

# HENRY COUNTY ENTERPRISE

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## Henry County secures state grant for Commonwealth Crossing site

Henry County will receive \$750,000 in state grant funding to support site development at Lot #3 of the Commonwealth Crossing Business Centre, part of a major statewide effort to prepare industrial sites for future business investment.

“This grant is a major step forward for Henry County,” said Board of Supervisors Chairman Jim Adams. “Preparing Lot #3 at Commonwealth Crossing for future development strengthens our position in a competitive market. With 100 acres and rail access, this site has tremendous potential. Getting the engineering and design work done now ensures we’re ready when the next opportunity comes.”

Adams noted that recent success in attracting major employers like Crown Holdings and Press Glass came in part from having project-ready sites. “Combined with record levels of industrial permitting and steady business interest, this investment reflects the kind of momentum we’ve worked hard to build, and we’re committed to keeping it going,” he said.

Gov. Glenn Youngkin recently announced a total of \$40 million in Virginia Business Ready Sites Program (VBRSP) development grants for 13 sites across the Commonwealth. Of that total, \$35.9 million will go directly toward development, with an additional \$4.1 million supporting a new accelerated site characterization initiative.

“Business-ready sites are instrumental to Virginia’s ability to compete and win economic development projects and create great new jobs for Virginians,” Youngkin said. “Since 2022, we’ve seen more than \$125 billion in capital investment committed by companies expanding or moving to Virginia because they know they can move quickly on these landmark projects.”

The VBRSP, administered by the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP), helps localities improve infrastructure and secure permitting to prepare sites for business expansion or relocation. For localities over 35 square miles, eligible sites must include at least 50 contiguous, developable acres.

(See State Grant p. 9)



City Manager Aretha Ferrell-Benavides at a meeting of Martinsville City Council earlier this year.



Mayor LC Jones

## Mayor defends city manager’s record, questions coverage

By Jessica Dillon and Taylor Boyd

Tensions in Martinsville are again running high, after the city council placed City Manager Aretha Ferrell-Benavides on paid administrative leave and approved funds for a forensic audit during a July meeting.

Shortly after those actions, it was reported that Ferrell-Benavides

was one of four finalists for the city manager’s job in Elgin, Texas. She visited there for a meet-and-greet and to interview for that position.

“I don’t blame her,” Mayor LC Jones said. “You’re in a place of uncertainty. She’s got council members who have continued to disrespect her, accuse her falsely in public, call other cities, dredge up”

(See Mayor p. 10)

## 23 years in, investigators still pursue justice in Short family killings

New DNA testing, fresh leads and continued resolve keep Short family case active

By Debbie Hall

Henry County Sheriff Wayne Davis was a patrol officer on Aug. 15, 2002. He had been on the job for only two years when he and another deputy responded to a call at the Oak Level home where Michael and Mary Short lived with their 9-year-old daughter, Jennifer.

“I was one of the first responding patrol officers,” Davis said. “That call came in as a well-being check.”

At the scene, authorities found Michael Short, 50, and Mary Short, 36, dead. Both had suffered a single gunshot wound to the head. The phone line to the home had been cut, and two .22-caliber shell casings were found — one near each of the bodies.

Jennifer was missing. Authorities initially thought she had escaped and scoured the area around the home. They later believed she had been abducted by her parents’ killer or killers. About six weeks later, human remains found in Rockingham County, North Carolina, were determined to belong to Jennifer. She, too, had suffered a single gunshot wound to the head.

Authorities believe the murders and abduction occurred between midnight on Aug. 14, 2002, and 9 a.m. the next morning. It remains unclear how long Jennifer was alive after her abduction.

Although the anniversary this year marks more than two decades since the Short family incident, the case isn’t cold, and Davis hasn’t



Posters, challenge coins and other reminders of the Short family case cover the walls of Henry County Sheriff Wayne Davis’s office. “If I had just one goal I could accomplish during my career, it would be to solve the Short family case,” Davis said.

forgotten.

“I have been with this case since the initial 911 call. This investigation is extremely active,” he said, with authorities pursuing new DNA



testing, fresh leads, and the same goal: to bring those responsible to justice.

As the lead investigative agency, “we have an”

(See 23 Years p. 9)

## New city policies aim to improve oversight, restore trust

By Taylor Boyd

The City of Martinsville has implemented new purchase card and travel/training policies, with more policy updates expected in the coming weeks.

The changes went into effect Aug. 1. Acting City Manager and Police Chief Rob Fincher said the city is reviewing all of its policies and employee manual to determine what needs to be updated.

“It’s been a while since it’s been updated, and so it’s time,” Fincher said. “We do a regular routine review of all policies.”

A group of city employees reached out to other localities to compare practices. Fincher said they prioritized the purchase card and travel/training policies first, because those were the ones that came under scrutiny and drew the most public attention.

“What better way to help reestablish trust than to set out, modify our policies, put them in place, and make certain that people adhere to them,” he said. “That increases professionalism and trust all the way around.”

Fincher noted that Martinsville and Henry County’s sheriff’s offices and police departments already have regular policy review processes, and that “there’s no such thing as a perfect policy. It has to be continually reviewed and updated. So, although we just enacted these, I’m sure there may be some additional changes.”

“These will probably be updated again. As we”

(See New City p. 11)



The Baldwin Park Fitness Court and Studio officially opened with a ribbon cutting on July 30.

