



The Career Academy's ambulance simulator is designed to offer students a realistic experience of working in tight, high-pressure emergency situations. (Contributed)

Career Academy launches EMT program to meet local emergency services shortage

By Maddy Oliver
The Career Academy is partnering with Henry County Public Safety to offer Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) certification courses to Henry County high school students. The initiative was launched in response to a growing shortage of emergency services personnel in the area.

Melissa Hubbard, the course instructor, emphasized the urgent need. "We are in an extreme deficit for EMS providers in the area," she said. "It seems to be an ongoing problem, not just for our area, but everywhere. EMTs—there are just not enough of them to go around. (See Career p. 9)

Big projects, bigger bets: County's development value soars



Progress on the expansion of the Press Glass facility in the Commonwealth Crossing Business Centre is visible in this aerial photo. The company announced the \$155.2 million capital investment on Aug. 30, 2023. Press Glass first announced plans to locate in Henry County in 2018.

While the number of building permits in Henry County has remained relatively steady over the last decade, the value of new development is rising sharply — a sign of growing investor confidence and larger, more ambitious projects. From 2015 to 2020, the county issued 5,333 permits representing just over \$385 million in development activity. Since 2021, only 4,356 permits have been issued, but the total project value has jumped to more than \$687 million, before adjusting for inflation. When adjusted for inflation, the post-2020 total rises to over \$742 million — (See Big Projects p. 2)

Parents charged in infant abuse case; SWAT ends armed standoff in Collinsville

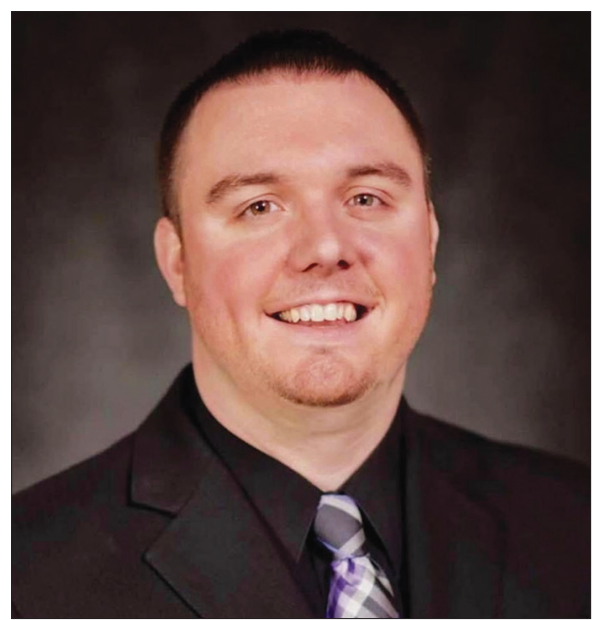
By Debbie Hall
Two parents have been charged with felony child abuse and neglect following an alleged assault on an 8-month-old child, which led to a day-long manhunt and a SWAT standoff in Collinsville, according to the Henry County Sheriff's Office. Sheriff Wayne Davis said the investigation began in the early morning hours of July 24, when deputies responded to a home on Norwood Drive for a reported assault and neglect of an infant. Upon arrival, deputies took the child's mother, Nikki Angelina Walker, 32, into custody. She is being held at the Henry County Adult Detention Center on a \$4,000 secured bond. The child's father, Chase Thomas Fielder, 32, allegedly fled the scene before deputies arrived. Authorities issued arrest warrants for both parents on charges of felony abuse and neglect of a child, and deputies began searching for Fielder. Later that evening, at approximately 7:59 p.m., investigators received information that Fielder was at 63 Norwood Drive in Collinsville. Deputies responded to the residence, where Fielder allegedly slammed the door and began barricading himself inside in an attempt to avoid arrest. Due to Fielder's "known criminal history and



A section of the exterior wall is missing from a home on Norwood Drive following a standoff on July 24, which ended with the arrest of Chase Thomas Fielder.

escalating behavior," Davis said, the Henry County Sheriff's Office SWAT Team was activated. Deputies first attempted to negotiate a peaceful surrender, but those efforts were un-

successful. When the SWAT Team arrived, chemical munitions were deployed into the home in an attempt to force Fielder to surrender. Davis said the residence had been heavily fortified from the inside, with furniture and large appliances—including beds, couches, mattresses, a washing machine, and a dryer—used to block entry through both the front and back doors. "Actually, we made an attempt to use a standard breach on the door," Davis said. "It just was not possible." As a result, SWAT used a Lenco BearCat armored vehicle equipped with mechanical breaching tools to create an entry point through the front door and wall of the residence. "That particular vehicle has multi attachments that can be used in a number of different ways," Davis said. He added that SWAT members train with the BearCat nearly every month and that both he and members of the team have attended National Tactical Officers Association training, which includes armored vehicle operations for high-risk incidents. Despite the breach, Fielder allegedly continued to resist. Additional chemical agents were deployed, and he eventually exited the home (See Parents p. 9)



Jonathan Martin is running for the Blackberry District seat on the Henry County School Board. (Contributed)

Martin enters school board race in Blackberry District

By Taylor Boyd
Jonathan Martin is running for the Blackberry District seat on the Henry County School Board, motivated in part by bullying his daughter experienced last year. He will face Sherry Vestal in the November election. Incumbent Thomas Auker is not seeking re-election. Martin, 36, said his daughter was bullied at (See Martin p. 10)

Vestal seeks Henry County School Board seat



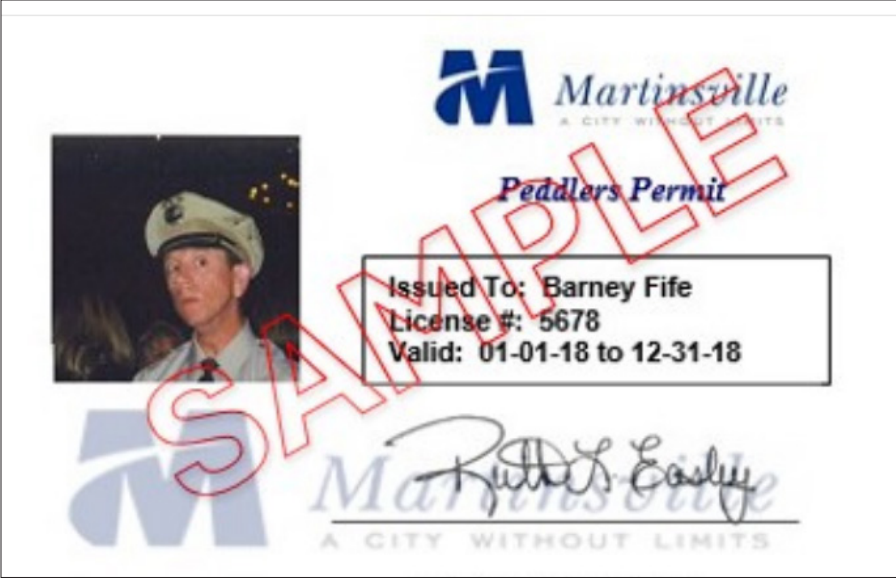
Sherry Vestal, who spent 34 years working for the school division as a school nurse and school nurse coordinator, is seeking the Blackberry District seat on the Henry County School Board. (Contributed)

By Taylor Boyd
Sherry Vestal is running for the Blackberry District seat on the Henry County School Board in the November election. She will face Jonathan Martin in the race. Incumbent Tom Auker is not seeking re-election.

Vestal, who retired three years ago, worked for the school division for 34 years as a school nurse and school nurse coordinator. "Henry County has a great school division, otherwise I would not have stayed 34 years," she said. "I want employees to feel that they can speak and voice their concerns with total support." She said she was inspired to run after Auker told her he did not plan to seek another term. "The more I thought about it, the more I thought that's what I needed to do," she said. Vestal added that politics runs in her family. "My father was in politics for 34 years," she said of S.E. Moran, who served on the Henry County Board of Supervisors. "I guess politics is in my blood, and that's why I decided to run," she said. "I'm hoping that I can help make a difference." If elected, Vestal said she plans to support all school employees and ensure they feel heard. "I have friends that still work at the central office that say things are better than they've ever been," she said. "Then I have people that work in the buildings that tell me they feel like they're not being heard." She believes that when employees feel valued and supported by their supervisors and administrators, it leads to a more committed and responsive workforce. "Happy employees will be very responsive and committed employees," she said. Vestal also wants to represent not just school staff but parents as well. "I've heard parents complaining about bullying issues," she said. "I've heard teachers complain that they feel like they're swamped and they're drowning in work that they have to do." Though she hasn't heard many specific concerns from parents, she said she wants to return to the school system to gain a clearer understanding (See Vestal p. 10)

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UPDATES





The proper ID from door-to-door peddlers will look similar to the sample pictured in the photo.

City residents reminded to ask for ID from door-to-door sellers

In mid-June, the Martinsville Police Department reminded residents that selling items or services door-to-door requires a city-issued peddler’s permit, according to a release from Commissioner of Revenue Ruth Easley.

The permit is issued through the Commissioner of the Revenue’s Office. Applicants must undergo a criminal background check and receive approval from the Martinsville Police Department before the Commissioner’s Office issues a photo license.

Peddlers must carry the permit while going door-to-door and present it upon request.

The permit requirement does not apply to children or individuals affiliated with area schools or local nonprofit organizations who are fundraising on behalf of those groups.

Residents are encouraged to ask to see the permit from anyone going door-to-door selling products or services. If the individual cannot provide one, residents should ask them to leave and call 911.

The police department notes that many brick-and-mortar businesses offer similar services and products recently peddled door to door, and city officials encourage residents to support local businesses and shop local.

Big Projects

(cont. from page 1)

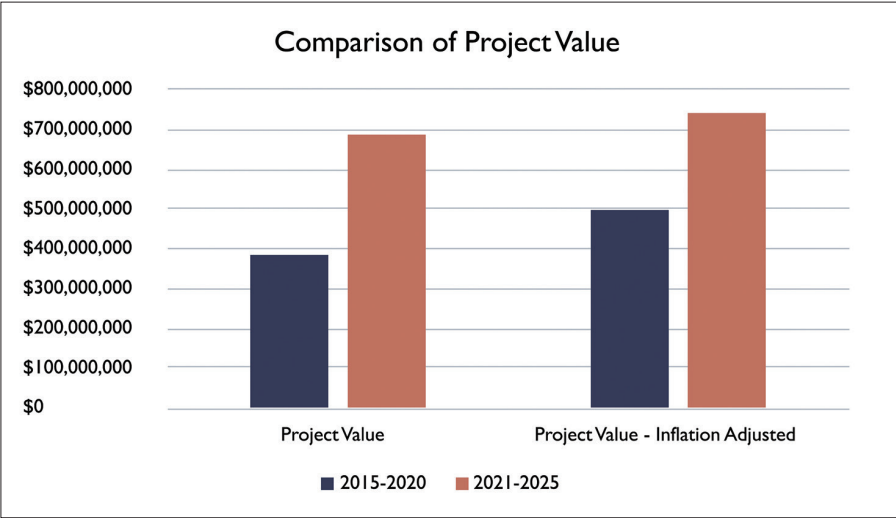


Figure 1: Comparison of Building Permit Project Value, Pre-Pandemic versus Post-Pandemic

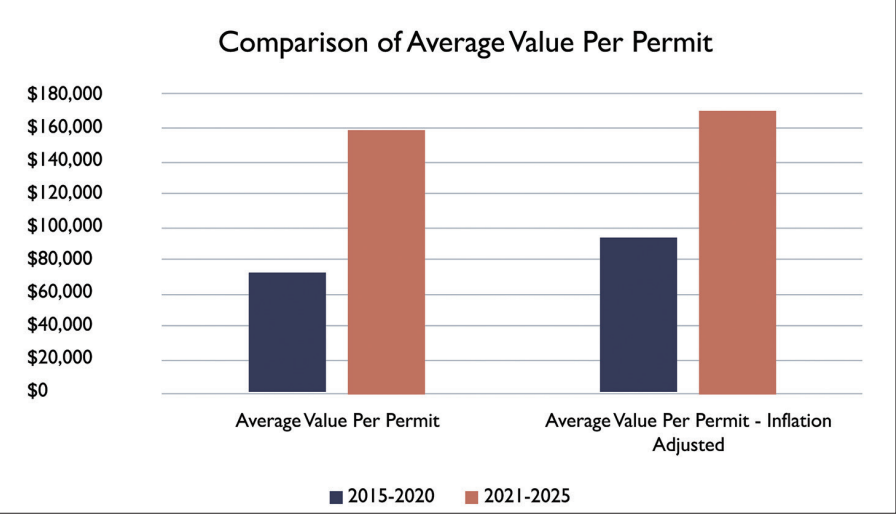


Figure 2: Comparison of Average Value Per Building Permit, Pre-Pandemic versus Post-Pandemic

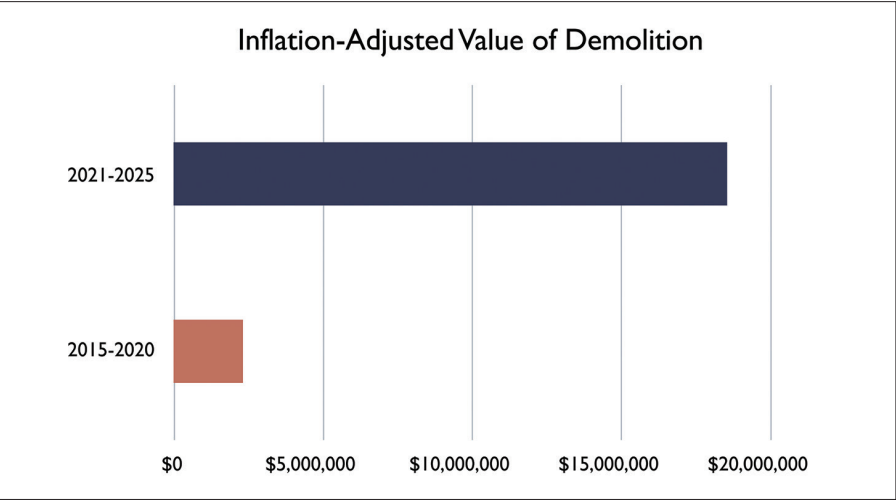


Figure 3: Comparison of the Inflation-Adjusted Value of Demolition Activities, Pre-Pandemic versus Post-Pandemic

a nearly 49 percent increase in real investment compared to the previous five-year period.

