding to the festive atmosphere. “We had adults at the desk asking, ‘Where’s Dolly?’” Boucher said, explaining that she took care to clarify in event promotions that the real Parton would not be present. “We kept hoping that she would pull a Dollywood and come up here.”

Boucher is a strong advocate for the Imagination Library program and actively encourages families to participate. “I actively look for people to give the application to,” she said, adding that the library plans to make the birthday celebration an annual event. Funded by United Way, the Imagination Library provides registered children with a free book every month until they turn five, ensuring access to quality literature during their formative years.

The library regularly hosts Storytime sessions to foster early literacy. “That’s the way they learn to read—they learn to read by having people read to them,” Boucher said, emphasizing the importance of picture books in building vocabulary. “You’ve got to get them early. Who doesn’t like getting something free in the mail?”

Parents interested in Storytime sessions can find schedules and event details on the library’s website and Facebook page. Those looking to enroll their children in the Imagination Library can contact Erica James at the United Way of Martinsville-Henry County at (276) 638-3946.

Gravely appointed programs coordinator at Piedmont Arts

Piedmont Arts has appointed Jennifer Gravely as its new programs coordinator, expanding her role within the organization.

“Jennifer has become an integral part of the Piedmont Arts team and we are thrilled to see her step into the role of programs coordinator,” said Executive Director Heidi Pinkston. “Her dedication to educational outreach and her creativity will continue to enhance our mission of bringing the arts to life for Martinsville-Henry County.”

Gravely joined Piedmont Arts in August 2024 as the education and social media coordinator, and will continue with those responsibilities in addition to her new role coordinating performances and special events.

Gravely grew up in Martinsville and graduated from Wake Forest University with a bachelor’s degree in English and minors in journalism and communication. She worked as an assistant editor at “Southern Living” magazine and as an associate editor at a custom-publishing



firm. She moved back to Martinsville in 2013 to raise her family, accepting the position of communications director for the Patrick & Henry Community College Foundation. She later served as marketing and communications director for Carlisle School.

See more at
www.henrycountyenterprise.com

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Free Drone Event Launched For Students

New College Institute (NCI) is launching Build & Fly with VMI, an engaging and hands-on event designed for students ages 13-18 to experience drone science and learn about career options in robotics and innovation. The event is set for February 15, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at NCI, which is located at 191 Fayette Street, Martinsville.

Through hands-on, interactive experiences, students will get an up-close look at drone mechanics, discover the physics that makes them fly, and explore the wide range of tasks drones can perform across different industries. Rather than just observing, students will actively participate every step of the way—engaging in real-world applications and unlocking the potential of this cutting-edge technology.

“As drones continue to transform industries like agriculture, healthcare, environmental monitoring, transportation, and media, students can gain valuable skills in areas such as robotics, aerodynamics, data analysis, and geographic information systems (GIS),” explains NCI Chief Academic Officer Dr. Susheela Shanta. “This event encourages cross-disciplinary learning, as students can explore the potential to shape the future of industries and even contribute to societal betterment.”

This is a free event, but space is limited. NCI has partnered with Virginia Military Institute, iVue Robotics, Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association (AFCEA) and Shenandoah University to bring this event to Martinsville.

“Using drones in STEM education is not just about flying; it’s about fostering a problem solving mindset,” states Dr. Sherif Abdelhamid, Assistant Professor for the Department of Computer & Information Sciences at Virginia Military Institute. “Whether it is mapping disaster-struck areas, monitoring wildlife, or optimizing logistics, drones can empower students to see the bigger picture of how STEM skills can be used to make a meaningful impact. Additionally, integrating drones with programming makes the learning experience more engaging by turning abstract coding concepts into hands-on experiences.”

“As the industry for drone technology and advanced air mobility continues to grow, it is imperative that we meet the demand through a trained

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February 15, 2025 **10 AM - 2 PM**

Join us for an exciting **FREE** event presented by Virginia Military Institute & iVue Robotics!

This is a unique chance for students ages 13-18 to experience drone science and learn about career options in Robotics and Innovation.

Space is limited to 60 participants, and the first 30 registrants will participate in an exclusive workshop to build and fly drones!

Registration required. Scan the QR Code or visit our website to reserve your spot!

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workforce that can operate these systems safely in the national airspace system,” Dr. Melissa Stange, Assistant Professor of Computer Science at Shenandoah University. “The only way this can be achieved is through STEM educational programs that engage our future workforce not only for jobs of today, but jobs that have yet been created. Drones provide a unique way of practicing cybersecurity concepts or creating virtual reality experiences.”

Registration is required. To register or learn more about this event, please visit <https://newcollegeinstitute.org/event/build-fly-with-vmi/>.

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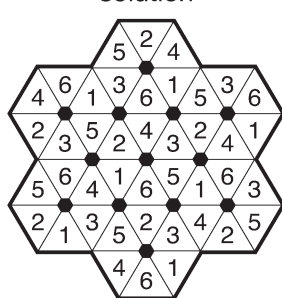
COUNTY OF HENRY REZONING PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

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 on **February 25, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.** in the Summerlin Meeting Room of the County Administration Building, Kings Mountain Rd, Collinsville, Virginia. The purpose of this public hearing is to receive input into the possible rezoning of property. Following are the specifics of the public hearing. **Case R-25-02 Peggy K. Goard** The property is located at 340 Primrose Dr, in the Blackberry District. The property is shown on Tax Map 13.9/167A. The applicant is requesting the rezoning of approximately 0.53-acre from Suburban Residential District S-R to Rural Residential District R-R. The original house was destroyed by fire, and the applicant wishes to replace it with a manufactured home. 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

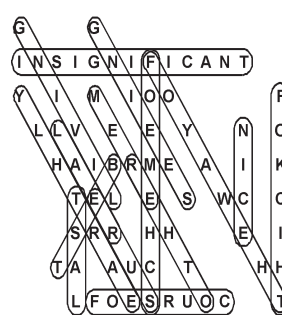
Find Us On Facebook Puzzle Answers!

SNOWFLAKES

solution



— THINGS



SCRAMBLERS

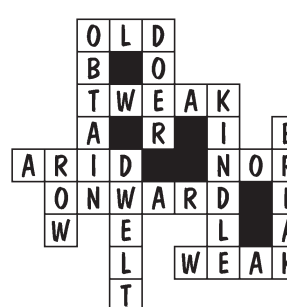
solution

1. Aspect
2. Cloak;
3. Wither;
4. Sparse

Today's Word
PROTEST



answer



Weekly SUDOKU

Answer

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

Crossing the Lines

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

Fulk responds to recent remarks, urges focus on county business

Exploring the Legend: Author Chronicles Sasquatch History in New Book

Former Patrick County Board of Supervisors interim member Jane Fulk is calling on current board members to shift their focus to county affairs rather than referencing her in discussions.

Following the Nov. 18 board meeting, Fulk no longer serves as interim and has returned to private life. However, her name surfaced in a recent interview with former board members regarding emails sent by Steve Marshall, who represents the Blue Ridge District.

During the discussion, Doug Perry, of the Smith River District, mentioned a past controversy he attributed to Fulk.

“The whole debaclery (sic)... and how she (Fulk) got ahold of or took some contract wordage, twisted things around, misrepresented them, and started the whole rumor control and misrepresented facts,” Perry said.

After reading the remarks, Fulk questioned their relevance to the emails in question.

“The only controversy that I’m aware of happened while I was on the board is my belief that EMS (Emergency Medical Service) providers should be paid a fair wage according to their certifications,” she said, adding that she repeatedly raised concerns about cuts to EMS salaries before the board’s October meeting.

Legislators stand firm against solar bills, defend local control



Several local officials visited Richmond, with many stopping by to see Del. Eric Phillips (far right), including Sandra Stone, Patrick County Treasurer, and Glenda Morse, Commissioner of the Revenue.

As multiple bills make their way through the 2025 General Assembly, local officials are reaffirming their opposition to solar energy projects and efforts to shift decision-making authority away from local governments.

As of Feb. 3, 12 solar-related bills had been introduced, with only three failing. As of this writing, the remaining nine were in various stages of the legislative process, including the House, Senate, subcommittees, and incorporation into other measures, according to the Virginia General Assembly website. The proposed legislation primarily focuses on solar energy facilities, interconnection policies, local decision-making authority, photovoltaic equipment, and the Solar Interconnection Grant Fund and Program.

Local Authority vs. State Oversight

Del. Wren Williams, R-Stuart, said he opposes any legislation that removes localities’ ability to determine where solar farms are located.

“Those localities are elected by their people, so if the people don’t like the decisions that their elected officials are making, then they’ll have to replace their elected officials,” Williams said. “Otherwise, the localities are the ones that are going to get to decide where these solar farms go.”

Williams acknowledged concerns among local officials and residents that the state could take over site selection for solar projects.



Jane Fulk

Fulk said she specifically questioned the reduction of EMT wages from approximately \$18 to \$15 per hour.

“The last time I spoke to Doug Perry about the EMTs’ pay being cut... he advised me that it would be taken care of at the board of supervisors’ retreat,” she said.