## Free fitness space opens at Baldwin Park

By Jessica Dillon

A new fitness court—featuring Virginia’s first-ever open-air fitness studio—officially opened at the top of Baldwin Park on July 30. The new space offers free, accessible exercise opportunities to the Martinsville community and is available during the park’s open hours.

“This is the first Fitness Court Studio in the state of Virginia,” said Kendall Davis, former public information officer. “I know we have other fitness

courts here, but what makes this different is this, right here. It’s open workout space—space you can use for Zumba, for dance, for all types of fitness that don’t involve weights.”

The court is part of a national initiative promoting accessible public fitness spaces. Baldwin Park was selected for its increasing use as a community event hub, including recent celebrations like the Juneteenth Festival.

“This space is supposed to be enjoyed by the community,” one

speaker said. “We’re pushing healthy hearts, encouraging people to extend their lives by just getting out here and moving.”

The project was a collaboration between the City of Martinsville, the National Fitness Campaign, Aetna, and the Harvest Foundation, which contributed a \$70,000 grant. The court also features a Martinsville-themed mural celebrating the city’s athletic legacy.

“This mural behind me,” a city representative said.

(See Free p. 11)

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# VMNH maintains national accreditation, highest recognition for U.S. museums

The Virginia Museum of Natural History (VMNH) has received reaccreditation from the American Alliance of Museums (AAM). AAM accreditation is the highest national recognition afforded to the nation's museums and a status that VMNH has maintained since 1994.

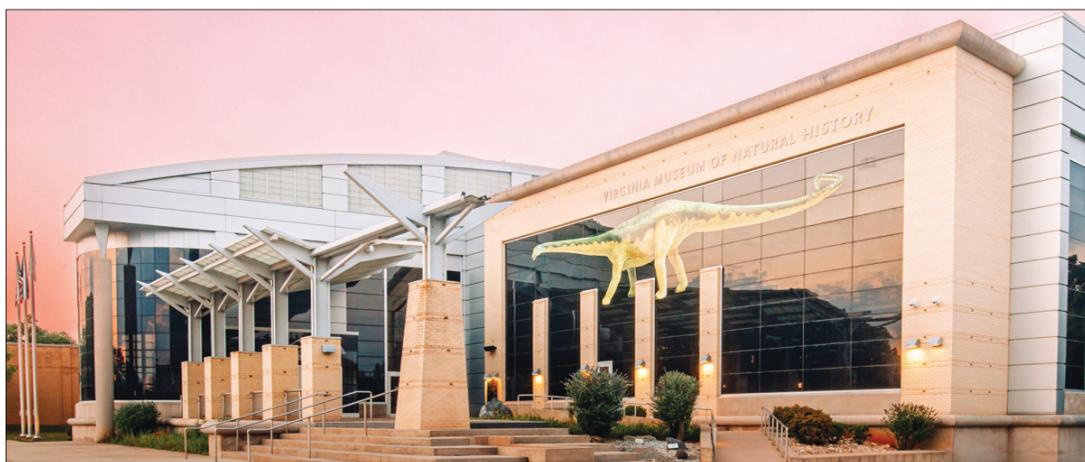
National accreditation brings recognition to a museum for its commitment to excellence, accountability, high professional standards and continued institutional improvement. Developed and sustained by museum professionals for over fifty years, the Alliance's museum accreditation program is the museum field's primary vehicle for quality assurance, self-regulation, and public accountability, and strengthens the museum profession by promoting practices that enable leaders to make informed decisions, allocate resources wisely, and remain financially and ethically accountable to provide the best possible service to the public.

"VMNH is a credit to Virginia's slate of wonderful museums, and has been a true partner in the lead up to the nation's 250th Anniversary Celebration," said Virginia Secretary of Education Aimee Guidera. "We are so pleased to congratulate VMNH on this deserved recognition for their commitment to quality and excellence."

Of the nation's estimated 33,000 museums, approximately 1,100 are currently accredited. All museums must undergo a reaccreditation review at least every 10 years to maintain this privileged status.

"Achieving accreditation once again is a testament to the commitment and dedication that both the museum's governing board and staff continuously demonstrate to ensure that VMNH remains a standard-bearer of museum excellence," said Dr. Melany Clark, chairman of the Virginia Museum of Natural History Board of Trustees.

Accreditation is a rigorous, but rewarding, process that examines all aspects of a museum's operations. To earn accreditation, a museum first completes a yearlong self-study before undergoing



The Virginia Museum of Natural History in Martinsville. (Contributed)

a site visit by a team of peer reviewers. AAM's Accreditation Commission, an independent and autonomous body of museum professionals, considers the self-study and visiting committee report to determine whether a museum should receive accreditation.

"National accreditation shows that your organization is following the gold standards of museum operation," said VMNH Executive Director Dr. Joe Keiper. "To attain this status, you have to go through a deep dive into your operations and scrutinize your policies and procedures. We revised some policies to keep up to date, and analyzed visitation and financial data to measure our impact. Less than 5 percent of all United States museums ever attain accreditation, showing the hard work by our staff and board members leads to positive outcomes in science and science literacy."

As Virginia's natural history museum, VMNH seeks to increase understanding of, and appreciation for, the natural history of the Commonwealth through education, research, collections, and exhibits. All four areas were praised within the final accreditation report, with special emphasis placed

on the museum's science outreach programming.

"Our site visit report was very complimentary of our staff and their dedication," said Keiper. "The site reviewers were very impressed with our science outreach team, who lead educational programs at schools all around Virginia. Their expertise and professionalism were evident throughout the report."