The average value per permit has more than doubled, from roughly \$72,000 between 2015 and 2020 to more than \$158,000 since 2021, also before adjusting for inflation.

This shift can be attributed to several factors including en-

hanced site readiness, consistent tax policy, and a long-term commitment to supporting economic development.

“These numbers reflect the wisdom of the board’s forward-looking investments,” said Jim Adams, chairman of the Henry County Board of Supervisors. “From preparing sites for major employers to keeping taxes low

Community Storehouse requests donations as SCSEP funding ends

By Taylor Boyd

Community Storehouse, a Martinsville-based nonprofit organization, is asking for donations after the U.S. Department of Labor halted approximately \$300 million in Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) grants, cutting payments to national providers.

According to a July media release, SCSEP—authorized under Title V of the Older Americans Act—is the only federal program specifically designed to support low-income Americans aged 55 and older through paid, part-time community service assignments. The program provides workforce training and helps participants transition into unsubsidized employment.

Travis Adkins, executive director of the agency, said participants must meet income and asset restrictions to qualify.

“So these are impoverished people,” he said. “The goal is supposed to be for seniors to get recent references, or maybe new skill sets that they didn’t use before, to be able to better their life if they are on a low, fixed income—and to set them out into the workforce.”

In practice, Adkins said the program also benefits nonprofits by providing much-needed staffing support, as SCSEP pays participants directly.

“Participants typically work 20 hours per week at minimum wage, addressing community needs and gaining transferable skills,” the release stated. “Research affirmatively links SCSEP participation with reduced isolation, improved well-being, and elevated self-sufficiency among seniors. Locally at the Storehouse, SCSEP participants have served as support staff in various roles for years—roles that are vital to keeping our operations running smoothly, efficiently and compassionately.”

Adkins estimates the Storehouse has participated in the program for at least 15 years.

“This year it’s just kind of been silently done away with,” he said. “All of our workers have been silently furloughed. Their calendar year starts in June, so all of this started back then.”

In this region, Adkins said Goodwill Industries oversees the SCSEP contract with the federal government.

“All of their office workers that would usually be doing the payroll for these people—I think they have all been furloughed. So, there’s just been media silence about it,” he said.

Adkins said the Department of Government Efficiency—referred to as DOGE—identified SCSEP as

a program to be cut.

While the Storehouse once had six SCSEP participants, Adkins said it recently had just two.

“But they are vital support staff,” he said. “And of course, if you go down from six to two, the two are doing the job of the six. And now we have zero. So, it’s affecting the nonprofit negatively in that we don’t have the people to do those duties. But these people depended on that money, so it’s horrible for them, it’s horrible for us.”

As a result, Storehouse is asking foundations, corporations, faith communities and individual donors to provide bridge funding to help compensate the furloughed SCSEP workers.

“Ideally, if somebody could just give us the money to employ these two people on our own, it would be amazing,” Adkins said. “For the rest of the year, to rehire these two people at minimum wage—and they only got a maximum of 20 hours a week—it would be about \$10,000.”

Adkins said he hopes to bring back at least one of the two workers.

“That we’re not going to have to completely redo the way we do all of our support services just because we’ve, out of the blue, lost this program,” he said. “Without immediate help, we risk losing not only crucial income for our seniors—but also the human infrastructure that keeps our doors open and our mission alive.”

Adkins also encouraged the public to contact lawmakers and advocate for the program to be re-funded.

The Storehouse is also operating under a \$70,000 deficit in its \$300,000 annual budget, while it awaits reimbursement from the federal Employee Retention Credit (ERC) program.

“We’ve been waiting since Jan. 12, 2023, for the ERC money,” Adkins said. “After they did the first two parts of support during COVID, they did the ERC—where if you made it through the COVID crisis and retained your employees, you could submit to the federal government to get reimbursed for this money. We’re owed almost \$70,000.”

Adkins said every 60 days, the Internal Revenue Service sends a letter requesting more time to process the reimbursement.

“Then another 60 days go by, and we get that same letter again,” he said. “It’s been going on since ‘23.”

Those wishing to donate can visit www.storehousemhc.com, donate in person, or mail checks earmarked “SCSEP” to 128 E. Church St., Martinsville, VA 24112.

development. New housing projects, including the School Drive Apartments, are being developed to meet demand for quality living options. Meanwhile, commercial permits are increasing as retail and service businesses expand to serve both residents and the local workforce.

Demolition activity — often overlooked as an indicator of development — is also up. Between 2015 and 2020, the county issued 106 demolition permits valued at a combined \$2.3 million (inflation-adjusted). Since 2021, that figure has grown to 136 permits worth over \$18 million. County officials say this trend reflects efforts to clear older structures and pave the way for redevelopment.

This balanced growth across residential, commercial, and industrial sectors reflects the success of the board’s wise investments in site readiness, infrastructure, and maintaining competitive tax rates. It signals investor confidence in the county’s future, underpinned by a skilled workforce and predictable operating costs, including some of the lowest water and sewer rates in the region.

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

Thursday, August 7

Henry County School Board meets at 9 a.m., followed by closed session, Henry County Administration Building, 3rd Floor Boardroom.

Tuesday, August 12

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m., Municipal Building, 55 W. Church St., Martinsville.

Events

Saturday, August 2

The Bassett Branch Library Expansion Committee and the Blue Ridge Library Foundation are hosting a BINGO Fundraising Event, to benefit the Bassett Branch Library Expansion Project, at the Historic J.D. Bassett Event Center, 3289 Riverside Dr. Doors open at 4 p.m.; BINGO starts at 6 p.m. Packets include 3 games per play; 20 games per packet. The first packet is \$20; \$10 for each extra. Prizes per game, pull tabs, door prizes, raffle and 50/50. Cash only. Concessions will be available for purchase. Check the Bassett Branch Library Expansion Project Facebook page.

Storytime, 10 a.m., the Hylton Library, 475 Spencer Penn Road, Spencer. Free program. No registration is needed.

Sunday, August 3

The Virginia 250 Symposium will celebrate the 250th anniversary of Virginia with three speakers: VA250 Executive Director Cheryl Wilson, Jeff Briggs, and Hunter Haskins. It will be held at 3 p.m. Sunday, August 3, at the MHC Heritage Museum, 1 E. Main St., Martinsville. This program is part of the Sunday Afternoon Lecture Series.

The Churchmen will be in concert in the Family Life Center at Horsepasture Christian Church, 1146 Horsepasture Price Road, Ridgeway, at 6:30 p.m. Free admission. Love offering is appreciated.

Tuesday, August 5

Book sale hosted by Friends of the Blue Ridge Regional Library, in the basement of the main branch, 310 E. Church St., Martinsville, 2-8 p.m. BAG SALE (we provide the brown bag)-fill with as many hard-backed fiction for \$5. Special area for shopping, with shoppers limited to 10 at a time. Next sale is Sept. 19 & 20.

Thursday, August 7

Books and Brews hosted by Martinsville Library staff, 5 p.m., Scuffle Hill Brewing Company, 2550 Virginia Ave., Collinsville. “The God of the Woods” by Liz Moore will be discussed.

Bob Ross Painting Class 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Piedmont Arts. Learn Bob Ross’s famous painting technique with certified instructor Naomi Hodge-Muse. Students will paint “Country Cabin.” Bring a roll of paper towels. All other supplies provided. \$75 for members and \$85 for

nonmembers. Advanced registration required at PiedmontArts.org.

Saturday, August 9

Breakfast Fundraiser for Brian Lawson, who is currently battling Acute Myeloid Leukemia, 8 to 10 a.m., Mount Vernon Baptist Church, 7174 Mount Valley Road, Axton.

Sunday, August 10

Interfaith program on ethno-nationalism, Smith Memorial Methodist Church, 3-4 p.m., 2703 Daniels Creek Road, Collinsville.

Friday, August 15

Needle Felting: Embellished Scarf, Shirt or Tote Bag, 2:30-4:30 p.m., Piedmont Arts. Embellish a scarf, shirt or tote bag at this beginner-friendly needle felting class. Instructor Belle Thomas will guide students through the process of needle felting, making it easy and enjoyable. Choose from three designs (mushrooms, butterflies or flowers) or create your own. No previous experience is needed. All needle felting supplies are included. Students should bring their own scarf, shirt or tote bag. Make sure the material of your item is thin enough for a needle to easily poke through (linen, cotton, blends of wool, etc.). Extra scarves and tote bags will be available, \$30 for members and \$35 for nonmembers. Advance registration required at PiedmontArts.org.

Saturday, August 23

13th annual Bikers for Babies, MHC, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m., “Big Chair Parking Lot”, Broad St. & Church St. Uptown Martinsville.

ONGOING

A series of four classes on genealogy research will be held on the first four Tuesdays in September (2, 9, 16, 23), from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Bassett Historical Center. There is no charge for the classes. 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 people, so please call the Bassett Historical Center, 276-629-9191, to reserve your spot.

Monday Market at Fairy Stone State Park, Mondays, rain or shine, through Labor Day, 5-7 p.m., at Shelters #3 & #4. Cash only market. Free parking.

BINGO on Mondays, Horsepasture Volunteer Fire Department, 17815 A.L. Philpott Highway, Ridgeway. Doors open at 5 p.m., games start at 7 p.m. Concessions are available.

Uptown Pub Run, Mondays at 6.p.m., meets at The Ground Floor, 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.

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. Free to the public, but donations will be used by the club to pay for electricity etc.

The Fontaine Ruritan Club hosts Bingo every Tuesday, 1903 Joseph Martin Highway, Martinsville. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. and games begin at 7. Money from Bingo supports community service awards, scholarships, and other community efforts.

Bingocize at Spencer-Penn Centre. Play Bingo and prevent falls with simple exercises. This free class is offered Tuesdays at 10 a.m.

Chair Aerobics at Spencer Penn Centre, Tuesdays at 9 a.m. with Judi Perrin; \$5 fee, 45 minutes of exercise, strength building and fun.

TOPS FIELDALE VA 0626 meets on Tuesdays at 5:30-6:30 p.m. at the Bassett Public Library, 3969 Fairystone Hwy, Bassett. New members are welcome. For more information, 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.

The Martinsville-Henry County Democratic Committee meets on the first Thursday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at New College Institute on Fayette Street (park on Moss St.). RSVP at mhcdcv.org/meeting-rsvp for Zoom link.

The Martinsville -Henry County Republican Committee meets on its summer schedule. Watch online at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2041797322550450>.

Farmers’ Market at Spencer Penn Centre, Thursdays 4-6 p.m. under the pavilion.

Chair Aerobics, Tuesdays at 9 a.m. with Judi Perrin. 45 minutes of exercise, strength building, \$5 fee, Spencer Penn Centre.

Bingocize, Tuesdays at 10 a.m., help prevent falls with simple exercises. Free at Spencer Penn Centre.

Neighbors in the Know. Join staff and volunteers in the Hylton Library at the Spencer Penn Centre for activities and socializing on the third Monday of each month, 10-11 a.m. This free program is perfect for all ages. Registration is not required.

Boys & Girls Club at risk of losing 70% of program budget

By Jessica Dillon

The Boys & Girls Club of the Blue Ridge could face significant financial strain due to potential funding cuts proposed in the “Big Beautiful Bill.”

The legislation threatens to eliminate 21st Century funding, which supports many after-school and summer programs focused on students’ academic success. This funding accounts for about 70% of the organization’s programming expenses.

The funding helps the club hire licensed teachers at six school sites to provide academic tutoring, enrichment activities and social-emotional development.

“Without the funds, these services would be drastically reduced—our ability to hire licensed teachers who provide quality after-school tutoring and enrichment for six of our school sites that we serve in Martins-



CEO Marisa Womack and Director of Operations Andrew Mullins advocate for continued 21st Century funding during a trip to Washington, D.C. (Contributed)

ville and Henry County,” said CEO Marisa Womack.

Womack said she’s hopeful the bill might change, but she remains uncertain about the final outcome.

“I do not know. I can’t call it,” she said. “We’re hoping that those advocacy efforts will be acknowledged and heard on a national level, I mean, you know, on the federal level.”

The club began re-

ceiving this funding in 2022. Womack noted they would try to fundraise to recover some of the lost funding, but replacing the full \$1.2 million would be extremely difficult.

“The probability is not the greatest, but I’m still hopeful either way.”

Existing fundraisers—like the Duck Race and the Great Futures Gala—help, but they only supplement the current



funding and don’t come close to reaching the \$1.2 million goal.