That retreat, originally discussed in October, is now scheduled for late March.



Del. Wren Williams giving a recent live update on his social media page.

“I think that the only way that concern is going to be addressed is if we see some people break from the solar pack and vote against this so that their own localities can have those decisions instead of the State Corporation Commission (SCC),” he said.

Williams also suggested that some of the proposed legislation could pass both the House of Delegates and the Senate, even with opposition from many Republicans.

“But I think that ultimately it might come down to the governor having to veto the decision,” he said.

Concerns Over Local Control
Del. Eric Phillips, R-Martinsville, said he is strongly opposed to any bill that would override local ordinances restricting the number or size of solar farms.

Russell Easterbrooks’ recently published book, “Searching for Sasquatch with Historical Observations and Interpretations,” delves into the istory and lore surrounding sasquatches in North America. Released in December 2023, the book serves as a reference guide for enthusiasts and skeptics alike.

Years of research inspired Easterbrooks to compile his findings into this comprehensive work.

“I started out doing a high school report on the sasquatch, and that kind of got me interested in the subject,” he said. “I did a lot of research over the years and always wanted to try to put it together into a book, but just never did. Life kind of got in the way and so forth, so I just didn’t get it done.”

That changed last year when Easterbrooks finally completed the 125-page book.

“I’m glad I did,” he said. Easterbrooks emphasized that his book isn’t written to convince skeptics.

“It’s not like that. It’s just a book filled with information and information on a lot of different things,” he said.

However, he firmly believes sasquatches are real.

“They are very real, I can assure you of that,” he said. “Uwharrie National Forest in North Carolina has a family unit, for sure. The Smokies also have some. I worked with the forest service and worked out in the Smokies quite a bit. I never did get to see a sasquatch, but I have some footprint impressions and plaster casts that I was able to collect. The Jefferson National Forest also has a family group living there.”

Easterbrooks’ fascination with sasquatch history stems from a gap he observed in existing literature.



“Searching for Sasquatch with Historical Observations and Interpretations,” by Russell Easterbrooks, chronicles the history of sasquatches in North America, incorporating historical accounts and research findings.

“For me, I felt like a lot of the books that I have read on sasquatch— I have a huge library— but those books don’t talk about a lot of the history going back. It’s more about sightings and things that are happening today, and I felt like there was a lot of good information that should be saved from the history,” he said.

The book explores historical accounts from the Hudson Bay Company, the gold rushes in California and Alaska, and even the Native American perspective.

“Native Americans were very familiar with sasquatches, going as far back as you could go in your research,” he said.

“Searching for Sasquatch with Historical Observations and Interpretations” is available on Amazon. Signed copies can also be purchased on eBay.

Grant Writer Expands Passion into Small Business to Help Others

A local grant writer has transformed her passion for helping others into a small business aimed at helping organizations secure funding.

Kirsten Smith Beasley, founder of Granting Solutions, LLC, said she was inspired to start her business after receiving numerous requests for grant-writing assistance.

“Obviously, it’s something I love to do, but I can’t do it with my full-time job. This was kind of a way where I could go out and dabble into some other sectors and help others out on the side,” Smith-Beasley said.

In her full-time role, Smith-Beasley works as a grant writer for the Martin Tyrrell Washington (MTW) District Health Department in North Carolina. Over the past seven years, she has helped secure more than \$10 million in funding.

“I just love it. Once you start and you start getting awards, it’s like you don’t want to stop writing,” she said.

Smith-Beasley specializes in public health and rural communities but also writes grants for nonprofit organizations, the public sector, the criminal justice sector, schools, and, more recently, small businesses.

She registered Granting Solutions last summer but took time to reflect before taking on her first client in November.



Kirsten Smith-Beasley founded Granting Solutions, LLC, in 2023 to assist organizations with grant writing.

“Actually, I’ve gotten a few clients so far already in North Carolina and Virginia,” she said.

Among her clients are a nonprofit assisting individuals and families affected by Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig’s disease, and another nonprofit providing equine therapy for veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

“Honestly, when I do get a grant, especially when you get the award notification, it’s so much more than just getting money. That is money that is making a true difference in people’s lives and in the communities, and that’s why I do it,” she said.

To read more about these and other stories, check out

The Enterprise,

www.theenterprise.net

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Martinsville 278-858-3458

1-3-5-7-9PM

1-3-5-7-9PM

1-4-7-9:15PM

1-3-5-7-9PM

1-4-7-9:15



PUZZLE TIME



FEAR KNOT

By: rj johnson

DOUBT? ...OR DARE!

ORN
BITONA
TEWDL
♥KEWA
WODNAR
DLO
♥ADRI
AWKET
WRO
♥ILKDEN
♥EKRA B
♥EDRO

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

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF

Find at least six differences in details between panels.

Differences: 1. Shovel is shorter. 2. Arm is lower. 3. Snow is missing. 4. Door knob is missing. 5. Zipper is missing. 6. House is not as wide.

MAGIC MAZE ● — THINGS

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

Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions forward, backward, up, down and diagonally. Unlisted clue hint: JUST ONE OF — THINGS

Best Course of Earthly Insignificance	Last Living Mere Nice	Other Real Scheme of Seeing	Sure The way of Thick of
---------------------------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------------	--------------------------

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Super Crossword

ACROSS

1 Hindu music pattern
5 Captivated
13 Kellogg's toaster treat
20 Missing GI
21 Sprinted competitively, perhaps
22 One shunning something
23 Best Actor nominee for "Mrs. Miniver"
25 Maximal-ebb phenomenon
26 Trauma pro in a hosp.
27 "Knives Out" actress — de Armas
28 No, in Fife
30 Japanese wheat pasta
31 Filmed again
33 American Ballet Theatre principal dancer beginning in 2015
39 Double Stuf cookies
42 Look for water with a divining rod

DOWN

1 Less refined
2 Au courant
3 Top medals
4 Valved brass instrument
5 Make a gaffe
6 California wine valley
7 Have — with (be favored by)
8 Lady's title
9 Assn.
10 "Norma —"
11 Writer Umberto
12 IHOP competitor
13 Prefix with -lithic or -zoic
14 — -lacto vegetarian
15 "Wham!"
16 From which a name is taken
17 Reebok rival
18 Made over to make
19 Au courant
24 Tourist destination that's "green"
29 Golf rarity
32 Ho-humness
34 Cruel Amin
35 Many an heir
36 Pan Am rival
37 Travel origin, generically

CELEBRITY ANAGRAMS

75 Many a monk
76 Some unofficial sci-fi stories
78 Two-gender pronoun
79 Prefix with center
82 Camera variety, briefly
86 Swiss mount
87 Bowled over
88 Gas ratings
89 Floor cleaner
90 Styled after
91 Writer Anaïs
92 Partners
93 Capital of South Dakota
94 Laotians and
95 Just dandy
96 Likenesses
99 Leslie of "Lili"
100 "The Deep" director Peter
102 Delhi's land
103 Very poor
104 Whirls around
108 Short skirt
109 Old Peruvian
112 "Do — say!"
113 Skater Midori
115 Adam and —
116 Actress Lucy
117 TV pitches
118 Signing tool

Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

• It is illegal to publish photographs of handcuffed suspects in France, as they're not to appear guilty until actually proved so.

• The word "king" in a snake's name indicates that it preys on other snakes.

• St. Lucia is the only country in the world named after a woman. Originally called the Island of the Iguanas by early Carib settlers, the name was later changed after French seamen were shipwrecked there on Dec. 13, the feast day of St. Lucy.

• Studies have shown that spending only a few minutes every day in the New York City subway system can ultimately result in hearing loss.

• When you snap your finger, it moves at about 20 mph.

• Pope Gregory I decreed that rabbit fetuses were marine mammals and they could therefore be eaten during Lent.

• A bobsled is so named because early racers bobbled their heads back and forth in an attempt to gain speed. (It didn't work.)

• The annual World's Biggest Liar competition in Cumbria, England invites entrants from around the world to tell the biggest and most convincing lie they can muster in five minutes. No props or scripts are allowed, nor are politicians or lawyers permitted to compete, as "they are judged to be too skilled at telling porkies."

• More than four tons of old U.S. paper money is mulched into compost every day.

• Cockroaches are so repulsed by humans that if they're touched by a human, not only do they run away, but they wash themselves. (Personal to cockroaches: The feeling is mutual!)

• Bananas are curved because they grow towards the sun, in a process called "negative geotropism."

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

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Weekly SUDOKU

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

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

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦

♦ Moderate ♦♦ Challenging
♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

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SNOWFLAKES

by Japheth Light

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

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦♦

♦ Easy ♦♦ Medium ♦♦♦ Difficult

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Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS

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Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS

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WHEN ACTUALLY COMPETING, HOWEVER, USE ONLY THE TYPES OF SHOTS YOU'VE FULLY MASTERED - EVEN WHEN THAT MEANS PLAYING SAFER THAN YOU'D LIKE. MISHIT THROUGH LACK OF PRACTICE OR CONFIDENCE, THE WEDGES CAN SEVERELY DAMAGE YOUR SCORE.