Though the museum has enjoyed accreditation for over 3 decades, maintaining the status requires a commitment to best practices at all levels of the institution.

"Accreditation is a monumental achievement," said Marilyn Jackson, AAM President and CEO. "The process demonstrates an institution's commitment to best practice and is flexible enough to be accomplished by museums of any size."

To celebrate the achievement, VMNH will offer free admission to all museum visitors on Saturday, August 9, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

For more information about the museum, visit [www.vmnh.net](http://www.vmnh.net).

For more information about the American Alliance of Museums, visit [www.aam-us.org](http://www.aam-us.org).

## Millner leads effort to preserve Carver High School history



The first year book of George Washington Carver High School, published in 1951, will be part of the collection. The Rev. Tyler Millner Sr. is working to preserve local African American history by collecting documents, news clippings, oral histories and other information about George Washington Carver High School.

**By Taylor Boyd**

The Rev. Tyler Millner Sr. is collecting documents, news clippings, oral histories and other information about George Washington Carver High School in an effort to preserve local African American history.

Millner, who graduated from Carver in 1964, said he was inspired to start the project after realizing he couldn't find anything about the school beyond his own yearbook.

"I said, 'That can't be. We can't let that happen. There will be a whole span with nothing,'" he said. "You can't leave this whole chapter out of the Henry County history of education. That's what launched me into the project, and I'm hoping it will be a community project."

By consolidating materials into one collection, Millner said anyone interested in the school will be able to learn more about its history and legacy.

He's asking former students and faculty to submit personal stories about their time at Carver.

"We are encouraging people to write either a half page or one full page describing whatever story or event impressed them," he said. "Or write about a particular teacher or other personality that made an impact while you were at Carver."

Millner is especially interested in collecting copies of the school's yearbooks to showcase its teachers, staff and students. Last week, he received a copy of the school's first yearbook from 1951. He now has four in his collection.

For those who have photographs, news articles or other artifacts they want to keep, Millner is asking for permission to copy or photograph them.



Millner said the driving force behind the preservation project are Simon Spencer (left) and Sallie Morris (right), members of Carver High School's first graduating class in 1953.

George Washington Carver High School was the first high school built for African Americans in Henry County in the 1950s.

Despite the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision that declared school segregation unconstitutional, Millner said Carver was still segregated when he graduated a decade later.

"I graduated in '64 and they still were separate schools," he said. "The next year, they started doing some integration, and I think it went all the way to '69 when the courts really put pressure on the issue by saying, 'You must integrate these schools.'"

For more information or to help with the project, contact Millner at (276) 224-3514 or [tcmpastorms55@gmail.com](mailto:tcmpastorms55@gmail.com).



Piedmont Arts is a nonprofit art museum in Martinsville, located at 215 Starling Ave. Museum hours are 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Tuesday-Saturday. Admission is free.

## Input sought about Piedmont Arts' future for a long-range strategic plan

Piedmont Arts is seeking input on its future and how it can positively impact the community. The museum will use this feedback to create a new strategic plan that will guide its goals through the next five years.

Community members are asked to complete a public input survey about their experiences at Piedmont Arts and how the museum can shape these experiences going forward. The survey will go live on Aug. 1 and remain open through Sept. 30. It can be accessed on the museum's website at [PiedmontArts.org/info/Public-Input-Survey.cfm](http://PiedmontArts.org/info/Public-Input-Survey.cfm).

Members of the public are also invited to a listening session about Piedmont Arts from 6-7 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 10, at the museum. The listening session will give participants the opportunity to share their opinions in a safe and welcoming space and hear from others about the impact of the arts in the community.

A listening session for members of Piedmont Arts will be held from 6-7 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 11, at the museum.

The museum's strategic planning process is being facilitated by Natalie Hodge Davis and Jennifer Reis.

Hodge Davis is a seasoned facilitator, speaker and lifelong arts advocate with a deep commitment to community-centered storytelling. A former president of the Piedmont Arts board of directors and the 2023 recipient of the prestigious Clyde Hooker Award, she brings a wealth of experience in strategic leadership and creative engagement. As founder of Rudy's Girl Media, she has spent her career using narrative to inspire, uplift and mobilize communities. Her work co-facilitating Piedmont Arts' strategic planning process reflects her ongoing dedication to ensuring the arts remain a vibrant, accessible force in Southern Virginia and beyond.

"Strategic planning is more than paperwork," said Hodge Davis. "It's a promise to listen, to grow and to imagine a future shaped by the people who live, work and create here. When community voices lead the way, the arts become a mirror of who we are and a map for where we're going. The process only works if it's honest — and that means making space for real community input. We can't serve people with programs designed in a vacuum. This planning process is about slowing down long enough to hear what matters most and building from there."

Reis is a creative entrepreneur, arts administrator, artist, author and educator with 30 years of ex-

perience in arts entrepreneurship and management. A master facilitator for adult learning initiatives such as AIR Collaborative's courses in arts-based community and economic revitalization, she is also an arts entrepreneurship curricular consultant for Nest NYC, Triangle Artworks in the Raleigh-Durham region of North Carolina and the Tamarack Foundation in Charleston, West Virginia. Formerly arts entrepreneurship faculty at UNCG, she is utilizing a decade of experience teaching artists and artisans creative venture development and is currently the lead author of the forthcoming book via Routledge, "The Creative Entrepreneur: A Practical Guide." Through her consulting company Make Do Creative, she works with community and economic development, trade, governmental and cultural organizations to design, manage and deliver creative entrepreneurship curriculum for makers of

all kinds to develop sustainable ventures. For more than a decade, she has provided strategic planning facilitation for cultural organizations ranging from large, international associations to smaller, local arts agencies. Her earned degrees include a BFA from Columbus College of Art and Design and graduate work in arts management, instructional design, studio art and arts education from Syracuse University, UNC-Greensboro and Morehead State University.