The club has sent letters to parents, volunteers, and is encouraging local residents to contact legislators. They are also providing a digital advocacy link that connects directly to Virginia’s U.S. senators.

The Boys & Girls Club currently serves more than 450 local children, with enroll-

ment continuing to rise.

“That’s just within the Martinsville—Henry County area,” Womack said.

Losing the federal funds would create a large gap that grants and local fundraising alone likely can’t cover. In March, Womack and other staff members traveled to Washington, D.C., to advocate on behalf of the club and 21st Century funding.

“We went to the White House to advocate specifically for 21st Century funds, along with about 50 other Boys & Girls Clubs across the nation.”

Del. Eric Phillips, R-Martinsville, who serves as the current board president, is also actively advocating. The club is distributing advocacy materials to help raise public awareness and push for continued support.

Womack emphasized that the need for safe, structured after-school options is growing, not shrinking, and she urged the community to step up through advocacy, donations or volunteering.

“We want to help ensure that no child has to go home alone without support,” she said. “We truly believe that with public awareness and community backing, the program can be saved.”

OPINION

Elisabet Minter’s final curtain call leaves community mourning



Elisabet Minter



Holly Kozelsky

It has been a vigil none of the Minters nor their friends surely expected to take, but suddenly, it was upon them.

For a week, they’ve been at the side of Elisabet’s hospital bed in their living room, until she passed away Tuesday morning, July 29.

Her parents, Wendell and Deloris Minter, and sister, Heather Minter, have been with her since she first started seeking treatment for stomach pains in March. She was in and out of hospitals for tests; it was eventually discovered that she had cancer of the abdominal wall.

You, too, may have known Elisabet “Lis” Minter, 34, in a way, whether you realized it or not. In fact, she may have made you cry, and again laugh, and again leap to your feet and dance, and yet and again sit and ponder life’s difficult issues. She had been acting in plays and singing in shows since high school – as far as I’ve known her and known of her – and very possibly even much sooner than that. She was known for her powerful and beautiful singing at her church Mt. Hermon Church of the Brethren, and in other settings.

Much of that entertainment was a family affair. Where you saw one Minter sister you saw them both. They were always together, on stage and off. They were the best of friends. For a few years, they sold Lula Rue clothing together.

Since Elisabet had been sick, her friends have been involved with fundraisers. Shana Cohen held a raffle offering two \$50 gift certificates to Made With Love By Shana, to be given among donors. The donations were to be sent to Heather Minter through Venmo or Cash App at heatherm7185, to help with expenses. Shana Wright also set up a GoFundMe, which by

Tuesday evening had raised \$5,455 to go to Elisabet’s mother.

The sisters’ theater friends have planned a fundraiser for Elisabet on Aug. 24 at Mt. Hermon Church of the Brethren in Bassett. It would include a live band, a music revue, improv, a bake sale, an auction and body art and face painting by Joyful Canvas Facepaint by Maci.

Elisabet was a 2008 graduate of Magna Vista High School, where she performed in the school theatre, including the Choral Department’s Madrigal Dinner.

She had a degree in biology from Radford University and a master’s degree in early childhood education, and most recently worked for Center for Early Success in Danville.

“She dedicated her life to children,” said family friend John Michael Ayers. “She loved them dearly.”

In 2014, the whole family were in TheatreWorks’ “Hairspray.” Elisabet, the quieter sister, portrayed the outgoing Tracy Turnblad, and Heather, the outgoing sister, portrayed Tracy’s reserved mother, Edna. Their father, Wendell, was in the ensemble, and their mother, Deloris, volunteered during the show’s run.

Elizabet has played nuns at least twice: in “Nunsense” with the PHCC Patriot Players in 2015 and “Doubt, A Parable,” with TheatreWorks Community Players in 2023.

In “Doubt,” you could feel her mental and emotional anguish as she tried to work through figuring out the right thing to do. From any of her singing, you would feel however she wanted you to – lifted up, or reminiscing sad, or excited and happy.

Her other theater credits included “Les Misérables,” TheatreWorks, 2013; “Julius Caesar,” TheatreWorks, 2014; “Legally Blonde,” Patriot Players, 2015; “The Big Five-OH!,” TheatreWorks, 2015; “The Wiz,” TheatreWorks, 2015; “Doo Wop, Motown and More,” TheatreWorks, 2017, and there were several others as well. In many – if not most – of those shows, she performed on stage along with Heather.

The Black Box and Walker Fine Arts Theatre weren’t her only stages.

“She performed year after year with the Hee-Haw performance at Mount Hermon, and she made so many laugh with her humor and comedic timing,” John said. “She was a true stage queen. She also volunteered so much with the American Red Cross Blood Drives at her church.”

And he mentioned a few random things about her: “She loved to travel to the beach, races and other road trips with family and friends. She loved beaver nuggets from Buc-ee’s and anything green.” The sisters also “would find the weirdest flavors or seasonal flavors of different items and taste test them on Facebook Live for lots of laughs and fun.”

The Minter family has been through the unimaginable in these past few months, and the community has held vigil along with them. Often you hear of victories against cancer, but in this case, the disease has shown itself to be the cruel, unforgiving, unrelenting beast that it is.

Letter To The Editor

Franklin Graham.....Not What Leadership Looks Like

Franklin Graham broke the law in July 2024 when he used one of the largest public stages to endorse a presidential candidate.

Graham completed a “quid pro quo” with Trump. By appointing justices to the Supreme Ct and attempting to delete the Johnson Amendment, Trump set the quid pro quo in motion. Abortion was banned by the Court in 2022, Graham’s endorsement was delivered in 2024 and Graham invited Trump to “campaign” in a weather disaster in the fall of 2024. Extra quo was added in spring 2025 when Samaritan’s

Purse received its full 19 million returned to it this spring from the initial USAID cut but World Vision and Catholic Charities did not.

For over 15 years now Franklin Graham, the unchallenged leader of the Christian Evangelicals has decided to work in the physical “seen” world versus the “unseen” world through his political support of Trump (2 Corinthians 4:18). So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal).

Both Graham and Trump fanned the Obama “birther conspiracy.” Graham vacillated between his publicly expressed belief that Trump had won the 2020 election to his interview with Roger Bolton for the Religion Media Centre in 2023 when he said “Of course he lost the 2020 election. There’s no question about that.” Effective leadership does not vacillate.

If he was operating in the “unseen world” would he not have explained that no matter how many federal/state laws are made to ban something, a woman’s decision on abortion is based on her relationship with her Lord and decisions about her body is between her and her Lord?

Yet Graham proclaimed that ...” Trump defended the Christian faith even though he was not the best example of it.” What Christian or secular leader tells the world that he would like to punch someone in the face? How can one defend the Christian faith while acting in defiance of it?

Secondly, by choosing to ignore all the available evidence and accept the hypocrisy of Graham’s statement is to choose the “wide gate” instead of the “narrow gate” that the Bible teaches (Matthew 7: 13-14). Is there any courage behind the Sunday morning pulpit to choose the “narrow gate” over the “wide gate”?

In the words of the late pastor John McArthur, “we must not use God’s use of a man as an endorsement of a man. This is not the time to put blind trust in a man.”

Graham has perfected his “idolatry” relationship (Exodus 20: 3-5) with POTUS but failed his leadership test of the faith based community. He has surrendered the power of faith to the cheap value of political persuasion.

Christian leadership does not honor “quid pro quos.” Leadership does not countenance “tearing people down....” Leadership does not teach “where to fish.” It teaches “how to fish.”

Randy Scott,
Henry County

Special Opportunity



Morgan Griffith

Representative

As your representative, I am privileged to visit the White House for important events.

This year, I attended White House events celebrating major developments.

I attended a ceremony where President Trump announced new executive actions to reinvigorate America’s beautiful clean coal industry.

I was at the White House to witness President Trump sign my HALT Fentanyl Act.

Both were big steppingstones for our country’s energy security and national security.

Recently, I received a White House invitation to celebrate passage of the reconciliation bill known as the “big, beautiful bill.”

Beforehand though, Speaker Johnson, myself and six other members were invited to a meeting with Trump in the Oval Office.

Trump was running behind, but had his team bring us into the Oval Office while he was negotiating with Japan’s trade delegation.

Trump’s performance in the room was truly masterful. He showed a true command of the issues and figures at play.

It was a privilege to watch the master of the “Art of the Deal” at work. He repeatedly told the Japanese that they were getting a good deal (and they are) and that he would not make that deal if they were not such good friends to the United States.

As I stood there, I witnessed numbers changing in real time. Discussions included rice, semiconductors, automobiles and other items.

Trump got his deal!

One of Trump’s staffers leaned over to me and said: “Does this remind you of Commodore Perry?”

I immediately smiled and said: “Absolutely.”

In the 19th century, Commodore Perry opened up Japan for trade with the United States.

This too was a seminal moment in history.

Following the agreement, both sides prepared for a photo. Trump asked me and the other congressmen to join in a photo.

After the photo, Trump said: “Alright this is going to get out.” Then I watched as he and White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt reviewed a draft press release celebrating the deal.

Trump made suggestions, changes and additions before approving the release. Although Trump’s release was on a much grander scale, it was very similar to how I review my press releases and newsletters with my communications director, Jackson Krug.

Following this historic and special opportunity in the Oval Office, I unfortunately had to leave before the large House gathering to celebrate passage of the reconciliation bill.

I had previously committed to a speaking engagement nearby. When I got to that group, I explained my delay because of the special opportunity to be with Trump during the trade discussions.

I said to the group that you can hate Trump’s policies if you want. You can have different opinions. But I witnessed firsthand that Trump is a hardworking president who has firm command on all the issues.

The trade deal with Japan is a major win.

A big feature of the deal is that Japan will establish a \$550 billion fund. The U.S. will be able to determine which industries to support and direct Japan to finance projects using the fund.

Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick says profits from these ventures will result in America reaping 90% of profits from these projects!

Japan will also increase its defense spending with U.S. firms by billions and purchase 100 Boeing planes.

The trade deal with Japan is one of multiple that Trump secured this year.

The very first trade deal Trump secured was with the United Kingdom (UK) in May.

According to the White House, the deal gives American companies and exports never seen before access to British markets.

The UK is also committed to reducing non-tariff barriers, such as regulations, that hurt American manufacturers and products.

Interestingly, a day after the UK deal was made, Governor Youngkin reportedly got on the phone to speak with AstraZeneca.

AstraZeneca is a UK pharmaceutical company responsible for innovative medicines used by millions of patients globally.

Following numerous discussions with AstraZeneca, Governor Youngkin announced a deal where the company plans to invest \$50 billion for a facility in Virginia!

It is said that AstraZeneca plans for the Virginia site to be its largest drug manufacturing facility in the world.

While it remains to be determined where exactly the site will be built, this project will create hundreds of jobs and support Virginia’s growing life sciences industry.

The Trump trade deals should be major boosts to the American economy, and more deals are on the way.

It was a special opportunity and I was honored to be present for the finalization of such an important deal.

If you have questions, concerns, or comments, feel free to contact my Abingdon office at 276-525-1405, in Christiansburg at 540-381-5671, or via email at www.morgangriffith.house.gov.

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OPINION

Let me get this straight

All right. Let me get this straight. President Donald Trump campaigned on releasing the Epstein files, a list of people in positions of power who allegedly engaged in child sex trafficking with late financier Jeffrey Epstein, who died in prison in 2019 under mysterious circumstances.

Trump campaigned on this promise despite countless rumors that he was one of the key people on said list, given his well-documented 15 year friendship with Epstein, inviting Epstein to be a guest at his wedding, and the fact that they were photographed together more times than I have been photographed period. Also, Trump said in 2002 that, “I’ve known Jeff for 15 years. Terrific guy. He’s a lot of fun to be with. It is even said that he likes beautiful women as much as I do, and many of them are on the younger side.”

So then — just to be clear — after being re-elected, Trump does not release the Epstein files and continually gets annoyed when people keep asking about them, presumably because every other problem in his life has melted away to vapor if he ignores it long enough.

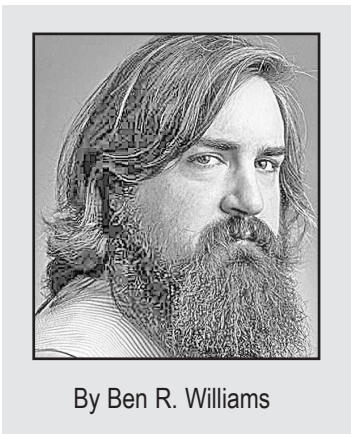
Then he has his U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi announce that the Epstein files don’t exist, despite the fact that she had previously said they do exist and are on her desk.

Then — and again, I’m just trying to keep this straight — Trump begins to claim, depending on the day, that the files 1.) don’t exist, 2.) do exist and will be incredibly damaging to Democrats, or 3.) were created by the Democrats and filled with lies to destroy Trump.

Also, in the midst of all this, the FBI released a video from the prison where Epstein was being held on the day he supposedly died of suicide, but it had been edited to exclude one minute.

Also, House Speaker Mike Johnson called a recess solely to avoid having the House vote on releasing the Epstein files.

Also, Ghislaine Maxwell, the only living person who has actually faced any consequences for Epstein’s child sex trafficking and is currently serving a 20 year prison sentence, just had a secret meeting with the Justice Department and no one has any idea what was



By Ben R. Williams

discussed, but shortly thereafter, she filed a brief with the Supreme Court to appeal her conviction.