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SCRAMBLERS

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

Facet			
CAPSET	_____	_____	_____
Cover			
LOCKA	_____	_____	_____
Shrink			
ITHREW	_____	_____	_____
Scant			
PASSER	_____	_____	_____

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Heritage Museum to Feature Historic Cooking Exhibit, Seeks Local Artifacts and Recipes

The Martinsville-Henry County Heritage Museum will have an exhibit on cooking through history, and the public is invited to share related artifacts and old local recipes.

Area residents are invited to lend the museum old cookware and utensils that represent times gone by. Lent items would be on display as part of the exhibit for 6 months, then returned. Stories behind the cookware would be included.

To drop off items, stop by the museum between 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Wednesdays. The Heritage Museum is at 1 E. Main St., Martinsville (former Henry County Courthouse). To arrange a different time, email wilson.mhchs@gmail.com.

Send recipes with local origins, and the stories behind them, to wilson.mhchs@gmail.com, or call Wilson at 276-403-5361, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Wednesdays.

Items and recipes will be accepted through and including March 19.

The exhibit is curated by MHC Historical Society (MHCHS) Intern Raylee Wilson, but the original idea came from Katie Connelly of Martinsville.

Last year, when MHCHS Executive Director



MHC Historical Society intern Raylee Wilson is seeking loans of antique cooking vessels and utensils, as well as locally significant recipes, for an upcoming exhibit on the history of local cooking.

Holly Kozelsky was at a meeting of the Current Events Club, Connelly suggested the museum

have an exhibit on cooking. Kozelsky was putting together an exhibit on home sewing for the museum and, Connelly and other women at the meeting said, an exhibit on cooking would be a natural sequel.

Connelly and other club members talked about how many Martinsville women were among the first home cooks to have a Cuisinart, which was introduced in 1973. The local women had developed an interest in fine cooking through taking extensive cooking classes in Greensboro, N.C., and shopping at the market there for ingredients that weren't available here. The Cuisinart which Connelly, like many of her friends, special-ordered from interior designer Lou Harris Interior Design in the 1970s will be on display.

Wilson, a senior at Ferrum College, is studying for a major in history with minors in religion and museum studies. Her passions include local history and staying involved in community programs whether it be volunteering or educational events. During her high school years, Wilson was a member of many history clubs, where she found her love and dream of working in museums.

Lecture to Explore Virginia's Forgotten Readjuster Movement

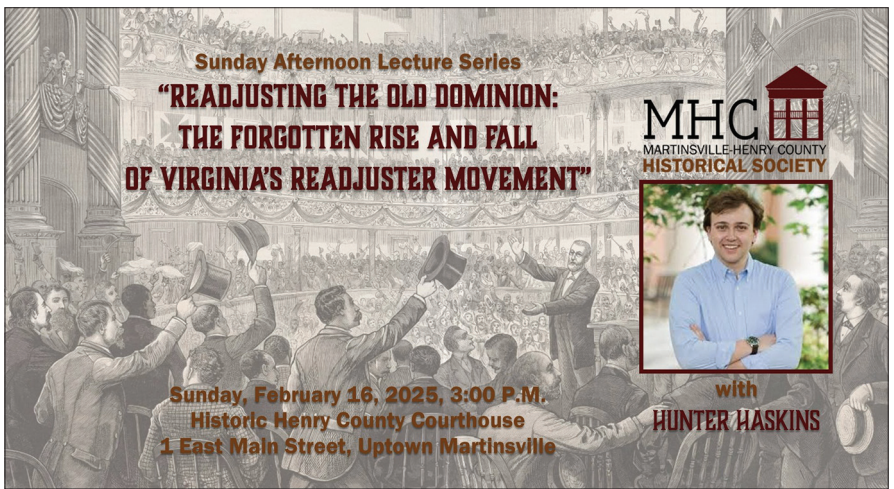
The Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society will present its Sunday Afternoon Lecture Series on Sunday, Feb. 16, at 3 p.m. at the Historic Henry County Courthouse. The event will feature Hunter Haskins, who will discuss "Readjusting the Old Dominion: The Forgotten Rise and Fall of Virginia's Readjuster Movement."

Haskins will share the story of the Readjusters, a long-overlooked 1880s Virginia political movement that implemented significant socioeconomic reforms benefiting both whites and African Americans. The movement emerged in response to Virginia's debt crisis, advocating for fiscal policies that protected public services and education. During their brief political dominance from 1879 to 1883, the Readjusters



reshaped the state's education system and infrastructure, promoting inclusivity across racial and economic lines. However, the movement's impact was largely erased from historical narratives for more than a century.

Haskins is the assistant director of the Salem Museum and a



Roanoke College graduate with a background in history, political science, and public history. He previously taught at Carlisle School and worked at the Blue Ridge Institute and Museum as a docent, interpreter, and blacksmith. He also serves as se-

cretary of the Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society.

Admission is free, and the Martinsville-Henry County Heritage Museum will be open following the lecture. The Historic Henry County Courthouse is fully handicapped accessible.

Night to Shine Provides an Evening of Fun

By Jessica Dillon

Night to Shine, an annual prom event for individuals with special needs, returns this year on February 7, hosted by Stone Memorial Christian Church in Collinsville in partnership with the Tim Tebow Foundation. The event, which has been held for over a decade, will be held at New College Institute (NCI), offering attendees a night of dancing, entertainment, and celebration.

"In high school, they have proms all the time, but it's not geared to those who have limitations," said Senior Minister Tim Wood. The dance floor is designed to be mobility-accessible, ensuring that all attendees can participate. "It started to give an opportunity for those with special needs to have a special night," added Worship Minister Josue Rodriguez.

The event is carefully tailored to be an enjoyable and accommodating experience. Volunteers work to create a comfortable atmosphere, including a designated sensory room for guests who may need a quieter space. "We have a sensory room for if it gets too busy," said Rodriguez. The night also includes food, photo booths, and ample dance space for attendees.

Approximately 150 guests are expected to attend this year's event. Each participant is paired with a buddy to assist them throughout the evening. Local funeral services provide limousines to transport attendees to the venue, adding to the prom experience. Volunteers from the church also handcraft corsages for the guests.

A highlight of the evening is the crowning ceremony, where every guest was named either king or queen and presented with a crown or tiara. Attendees also receive gift bags as keepsakes from the event. The church assists guests in obtaining formal attire to ensure everyone can fully enjoy the evening.



"We start off the night with a red carpet," said Wood. Upon arrival, attendees are greeted by members of the BETA Club from local schools, who acted as "paparazzi," cheering them on and taking photos. "It makes them feel real special, and they are strutting as they come down that carpet," he said.

Wood collaborates with local schools to extend personal invitations to special needs students. "Where we get most of our guests comes from our nursing facilities, a lot of them through Piedmont Community Services. As long as they have special needs, they're invited," he said.

The event continues to leave a lasting impact on its guests. Wood shared the story of an elderly attendee who had never attended a prom before. "This 80-plus-year-old lady, as she was

getting out of the limousine ride, was smiling so great and said, 'I never got to go to a prom in my life until now,'" he recalled.

Despite being a church-sponsored event, the music selection consists mainly of secular but family-friendly songs. "Very little of it is Christian-oriented, it's going to be secular music, but, this is a fun fact—when we do karaoke, Christian music is the most requested music they want to do," said Wood.

A long-standing tradition at Night to Shine is ending the event with a large conga line set to "We Are Family" by Sister Sledge. The line includes both guests and their buddies, totaling around 300 people and serving as a joyful finale to a memorable night.

Piedmont Arts accepting nominations for the 2025 Clyde Hooker Award

Piedmont Arts is accepting nominations for the 2025 Clyde Hooker Award, which honors supporters of the arts in Martinsville-Henry County. Nominees should be individuals or businesses that are involved in and support Piedmont Arts and other arts and cultural organizations in the region. Recipients of the Clyde Hooker Award will be honored at a special reception.

The Clyde Hooker Award was established by the Piedmont Arts Board of Directors in 2003 to recognize individuals and businesses that have made significant contributions to arts and culture in Martinsville-Henry County. The award is named in honor of J. Clyde Hooker Jr. for his



generous support of Piedmont Arts and the arts in Martinsville-Henry County.

To nominate an individual or business, complete a nomination form and return it by 5 p.m., Friday, March 14. Nomination forms are available at Piedmont Arts and online at PiedmontArts.org/info/clyde-hooker-awards.cfm.

Email submissions@theenterprise.net

County Farm Among Century Forests

Tucked among Virginia’s 16 million acres of forestland are families’ rich stories of stewardship and dedication to the land.

“The Virginia Century Forest Program was established to honor individuals and families whose working forests have been in the same family for 100 years or more,” explained Jennifer Leach, coordinator for the Virginia Department of Forestry program.

“It’s important to recognize families who have made long-term commitments to enhancing the environment and protecting the quality of life for their fellow Virginians through forestry.”

In Henry County, the Hodges’ family land dates to the American Revolution.

“The land grant was for two parcels—one for 535 acres and another for 300 acres,” said Michael Hodges, who owns Hemlock Haven Farm with his brother, Jim. “They were signed in 1781 by Thomas Jefferson, who was governor then.”