"The strategic planning process is just that — a process that involves community and stakeholder engagement, review of an organization's assets and needs and the invaluable opportunity for the board of directors to envision a thriving future for Piedmont Arts," Reis said.

For more information on Piedmont Arts, visit [PiedmontArts.org](http://PiedmontArts.org).

# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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

## Meetings

### Tuesday, August 12

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

## Events

### 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

TGIF Concert, sponsored by Rotary Club of Martinsville & Henry County. Band: Miss Mandy and the Somethings, opens at 6 p.m., music begins at 7. Bridge St. parking lot Uptown Martinsville. Food by Hugo's; beverages by Lawrence Distributing. Free event.

Needle Felting: Embellished Scarf, Shirt or Tote Bag, 2:30-4:30 p.m., Piedmont Arts. 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](http://PiedmontArts.org).

### Saturday, August 16

Hamburger Supper, \$10 at the Rangeley Ruritan Club, 5-7 p.m. Meal includes burger, potato sale, baked beans, dessert and drink. Extra burger is \$3. Alpha Gal friendly options (turkey burger) available. Eat in or take out. Proceeds go towards community projects, with a portion of proceeds to go to FC Middle FFA.

### Sunday, August 17

Open Bluegrass/Country JAM SESSION, 1:30 to 4 p.m., Bassett Ruritan Club, 277 Philpott Dam Road, Bassett. Free admission. For information

call Randy, 276 629-8296.

### Saturday, August 23

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

### Friday, August 29

Haircuts by Clark's Cuts, professional, licensed beautician, 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. upstairs at the Bassett Ruritan Club, 277 Philpott Dam Road, Bassett. Walk-ins welcome. Suggested donation \$15. All proceeds go to the Bassett Ruritan Club.

## 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 [mhcd-cva.org/meeting-rsvp](http://mhcd-cva.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.

## Patriots united: Unfinished business drives 2025 men's soccer squad

The 2025 Patrick & Henry Community College Men's Soccer team enters the new season with one goal: finish what they started.

Last year, the Patriots finished as Region 10 runners-up. Just one season removed from back-to-back Region 10 championships in 2023 and 2024, head coach Brennan Murphy is entering the fall with a fresh roster, familiar hunger, and high expectations.

"We've built a strong culture of competing at the highest level," said Murphy. "This year's group is talented, hungry, and ready to chase another championship. We know what the standard is and we're not shying away from it."

With a mix of returning leaders and promising newcomers, the Patriots are embracing the challenge ahead using the sting of last year's narrow defeat as fuel for another title run and a long-awaited NJCAA National Tour-



The 25-26 P&HCC men's soccer team enjoys the view from Sharp Top mountain.

name berth.

The Patriots kick off preseason action this weekend with a gauntlet of road matchups against three NCAA Division I powerhouses:

•@ Radford University – August 8 | 7:00 PM

•@ Longwood University – August 10 |

6:00 PM

•@ Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) – August 11 | 7:00 PM

"We know what these games mean for our growth," said returner Thommy Mendez of New York. "If we want to be the best, we've got to play the best." These high-level

tests will give Coach Murphy and his staff a real-time look at the team's identity, fitness, and tactical edge.

Following preseason, the Patriots dive head-first into one of the most ambitious schedules in program history, including: NJCAA national contenders Neosho CC and Rock

Valley CC (Aug 22–23 in Indiana); Western Iowa Tech, Central NE, and Northeast NE (September road swing); and Region 10 battles against Cape Fear, Louisburg, Richard Bland, and Wake Tech.

"This is why I came here, to compete at a high level and prove

I belong," said freshman Honore Tumusifu of Nigeria. With long road trips and a full slate of ranked opposition, the Patriots know every minute counts.

"It's going to be a war every game, but that's what prepares you for late October and November. That's what makes championship teams," said Murphy.

With another Region 10 crown within reach and the dream of national tournament contention on the line, the Patriots are locked in and ready for the grind.

"We want to be playing our best soccer when it matters most. That's the mission," said Murphy.

Follow the Patriots all season long on [www.phccsports.com](http://www.phccsports.com) and on social media @PHCCAthletics for scores, highlights, and behind-the-scenes content. View the full soccer schedule at <https://www.phccsports.com/sports/msoc/2025-26/schedule>.

## Tourism surges in Virginia with \$35.1B in visitor spending

Gov. Glenn Youngkin and the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) recently announced that Virginia's tourism industry generated a record \$35.1 billion in visitor spending in 2024 — a 5.4% increase from the \$33.3 billion reported in 2023.

Overnight visitation rose to 44.7 million in 2024, up from 43.6 million in 2023, surpassing pre-pandemic levels for the first time and setting a new record.

"In 2024, a record-breaking one million additional overnight visitors chose Virginia, drawn by our unmatched beauty, rich heritage, and welcoming communities," Youngkin said in a statement. "Those visitors traveled from farther away, stayed longer, and spent more, generating a record \$35.1 billion in direct spending. This unprecedented level of economic activity not only supports hundreds of thousands of good-paying jobs and strengthens local businesses, but it also generates crucial state and local tax revenues

that help ease the tax burden for Virginia families."