And — just to make sure I’m getting this right — the party in question that is supporting Trump through this situation is the party of family values and protecting children?

And we are to believe that despite reams of evidence of a years-long friendship, Trump took no part in Epstein’s horrific criminal enterprise? And we are further expected to believe that Maxwell’s meeting with folks from the Department of Justice had nothing to do with them coaching her on what to say or who to implicate if she wants to taste freedom again? We are expected to believe both of these things uncritically?

Even Joe Rogan can’t believe how dumb this administration thinks the American people are. Joe Rogan! The most credulous person in America, a man who was convinced without evidence that teenagers were going to the bathroom in litterboxes at high schools across the nation. I could stick my thumb between my pointer and middle finger and successfully convince Joe Rogan I had stolen his nose, but EVEN HE isn’t buying what the White House is selling.

The Epstein scandal is massive in scope yet as thin and transparent as a piece of cling wrap. It’s clear that Trump is heavily implicated in the Epstein files. It’s clear that many wealthy people and politicians are implicated. No matter what side of the aisle they fall on, every last one needs to have their day in court. To do any less would be a miscarriage of justice.

As the saying goes: let justice be done though the Heavens fall.

Column Sponsored by: Dr. Mensink

Community Chronicles



This undated photo shows what is now the Dutch Inn being constructed in Collinsville. (Photo courtesy of the Bassett Historical Center)

By Jarred Marlowe

The story of Collinsville, Virginia begins in the early 1930s, on land once owned by the influential Hairston and Waller families. Over time, these large estates were divided and sold, eventually coming into the hands of local figures such as Frank Wilson, the Ford brothers, and John Redd Smith.

At that time, Heck Ford, a prominent businessman in Henry County, was determined to bring a new kind of industry to the area—something outside the traditional textile and furniture sectors. His efforts led him to Levy Bertrand Collins, better known as “Cap,” an inventor and entrepreneur from New Jersey.

Cap Collins was the mind behind the No Battery Flashlight, a cutting-edge device for its time.

His flashlights gained attention for their use in cold environments where batteries failed, and were even said to have accompanied Admiral Richard Byrd on his Antarctic expeditions. Hoping to convince Collins to invest in southern Virginia, Heck Ford offered him 25 acres of land west of Martinsville. The Ford brothers and Wilson quickly matched the offer, bringing the total to 75 acres, and Collins accepted.

After relocating with his family to Henry County, Collins began laying out streets and constructing both his home and a new factory. He sold the remaining lots to help fund the project. The first street in the area was Wheeler Avenue, where both his residence and the factory were built. Though the factory no longer stands, the home remains a land-

Opinion Editorial

By Dr. Greg Hodges, P&HCC President

As Patrick & Henry Community College prepares to welcome our students back to campus for the fall semester, we wanted to provide our community with highlights from the recently concluded 2024-2025 academic year.

We are thrilled that our enrollment growth continued for a third year with a 5.1% increase in the total number of students served from the previous year. It is important to note that this is the first time in 20 years that P&HCC has experienced three years of total enrollment growth. This includes a 24% increase in Workforce enrollment over the previous academic year, which builds upon similar year-over-year increases from the previous two years.

The college also had a strong year of instituting new programs and initiatives. Thanks to the generosity of the Ratcliffe Foundation which provided a grant for \$176,267, P&HCC was able to launch a new heavy equipment operator program at the P&HCC Baliles & Reynolds Learning Center in Patrick County. Additionally, a grant from the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission allowed the college to partner with The Franklin Center in Franklin County to launch a nurse aid program and provide certifications in phlebotomy and certified medical assistance.

To further demonstrate our college’s commitment to regional economic development, P&HCC signed an MOU with the Henry County Adult Detention Center to become the training provider for the region’s justice-impacted population. Additionally, P&HCC successfully relaunched its Middle College program in conjunction with the regional adult education program to ensure that students have a pathway to both a G.E.D. and post-secondary education.

Patrick & Henry also expanded transfer partnerships and programs with our university partners and brought to scale new academic and workforce credentials to meet the workforce needs of our community. For example, the college is part of a consortium known as the SOVA Innovation Hub, which received \$600,000 from Go Virginia Region 3 to fund the Rise Collaborative which will fortify Southern Virginia’s standing as a central hub for fostering small business growth, innovation, and economic development.

The college also signed two articulation agreements (the Bachelor of Social Work and the Bachelor of Business Administration with Sports Management Emphasis) with Ferrum College. Additionally, P&HCC was one of eight colleges to sign the Tartan Transfer Agreement to accelerate transfer opportunities to those students who wish to transfer to Radford University.

As part of our commitment to expanding career and technical edu-

cation for our community, I was delighted to sign a three-way agreement with Danville Community College and Southside Virginia Community College to expand building trades training programs across the southern Virginia region. As part of this initiative, the college was awarded \$2.6 million dollars from the Region 3 Workforce Pipeline to expand the P&HCC Building Trades Academy.

The success of the college has been noticed across the community, Commonwealth of Virginia, and country. For example, P&HCC was awarded \$127,527 from the Tobacco Commission for an Electrical Training Mobile Lab to serve Henry County Adult Detention Center and The Franklin Center. Additionally, the institution won the prestigious national Advising Success Network award from the Student Choice Awards for Holistic Advising Excellence in Advising Services and was selected to be one of 28 community colleges across the country to participate in Phase Two of the Rural Pathways Initiative with the National Center for Inquiry and Improvement (NCII). P&HCC was also awarded \$150,000 from the State Council of Higher Education of Virginia (SCHEV) and VTOP (Virginia Talent Opportunity Partnership) to expand Work-Based Learning opportunities and was also awarded \$15,000 from SCHEV to facilitate middle school visits to our campus.

We are also extremely proud of the accomplishments of our student-athletes. P&HCC placed students in nationals for several sports including golf, track and field, and wrestling. Additionally, the 2024 NJCAA Division III women’s softball world series champions followed their impressive run with a runner-up title for the 2025 world series.

As always, the highlight of the year is celebrating the accomplishments of our students at our annual academic graduation ceremony. For many, they are not simply graduating; they are walking into a world of financial stability for themselves and their families. To that end, we are thrilled to share that for academic year 24/25, 515 academic students (a 13% increase over the previous year) earned 714 academic credentials (a 13% increase over the previous year) with 234 of these students (a 17.5% increase over the previous year) participating in our May 17 commencement ceremony.

For 63 years, P&HCC has been this community’s college. Now, more than ever, we are singularly dedicated to our mission of economic mobility for our students and their families. We accomplish this goal by providing our students with the high-quality education and training they need to be successful employees and employers. The economic renaissance in our region is very real, and P&HCC is a critical part of this resurgence.

It continues to be the honor of my life to serve as the president of Patrick & Henry Community College.

mark. Construction was completed with the help of the Lester Lumber Company, whose owner was a strong supporter of Collins and his vision for the area.

Nearby, landowner John Redd Smith recognized the potential of Collins’ development. He began laying out streets of his own, dividing hundreds of acres into residential lots. Many of those new streets were named after Smith’s children, including Eliza Reamy Avenue, Susan Drive, James Street, Patsy Avenue, and John Redd Smith Boulevard. The first house built on these lots belonged to the Morris family, who operated Morris Union 76 Oil, and stood where the KFC in Collinsville is located today.

Unfortunately, the Great Depression soon took its toll. Cap Collins’ factory never produced a single flashlight. No equipment was ever installed, and his business failed before it could begin. Collins left the area and later died in Iowa.

In the early years, the area was known as Midway, as it sat between Martinsville and Bassett. The turning point came in 1938 when the state constructed a new

road to replace the flood-prone route along the Smith River. This new road—now known as Virginia Avenue—connected downtown Martinsville to the Bassett Forks area. It was laid directly through the garden of John Redd Smith’s estate, known as Barbour Place.

The arrival of Virginia Avenue sparked a period of rapid growth. Collinsville’s population grew from nearly zero in 1930 to 2,000 by 1949. By 1960, it had reached 3,600 residents, surpassing Bassett to become the second-largest unincorporated town in Virginia. Lot prices rose accordingly—from \$100 in 1933 to \$800 in 1946 and eventually to \$30,000 by the 1970s.

What began as a dream of innovation laid the foundation for one of Henry County’s most vibrant communities.

Jarred Marlowe is a local resident and historian. He is a member of the Col. George Waller Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution, the Blue & Gray Education Society, and the committee chair for the Martinsville-Henry County 250 Committee. He may be reached at marloweja15@gmail.com.

Submit your community news and photos to dhall@theenterprise.net and be sure to like the Henry County Enterprise on Facebook

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

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HELP WANTED

The Blue Ridge Regional Library is hiring a Library Director for the system covering Henry, Patrick, and Martinsville. Please refer to our website <http://www.brll.lib.va.us/careers> for more information.

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LEGAL

Notice of Public Hearing

The City of Martinsville Planning Commission will meet on August 20, 2025, beginning at 4:00 p.m. in Room 208 of the City of Martinsville Municipal Building located at 55 W. Church Street, Martinsville, VA 24112, for those parties in interest to the following request(s):

1) **REQUEST for REZONE** - Application of The City of Martinsville requesting to rezone several properties located along Broad Street, College Street, and Bridge Street from C-C, Commercial Corridor District and C-N, Neighborhood Commercial District, to R-T, Residential Transitional, to correct existing non-conforming uses and to implement best zoning practices. The rezoning of property is a request that requires review by the Martinsville Planning Commission and review and approval of Martinsville City Council. Questions or comments regarding this matter can be directed to Hannah Powell at hpowell@martinsvilleva.gov or (276) 403-5156.

Notice Submitted By:
Hannah L. Powell, CZA
Community Development Specialist

LEGAL

COUNTY OF HENRY REZONING PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Pursuant to Section 15.2-2204 of the Code of Virginia, a series of public hearings has been scheduled for **August 13, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.** in the Summerlin Meeting Room of the County Administration Building, Kings Mountain Rd, Collinsville, Virginia. Following these public hearings, the Planning Commission will make recommendations on the applications to the Board of Supervisors.

The Henry County Board of Supervisors will conduct public hearings on the following applications on **August 26, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.** in the Summerlin Meeting Room of the County Administration Building, Kings Mountain Rd, Collinsville, Virginia.

The purpose of these public hearings is to receive input into the possible rezoning of property. Following are the specifics of the public hearings.

Case R-25-11 John D. Horsley and Claudia G. English

The property is located at 1317 The Great Rd, in the Blackberry District. The property is shown on Tax Map 39.3(18)/4,5 and a portion of 39.3/353. The applicant is requesting the rezoning of approximately 7-acres from Suburban Residential District S-R to Agricultural District A-1. The applicant wishes to market the property for the potential to keep agricultural animals.

Case R-25-12 Roger and Deborah Wheatley

The property is located in the north east corner of the intersection of Riverside Dr and Governor Stanley Hwy, in the Blackberry District. The property is shown on Tax Map 15.8/163A. The applicant is requesting the rezoning of approximately 3.725-acres from Commercial District B-1 to Agricultural District A-1. The applicant wishes to rezone the property, and apply for the required Special Use Permit, to allow for the development of a RV park.

Case R-25-13 Whitney Sligh

The property is located at 1850 Daniels Creek Rd, in the Collinsville District. The property is shown on Tax Map 29.7(60)/6. The applicant is requesting the rezoning of this lot, containing a residence, from Suburban Residential District S-R to Office and Professional District B-3. The applicant wishes to rezone the property, and apply for the required Special Use Permit, to offer a transitional living opportunity for young adults aging out of the foster system.

The applications for these requests 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

LEGAL



Route 57 (Chatham Road) Henry County

Willingness to Hold Public Hearing
Notice of Intent to Abandon Previously
Discontinued Primary Highway

Pursuant to §33.2-902 Code of Virginia, the Henry County Board of Supervisors will consider abandonment of a discontinued section of Route 57 (Chatham Road) from 0.037 mile west of Route 925 (Stockton Road) to 0.12 mile west of Route 925, a distance of 0.08 mile. This section of road was discontinued on June 16, 1983.

This matter is being consider by the Board of Supervisors at the request of VDOT as a prerequisite to the conveyance of surplus right of way. To ask questions or request additional materials related to the proposed abandonment, contact Lisa Hughes at 276-629-2582, 1-800-367-7623 or TTY/TDD 711.

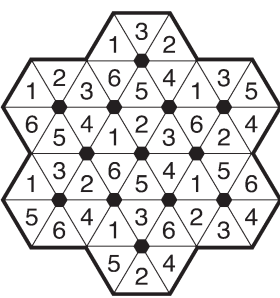
If your concerns cannot be satisfied VDOT is willing to hold a public hearing. You may request that a public hearing be held by sending a written request to Lisa Hughes, Virginia Department of Transportation, 309 Weeping Willow Lane Bassett, VA 24055 on or prior to **September 1, 2025**. If a request for a public hearing is received, notice of date, time, and place of the hearing will be posted.

VDOT ensures nondiscrimination and equal employment in all programs and activities in accordance with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, contact VDOT's Salem District Civil Rights at 540-387-5552, 1-800-367-7623 or TTY/TDD 711.