Michael and his wife, Rita, live on the remaining 213 acres, with 100 of those comprising a Century Forest. The forest’s pines and hardwoods have been integral to the family’s

livelihood for seven generations. Family homes, barns and fences were built with its timber.

Today, the family maintains a stewardship plan to conserve woodlands — fencing cattle from streams, planting buffers and creating wildlife habitats. Every few decades, timber is sustainably harvested and replanted.

And beyond the family business, the forest is a place for respite.

“We walk the trails and hike the woods,” Rita said.

Michael said it’s their responsibility to keep the family’s 250-year heritage going. “My brother and I each have kids—the eighth generation is in waiting.”

To the east, in Essex County, John and Patricia Haile’s land started as a wedding present in 1844.

“John’s great, great grandfather was getting married, and his father, Capt. Robert Gaines Haile, bought (Elton Farm) for him,” Patricia said.

That marked the beginning of a 180-year farming and forestry legacy on the 304-acre property with over 100 acres of hardwoods and

pines.

“There was a sawmill on the property until 1950,” John recalled. “My father cut black walnut trees, milled them into railroad ties and sold them to the railroad.”

The timberland now serves as a sanctuary for livestock—shading them on hot days and providing shelter during calving season. The Hailes work with foresters to thin trees and harvest timber.

“It’s a renewable resource and does a lot for our environment,” Patricia noted.

The Hailes’ Century Forest also symbolizes times of resilience.

“Fifty acres of the property had an improved stand of pines that was first planted by the Civilian Conservation Corps,” John said. To recover from the Great Depression and weather hard economic times, then-President Franklin Roosevelt established a program that hired millions of unemployed young men for conservation work. “And planting trees was one of their jobs.”

Read more in January’s issue of Virginia Farm Bureau News magazine at vafb.com.

Don’t Answer Calls from Unknown Numbers

Receiving a call from an unknown number may seem harmless, but it could be the start of a scam. Criminals are using increasingly sophisticated tactics to deceive you into revealing personal information or making payments. Here are three tips to protect yourself from unknown callers.

Let it ring. The easiest thing to do is not answer the call. If it is important, the caller will leave a message or call back again.

Let the caller speak first. Most scammers use an auto dialer – an automated system that calls a

bunch of random numbers at the same time and connects to a live person when someone answers the phone. That brief pause or delay before the caller speaks is a red flag that the call could be a scam.

Block suspicious calls. Check with your service provider to learn about options to block spam and scam calls.

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

Taxpayers have many options for help filing federal returns

The Internal Revenue Service opened the 2025 tax filing season on Jan. 27 and is accepting and processing federal individual tax year 2024 returns.

The IRS expects more than 140 million individual tax returns for tax year 2024 to be filed ahead of the Tuesday, April 15 federal deadline. More than half of all tax returns are expected to be filed this year with the help of a tax professional, and the IRS urges people to use a trusted tax pro to avoid potential scams and schemes.

Taxpayers residing in a federally declared disaster area may have additional time to file and pay federal taxes.

Get free help preparing and filing taxes electronically

Taxpayers can visit IRS.gov to get answers to tax questions. IRS.gov is the quickest way for taxpayers to get help. The Interactive Tax Assistant (ITA) is a tool that provides answers to several tax law questions specific to individual circumstances. Based on input, it can determine a taxpayer’s filing status, if a person should file a tax return, if someone can be claimed as a dependent, if a type of income is taxable, if a filer is eligible to claim a credit or if an expense can be deducted.

The IRS encourages people to file their tax returns electronically and choose direct deposit for more secure and faster refunds. According to the Treasury’s Bureau of the Fiscal Service, paper refund checks are 16 times more likely to have an issue, like the check being lost, misdirected, stolen or uncashed. Filing electronically reduces tax return errors as the tax software does the calculations, flags common errors and prompts taxpayers for missing information.

Free tax filing options

The IRS offers free online and in-person tax preparation options for eligible taxpayers through IRS Free File, IRS Direct File and Volunteer Income Tax Assistance and Tax Counseling for the Elderly pro-

grams.

IRS Free File. Taxpayers with income of \$84,000 or less last year can use IRS Free File Guided Tax Software now through Oct. 15. IRS Free File Fillable forms, a part of this program, is available at no cost to any income level and provides electronic forms that people fill out and e-file themselves, also at no cost.

Direct File. Now open in 25 participating states, taxpayers can use Direct File to file online directly with the IRS for free. It is a free web-based service – available in English and Spanish – that works on mobile phones, laptops, tablets or desktop computers. It guides taxpayers through a series of questions to prepare their federal tax return step-by-step. Direct File automatically guides taxpayers to state tools to complete their state taxes. Get help from IRS customer service representatives through a live chat feature in English and Spanish. Interested taxpayers can go to directfile.irs.gov, where they can determine if they are eligible.

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA). The VITA program offers free tax help to people who generally make \$67,000 or less, persons with disabilities and taxpayers whose preferred language is not English. IRS-certified volunteers provide free basic income tax return preparation with electronic filing to qualified individuals.

In addition to VITA, the Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) program offers free tax help for all taxpayers, particularly those who are 60 and older, specializing in questions about pensions and retirement-related issues unique to seniors.

MilTax. This is a Department of Defense program available to members of the military and some veterans with no income limit. MilTax generally offers free return preparation and electronic filing software for federal income tax returns and up to three state income tax returns.

Martinsville Man Arrested After Standoff

A Martinsville man was taken into custody Wednesday, Jan. 29, after allegedly barricading himself inside a home, according to the Henry County Sheriff’s Office.

Deputies responded to the 500 block of Lakewood Trail at approximately 4:20 p.m. on January 29 after receiving a report of shots fired. Upon arrival, deputies spoke with a victim who stated he had been discussing Brightspeed service with a client when he heard a gunshot and a projectile “whizz” past his head. The victim then saw a black man carrying what appeared to be a rifle enter a nearby residence.

When deputies attempted to make contact with the suspect, he allegedly refused to exit and barricaded himself inside. After approximately 90 minutes of negotiations, the suspect surrendered peacefully and was taken into custody without further incident.

The suspect was identified as Michael Jamel Holland, 27, of 580 Lakewood Trail, Martinsville. Authorities said Holland had outstanding warrants before the incident and now faces additional charges. Holland is charged with two counts each probation violation and resisting an officer of the court (one count in Henry County and one in Martinsville), and one count each aggravated malicious wounding, brandishing a firearm, and obstruction of justice.

Following Holland’s arrest, a



search warrant was executed at the residence. Investigators seized several items, including a high-powered air rifle and suspected narcotics, which will be sent to the Department of Forensic Science for analysis.

No injuries were reported, and authorities said there is no ongoing threat to the community.

Holland is currently being held at the Henry County Adult Detention Center without bond.

The investigation remains active. Anyone with information related to the incident is encouraged to contact the Henry County Sheriff’s Office at (276) 638-8751 or Crimestoppers at 63-CRIME (632-7463). The Crimestoppers Program offers rewards of up to \$2,500 for information leading to an arrest, with reward amounts determined by the nature of the crime and the value of the information provided.

Watters named new VP for Institutional Advancement and External Relations

Chris Watters as the new Vice President for Institutional Advancement and External Relations at Ferrum College.

Most recently, Watters served as the Director of Alumni and Family Engagement Events at Bucknell University. In this position, she played a crucial role on a leadership team that transformed the Alumni Relations Office into the Center for Alumni & Family Engagement following a strategic reorganization in 2019.

“She is a dynamic leader committed to expanding philanthropic support, strengthening alumni networks, and fostering enduring connections that enhance the college’s mission,” said Ferrum College President Mirta Martin. “Chris brings an extensive and impressive 17-year career in alumni and family engagement, including a strong record in building donor relationships and connections that advance institutional philanthropy.”

Before her work at Bucknell, Watters served as the Director of Alumni Relations at Berry College, where she achieved outstanding results in alumni engagement and giving. Her strategic focus on building relationships with alumni and her expertise in donor engagement and fundraising helped foster an environment of increased generosity and institutional support. She also partnered with alumni association presidents and the Alumni Council, oversaw the development of a student philanthropy program, managed a wide range of alumni events, from large celebrations



to smaller affinity reunions, and played a key role in cultivating long-term donor relationships.

“I am grateful to President Martin for the opportunity,” said Watters. “The work at Ferrum aligns directly with my personal values, beliefs, and mission. I am excited about being a part of the dedicated institutional advancement team and partnering across campus and with the broader Panther family to ensure that Ferrum College remains a strong pathway to a brighter future for our students.”

Watters holds an MBA with a concentration in Computer Information Systems from Georgia State University and a BS in Psychology from Berry College.