Travelers spent an average of \$96 million per day in Virginia last year, up from \$91 million in 2023. Visitor spending directly generated \$2.5 billion in state and local tax revenue — a \$100 million increase year over year. The state reported that tourism revenue saves the average Virginia household \$990 annually in taxes.

Tourism supported more than 229,000 jobs in Virginia in 2024, nearly 5,000 more than in 2023. Direct travel employment is now at 95% of pre-pandemic levels. However, staffing shortages remain, particularly in the lodging sector.

"Tourism is more than just an economic driver — it plays a foundational role in sustaining Virginia's workforce," said Secretary of Commerce and Trade Juan Pablo Segura. "One out of every four restaurant jobs and one out of every four recreation-sector jobs in the commonwealth are en-

tirely supported by visitor spending. The ripple effects of tourism touch every corner of Virginia."

VTC President and CEO Rita McClenny credited the momentum to strong marketing and local partnerships.

"Through strategic marketing and close collaboration with statewide partners, VTC is driving new demand and encouraging longer stays across Virginia," McClenny said. "From coast to cliff, our diverse destinations continue to captivate. As we look ahead to milestone moments such as the VA250 commemoration, Virginia is poised to play a leading role in how visitors engage with history, culture, and adventure."

Tourism Economics provided the annual data for VTC. The report is based on domestic travel (from within the U.S.) by visitors who stayed overnight or traveled more than 50 miles from home. Full data and methodology are available at [vatc.org/research](http://vatc.org/research).

# OPINION

## The sitcoms, the stars, and the woman who raised me

The men loved Jennifer on “WKRP in Cincinnati,” but no man loved her more than my mother did.

The half-hour television sitcom, which ran from 1978 to 1980, was set in a radio station. Each of the characters was a full-out stereotype: the naïve, bumbling station manager Mr. Carlson, who always wore a three-piece suit; program director Andy Travis, with longish flipped back hair and tight jeans and a tight plaid shirt halfway unbuttoned; smooth R&B DJ Venus Flytrap, who dressed with colorful flair; laid-back and probably high rock DJ Dr. Johnny Fever; earnest glasses-wearing intern Baily Quarters; neurotic and excitable news reporter Les Nessman; and polyester-wearing slick and sleezy salesman Herb Tarlek.

Jennifer Marlowe, played by blond bombshell Loni Anderson, was the station’s receptionist. She was cool, calm and collected. Men’s jaws dropped when they saw her, but she just went right on about her way, taking the lead with everyone falling in line. She was sensible, and the men ate right out of her hands as she led them to do what was right for the station, for the moment.

Normally, my mother (and she probably never realized this, or at least, never realized it was obvious) hated beautiful women. Oh! She particularly despised and resented Charo, that flamboyant Latina actress and dancer. Charo always acted sexy on purpose, and would shake her goods and flirt with whatever male anchor was interviewing her, or the lead of a TV show. The difference was Charo so obviously wanted male attention, but Jennifer just brushed off male attention. Mom loved how Jennifer brushed off the male attention.

When Loni Anderson died on Sunday, I mentioned it to my sister: “Do you remember how much Mom loved her on “WKRP in Cincinnati?”

“Yes, it was a good show,” my sister replied, “but crazy inappropriate for nowadays.”

True. Those character stereotypes alone would be protested now. How times have changed in our lifetimes. I suppose they always do, though, and each generation notices.

Other iconic female characters from that time period (and this is just as seen through the filter of my mother’s eyes) included Mary Richards from the “Mary Tyler Moore Show,” Erica from “All My Children” and the queen of them all, Carol Burnett.

From 1970 to 1977, the “Mary Tyler Moore Show” was one of the first to show an independent woman living

on her own and working. Mary Richards was divorced around the same time my mother was, and my mother idolized her and her lifestyle. She saw in Mary Richards what she could be – what life should be. Unlike Jennifer, Mary Richards was no bombshell. She was cute and little and stylish and wore her heart on her sleeves.

My mother didn’t watch soap operas, but she certainly knew who Erica, who went through too many last names to pick one, was. The petite, beautiful melodramatic character was played by Susan Lucci from 1970 until the show ended in 2011. I found this list of her husbands on Wikipedia: Adam Chandler, Dimitri Marick, Jackson Montgomery, Jeff Martin, Travis Montgomery, Tom Cudahy, Mike Roy; and though she seemed to never be pregnant, she had five children, some of whom just appeared as teenagers claiming she had given them away years ago. Erica could really tell someone off, with flair.

But saving the best for last – the one and only Carol Burnette. In “The Carol Burnett Show,” which ran from 1967 to 1978, she was not beautiful in the conventional sense, like those other actresses were. But she was hilarious. The night and time of her show was the special time in our household, and our mother sat her girls around her to watch it. Much of the humor was lost on us. Mom would laugh uproariously at the scene in which Carol was dressed in a pair of green curtains, with the rod still on them, a parody of a scene from “Gone With the Wind.” Between snorts of laughter, she’d explain to my sister and me why it was funny, and what it made fun of, but we had not seen “Gone With the Wind” and didn’t get it.

Our dearly departed mother would be surprised to know that people now can watch “WKRP in Cincinnati,” and many of those other shows, very easily now thanks to the internet. Since the news of Loni Anderson’s death, I’ve watched a few episodes of “WKRP.” The experience both brought the past to life, with the feeling of my late mother, and my sister as a child, nearby watching with me, yet also with shocking clarity showed how much time has passed, and how far away we are now from where we were then.