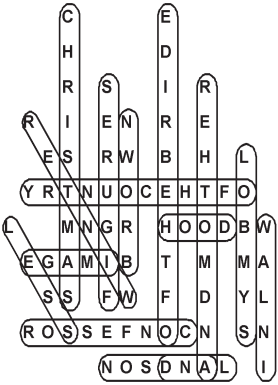
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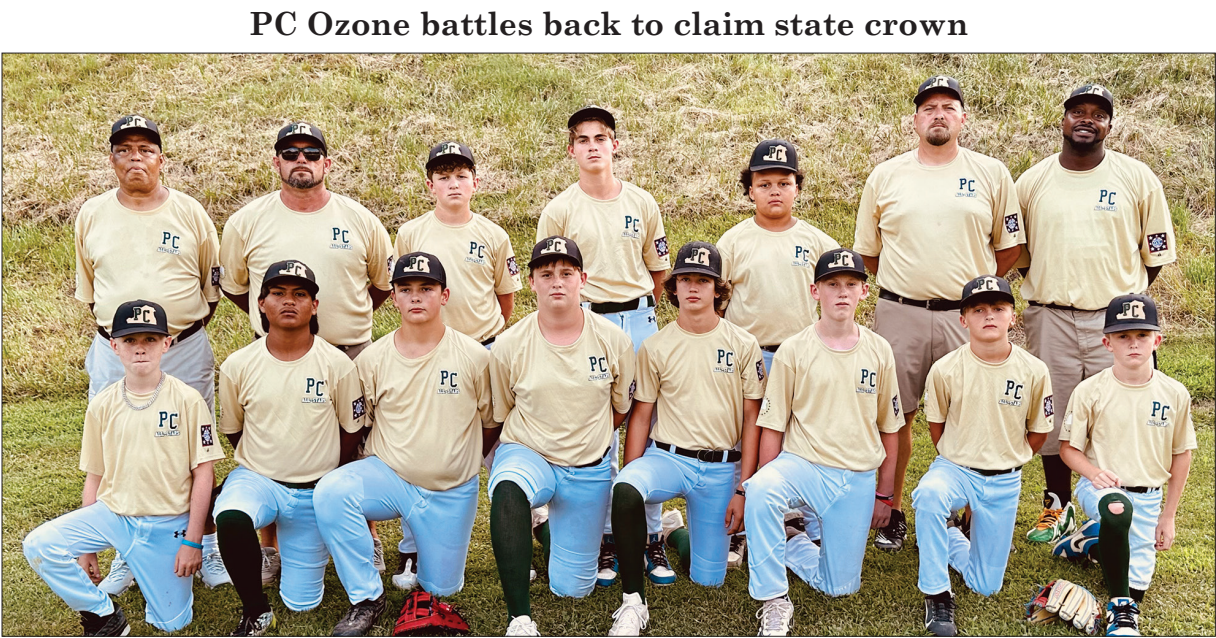
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Crossing the Lines

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



Pictured (front row, left to right) Jensen Harbour, Ian Martinez-Tejeda, Lane Cameron, Bentley Stanley, Lucas Hall, Hunter Thomas, Easton Conner and Colston Collins; back row: Darrell Dodson, Robbi Campbell, Tobin Simmons, Easton Taylor, Caylin Edmonds, Brandon Simmons and Corey Edmonds.

The PC Ozone team won the Division 1 Diamond Youth baseball state championship at Southside park in Martinsville that took place July 4-11.

The team took a tough loss the first game and came back fighting and won the next 4 big games against Grayson, Halifax and Madison Heights Counties.

They are heading to the World Series in Lex-

ington SC on August 1-6.

The team would like to thank the community for all of the support they have received. Head coach Robbi Campbell said, "I have been around DYB in Patrick Co for several years and this team is one of the best I've seen. 1-11 can hit with power or lay a bunt down when needed. The team is full of pitchers or catchers that can play any position on the field."

Bull Mountain Arts gifts floral installation to P&HCC



Bull Mountain Arts gifted a 24-foot permanent installation titled "Arts and Flowers: A Painting Montage of Native Virginia Flora" to Patrick & Henry Community College's Stuart site. About a dozen artists contributed to the piece.

Bull Mountain Arts (BMA) formally unveiled a 24-foot permanent installation titled "Arts and Flowers: A Painting Montage of Native Virginia Flora" in the community room of Patrick & Henry Community College's (P&HCC) Stuart site on Thursday, July 3.

The installation includes 26 paintings created by a dozen BMA members.

BMA is a nonprofit arts organization formed in 1998 to promote community art, teach art, and encourage people to create art.

While the idea for the project originated in January, BMA President Lora Mahaffey said members began painting in April.

"The idea kind of came around the holidays, but we decided to postpone that because everybody was

so busy. Angie [Brown, P&HCC site facilitator] and I were talking about it last year, like we need some art on this wall. She's like, 'Okay, why don't you just do it,' and I'm like, 'Okay, we're going to do it,'" she said.

After discussing the project with the group, Mahaffey and another member developed the idea of a collage featuring Virginia wildflowers.

"And just people pick what they want and tell them it's a certain style. It doesn't have to be botanically correct, but just, you know, you get the feel of it," she said. "We got a magazine and started cutting out all of these flower pictures and making these different scenarios about what it would look like. Since we had such a long wall, we wanted it to be at least half the size of the wall."

Critz nursery blends faith, farming and self-serve simplicity

Clay & Twig, a self-serve farm shop and nursery in Critz, is the fulfillment of owner Jonathan Witt's childhood dream to turn his family's old tobacco barn into a flower shop.

Founded in 2024, the shop offers plants and products that are either grown, made, or thoughtfully sourced to reflect the seasons.

"It's more than just a business—it's a way to create beauty for others and share a slower, more meaningful rhythm of life," Witt said.

Most of the plants are grown at Round Hill Plants, the Witt family's greenhouse that has operated since 2009. Witt said he also plans to source additional plants and products throughout the year.

"What you see in the shop isn't mass-produced—it's curated with care. We work in step with the seasons, so what's available changes throughout the year," he said.

The shop currently offers a variety of houseplants and hanging baskets, including spider plants, several types of peperomias, pileas, and begonias.

"This fall, I'll offer mums, and I'm actually working on some baskets for the fall," Witt said.

For autumn, Witt plans to stock pumpkins,



The self-serve farm shop offers a variety of hanging baskets, houseplants, and vegetables.

gourds and Indian corn for seasonal decoration.

"As time progresses, I'm going to kind of add to what we offer," he said. "I kind of felt limited to Round Hill Plants just being plants, so I want to later on be able to offer home décor, seed packets, pottery, produce—all sorts of different things. Almost like a garden center-type deal."

The self-serve shop is open daily from 8 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Payment is made through an honesty box, with cash, check, and Venmo accepted.

County prepares to start 2027 property reassessment

Field assessments for Patrick County's 2027 general reassessment of real estate—which will become effective Jan. 1, 2027—are set to begin soon, with visits planned to all county properties.

Patrick County has retained Wampler-Eanes Appraisal Group, Ltd., a Vision Company, to conduct the reassessment.

According to a release, Wampler-Eanes has been in business for more than 30 years, serving localities in Virginia and North Carolina. The company has completed over 142 assessments, with more than 2.4 million parcels evaluated.

Earlier this month, Commissioner of Revenue Glendna Morse said the county had not yet met with Wampler-Eanes to formally discuss the reassessment process.

"They've started things on their end, but they have not come in and set up anything. I have not spoken with them," she said recently.

While she hasn't received a definitive timeline, Morse said she believes the property visits will begin in August.

Displaced tenants face food, medication needs



Residents packed up belongings for storage after being displaced from their homes.

Cotton Mill Apartment residents are in need of assistance after a burst sprinkler line on July 15 forced many from their homes.

About 20 residents are currently staying at the Dutch Inn in Collinsville, with a few others housed at the Virginian Motel in Stuart. They are expected to remain in hotels for at least 30 days while repairs are made to the apartment complex.

Katy Trent, of Trent Memorials LLC, who also worked as a caregiver at the complex, said some residents on the third floor were not affected by water damage, and were able to remain in the Stuart complex.

Trent said that from her understanding, tenants had to remove their belongings by Monday, July 28, to allow repairs to begin.

"We were actually there Saturday trying to help pack up one woman," she said. "The problem with that is they're wanting them to get these pods and stuff to put their stuff in, and they said they could store them in the lower drive there because it's like a two-tiered parking lot. The problem is there's not enough pods to bring in right now. These people had full lives. I mean, imagine taking everything you have and being told you had to get it out in a couple days."

She added that many residents didn't have family available to help them move.

"We helped a man move his couch because it was waterlogged—it was ruined," she said.

While residents were responsible for paying for the storage pods themselves, Trent said it was her understanding the complex is waiving August rent.

To help dry the apartments, Trent said multiple fans and dehumidifiers are running throughout the complex, and repairs are underway.

"They're ripping out the walls and they can't go back, and the unfortunate thing is not everybody's equipped to stay in a hotel to meet their needs. They're living off the basics," she said.

Monetary donations can be sent to Trent Memorials LLC, 135 G Run, Critz, VA 24082. Trent said donations will be used for whatever residents need.

For more information about how to help, visit Facebook.com/TrentMemorialsLLC.

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

THANK YOU FOR READING



1-3-5-7-9



1-4-7-9:15



1-3-5-7-9



1-3-5-7-9



1-4-7-9:15

OPEN
EVERYDAY
\$5 tickets

Hollywood Cinema
beside Walmart
Martinsville 276-656-3456



Puzzle Time



FEAR KNOT

By: rj johnson

DOUBT? ...OR DARE!

RYC
♥ORTEDU
TEM TA
♥ADEM
♥TECIRD
TLE
OYER
♥IDEMA
♥DNA
♥MYALEN
♥ARNID
DTOR

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. Collar is larger. 2. Hat is tilted back. 3. Arm is longer. 4. Nose is different. 5. Thumb is moved. 6. Boy's hair is different.

MAGIC MAZE • FATHER

Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions forward, backward, up, down and diagonally. Unlisted clue hint: **ONLY** — **WILL TELL**

And mother
And son
Brown
Christmas

Confessor
Figures
Hood
Image

In-law
Land
Less
Of the Bride

Of the country
Symbol
Winter

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Super Crossword

MINERAL BOOST

ACROSS

1 Hello, in Rio
4 Look after
10 Capture on film again
16 Laceration
19 Concerning past events
21 Single-person, as a band
22 Be incorrect
23 Writing a computer program based on a Grimm story?
25 With
67-Across, persona for Snoopy
26 Remove from a crate
27 Iowa's tree
28 Plant plots
30 Wasps' home
31 Diplomatic delegation headed for a meeting with Philippine president Ferdinand?
36 Cards used by psychics
39 Et — (and others)
40 Paris subway

41 Unintelligible message on a warning sign?
47 Wash. VIP
48 Started to cry, with "up"
49 Orig. copies
50 Sugar block
53 Occasionally
55 Signal light shaped like an abdominal organ?
63 — fire (ignited wood, say)
64 Caught up in — of lies
67 See
25-Across
68 Voice a view
69 Hollywood quaff, in brief
70 Small group of child prodigies?
74 Scottish cap
75 Mild cheese
77 1982 Disney cyberfilm
78 — tide
79 Actor Noah
80 Very destructive hurricane?
84 Unfamous people
86 Oklahoma tribe

87 Moo goo — pan
90 Doha native
91 U.K. network
94 School chaplain?
100 Vowel quintet
103 iPod variety
104 Win over
105 Have the same remorseful feelings that I'm having?
109 Healing sign
113 Ari of NPR
114 — Canals
115 Huge desert
117 "Science Kid" of PBS
118 Dietary extras given to eight answers in this puzzle?
124 Filmmaker
DuVernay
125 Clarke of "Game of Thrones"
126 Eradicated
127 Marks, as a ballot
128 Pardner (Chick-fil-A slogan)
130 Afore

DOWN

1 Cry of mock enthusiasm
2 Former NPR host Hansen

3 Athletic shoe brand
4 Playpen array
5 "The Father of Art Deco"
6 Actress Vardalos
7 Nero's 650
8 — kwon do
9 Butter substitutes
10 Big jukebox brand
11 Brian of Roxby Music
12 Danson of "Ink"
13 Pal, to Pedro
14 Former TWA rival
15 Hypothetical memory imprint
16 Says "no" to
17 Smelter input
18 Keep trying
20 Pasta-serving cafe
24 River nymph
29 Hip-hop "Dr."
31 "Eat — Chikin" (Chick-fil-A slogan)
32 Tabloid pair
33 IRS IDs
34 Diarist Anaïs
35 Gift stick-on
37 Attention-getting sound

38 Common sunfish variety
41 Slanted type
42 Sinus-cleaning apparatus
43 Cow-bison hybrid
44 "Bad!" cluck
45 Tarzan player
46 Chafe
51 Tabby's cry
52 Infant food
54 Stockholm's land: Abbr.
56 Cake coater
57 Scooby- —
58 Proper —
59 Additionally
60 Guy living in an urban area
61 Vigilant
62 Archival
65 Outer: Prefix
66 Brian — (11th-century Irish king)
70 Money given for a svc.
71 — anglais (oboe cousin)
72 Enthusiast
73 Belle — (pre-World War I period)
76 Pal, slangily
79 Area drained by a river

81 Instant lawn
82 Middle grade
83 Big head
85 Zero
88 For — (not free)
89 "— it a pity?"
91 Big wind instrument
92 Apian abode
93 Noisy insects
95 "Whichever"
96 Kia or Tesla
97 Like some poor ratings
98 NASA cancellations
99 Six-pt. plays
101 "Alley —"
102 Social welfare org.
106 Suffix with aero- or vello-
107 It merged with Exxon
108 Wake rudely
110 River vessel
111 Pianist
Rubinstein
112 Sew loosely
115 30-day mo.
116 College town in Iowa
119 Everybody
120 Recline
121 Educ. group
122 Ex-Laker
Gasol
123 Trio after K

Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

• James Doohan, beloved by Star Trek fans as "Scotty," was awarded an honorary doctorate by the Milwaukee School of Engineering after it was discovered that half of the school's students had been inspired to pursue engineering careers by the fictional character he portrayed.