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Sports Schedule

The following are the dates and times of local high school teams and their games for the week February 10-15:

2/10	4:30pm Girls Basketball Carlisle at New Covenant 7pm Girls Basketball Mecklenburg County at Bassett 7pm Girls Basketball Halifax County at Magna Vista 7pm Boys Basketball Bassett at Mecklenburg County 7pm Boys Basketball Magna Vista at Halifax County	2/11	7:30pm Boys Basketball Carlisle at New Covenant 10am Swim & Dive Bassett - Regional at Christiansburg Aquatic Complex 4:30pm Girls Basketball Carlisle at Roanoke Catholic 6pm Boys Basketball Carlisle at Roanoke Catholic 6:30pm Girls Basketball Martinsville at Magna Vista 8pm Boys Basketball Martinsville at Magna Vista 7pm Girls Basketball Halifax County at Bassett	2/13	7pm Girls Basketball Mecklenburg County at Halifax County 4:30pm Girls Basketball Carlisle at Chatham Hall
		2/12		2/15	10am Wrestling Bassett - Regional at Staunton H.S. 10am Wrestling Martinsville - Regional at Liberty H.S. 2:30pm Boys Basketball Fishburne Military at Carlisle

February 1 Named Ruth Pace Day in Henry County, Martinsville, and Ridgeway



Nora Ruth Pace enjoys birthday cake as she celebrates her 100th birthday on February 1. (Contributed photos)

By Taylor Boyd

Ridgeway native and longtime educator Nora Ruth Pace celebrated her 100th birthday on February 1, with family, friends, and community leaders gathering to honor her legacy. The occasion was marked with official proclamations from Henry County Board of Supervisors Chairman Jim Adams, City of Martinsville Mayor L.C. Jones, and Ridgeway Vice Mayor Michael Bass, designating February 1 as Ruth Pace Day.

“There were a number of other dignitaries that sent written communications,” said the Rev. David L. Franklin, event organizer and one of Pace’s former students. Messages of recognition came from the office of President Donald Trump, U.S. senators, the Virginia House of Delegates, and Martinsville City Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Zebedee Talley Jr.

Pace received numerous birthday cards, and Franklin noted that she continues to receive them. Her most significant gift was the restoration and retuning of her Steinway & Sons Grand Piano. “Others who were there just didn’t know it was supposed to be regularly maintained in that fashion,” Franklin said. Additional donations will likely support its upkeep in the coming months.

Approximately 30 guests attended the celebration at Pace’s home, while others joined a separate gathering at Jerry’s Pizza, Pasta & Grill in Martinsville. “It went well. It was a good event, everyone enjoyed themselves. She seemed to enjoy it, and her nieces and other family members were there,” Franklin said.

During the celebration, family



Nora Ruth Pace.

members shared stories about growing up with Pace, while friends and former students reflected on her profound impact on the community.

A graduate of Ridgeway Elementary and High School, Pace earned her Bachelor of Arts in Music from the University of Kentucky in 1945. She was an accomplished pianist and served as president of the music fraternity Phi Beta. She continued her education at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, where she earned a master’s degree, and pursued additional graduate studies at Ithaca University, Juilliard, Oberlin, Westminster Choir School, Columbia University, James Madison University, and Union Theological Seminary in New York.

Throughout her career, Pace worked with esteemed conductors and educators, including Robert Shaw, Robert Fountain, Olaf Christiansen, Paul Christiansen, Fred Waring, Paul Salamunovich, and Clair McElfresh. She also studied conducting under Rise Jones and Margaret Hillis.

A lifelong member of Ridgeway United Methodist Church, Pace dedicated more than 50 years to teaching Sunday school, directing the choir, playing the organ and piano, and serving on numerous church committees.

Pace taught choir music in Martinsville City Public Schools for 40 years, retiring in 1985. She initially taught at all grade levels before becoming a full-time instructor at Martinsville High School, where she played a key role in designing the school’s music building. In 1951, she received a Ford Foundation grant, allowing her to



Friends, family, and former students gather to celebrate Ruth Pace’s milestone birthday.



spend a year studying music and attending workshops in New York City, where she trained with renowned vocal coach Rosalie Miller.

Pace was an active member and leader in multiple organizations, including the Martinsville Education Association, Virginia Music Educators Association, and Virginia Choral Directors Association. She served as assistant director of the Virginia Music Camp at Massanetta Springs for over 30 years and was later honored as the first Virginian to conduct the camp’s Women’s Chorus. She frequently guest-directed regional and state choruses.

Combining her high school students with community singers, Pace organized concerts featuring professional vocalists, which led to the formation of the Piedmont Choral Society. Under her direction, the ensemble introduced professional orchestral accompaniment to the area.

In 2003, she was honored by the Piedmont Arts Association as the inaugural recipient of the Clyde Hooker Award, recognizing her significant contributions to the arts. Upon her

retirement in 1985, the Virginia General Assembly presented her with a resolution commemorating her four decades of service in music education.

Beyond her musical achievements, Pace co-chaired the Ridgeway Centennial Committee and co-authored the book *The Life and Times of Ridgeway* alongside her cousin Mary Pace McGee. Together, they played a crucial role in raising funds for the Ridgeway Branch of the Blue Ridge Public Library. Their efforts were recognized by the Exchange Club of Martinsville, which presented them with the “Book of Golden Deeds” award for outstanding community service.

In 2010, Pace received the Copenhaver Contribution to Education Award from Roanoke College. Her legacy continues to be celebrated by former students, including through a 2020 livestream event by TheatreWorks Community Players titled *A Night in Time with Ruth Pace*.

With the support of caregivers, Pace continues to reside at her family’s historic farm, where she remains a beloved figure in the community.

Alcohol Education and Prevention Grant Period Open

In an effort to eliminate underage and high-risk drinking, the Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control Authority (ABC) is accepting applications for the 2025-2026 Alcohol Education and Prevention Grant program now through March 1.

This is the 10th year Virginia ABC is offering grants to support alcohol education and prevention programs and projects across the commonwealth.

Since 2013, Virginia ABC has awarded an average of \$80,000 each year through its grant program to Virginia organizations working to prevent underage and high-risk drinking. Organizations are eligible to receive up to \$10,000 each to support evidence-based projects that have a long-lasting impact and en-

courage partnerships between organizations. Community coalitions, law enforcement, nonprofits, schools, government entities, colleges and universities, faith-based organizations and prevention-related groups are encouraged to apply.

Proposed projects must address prevention in one or more of the following focus areas:

- *underage drinking
- *providing or serving alcohol to youth
- *high-risk drinking

“We strive to support and work collaboratively with organizations that share our mission to strengthen the commonwealth through public safety and education,” said Katie Crumble, director of Virginia ABC Community Health and Engage-

ment.

Applications are available online, with a convenient online platform for submission. Virginia ABC has provided an application guide to assist applicants and provide more in-

formation about the program. This grant application guide and the grant application are at www.abc.virginia.gov/education/grants.

Applications are due by 5 p.m. on March 1.

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Under the Big Top, a circus-themed fundraiser, slated to support the arts

Piedmont Arts will host Under the Big Top: The Greatest Fundraiser on Earth at 7 p.m., Friday, March 7, at the museum.

The circus-themed event will feature food, drinks and entertainment, including live music by jazz quartet Four Brothers, a 360-degree photo booth, caricatures, carnival games and circus performers. Guests should dress in “carnival cocktail” attire or cocktail party clothing with a colorful, circus-themed flair.

“We’re excited to bring this fun event to the community,” said Piedmont Arts Executive Director Heidi Pinkston. “Guests are in for an exciting carnival-like experience with lots of activities, games, performances and music. This event will be loads of fun and will help support the important arts programming that Piedmont Arts brings to our community and schools.”

Guests can also take part in a 50/50 raffle and a live auction for a chance to throw a pie at a beloved community member.

“The pie throwing auction is going to be a big



draw,” said Pinkston. “A surprise guest has generously volunteered to be the recipient of a pie to the face, all in support of the arts and

the powerful role they play in shaping life in our community.”

Tickets are \$75 per person and include unlimited light bites, beer, wine and cotton candy champagne cocktails. 50/50 raffle tickets start at \$5 each. Game tickets are \$5 for three games or \$10 for eight games. Caricatures are \$20 each. Proceeds support Piedmont Arts programming in Martinsville-Henry County. Tickets are available at the museum or online at PiedmontArts.org.

Under the Big Top is sponsored by Martinsville Eyecare Center, VisitMartinsville, Atlantic Union Bank, Bassett Furniture, Inc., Diversified Trust, First Piedmont Corporation, Martinsville Family Medicine, Prillaman Landscape Dimensions, Inc., Greg Snyder Orthodontics, Stone Dynamics, Inc., Greg James Insurance, Lou Harris, Inc., Young, Haskins, Mann, Gregory, LLC, Draper Flowers & Gifts and Third Bay Cafe.

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

Key Efforts to Combat Human Trafficking in the Commonwealth Unveiled

Virginia officials are ramping up efforts to combat human trafficking through Operation Silence Shattered, a statewide initiative focused on awareness, prevention, and law enforcement action. This initiative, alongside key legislative efforts in the Virginia General Assembly, aims to protect vulnerable individuals and dismantle trafficking networks across the Commonwealth.