**Holly Kozelsky**

## Wagner, Bristol, and Baseball. Oh My!

As the second half of the Major League Baseball (MLB) season continues, there are noteworthy MLB events that merit the attention of the Ninth District.

First, Billy Wagner was recently inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

Wagner, a Southwest Virginia native who pitched at Tazewell County High School and then Ferrum College (both of which are in the Ninth District), put together an incredible career after being drafted 12th overall in 1993.

Wagner’s accolades include seven all-star selections, 422 saves (second all-time among lefties) and the highest strikeouts per nine inning rate in MLB history.

Wagner is the first Division III baseball player inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame!

Wagner is not the only player to be a part of the 2025 class, but the class he is a part of highlights just how special and impressive Wagner’s professional career was.

Those in Wagner’s class are MLB behemoths.

Ichiro Suzuki, the hitting legend with 10 consecutive all-star selections and golden glove awards, and CC Sabathia, the pitching workhorse who put together more than 250 wins, are two of the other inductees.

Wagner does not forget his Southwest Virginia roots either: during his induction ceremony, Wagner thanked his coaches from Tazewell and Ferrum for their positive impact on his career and life.

Wagner also wore a Ferrum College pin and Tazewell County pin on his suit lapel.

Southwest Virginia is incredibly proud of Wagner. His journey to the Hall of Fame inspires scores of young athletes and athletic programs in our region.

The weekend following Wagner’s induction into the Hall of Fame, the Bristol Motor Speed-



**Morgan Griffith**

Representative

way will host the Atlanta Braves and Cincinnati Reds for the first-ever MLB game to be played in a NASCAR stadium.

In 2016, the Speedway successfully hosted the college football game between the University of Tennessee and Virginia Tech. The “Battle at Bristol” drew in nearly 157,000 people!

That game holds the record for the highest single-game attendance in NCAA football history.

According to AP News, the largest crowd ever to see a baseball game was a 2008 exhibition game at the Los Angeles Coliseum. That game drew 115,300 people.

The Reds-Braves Speedway Classic may topple that record.

While it is the first MLB game to be played in Bristol, Southwest Virginia is no stranger to the influences of MLB.

Minor League Baseball has been a staple in our region for decades.

In the 20th century, Wytheville was the home of multiple MLB affiliates, including the Reds and the Braves! One of those players, Roger Williams, would later play for Atlanta and is currently a member of Congress.

Whenever he sees me, his greeting is: “How are things in Wytheville?”

The last game in Wytheville took place in 1989, in a game between Wytheville and the Pulaski Braves.

Pulaski is home to multiple Appalachian League championships, most recently in 2013 when it was an affiliate of the Seattle Mariners.

In 2019, the Pulaski Yankees were awarded Minor League Baseball’s top honor, the John H. Johnson President’s Award.

The very first MLB affiliate in Pulaski were the Brooklyn Dodgers from 1947-1949.

In 1935, Pulaski’s Calfee Park was built as a result of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal public works policies.

Pulaski is the current-day home of the Pulaski River Turtles, an Appalachian League team that plays in the summers but has no MLB affiliates.

Other teams in the Appalachian League include the Bluefield Ridge Runners and Bristol State Liners.

Some of these teams will feature local players from Southwest Virginia. At a 2022 Pulaski game that I attended, the starting pitcher for the Turtles was a Gate City native.

The Appalachian League has hosted future MLB talent, including Hall of Fame-level talent.

Look no further than Hall of Fame pitcher Nolan Ryan, who holds the MLB record for career strikeouts and no-hitters.

Ryan pitched for the Marion Mets before his rise to “The Show.”

This year, Marion welcomed back baseball and is now host of the Hungry Mothers, a team that plays as part of an independent wood bat league for collegiate players.

Despite periods of instability in the baseball apparatus over the years, Southwest Virginia’s love for baseball has not wavered.

The spirit of the game will continue to live on, likely inspired by home-grown success stories like Billy Wagner and record-setting events like the Speedway Classic.

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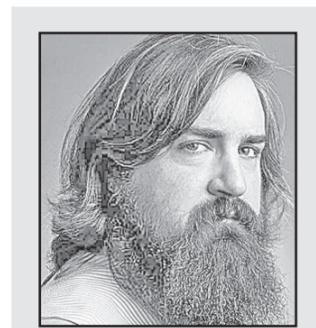
## MAGA faithful concerned Epstein rumors are distracting from deep state trafficking ring

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Some of President Donald Trump’s most faithful supporters are increasingly concerned that the time spent discussing Trump’s ties to deceased multimillionaire financier and child sex trafficker Jeffrey Epstein would be better spent trying to uncover the deep state pedophile ring.

Randy Banks of Biloxi, Mississippi said that it’s imperative that the federal government put real work into prosecuting the powerful people who have benefitted from the deep state sex trafficking ring.

“I voted for Donald Trump three times, and I’m looking forward to voting for him a fourth time,” Banks said. “I want him to shine a light on the deep state pedophile ring that I’ve been hearing about for years now. Unfortunately, all this nonsense about Jeffrey Epstein has been a huge distraction from that goal.”

According to Banks, despite rumors that former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was abducting children and keeping them in the basement of a Washington, D.C. pizza parlor in order to harvest their adrenaline and convert it into the drug adrenochrome, which would then be distributed to an elite cadre of left-wing Hollywood celebrities, little effort has



By Ben R. Williams

been made to dig up the presumably overwhelming evidence of these crimes.