• A boy born with only 2% of his brain defied doctors' expectations when the organ grew to 80% of the average size.

• The first written ice cream recipe was found in a 1665 recipe book.

• Rocking chairs were used in mental facilities and hospitals to soothe and comfort patients long before their widespread adoption in homes.

• Some asteroids get pulled into a planet's gravity and become their moons.

• White-tailed jackrabbits are the greatest land jumpers, having been recorded leaping 21 feet vertically.

• In early 1949, Victor T. Hoeflich introduced the "Man-from-Mars Radio Hat," featuring a portable radio built into a pith helmet. It retailed for \$7.95 and was sold across the country for a while, but lost popularity due to its technical limitations, which included losing its signal and making annoying squealing noises.

• A man was jailed for two years for cheating at poker. His method? Using infrared contact lenses to see cards pre-marked with invisible ink.

• The Finnish word "kalsarikännit" means to get drunk alone at home in your underwear.

• In Alaska, plants can grow exceptionally large due to receiving up to 20 hours of sunlight daily, which greatly enhances their photosynthesis process.

• When Nebraska implemented a law allowing parents to leave unwanted newborns at safe havens, no age limit was specified. Within just weeks, 36 kids had been dropped off, but not one was a newborn and the oldest was 17.

Thought for the Day: "A happy marriage is the union of two good for-givers." — *Ruth Graham*

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Weekly SUDOKU

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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

NO MATTER HOW NERVOUS OR SELF-CONSCIOUS YOU MAY FEEL, NEVER RUSH YOUR OPENING TEE SHOT. MY EXPERIENCE IS THAT THE OPENING DRIVE GENERALLY SETS THE PATTERN FOR THE ENTIRE ROUND.

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TAKE A FEW DEEP BREATHS. LIMBER UP. PLAN YOUR SHOT EXTRA CAREFULLY. THEN MAKE SMOOTHNESS INSTEAD OF POWER YOUR KEY SWING THOUGHT. JUST TRY TO SWING THE CLUBFACE SQUARELY THROUGH THE BACK OF THE BALL.

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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!

Task
ROECH

Sensory
COINS

Writer
BRISCE

Nook
INCEH

TODAY'S WORD

"We worked it out. My wife worries about inflation and I worry about the _____."

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Career

(cont. from page 1)

I think it’s great getting the students in here young to fill those voids in the healthcare system.”

Hubbard has worked in EMS for 13 years, 11 of those as a paramedic. She previously taught the paramedic program at Patrick & Henry Community College.

Career Academy Coordinator Brittany Brummitt said the school system offered EMT certification about a decade ago and saw a new opportunity to meet both student and community needs by bringing it back.

“They wanted to bring it back just because of the need in the area for emergency responders,” Brummitt said. “EMT is kind of the basis for everything. If you’re wanting to do public safety—like firefighting—you need to have EMT as well in our area.”

The course is open to juniors and seniors and can be completed in one academic year or split between the junior and senior years. Upon completion, students are eligible to sit for the National Registry EMT certification exam.

The Career Academy will work with Henry County Public Safety to offer students classroom instruction, hands-on practice and real-world field experience.

Students are “required to complete field hours through the program,” Brummitt said. “So that’s where the partnership with Public Safety comes in. They’re actually required to go and ride on the ambulance with them to get that actual contact field experience, as well as what they do in the classroom.”

Brummitt said the partnership benefits both the students and Public Safety.

“We had conversations with Public Safety, and they are wanting to have a strong recruitment force,” she said. “Obviously with our partnership, they’re training these kids, so they can hire them right after high school to go and work in the field with them. And there is a need in the area for more workers in that department.”

Real-world experience is a focus of the program, as it is with many Career Academy offerings.

“Here at the Career Academy, we want to prepare them for whatever future career experience they’re going into and give them that real-world experience,” Brummitt said. “Yes, they’re going to get that certification, but

they’re also going to get that real-world experience, going out with Public Safety in the field to prepare them for their future careers after high school.”

Aiding that preparation is an ambulance simulator in the classroom, which Brummitt said is designed to offer a realistic environment for training.

“The simulator is meant to simulate an actual ambulance. They have the stretcher and everything, so they’ll get to practice doing their lifts. All of the oxygen and those things are placed similarly to an ambulance,” she said. “The storage space gives them an idea of how it would be placed in a real-life situation—where you would be sitting, the space confinements, and working in those tight areas.”

Hubbard said the course prepares students for a vital, high-stakes role.

“On the EMT level, of course, learning how to care for our ailing community and emergencies, to be able to deal with people who are having the worst day of their life and actually being able to make a difference in that time,” she said.

Students will learn how to take vital signs, communicate with patients, administer certain emergency medications, and perform lifesaving interventions.

“They’re there to save a life and to transport to appropriate facilities,” Hubbard said.

But beyond the technical training, Hubbard said the course also teaches students how to be compassionate, effective communicators.

“It’s not only teaching them how to be EMTs, but it’s teaching them how to be good people—how to be able to talk with different people of different socioeconomic backgrounds, and just getting their hands out there and making sure that healthcare is the field for them,” she said.

Interest in the course is already high. The class can accommodate 18 students, and Brummitt expects it to reach full capacity in its first year.

Looking ahead, she said there may be room to expand public safety offerings.

“Going forward, we’re really excited about the participation and interest in the program,” Brummitt said. “We should be at full capacity, but if fire is an option in the future, we would like to look at that and continue to strengthen the certifications within the pro-



An interior view of the ambulance simulator, which will be used by students enrolled in Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) certification courses.

gram—not just the EMT, but to see what else we can offer to the students.”

Beyond public safety, the Career Academy continues to grow its course offerings.

“Last year, we added an additional course—our certified medical assistant,” Brummitt said. “We’re looking at continued growth opportunities for the 2026–27 school year. Right now, we have cybersecurity, certified medical assistant, HVAC/industrial maintenance, EMT, agrisciences and cosmetology.”

She added that the Career Academy, which has an application process, is becoming increasingly competitive.

“There’s a need for the students. You have so many students now who have interests beyond just going into a college field after graduation,” she said. “Our career and technical programs are a way to grow those interests. This is just another opportunity for them, because so many students enjoy that hands-on learning experience.”

Hubbard said she hopes the EMT program will not only introduce students to public safety as a career, but also inspire them to volunteer, thus helping to address the needs.

Volunteerism “is definitely on the decline,” she said. “I have a special place in my heart for volunteers. I think these kids will be great to go out here and volunteer and get some community hours as well. I think it’s a great thing for the community.”



Increasing opportunities for ag teachers is a shared responsibility

Plenty of capable candidates with agricultural degrees are willing to fill the multiple vacant agriculture instructor roles open statewide.

But those provisional teachers often “lapse out” of temporary licensure. That’s because they don’t have a streamlined pathway to obtaining the complex licensure requirements to stay in the classroom, while simultaneously meeting the demands of sustaining a school agriculture program.

Virginia Farm Bureau Federation recently reported on the long-standing need to simplify the transition of graduates from college-to-classroom in a special online report.

It’s a nuanced issue with myriad control points, said professor Tracy Rutherford, head of Virginia Tech’s Department of Agricultural, Leadership, and Community Education.

“So that can make it very confusing, very frustrating and very disjointed for stakeholders,” she said. “A pathway to licensure with the fewest additional requirements is the goal.”

Integration of that goal starts in high school.

On the recruitment level, teachers and guidance counselors can encourage students to pursue teaching. Advisers should be informed of all certification options.

Two Virginia Tech degree programs are an internal pathway for students to attain licensure while still in college. Agriculture and Extension Education and Career and Technical-Agriculture Education degree programs prepare students for the demands among many school districts, from ag mechan-

ics, safety or livestock handling, to lesson planning and classroom management.

“We’re starting to see those fruits,” said Sara Jo Jones, Carroll County ag instructor. “It will be a while before it all comes together.”

Virginia Tech is working closely with its School of Education to align those two academic programs, while marketing the undergraduate major and the teaching and learning minor.

“We have 13 Agriculture and Extension Education freshmen for fall 2025,” Rutherford noted. “That’s a great start!”

She said the committee also is focused on the alignment between community colleges and Virginia Tech to make attaining certification easier, including the creation of an active articulation model through Blue Ridge Community College.

Tweaks to endorsement requirements in the Code of Virginia might address persistent statewide teacher shortages in agriculture and career and technical education.

“We need more clarity in the variety of courses that meet the code and can be included in the degree programs,” Rutherford said. “And we need to streamline the code to realign with current education practices and provide non-credit alternatives that don’t cost teachers \$30,000 to meet the expectations for certification.”

HB 1909, which would have established the Virginia Commission for Agricultural Education Excellence to address instructor shortages, was tabled by a subcommittee

Parents

(cont. from page 1)



Nikki Angelina Walker is charged with felony child abuse and neglect in connection with the alleged assault of her 8-month-old child.

and was taken into custody without further incident, the sheriff said.

In addition to the existing child abuse and neglect warrant, Fielder was charged with obstruction of justice for his alleged actions during the standoff. He is being held without bond at the Henry County Adult Detention Center.

Davis said the swift and coordinated response from law enforcement underscores the agency’s commitment to protecting children and ensuring community safety.

“The abuse of an innocent child is one of the most disturbing and unacceptable crimes we face,” Davis said. “In Henry County, we have zero tolerance for those who



Chase Thomas Fielder faces charges of felony child abuse and neglect, along with obstruction of justice following a standoff in Collinsville.

harm the most vulnerable among us. Let this serve as a clear message: If you choose to violate the law, we will pursue you relentlessly, and we will bring you to justice.”

He also praised the deputies and SWAT Team for their professionalism and restraint during the standoff.

“A dangerous criminal was taken into custody without injury to law enforcement or the public,” Davis said. “That was due to the swift action, professionalism and unwavering resolve of our deputies and SWAT Team. The safety of our community depends on holding offenders accountable—and we will always rise to that responsibility.”

in January. The advisory commission would be administered, staffed and supported jointly by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the Virginia Department of Education.

Despite that legislative setback, VDOE and VDACS have begun planning a series of meetings of stakeholders and subject matter experts, “which aims to accomplish much of the same purpose,” said VDACS Commissioner Joe Guthrie. “These discussions are being conducted within the context of a broader strategic planning initiative for agricultural education that is already ongoing under leadership from VDOE.”

VFBF delegates supported that bill to coordinate efforts between state agencies in developing cur-

riculum guidelines to align with educational and workforce needs.

To retain provisional or rural ag instructors, community connection also matters, Rutherford said.

Stakeholders like Farm Bureau are obligated to be a welcoming resource in building partnerships with educators and supporting their ag programs, VFBF Vice President Robert J. Mills Jr. concluded.

“We will continue to foster connections between educators, farmers and other stakeholders in the agricultural sector, while working to shape policies that benefit ag teachers and programs on the state level,” he said. “Meanwhile, we also advocate for a strong federal farm bill that benefits agricultural education nationwide.”

Gooch earns national honor for coaching excellence

Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC) Assistant Softball Coach Josh Gooch has been named the 2025 Easton/NFCA Assistant Coach of the Year for NJCAA Division III. This national honor, presented by the National Fastpitch Coaches Association (NFCA), recognizes outstanding contributions and leadership by an assistant coach at the collegiate level.

Gooch has been instrumental in elevating the P&HCC Lady Patriots Softball program to national prominence. Entering his third season as an assistant coach, Gooch has helped guide the team to back-to-back appearances in the NJCAA DIII National Championship game—capturing the National Title in 2024 and finishing as the National Runner-Up in 2025.



“Josh has been nothing short of phenomenal since he joined our program,” said P&HCC Head Coach Roger Campbell. “He’s a tireless worker, a sharp softball mind, and most importantly, a genuine mentor to our student-athletes. His passion for the game and dedication to our team culture has helped us build something truly special here at P&HCC. This

award is well deserved.”

The NFCA’s Assistant Coach of the Year awards are selected based on peer nominations and celebrate coaches who demonstrate excellence on and off the field. Gooch was recognized not only for his technical knowledge and competitive success but also for his leadership, recruiting impact, and commitment to student-athlete development.

P&HCC Athletic Director and Assistant Vice President for Student Engagement, Brian Henderson, added, “Coach Gooch has helped build a legacy that will be felt for years to come, and we’re incredibly proud to see him honored on the national stage.”

With Gooch’s continued leadership and experience, the Lady Patriots are poised for another championship-caliber season in 2026.



Patterson tapped to fill Ferrum College post

Ferrum College is proud to announce the appointment of Corretta Patterson ’97 as its new director of Alumni and Family Relations.

A graduate of both Franklin County High School and Ferrum College, Patterson also holds a Master of Business Administration (MBA) from Averett University. She brings to this role more than 20 years of global experience in operations leadership across the corporate, nonprofit, and entrepreneurial sectors.

“We are thrilled to welcome Corretta Patterson back home to Ferrum College,” said President Mirta Martin. “As a proud alumna and proven leader, she embodies the spirit of Ferrum College—resilient, innovative, and community-driven. Her experience and energy will be instrumental in strengthening our bonds with alumni and families, and I know she will make a lasting impact.”