“Human trafficking is not a Republican or Democrat issue—it is a human rights issue,” said Gov. Glenn Youngkin. “From day one, we have been committed to not just reducing but eradicating this evil, because the fight to end it has long weighed heavily on Suzanne’s and my heart. Together, we will continue making a difference, empowering survivors, and building a future free from the darkness of human trafficking. Our work is far from over, but with unwavering determination, we will bring justice and hope to those who need it most.”

Launched on January 1, Operation Silence Shattered is a collaborative effort between the Virginia State Police, the Human Trafficking Institute, law enforcement agencies, and campus police across the Commonwealth. The initiative prioritizes prevention and victim support through awareness campaigns and strategic enforcement efforts.

Since its inception, Virginia State Police and the Human Trafficking Institute have engaged over 3,700 individuals in educational efforts, including outreach at rest areas, weigh stations, and law enforcement and prosecutorial training sessions. Through

partnerships with law enforcement agencies, the operation has resulted in 21 arrests of traffickers and sex buyers, while 12 victims have been identified and offered services.

The initiative also seeks to prevent trafficking by educating communities, particularly on college and university campuses, and addressing demand for illicit sex. Its core objectives include:

- *To provide awareness and outreach concerning anti-human trafficking efforts
- *To focus awareness of trafficking within college and university campuses
- *To address the demand for illicit sex throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia

“One of the most critical fights of our time is the battle against human trafficking,” Lt. Gov. Winsome Earle-Sears said, emphasizing the urgency of the fight against human trafficking. “Human trafficking affects every community, and therefore, it affects all of us. Together, we must send a clear message: we will always stand with victims, and we will always fight for the day when human trafficking is eradicated from our Commonwealth.”

Attorney General Jason Miyares reinforced the state’s commitment to pursuing traffickers and supporting survivors. “In Virginia, we are relentlessly pursuing those who exploit the vulnerable. We have strengthened our efforts at every level—coordinating, enhancing, and centralizing our fight to dismantle trafficking networks and deliver justice. Our goal is clear: to provide a victim-centered, trauma-informed response that combats hu-

man trafficking across the Commonwealth. I am proud of our progress, but we will not rest until every trafficker is held accountable and every survivor has the support they need to rebuild their lives.”

First Lady Suzanne S. Youngkin highlighted the importance of survivor support. “Every survivor of human trafficking carries a story of unimaginable resilience, and it is our collective responsibility to ensure they find hope, healing, and a future free from exploitation. Together, with organizations like Latisha’s House, Operation Light Shine, and New Creation VA, we are building a safer and more compassionate Virginia—one where every life is valued.”

Colleges and universities interested in participating can contact VSP’s human trafficking unit at humantraffickingunit@vsp.virginia.gov.

On January 17, 2024, Virginia State Police launched a Human Trafficking Hotline, allowing individuals to anonymously report suspected trafficking cases. Since its launch, the hotline has received over 333 submissions, leading to 136 active investigations and the identification of 47 victims who have been offered services as of November 2024.

To report concerns, text “VSP” followed by the tip to 847411 or submit an online tip.

Virginia officials remain committed to strengthening their fight against human trafficking, ensuring traffickers face justice and survivors receive the support they need to rebuild their lives.



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Reading as Brain Medicine: How It Can Help Combat Cognitive Decline

Aging and change go hand in hand. Although some may bemoan the gray hairs that start to arrive or stiffness in the knees that seems to sneak up on a person in middle age, such concerns are not necessarily enough to lose sleep over. However, many people 50 or older are nervous about the potential for cognitive issues like dementia as they grow older.

The Alzheimer's Association estimates that 6.7 million people have Alzheimer's disease in the United States. The Alzheimer Society of Canada estimates that there were 733,040 people living with dementia in the country as of January 1, 2024. Alzheimer's disease and other dementias can rob people of their memories, personalities and abilities to live satisfying, independent lives. While it may not be impossible to prevent all cognitive issues completely, there is reason to believe that reading could be an ally in cognitive care.

The American Academy of Neurology says that reading stimulates the brain and has been shown to slow down cognitive decline in old age. Reading also may help slow down memory loss.

The powers of reading were noticed more than 10 years ago when a 2013 study from researchers at Emory University measured readers' MRI scans as they read books. They found the deeper readers went into a story, the more areas of their brains were activated. This activity



Reading can keep brains functioning optimally and potentially delay age-related cognitive decline.

remained elevated for several days after participants finished their books. The more a person reads, the stronger complex networks in the brain become.

Additional evidence that reading can help the brain was noted by researchers at the Texas A&M School of Public Health. A 2024 study suggests that older people with mild cognitive impairment who engage in high levels of activities like

reading, hobbies and word games have better memory, working memory, attention, and processing speed than those who do not take part in such endeavors. Furthermore, a 2021 study published in Neurology found that high levels of cognitive activity, like reading and writing letters, can delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease by five years among those age 80 and over.

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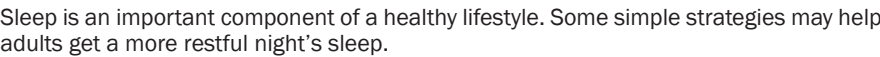
THE ESTATE & ELDER LAW CENTER
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There is no magic formula to ensure long-term health. However, if there were such an equation, sleep would be a critical component. Though adults may be able to function with less sleep than doctors recommend, the National Institutes of Health note that consistent lack of sufficient sleep can interfere with work, social functioning and driving ability.

The National Institute on Aging notes that adults of all ages generally need the same amount of sleep, typically between seven and nine hours of rest per night. That's an important distinction, as busy adults in mid-life might feel as though they can operate on less sleep without adversely affecting their overall health. However, in addition to the problems noted by the NIH, the NIA reports that ongoing lack of sleep, or even consistently poor sleep quality, can increase risk for cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, depression, and obesity.

Adults who feel their sleep quality is poor or those who aspire to sleep more each night can consider these three strategies to ensure a more restful night's sleep.

Screens are everywhere in modern life, and that includes the bedroom. In fact, the National Sleep Foundation's 2022 Sleep in America® Poll found that 58 percent of survey participants acknowledged look-



ing at screens within an hour before bedtime. The NSF reports that device usage so close to bedtime can adversely affect sleep quality because the blue light emitted from screens has shorter wavelengths than other colors in the visible light spectrum, which results in more alertness than warmer tones.

The blue light actually confuses the brain into thinking it's earlier in the day, thus making it harder to fall asleep.

Short naps can help people reenergize, but the timing of naps could adversely affect how well people sleep at night. The

Mayo Clinic notes that napping after 3 p.m. can make it harder to sleep soundly at night. And while short naps can provide a necessary jolt, it's important that naps be no longer than 30 minutes. Naps that exceed half an hour can contribute to feelings of grogginess and even compromise your ability to get restful sleep overnight.

Some may consider alcohol a sleep aide, and there's good reason for that perception, even if it's misguided. Hackensack Meridian Health notes that alcohol acts as a depressant for the central nervous system that can cause brain activity to slow down. As a result, alcohol can increase feelings of relaxation and tiredness. However, that effect is not long-lasting, and as alcohol levels in the blood drop, individuals are likely to wake up and may even find it hard to fall back asleep. Waking up in the middle of the night cuts down on the time individuals spend in the most restorative stage of sleep, which is why individuals often feel as if they got little rest after a night of drinking.



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Steps Seniors Can Take to Safeguard Their Mental Health

Mental health challenges can affect anyone, including older adults nearing or already enjoying retirement. While the “golden years” often evoke images of carefree days, many individuals aged 60 and older grapple with mental health issues.

The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that about 15% of adults aged 60 and older worldwide experience a mental disorder. However, the true scope of the problem may be even larger. The WHO acknowledges that depression among seniors is frequently undiagnosed and untreated, often because it co-occurs with other health issues.

In the past, late-life anxiety and other mental health concerns were less understood. But growing awareness has led to more resources and tools available to help seniors safeguard their mental well-being.

Recognizing Warning Signs

Recognizing the symptoms of mental health issues is the first step toward treatment. The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) highlights several warning signs that seniors and their loved ones should monitor:

- Noticeable changes in mood, energy, or appetite
- Difficulty feeling positive emotions or experiencing a “flat” mood
- Trouble sleeping or oversleeping
- Persistent worry, stress, or

difficulty concentrating

- Irritability, anger, or aggressive behavior
- Chronic headaches, digestive problems, or other physical pain
- Misuse of alcohol or drugs
- Feelings of sadness, hopelessness, or suicidal thoughts
- Risky or compulsive behaviors

• Thoughts or behaviors that disrupt daily life or concern others

- Hallucinations or sensory experiences not shared by others

These symptoms can vary by individual and condition, underscoring the importance of seeking professional guidance when concerns arise.

Seeking Support

Fortunately, seniors today have access to a wide range of mental health resources. In the United States, the NIMH provides a “Help for Mental Illnesses” webpage (<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/find-help>) with information about crisis support services. In Canada, the Canadian Mental Health Association (<https://cmha.ca/find-help/find-cmha-in-your-area/>) offers similar tools to connect individuals with local support networks.

Mental health crises require prompt attention, so seniors experiencing severe symptoms or distress should not hesitate to seek help.