“Children are being preyed upon by inhuman monsters,” Banks said. “It’s disgusting what these people have done. But you won’t hear anything about it on TV because the fake news media keeps talking about Jeffrey Epstein instead.”

Long-time Trump supporter Norma Stone of Bentonville, Arkansas said that she’s only aware of two people actively fighting to bring Clinton and her ilk to justice.

“President John F. Kennedy and his son JFK Jr. are keeping up the good fight,” she said. “Of course, it’s hard. They have to operate in secrecy, and JFK is 108 years old, so he’s moving a little

slower than he used to. But you won’t hear about any of that from the demonrats in the lamestream media. They’re too focused on this Epstein fantasy.”

Rep. Lauren Boebert, R-Colorado, who has long pushed for a deeper investigation into crimes committed by the deep state, said that the laser focus on Trump’s connection to Epstein is a miscarriage of justice.

“We’re supposed to believe that this wealthy pervert flew Donald Trump and a whole bunch of other powerful people to some island to commit crimes against children,” Boebert said. “Why are people so worked about these outlandish, fantastical claims? And why aren’t they equally concerned about what will happen if Barack Hussein Obama finds the seven magic crystals of Kahomet, thus allowing George Soros to transform into his final form, the dreaded ‘Tyranno-Soros,’ which will usher in 1,000 years of socialism and tolerance?”

Banks said that he’s ultimately only concerned about those who are being hurt the most.

“It breaks my heart to think about what this Epstein conspiracy is doing to our nation’s most vulnerable and beloved,” he said. “But then again, my President has weathered worse.”

Column Sponsored by: Dr. Mensink

## Letters To The Editor

### Stop. Read. Think.

The democratic party of today is nothing like the democratic party it used to be.

Why do they stand for so many things that are so immoral, unnatural, ungodly and unbiblical? Why are democrats so determined to kill unborn babies?

Why are democrats so determined to allow anything and everything to enter our country no matter how dangerous it may be? Why are democrats so soft on crime?

Why are democrats so determined to legalize things that are so wrong and so ungodly?

Why are democrats so determined to enlarge our government and create government programs that seem to take away incentives to work?

How on earth could anyone vote for a party that endorses so many negative things?

Our country deserves better and needs to return to the Christian values it was founded on.

One last thought, if the amount of effort to save animals was put toward saving unborn babies, wouldn't that be wonderful?

James Joyce,  
Collinsville

### When you don't get what you want?

In Martinsville, it is narcissistic behavior by one individual city council member. There are symptoms of this type of behavior, including a sense of self-importance, preoccupation with power, arrogance, lack of empathy, and a need to be around people who are important or special. They are interpersonally exploitative for their gain. Also, getting likes on Facebook helps their ego.

This council member appeared in this small town as if he had dropped out of the sky. There is a biblical story of an individual who was expelled from the heavenly world because he was arrogant and came to earth to mislead the good people. You know the story?

This individual became a council member with the idea of molding this small town into their image. If anyone disagreed, he would attack others who were not part of the plan or not in this inner circle. He helped others run for new council seats to support his vision, but efforts failed because this is a democracy where citizens decide who can control their lives.

However, this individual refuses to give up on his vision and has started attacking city personnel, as they are easy targets. So, he started making allegations and filing lawsuits, and began throwing anything out there to cause havoc. Because of this exploitative behavior for his gain, he enlisted another city council member to help in this holy war. At the same time, he didn't seem

to care that he was destroying Martinsville's reputation. Also, in every fight, there has to be an exit strategy.

These two city council members are fighting because they dislike other council members and some city employees, believing it is detrimental to their interests. They have similar traits and constantly speak highly of their friendship. Fighting can be good if you're doing it for the people. Fighting is bad if you're doing it for yourself and not for the good of others, as it affects their lives. This fight is not suitable for the city of Martinsville.

What started as an embarrassment because he was put on notice for his disrespectful behavior has turned into a witch hunt. The citizens of Martinsville need to realize who is spreading these allegations and enlisting more individuals. The two council members are whispering false narratives, urging the public to scrutinize the financial details in their claims against the city. But following the money works for the alleged parties as well. When you involve lawyers, you are opening yourself up to being taken advantage of, and the city is under siege, even by the lawyers whom they hired.

Narcissistic personality disorder is a mental health condition and requires professional help. Lawsuits are not a cure, just a big mess for all the citizens affected by them.

Lawrence Mitchell,  
Martinsville

## MHC Academic Foundation awards \$74k to future educators

Since its inception, MHC Academic Foundation has paid nearly \$1 million in scholarship awards to students working towards an academic degree through an NCI affiliated program. Applicants are required to submit one application to be considered for one of twelve scholarships.

The foundation reported that \$74,000 in scholarships was paid out to 21 students attending the Longwood University teaching program. Investing in these individuals is a direct investment in our community's future educators.

Commenting on this award Kevin DeKoninck, executive director of the foundation, said "It's exciting notifying the students of their awards. I especially enjoy hearing what the awards mean for them."

He said he was deeply touched when one recipient ended her thank you by saying, "Thank you for being a part of what God is doing in my family's life. He is whispering through your generosity."

One common comment he often hears is "I'm deeply thankful to the donors who made this possible."

The foundation echoes that same comment. On behalf of the Board of Trustees of MHC Academic Foundation, we are thankful to the twelve donors who made this year's awards possible."