Joe’s Mile honors running icon, brings community together

By Jessica Dillon

This year’s one-mile race, part of the Miles in Martinsville series, was renamed Joe’s Mile in honor of local runner and former race promoter Joe Philpott. The event was held July 19 and featured both traditional runners and Ruckers — participants who complete the course carrying weighted backpacks.

Fifty-six runners and 13 ruckers ran one mile of the Dick & Willie Trail, starting at the Uptown Connection and ending near the Liberty Street Trailhead.

Caleb Wright posted the fastest time overall, finishing in 4:16. Connor Kinkema followed with a time of 4:34, and Dan Henry finished close behind at 4:47.

In the women’s division, Sienna Bailey set a new course record with a time of 4:44. She was followed by Alice Kassens, who came in at 5:37,

and Lana Davis, who finished in 6:22.

The race was run in two heats, with options available for both runners and walkers. After the finish, participants gathered at the Liberty Street Trailhead to cool down and celebrate. Snacks, drinks and community conversation filled the parking lot as awards were handed out and personal bests were shared.

Joe Philpott was honored during the gathering for his decades-long contributions to local running. A competitive athlete since 1958, Philpott raced into his 70s, with wins in events ranging from the Draper Mile to the Shamrock Marathon. Though he is no longer racing, his presence on the trail Friday night was as impactful as ever.

Joe’s Mile brought together seasoned runners, first-timers, families and friends — each person chasing their own version of progress. Whether

Whelen Mazda MX-5 Cup returns to Martinsville Speedway

After making its groundbreaking oval debut at Martinsville Speedway last year, the Whelen Mazda MX-5 Cup presented by Michelin will return to the famous short track alongside NASCAR’s top-tier series.

Mazda’s signature spec series, now in its 20th season, will replicate its single-day exhibition event on Thursday, October 23, leading into the penultimate weekend for the NASCAR Cup, Xfinity and CRAFTSMAN Truck series championships.

The inaugural Whelen Mazda MX-5 Cup race at Martinsville in 2024 saw 18 cars take the green flag for a 100-lap feature race. The event produced an outstanding race, which culminated in a green-white-checkered finish and Jared Thomas taking the win and \$25,000

prize plus a Ridgeway clock.

“We were delighted by the fan reaction and feedback from our first visit to Martinsville Speedway,” Mazda Motorsports Senior Manager Jonathan Applegate said. “We immediately knew we needed to do it again. Clay Campbell and the leadership at NASCAR and IMSA thought the same thing and I’m thrilled that last year’s experiment has landed us as an opening act for NASCAR’s top series.”

The series’ return to Martinsville will look very similar to its’ debut; a one-day event, sharing the track with the Whelen Modified Tour. Teams will have two practice sessions leading up to single-car qualifying and a 100-lap race divided into two 50-lap stages.

“The Whelen Mazda MX-5 Cup race at

Martinsville Speedway really captures everything this place represents,” said Martinsville Speedway President Clay Campbell. “It brings us back to some of our earliest days of racing in the 50s, the last time we had open-top cars on track here, and blends it with all the intensity of modern-day competition. We couldn’t be more excited to add it to our NASCAR Playoffs race weekend and elevate that signature history-making atmosphere that comes with racing at Martinsville.”

Once again, IMSA’s YouTube channel will provide free live streaming of the race. A MX-5 Cup open test will be held at Martinsville, Monday, August 25, following the series’ doubleheader at VIRginia International Raceway.

Martin

(cont. from page 1)

school around the same time as a case in Roanoke, where a young girl died by suicide following similar mistreatment.

“Right around then, something just spoke to me and was like, ‘You know, maybe this is an opportunity for you to get in there and see what you can do,’” he said. “Just having a daughter in the school system, having nephews in the school system, and just wanting to see if there’s something we can do to make it—obviously you can’t eliminate bullying altogether—but to try to make it a safe, fun environment for them to learn in.”

Martin said he still has a lot of campaigning to do and plans to connect with local residents about their concerns.

“I don’t want to make any promises because I don’t know what’s in my power yet,” he said. “This, of course, would be my first elected position, so I don’t know limitations or what that looks like.”

Martin noted some of his goals include being an advocate for students’ success to ensure they can get the best education possible, being the support that teachers, administrators, and support staff need, and working to keep the schools safe.

Martin said bullying often con-

tributes to rising mental health challenges among students, and he wants to ensure they have access to counseling and support.

“It seems like some of those issues are on the rise these days with the bullying and some of the depression and anxiety that comes from that,” he said. “Some of these children come from homes where they don’t necessarily feel supported, and then they come to school and get picked on. I would like to see some type of help for those students.”

Martin also said he would work to keep good teachers and support efforts to reduce class sizes.

“The pay is good for this area, but it can always increase,” he said. “So, I’d like to work on teacher retention and recruiting good teachers to the area.”

While teachers in Henry County are relatively well paid compared to some other localities, other staff positions could benefit from salary reviews. “There’s some other areas as far as salaries I think we could do a little bit better,” he said.

As a member of the Martinsville-Henry County Social Services Community Policy Management Team, Martin said he regularly sees truancy cases and wants to improve the connection between parents and schools.

“I feel like it really needs to be encouraged at home,” he said. “I don’t know if there needs to be an education piece where the parents are involved, but there needs to be that connection between the parents, the community, and actually seeing the value of a good, quality education for the kids.”

He also said schools need more parental engagement overall, as education must be reinforced both in and out of the classroom.

Martin said he’s not anticipat-

ing major conflict if elected but is prepared to work through challenges if they arise.

“I feel like the people who are on the board are good folks,” he said. “Just being effective in communicating with them, talking things out—sometimes you can help others understand things from a different viewpoint.”

A Henry County native, Martin attended Patrick & Henry Community College. He currently works as a manager for Valley-Star Credit Union.

Vestal

(cont. from page 1)

of what’s currently happening.

“I’ve been gone for three years, I’ve been retired, so I think I just need to get back in there and just find out what’s going on,” she said.

Vestal said she plans to follow advice from one of her favorite Judge Judy quotes: “God gave you two ears and a mouth for a reason. You should listen twice as much as you speak.”

“I believe in having an open mind going in and listening to all sides and not going in with a preconceived idea,” she said. “I just want to be open and listen and make suggestions if I see something that needs to be changed or improved upon.”

She doesn’t expect challenges

working with other members of the board.

“I know there’s going to be seven members on the board and I’m only going to be one of those seven, but I foresee everyone working together,” she said. “In the end, we all have a common goal, and that’s to make us have the best school division in the Commonwealth.”

As a person of faith, Vestal said she will serve if elected—but will also support her opponent if she’s not.

“If it’s meant for me to be on the board, then I will serve,” she said. “If it’s meant for my opponent to be the one that’s elected, then I will support him 100 percent.”

See more at www.henrycountyenterprise.com

Bauble Noelle reopens in larger space with expanded selection



Chelsey Holland, owner of Bauble Noelle Clothing Boutique, celebrates the store's grand reopening with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.



Handmade items, including clay earrings by Brittany Shay, are part of the boutique's locally inspired inventory.



Seasonal displays at Bauble Noelle will showcase fall-themed merchandise as the boutique prepares for cooler weather.



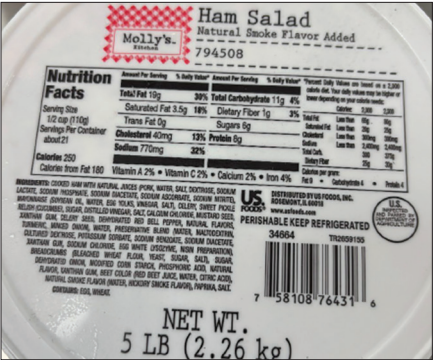
Bauble Noelle features a wide selection of jewelry, accessories, and clothing in a variety of sizes.

By Jessica Dillon
Bauble Noelle Clothing Boutique recently celebrated its grand reopening after moving into a larger space. The boutique, a local favorite, offers jewelry, accessories, and clothing in a range of sizes.
Owner Chelsey Holland said she wanted to create a shop that was welcoming to all women, with a wide selection.
“I needed more space, but I also wanted to do something totally different,” she said. “I don’t like when everything starts looking the same. I just wanted something unique. Not oversaturated—something that stands out.”
The store carries popular brands like Simply Southern, Lulu B and Kate Spade. Customers will also find handmade clay earrings by Brittany Shay and a variety of local touches throughout the space. Styles rotate seasonally, and Holland is already preparing for the next transition.
“Come fall, we’re very pumpkins and skulls,” she joked. “We’ve got all of it.”
“I get asked all the time who I shop for,” she said. “And honestly? Anyone from 16 to 100. You’ll see younger girls here and women who’ve

been shopping their whole lives, and we carry all different sizes, too. I’m not a size 0, and I want plus-size women to feel seen and fabulous.”
Holland reopened the shop on a Thursday morning and said she was thankful for the strong turnout.
“I was nervous,” she said. “I thought, Thursday? We’ll see. But I told myself, ‘Alright, family, let’s unite.’ And they showed up. It was awesome.”
Fashion has always been part of her life, though not through runways or magazines.
“I didn’t grow up with all that designer stuff,” she said. “I get inspired by regular women. I see people around town and just think, ‘She looks so cool.’”
Holland said her early inspiration came from teachers she admired growing up.
“They’d have their glasses matching their outfits, cute belts and dresses,” she said. “Back in the day, it wasn’t really cool to dress up as an adult unless you were a teacher. They were the only ones who could still wear sequins and ugly Christmas sweaters and make it fun. And now? That’s what people want again.”

Leia Richardson, who teaches elementary school during the week, works at the boutique on weekends.
“It’s so fun,” Richardson said, beaming. “There’s so much positive energy. Everybody knows my name, and it just feels like home. Chelsey treats me like a daughter—she really is the best boss.”
Working at the shop, she said, is about more than just making extra money.
“I get to talk to people my own age on the weekends instead of little kids all the time,” she laughed. “And I get to dress up. It’s just fun.”
Holland said she’s content with how things are going and is focused on the shop as it is now.
“Right now, I’m actually content,” she said. “I’ve always got ideas brewing, but I’m trying to enjoy this moment, especially as we roll into fall and winter.”
Bauble Noelle Clothing Boutique is open Tuesday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Saturdays until 5:30 p.m.
“We’re just really grateful,” Holland said. “The community supports us, and we want to give that love right back.”

Health alert issued for ham salad products



A public health alert was issued for ham salad products containing Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulated breadcrumb products that have been recalled by Newly Weds Foods, due to concerns that the products may be contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes* (Lm).
The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) issued the alert to ensure that consumers are aware that these products, which bear the USDA mark of inspection, should not be consumed. As more information becomes available, FSIS will update this public health alert. Consumers should check back frequently because additional products may be added.
The following products subject to the public health alert are:
*12-oz. printed plastic tubs containing “RESER’S FINE FOODS Ham Salad” with sell by dates of 09/01/25.
*5-lb. clear plastic tubs contain-

ing “Molly’s Kitchen Ham Salad” with sell by dates of 08/31/25.
The problem was discovered when Reser’s Fine Foods, Inc., a Topeka, Kan., establishment, determined that they used FDA-regulated breadcrumb products subject to an FDA recall because the breadcrumbs may be contaminated with Lm.
There have been no confirmed reports of adverse reactions due to consumption of these products. Anyone concerned about an illness should contact a health care provider.
Consumption of food contaminated with Lm can cause listeriosis, a serious infection that primarily affects older adults, persons with weakened immune systems, and pregnant women and their newborns. Less commonly, persons outside these risk groups are affected.
Some product may be in consumers’ or retailers’ refrigerators or freezers, and consumers who have purchased these products are



urged not to consume them. Retailers that have purchased these products are urged not to serve or sell them. These products should be thrown away or returned to the place of purchase.
Consumers with food safety questions can call the toll-free USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at

888-MPHotline (888-674-6854) or send a question via email to MPHotline@usda.gov. For consumers that need to report a problem with a meat, poultry, or egg product, the online Electronic Consumer Complaint Monitoring System can be accessed 24 hours a day at <https://foodcomplaint.fsis.usda.gov/eCCF/>.

VMNH unveils education pavilion



A life-size model of Pelagornis, an extinct genus of flying bird and the largest flying bird ever discovered, is suspended from the canopy of the new Jean S. Adams Education Pavilion.

The Virginia Museum of Natural History (VMNH) has unveiled the newly constructed Jean S. Adams Education Pavilion, a 3-season, open-air, programming and visitor area overlooking neighboring J. Frank Wilson Memorial Park. Designed to be both an extension of the museum’s public exhibit space and an additional venue for the museum’s expansive educational programs and special events, the pavilion is the largest physical space addition to the museum’s current facility since its 2007 grand opening.

“The museum has seen tremendous growth in the scope and popularity of both our educational programming and special events since we opened the doors to the current facility nearly two decades ago,” said VMNH Deputy Director Ryan Barber. “Not only will the pavilion provide essential additional space to accommodate more educational programs and more participants, but it will also serve as additional exhibit space for general museum visitors to enjoy.”

Located behind the museum overlooking J. Frank Wilson Memorial Park, the pavilion consists of exhibit signage interpreting the flora and fauna of the park and is highlighted by a life-size model of the largest flying bird ever discovered, the extinct Pelagornis, suspended from the pavilion’s canopy.