Healthy Habits for Mental Well-Being

While some cases of depres-



Depression is often undiagnosed among older men and women and untreated because it co-occurs with other issues affecting seniors.

sion and anxiety may not be preventable, adopting healthy habits can significantly benefit mental well-being. The National Institute on Aging (NIA) recommends the following:

- Stay active. Regular physical activity boosts both mental and physical health.
- Eat well. A nutritious diet can reduce the risk of illnesses associated with depression and disability.
- Get enough sleep. Aim for seven to nine hours of restful sleep each night.
- Stay social. Regular interactions with friends, family, or community groups combat isolation.
- Pursue hobbies. Engaging in enjoyable activities provides purpose and joy.

- Communicate openly. Discuss mental health concerns with trusted friends, family members, or healthcare providers.

A Growing Need for Action

Mental health issues among seniors are increasingly recognized as an important public health concern. Early detection, professional support, and a commitment to healthy living can make a significant difference.

Seniors and their families can learn more about safeguarding mental health by visiting trusted resources like nimh.nih.gov or consulting with local mental health organizations. The golden years can be a time of fulfillment and happiness, especially when mental health is prioritized.

Considerations for your second act



A number of retirees ultimately explore second careers. Finding a match may be easier than one could have imagined.

Many people see their careers as one of their defining characteristics. Children are often asked what they want to be when they grow up, and as adults they will likely be asked “What do you do for a living?” more times than they can remember. Work is undoubtedly a major component of life for most people from the time they leave school to the day when they retire. And a growing number of adults value work so much that they pivot to second careers.

A phenomenon known as “unretirement” occurs when people who have previously retired return to the workforce. A 2010 paper published in the Journal of Human Resources found nearly 50 percent of retirees followed a nontraditional retirement path that involved partial retirement or unretirement. According to a recent Retirement Saving & Spending Study from T. Rowe Price, around 20 percent of retirees are working either full- or part-time, while 7 percent of study respondents are looking for employment. Some people return to work for financial reasons while others seek the social and emotional benefits employment can bring. But individuals mulling a return to work or those currently working but trying to determine a second act should not feel beholden to previous career paths. A second trip around the employment block can involve an entirely different line of work. The following are some things to look for in a second act.

- Flexibility: Choose a career path that enables you to set your own schedule or possibly work part-time if that is your preference. This way you can still reap some of the benefits of retirement, including the flexibility to travel.

- Social interaction: Adults may lose daily opportunities to be social when they retire, which can compound feelings of isolation common among retirees. Consider a second career that lets you interact with a number of people and continue to build relationships and a good network.

- Personal passions: Reflect on what you might do for work if money is no object. This may help you narrow down new opportunities that are in line with your interests and passions. Find a job that utilizes your skills and experience and meshes with your interests. A former graphic artist, for example, may decide to teach design to young people.

- Nonprofit opportunities: Many retirees spent years in high-stress corporate environments where bottom lines may be more important than the bigger picture. Shifting to a career in the nonprofit sector can be a personally fulfilling job that utilizes skills learned in the corporate world.

- Consulting or contract work: If you’re a retiree who loved your job, you might want to have a second career as a consultant or contractor in the same field.



Stress is a part of life, but finding ways to manage chronic stress is vital to long-term health.

Strategies to manage and tame stress

Stress is a part of life. In small doses, stress can have a positive effect. But when stress is chronic, it can take its toll on the body and mind.

Stress can make people irritable and cause them to lash out at others. Stress also can contribute to high blood pressure and adversely affects sleep. When confronting chronic stress, individuals may have to take action to find relief. These stress-busting strategies can help.

- Engage in physical activity. The Mayo Clinic says any form of exercise can help relieve stress. Physical activity boosts chemicals in the brain and endorphins that help a person feel good. Exercise also can refocus attention, so a person is not preoccupied with stressful thoughts or situation.
- Listen to music. Music can be calming and serve as a distraction from stressful feelings. Simply listening to music can be a quick fix for a stressful situation and a bad mood.
- Review your lifestyle. It’s easy to take on too much, but doing so can lead to feelings of being overwhelmed, says the Mental Health Foundation. Prioritizing some things over others and delegating when

possible, can tame stress.

- Practice mindfulness. Breathing and mindfulness exercises can be practiced anywhere. Research has shown that mindfulness can reduce the effects of stress and anxiety. Deep breathing and being in a quiet moment when stress peaks may help to reduce stress.
- Step away for a few minutes. If possible, step away from a stressful situation, whether it is a difficult project at work or a loud room with a lot of activity going on. Many people find commuting stressful. Changing the route to one that avoids busy roads, even if it takes a bit longer to get from point A to point B, might help.
- Talk it out. Sometimes connecting with others and sharing experiences can help to relieve stress. Keeping feelings in and fixating on a situation may exacerbate feelings of stress. Social situations that encourage talking and laughing can lighten a person’s mental load, says the Mayo Clinic.
- Don’t turn to substances. Alcohol and drugs may temporarily relieve stress, but this approach can lead to addiction and even worsen the physical and mental toll stress takes on the body.

Staying Healthy After 50: Why Annual Wellness Exams Are Essential

Seniors are a growing and increasingly prosperous demographic. As the senior population increases, a greater emphasis must be placed on keeping aging individuals healthy. Wellness checks are important at any age, but they bear even more significance as individuals grow older.

Age brings with it many things, including experience and wisdom. But age also brings an increased risk for health problems. Aging men and women are vulnerable to chronic conditions like heart disease, COPD, cancer, and arthritis. It's noteworthy that many chronic health conditions fail to produce any symptoms until they have progressed to a point where treatment is difficult.

Annual wellness exams can help older adults take charge of their health and stay as healthy as possible. It's possible for a person to preserve his or her health (and possibly life) through check-ups and easy tests. Here are some common screenings and health recommendations that come up in the prime of one's life.

• **Colorectal cancer screening:** A colon cancer screening is recommended for everyone at age 45. Colon cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States, and risk increases at age 45. Although people seldom look forward to a colonoscopy and the required prep, putting off this test due to a little discomfort may result in missing colon cancer at its earliest stage when it is most treatable.

• **Cholesterol screening:** This simple blood test can help evaluate the risk for heart disease. High chole-

sterol can contribute to the buildup of plaque in the arteries, making them narrower and less flexible, according to Sharecare, Inc.

• **Mammogram:** Most health organizations recommend annual mammogram screenings from age 40 until menopause. Then it may be possible to have a mammogram every other year for those who are at average risk. It is important for women to discuss mammogram frequency with their doctors, particularly if there is a family history of breast cancer.

• **Diabetes:** ChenMed says diabetes may be more common in older adults, so regular screenings for this illness can enable early diagnosis and management.

• **Testicular cancer screening:** This test generally is not recommended without symptoms. Some organizations suggest men with a family history or other risk factors consider performing self-examinations.

• **Vaccination needs:** Doctors can alert patients to recommended vaccinations during wellness exams. Seniors should receive an annual flu shot and updated COVID-19 vaccination as available. Pneumococcal vaccine can protect against pneumococcal disease that can lead to pneumonia, meningitis and bloodstream infections. Adults over 50 also should receive a vaccination for shingles, which can occur in older age in those who have previously experienced chickenpox.

There are additional advantages to routine health checkups. Doctors can inquire about fitness routines, stress, sleep, and diet to see if patients are within the guidelines for healthy living.

Perfect Part-Time Jobs for Retirees Seeking Income and Engagement

For many adults nearing retirement, the thought of leaving behind long commutes and daily work obligations is a welcome prospect. Retirement offers the freedom to pursue recreation, travel, and long-postponed hobbies. However, as countless retirees discover, the appeal of unending free time isn't always as idyllic as imagined.

Factors like rising inflation can increase the cost of living, leaving some seniors stretched thin financially. Others may miss the social connections and mental stimulation that work provides. For retirees who aren't ready to commit to full-time employment but still want to stay active and engaged, part-time work offers an ideal solution.

Here are some part-time roles well-suited to retirees looking to reenter the workforce:

Retail Sales Associate

Working in retail can provide retirees with a variety of responsibilities and social interactions. Tasks might include greeting customers, making sales, restocking inventory, and assisting shoppers with their selections. Strong customer service skills and a personable demeanor are essential in this role. Many retailers offer flexible schedules for part-time employees, allowing seniors to adjust their hours to fit their lifestyles.

Consultant

Retirees who enjoyed their careers but prefer a less time-intensive commitment may



Seniors have many different options if they decide they want to return to the workforce in a part-time capacity.

find consulting to be an attractive option. According to The Balance: Money, consultants often earn more per hour than they did as full-time employees. Consulting provides a way to share expertise and contribute to industries retirees know and love, all while maintaining a flexible schedule.

Customer Service Representative

Customer service representatives assist clients with questions, concerns, and troubleshooting. These roles can often be performed from home, making them a convenient option for retirees. For those who enjoy problem-solving and interacting with others, customer service roles provide both purpose and flexibility.

School Positions

Jobs in schools offer retirees a chance to work in a lively and community-focused environment. Options include driving a school bus (with proper training and licensing), serving as lunchroom aides, substitute teaching, or working as crossing guards. Many of these roles have part-time hours during the school day, with the added bonus of holidays

and summers off.