“Providing our visitors with uniquely immersive experiences is a priority of the museum,” said VMNH Executive Director Dr. Joe Keiper. “When visitors look up and view the life-size model of Pelagornis, a bird that once flew over

Virginia, they won’t only be given an opportunity to become more familiar with the type of incredible life that existed millions of years ago, but they’ll experience, first-hand, what it would be like to actually encounter the largest flying bird ever discovered.”

Named for the late Jean S. Adams, a former museum trustee and longtime supporter, the idea for expanding the museum’s physical footprint via an education pavilion quickly drew widespread support from numerous individuals and entities from throughout the region, including the family of Jean S. Adams, The Harvest Foundation, and the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission.

“The commission has been a long-time supporter of the Virginia Museum of Natural History and is proud to play a part in making this latest expansion possible,” said Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission member Will Pace. “This outdoor pavilion will help draw visitors to our region and provide new opportunities for locals to engage with this award-winning museum. It’s a true asset for education, tourism, and community engagement in Southern Virginia.”

It’s a sentiment echoed by India Brown, Program Officer at The Harvest Foundation.

“The Jean S. Adams Education Pavilion is a powerful example of what’s possible when vision, persistence, and community partnership come together,” said Brown. “The Harvest Foundation is proud to support the Virginia Museum of Natural History as it expands access to hands-on learning for local families and

visitors alike. This project not only enhances educational opportunities—it strengthens Martinsville-Henry County as a destination for exploration and discovery, reflecting our mission to build a welcoming place where all can thrive.”

The pavilion is currently accessible to visitors as part of general museum admission. Museum admission is \$12 for adults ages 18-59 and \$6 for ages 3-17, seniors 60+, and college students. Admission is free for children under 3, museum members, and members of museums and science centers that participate in the ASTC Passport program.

The museum also participates in Museums for All, an initiative of the Institute of Museum and Library Services and administered by the Association of Children’s Museums, offering discounted admission to EBT cardholders and their immediate family members. Through this program, and additional funding provided by Hooker Furnishings, Carter Bank, and Community Foundation Serving Western Virginia, visitors who present their EBT card and accompanying ID at the museum box office will receive free admission to the museum. Free admission is available to EBT cardholders from any state and up to 5 immediate family members living within the same household as the cardholder.

For a full list of supporters of the Jean S. Adams Education Pavilion, visit www.vmnh.net/projects/jean-s-adams-education-pavilion.

To learn more about the museum, visit www.vmnh.net.

Enrollment open for Grassland Conservation Reserve Program

Agricultural producers and private landowners can now enroll in the Grassland Conservation Reserve Program (Grassland CRP). The sign-up runs from now until Aug. 8, 2025. Grassland CRP, offered by USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA), is a voluntary working lands conservation program that enables participants to conserve grasslands while also continuing most grazing and haying practices.

Grassland CRP emphasizes support for grazing operations, plant and animal biodiversity, and grasslands and land with shrubs and forbs under the greatest threat of conversion.

“Through the conservation of America’s essential grasslands, Grassland CRP supports continued agricultural productivity while at the same time prioritizing private lands stewardship,” said FSA Administrator Bill Beam. “By offering landowners the best of both worlds — economic viability and working lands preservation — Grassland CRP provisions support USDA’s commitment to Farmers First.”

CRP, USDA’s flagship conservation program, celebrates its 40th anniversary this year. For four decades, CRP has provided financial and technical support to agricultural producers and landowners whose accepted acres are placed under contract for 10-15 years and who agree to volun-

tarily convert the land to beneficial vegetative cover to improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and support wildlife habitat. The American Relief Act, 2025, extended provisions for CRP through Sept. 30, 2025.

Currently, more than 25.8 million acres are enrolled in CRP, with nearly 9.7 million acres in Grassland CRP. On May 12, FSA opened General and Continuous CRP enrollment for 2025. FSA is currently reviewing submitted offers and will announce accepted offers at a later date. Due to the 27-million-acre statutory cap, only 1.8 million acres are available for all CRP enrollment this fiscal year.

Landowners and producers interested in Grassland CRP should contact their local USDA Service Center to learn more or apply for the program before the Aug. 8 deadline.

FSA helps America’s farmers, ranchers and forest landowners invest in, improve, protect and expand their agricultural operations through the delivery of agricultural programs for all Americans. FSA implements agricultural policy, administers credit and loan programs, and manages conservation, commodity, disaster recovery and marketing programs through a national network of state and county offices and locally elected county committees. For more information, visit fsa.usda.gov.



Farmers urged to safely dispose of pesticides

The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Office of Pesticide Services is offering seven sites across the state for farmers, pesticide dealers, pest control firms, certified applicators, homeowners and golf course operators to bring unwanted, outdated or banned pesticides for disposal.

The program, in partnership with Virginia Cooperative Extension and the Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services, is at no cost to eligible participants and disposes of pesticides in a safe manner.

Since its inception in 1997, the program has collected and destroyed more than 1.9 million pounds of outdated and unwanted pesticides. This year’s locations are open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and are:

- Aug. 5 – Chesapeake Mosquito Control Commission, 332 Saint Bride’s Rd. E., Chesapeake

- Aug. 6 – Prince George County Extension, 6380 Scott Memorial Park Rd., Prince George
- Aug. 7 – Courthouse Convenience Center, 7232 Courtland Farm Rd., Hanover
- Aug. 19 – Nutrien Ag Solutions, 18432 Wachapreague Rd., Melfa
- Aug. 20 – Indika Farms Buying Station, 12249 Shiloh Dr., Windsor
- Aug. 21 – SVCC Truck Driving School, 1112 Courtland Rd., Emporia
- Sept. 10 – Southampton County Fairgrounds, 25374 New Market Rd., Courtland

Participants are encouraged to complete a pesticide collection registration form prior to the scheduled collection date and return the completed form to marlene.larios@vdacs.virginia.gov or mail to Office of Pesticide Services, VDACS, P.O. Box 1163, Richmond, Virginia 23218.

See more at
www.henrycountyenterprise.com

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FORMER MOUNTAIN VALLEY BREWING REVIVES AS ARTS NONPROFIT



The Mountain Valley Brewing venue space has been transformed to accommodate Sunbine, but keeps some of the brewery's charm such as the views.

The venue provides a family friendly environment for people to enjoy music and other events.

By Maddy Oliver

The Sunbine Music Foundation—formerly Mountain Valley Brewing—has evolved into a nonprofit with a mission: to support local arts-related causes through music and community events.

Mountain Valley Brewing, which closed in May, has rebranded its venue with that mission in mind. Foundation Director Peggy Donovan said, “Mountain Valley has closed, and we have kind of rebranded our event venue space as Sunbine at Mountain Valley. We’ve got a beautiful venue, we’ve got two stage areas, plenty of room for people and families to spread out, and we just didn’t want to see that go to waste.”

Donovan said the foundation’s mission began while the brewery was still operating, but organizers saw a need for a more focused nonprofit.

“We have been doing a music festival for years here, once a year called Sunbine Music Festival. Our goal was to try to raise funds for a nonprofit, and we had a hard time finding nonprofits to partner with. And then when we did, we weren’t exactly sure, like, we gave them a check at the end of the event, was it going towards the mission that we wanted it to go towards... So, we decided let’s do our own nonprofit and we can better control where that money goes back into the community,” she said.

Previously, the foundation hosted a single large event: the three-day Sunbine Music Festival, featuring 18 to 22 bands. But this year, they’ve shifted to a

monthly event model.

“In the years past, we’ve done one single music festival. It’s three days, we’ll have anywhere from eighteen to twenty-two bands, and just make that one event to try and raise funds. Getting started, we’ve broke even so we decided to take a different strategy this year and instead of doing one big event, we’re doing kind of a series of events every month,” Donovan said.

Sunbine has events planned through November, including performances by international blues artist Stacy Mitchhart in August and UK-based Essex County in September. This year’s Sunbine Music Festival, scheduled for October, will feature 13 regional and international acts with a focus on rock and roll.

The venue will also carry on Mountain Valley Brewing’s annual chili cookoff tradition.

“Mountain Valley Brewing has always done a chili cookoff the Saturday after Thanksgiving, we’ve been doing that for seven years, and since the brewery is gone everybody was very upset that we weren’t going to have a chili cookoff, so Sunbine will be holding the chili cookoff this year. It’s open to the public, it’s a fundraiser, but it’s always a great time,” Donovan said.

Sunbine’s ultimate goal is to give back to the community by helping young people in Henry and Pittsylvania counties participate in art and music programs.

“Our mission is to bring the community together through music and through music events and with all the proceeds going to support youth education and mu-

sic and the arts, and specifically in Henry and Pittsylvania counties. So we’re very focused, we’re local, we want to give back local,” Donovan said.

The foundation has heard from community members that many children want to participate in the arts but lack the financial means. While a specific support program hasn’t yet been developed, Donovan said they hope to contribute to several different initiatives in the future.

“Since we have only broke even, we have not really gotten a chance to really look around at specifically the schools and the school districts and the programs that are in need. So, we’re hoping to give to more than one organization at the end of this year,” she said.

Sunbine hopes to become a community staple—both as a family-friendly entertainment space and a nonprofit partner.

“We really want, number one we would like to become, not a Rooster Walk, not a FloydFest, but we want to be part of the community so that people know that there’s an event venue where they can come see really good entertainment at reasonable prices. It’s fun, it’s inclusive, we’re family friendly, we’re dog friendly, and it’s something else to do in the county and I think it’s a real asset to keep local music alive,” Donovan said.

She added that she hopes Sunbine becomes a “community hub” and that the foundation’s ability to raise funds and make an impact will grow over time.



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SKILL WAVE MEDIA FOUNDER USES PHOTOGRAPHY TO SUPPORT VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH

By Jessica Dillon

Seth Johnson, 37, is the local photographer behind Skill Wave Media. He invests in the community through charity events, often with the help of his wife, Ariel Johnson, director of the M-HC Warming Center.

Johnson grew up in Martinsville, Indiana, and joined the Army after high school.

"I enlisted at 18 and got stationed at Fort Bragg," he said. "That's where I met my wife. We've been through a lot together—deployments, moves, and the stress of transition. She's been my anchor through all of it."

After leaving the service, Johnson began struggling with mental health issues.

"I got out and thought I'd be fine," he said. "But the reality was different. PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), anxiety, depression—it hit hard. I lost friends to suicide. I started to realize just how much veterans carry with them, especially when they leave service and feel disconnected

from everything they knew."

That growing concern led Johnson to advocacy and peer support. He enrolled in an esports management and production program—an unconventional path, but one that led to surprising connections.

"I've always loved gaming, and I knew there was something powerful about it, especially for vets," he said. "I ended up interning with the Warrior Gamer Foundation, a nonprofit that connects veterans through online gaming. We provided a place for peer-to-peer support, crisis response, and just everyday connection."

Johnson said the digital space gave veterans an outlet to talk and support each other in ways that felt natural.

"There were no uniforms, no stigma, just people who understood," he said. "We had trained staff who could step in during a crisis, and if someone needed more help, we'd connect them with professionals or hotlines like 988."

That experience opened a new door.

Johnson bought his first camera—not for photography, but to help with video streaming and production. Then he started experimenting with still images, and something clicked.

"I didn't expect to fall in love with it, but I did," he said. "It started small—just taking pictures of friends, places, little moments. Then I realized this was more than a hobby. It was something I needed."

At one point, financial struggles forced him to sell that first camera. When he was able to get another, he committed to creating art.

"I wanted to create work that captured people being human," he said. "Not staged photos, but honest, emotional moments. The stuff you don't always see—the in-between seconds."

His wife, Ariel, said the shift was life changing.

"Before the camera, his anxiety kept him from going to events," she said. "Now he

(See Skill Wave Media p. 7)



Seth Johnson, the founder of Skill Wave Media, turns his lens toward healing for veterans.



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SKILL WAVE MEDIA

(cont. from page 6)

has a purpose when he walks in. It gives him structure and helps him stay engaged.”

Johnson began shooting local events—Fourth of July parades, community walks, and veterans’ marches—often at no cost.

“It’s not about the money,” he said. “It’s about giving back. If someone can look at a photo I took and feel seen, that’s what matters.”

He took courses through Operation Headshot, a veteran-led photography nonprofit, where he learned about lighting, composition and the business side of photography.

“I watched a lot of YouTube,” he said. “But learning from other veterans made a big difference. They understood where I was coming from and what I was trying to say through the lens.”

Today, Johnson operates his own photography and videography brand, focusing on capturing moments with intention.

“I want to create a space where people feel comfortable being themselves,” he said. “It’s not about filters or fake smiles. It’s about telling stories honestly.”

He also helped launch a regional veterans support group based in Virginia, aiming to bridge isolation with engagement.

“Sometimes it’s just checking in. Sometimes it’s organizing a meetup or sharing a resource,” he said. “We even got mentioned in a VA newsletter that goes out to over 18 million veterans. The goal is to make sure people know they’re not alone.”

Johnson’s work continues to grow, with plans to expand into nonprofit partnerships and storytelling campaigns that spotlight veterans and their families.

“There’s something powerful about taking a photo of someone and saying, ‘This is you. This matters,’” he said. “Veterans carry so much. And if my work helps one person feel seen, heard or valued, then it’s all worth it.”

He doesn’t claim to have all the answers, but he does believe in showing up.

“I still have rough days,” Johnson said. “But I’ve got my camera, my community and something to look forward to. That makes all the difference.”

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