Receptionist

Receptionists are the friendly faces that greet visitors in office settings, whether in medical clinics, corporate offices, or skilled nursing facilities. Tasks typically include answering phones, scheduling appointments, and light clerical work. For retirees seeking off-peak schedules, evening and weekend shifts in healthcare facilities may be a good fit.

Why Part-Time Work Makes Sense for Retirees

Beyond the financial benefits, part-time work can help retirees maintain an active social life, engage their problem-solving skills, and add structure to their days. It's also a chance to explore new industries or rediscover passions from earlier in life.

Retirement doesn't have to mean stepping away from work entirely. By choosing part-time roles, retirees can strike the perfect balance between leisure and productivity, ensuring their golden years are both fulfilling and financially secure.



Adults over 50 who want to be more physically active can look at any number of fitness classes to break a sweat, build strength and have fun all at once.

Fitness classes for the over 50 crowd

Exercise is a pillar of a healthy lifestyle. When individuals exercise regularly and pair physical activity with a healthy diet and smart lifestyle choices, they can extend their life expectancies and sleep well knowing they're doing everything they can to increase their chances of enjoying a limitless retirement.

Adults over 50 know it's not always so easy to exercise. Hectic schedules can make it seem like there's little time for exercise. And even when adults make time to break a sweat, they might find that traditional workouts combining strength training with cardiovascular exercise are too time-consuming and possibly even a little dull. In such instances, fitness classes can take the place of more traditional exercise regimens. Various classes provide a challenging workout, and many can do so in an hour or less.

• **Pilates:** Improving balance, core strength and flexibility are three goals of Pilates. Pilates has an interesting history, as it was created by Joseph Pilates, a German prisoner of war who was imprisoned off the coast of England during World War I. Pilates and the exercising phenomenon he created ultimately made their way to the United States, where the routine was embraced by dancers looking for a way to aid their injury recovery. Pilates is now part of millions of individuals' exercise regimens. This low-impact exercise is designed to strengthen muscles and improve alignment and flexibility. Achieving greater balance after 50 pays untold dividends for older adults, who can decrease their risk for falls and fall-related injuries by increasing their steadiness.

• **Spin:** Spin classes are a wildly

popular exercise program that utilizes cycling to help people break a sweat. Cardiovascular exercise is beneficial for a number of reasons, including its connection to heart health and even cognitive health. But many people lament daily sessions on a treadmill or elliptical that they find boring. Spin classes involve the use of stationary bikes, but instructors typically guide class members through conditions that mimic outdoor cycling sessions. Resistance and pedaling speed changes throughout a spin class, which serves to keep individuals engaged and burn lots of calories.

• **Kickboxing:** Sometimes referred to as Krav Maga, kickboxing is another unique and challenging class offered at many fitness facilities. Martial arts like kickboxing assist with weight loss and can help people improve their muscle tone, flexibility and stamina. Adults over 50 who are not accustomed to physical activity may find their energy levels are low, but a few kickboxing sessions may produce noticeable differences in stamina. The balance benefits of kickboxing are similar to those provided by Pilates, so this activity may be particularly beneficial for adults over 50 looking to reduce their vulnerability to falls as they grow older.

• **Dance:** Dancing is widely seen as a fun activity, and rightfully so, as few things can be as enjoyable as cutting a rug. But dancing also provides a great cardiovascular workout. Local community centers and even some fitness facilities offer age-specific dancing classes, which the AARP notes are great for individuals who want to build core strength, improve bone health and protect their heart.

The Key to a Comfortable Retirement: Saving Early and Strategically

The importance of saving for retirement is a message ingrained in professionals from the moment they enter the workforce. Whether it's parents urging their children to plan ahead, financial institutions promoting retirement services, or employers offering investment plans, reminders to save for the future are everywhere.

Despite this widespread emphasis, a significant number of individuals fall behind on their retirement savings. A 2023 survey by the Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan revealed that 44 percent of the 2,000 Canadian employees surveyed had not saved any money for retirement in the past year. In the United States, the numbers are just as sobering: a CNBC Your Money survey from 2023 found that 56 percent of Americans believe they are not on track to retire comfortably.

These statistics highlight the urgent need for financial planning, particularly among young adults just starting their professional journeys. Retirement goals vary by individual, as some may wish to retire early, while others plan to work into their 70s. Regardless of the timeline, establishing a savings strategy early can make a significant difference.

To help individuals stay on track, financial experts at Fidelity® have developed an age-based savings guideline for professionals aiming to retire at age 67. This system is designed to help individuals maintain their pre-retirement lifestyles and serves as a benchmark for retirement planning. Fidelity's recommendations are as follows:

- **Age 30:** Save at least 1x your annual salary.
- **Age 35:** Aim for 2x your salary.
- **Age 40:** Have 3x your salary saved.
- **Age 45:** Work toward 4x your salary.
- **Age 50:** Save 6x your salary.
- **Age 55:** Increase savings to 7x your salary.
- **Age 60:** Reach 8x your salary.
- **Age 67:** Ensure you have 10x your salary saved by retirement.

These benchmarks are based on the assumption of retiring at 67, but they can be adjusted for those planning to retire earlier or later. Fidelity encourages individuals to consult with financial advisors to tailor these goals to their unique circumstances.

Reaching these benchmarks can seem daunting, but starting early and saving consistently can make a significant difference over time. Automating savings, contributing to employer-sponsored retirement plans, and taking advantage of employer matching can accelerate progress.

It's also important to recognize that these benchmarks are guidelines rather than strict requirements. Some individuals may need to save more depending on their post-retirement plans, health needs, or lifestyle goals.

Ultimately, the key to a secure and comfortable retirement is a proactive approach to saving. Whether you're just entering the workforce or approaching the later stages of your career, taking the time to assess your financial goals and implement a savings strategy can ensure your golden years are truly golden.

Keep Your Brain Sharp and Protect Long-Term Cognitive Health

Cognitive health plays a critical role in overall well-being, enabling individuals to think clearly, learn effectively, and remember important information. While some memory lapses are a normal part of aging, significant cognitive changes that interfere with daily life should raise concerns.

According to the National Institute on Aging (NIA), brain health is a multifaceted concept that extends beyond cognitive function. It includes:

- *Cognitive health: The ability to think, learn, and remember.
- *Motor function: How well an individual controls movement.
- *Tactile function: Sensation and the ability to feel touch.
- *Emotional function: The interpretation and response to emotions.

Protecting cognitive health begins with understanding the factors that influence brain function. Experts emphasize proactive steps that can help maintain cognitive abilities and promote overall brain health as individuals age.

Prioritize Overall Health

Maintaining general health through regular medical care is a cornerstone of cognitive well-being. Routine screenings, managing chronic conditions, avoiding tobacco and excessive alcohol consumption, and getting sufficient sleep are all vital. Sleep is especially important, as it allows the brain to rest and repair, supporting memory consolidation and cognitive performance.

Manage High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure in midlife is linked to an increased risk of cognitive decline and dementia later in life, according to the NIA. Lowering blood pressure can reduce the likelihood of developing mild cognitive impairment. Routine monitoring and treatment of hypertension should be a priority for individuals aiming to protect their cognitive health.

Stimulate Your Brain

Keeping the mind active can help maintain cognitive abilities. Harvard Medical School recommends activities such as:

- Maintaining social connections.
- Engaging in puzzles, reading, or playing strategy-based games.
- Traveling to new places and learning



Cognitive health should be a priority. Adults can employ various strategies to reduce their risk of cognitive decline as they age.

about different cultures.

- Taking up new hobbies or skills, such as learning a musical instrument or a new language.

These activities challenge the brain and may foster the development of new neural connections.

Reduce Stress

Chronic stress can take a toll on the body, including the brain. Prolonged exposure to stress hormones may contribute to memory problems and cognitive decline. Reducing stress through relaxation techniques such as meditation, deep breathing, or mindfulness practices can be beneficial. Spending time with friends and loved ones, laughing, or taking a break with a vacation can also alleviate stress.

Boost Vitamin D Levels

Vitamin D is known for its role in bone health, but it also plays a part in brain function. Spending time outdoors in natural sunlight and consuming vitamin D-rich foods like fatty fish, fortified dairy products, and egg yolks can support brain health. For those

with low vitamin D levels, doctors may recommend supplements.

Address Hearing Loss

Hearing loss is another factor that may contribute to cognitive decline. Research published by Healthline suggests a link between central hearing loss and an increased risk of mild cognitive impairment. Seniors experiencing hearing issues should consult with healthcare professionals to explore interventions like hearing aids or other treatments that may help reduce cognitive risks.

A Holistic Approach to Brain Health

Cognitive health is influenced by a combination of physical, mental, and emotional factors. By taking a proactive approach—managing chronic conditions, staying socially and mentally engaged, reducing stress, and addressing sensory health concerns—individuals can protect their cognitive abilities and enjoy a higher quality of life as they age.

For more information and resources on maintaining cognitive health, visit the National Institute on Aging at nia.nih.gov.



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