Donors are:

\*The Phillip and Paula Burnett Scholarship

\*Worth Harris Carter, Jr. and Katherine Carter Scholarship

\*The Dorsey Family Scholarship

\*Wilbur S. and Lillie T. Doyle Memorial Scholarship

\*Benjamin R. Gardner Memorial Scholarship

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\*V. Wendell Hylton, ED.D. and Ernestine Hodge Dodson Scholarship

\*Lacy Foundation Scholarship

\*Mr. and Mrs. Bashley H. Lee Scholarship

\*Martinsville/Henry County Rotary Club

The foundation declined to list the names of students to receive scholarships, citing potential legal concerns.

## New invasive insect detected in Virginia

The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) announces the detection of a new invasive insect pest in Virginia. Agency inspectors discovered the box tree moth, *Cydalima perspectalis*, at four sites in Clarke and Loudoun counties.

Box tree moth is an invasive insect pest that can significantly damage and potentially kill boxwood (*Buxus* species) plants if left unchecked. The caterpillars are ravenous feeders, and heavy infestations can completely defoliate host plants. VDACS will provide treatment for boxwood plants, if box tree moth is confirmed on boxwood plants.

The box tree moth is native to East Asia and has become a pest in Europe where boxwood is native. In 2021, The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) detected box tree moth in New York. As

of July 2025, it has been confirmed in Delaware, Massachusetts, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. Prior to the detections in Clarke and Loudoun Counties, box tree moth was not known to occur in Virginia.

Early detection and rapid response are vital for the management of any newly introduced invasive pest. VDACS has surveyed the area surrounding the detections to determine the extent of infestation and has planned for more surveys to occur in the future. VDACS encourages property owners to report any suspected damage to boxwood plants on their property by using VDACS' Invasive Species Reporting Tool.

For resources on how to identify BTM damage or life stages, please visit [www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs\\_ext\\_vt.edu/ENTO/ENTO-445/ENTO-445.pdf](http://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs_ext_vt.edu/ENTO/ENTO-445/ENTO-445.pdf).

For more information on box tree moth, please visit the USDA APHIS



Glenn Claypool was recognized as the 1,000th program completer.

## National defense manufacturing program marks major graduation milestone

Accelerated Training in Defense Manufacturing (ATDM) recently celebrated its 1,000th program completer, highlighting the program's continued success in building the defense workforce.

Glenn Claypool was recognized as the 1,000th program completer and joined fellow students in celebrating the cohort's completion of the 16-week rigorous workforce training. Claypool discovered ATDM after completing a bachelor's degree in business management and working in sales before deciding to pursue certification in non-destructive testing.

"ATDM has given me a second chance at having a fulfilling career that provides a true sense of purpose," said Claypool. "It's not just a job, it's a path that has equipped me with skills that I'll carry with me for the rest of my life."

Created to support defense manufacturing initiatives across the United States and supply workers for the maritime industrial base, ATDM is well on its way toward its goal of 800-1,000 skilled tradespeople completing the program each year.

"Reaching 1,000 ATDM graduates bolsters a skilled workforce that our maritime industrial base needs urgently," said Matt Sermon, direct reporting program manager of the Maritime Industrial Base Program. "ATDM graduates are contributing directly to building and sustaining our Fleet. As we scale this proven model nationwide, we're helping our maritime industrial base develop the workforce needed to maintain maritime superiority for generations to come."

Graduating students complete 600 hours of intensive, hands-on training over 16 weeks, earning certifications in one of five high-demand defense industry skilled trades. These are high-paying careers in additive manufacturing, CNC machining, non-destructive testing, quality control inspection (metrology) and welding.

"ATDM's Maritime Training Center is a vital component of the work we do at IALR to support and pioneer new accelerated training methods that build the future workforce for defense, maritime and advanced manufacturing," said Telly Tucker, president of the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research (IALR).

Congresswoman Jen Kiggans ad-

ressed the finishing cohort at their completion ceremony, highlighting her unique connection to ATDM's purpose as a member of the House Armed Services Committee and the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, as well as being a Navy veteran herself and the wife of a Navy veteran.

"This year the ATDM program is celebrating another major milestone, its 1,000th graduate, and that number represents the 1,000 men and women trained with the specialized skills needed to rebuild American manufacturing and support our defense industrial base, and that's something to be proud of," said Congresswoman Kiggans. "Graduates of this program are not just entering a workforce; you are stepping into a mission. Whether you're heading to shipyards, maritime manufacturing facilities or defense plants across the country – your work will directly impact our national security."

A distinguishing feature of the ATDM program is that students are prepared for the workforce beyond technical training. ATDM staff assist with resume development, interview preparation and direct employer connections, leading to an 85% employment rate for completers within a month of finishing the program. ATDM partners with more than 200 employers across the United States for job placement as well as job training, a strong indicator of the program's success.

"ATDM has been a tremendous asset to our workforce development efforts. The program consistently turns out graduates who are not just technically capable, but ready to contribute from day one," said Kristi Rowe, people director at Keel. "One of our recent hires has already made a strong impression in his welding role—bringing precision, confidence, and a solid grasp of quality standards. What really stands out is how well ATDM's training aligns with the real-world demands of our work. It makes the transition from training to the job smooth and effective. We're excited about the future and look forward to continuing this successful partnership."

"I've met people from a wide range of backgrounds, different cultures, life experiences, education levels and career paths, but the one thing we all share is that we came to ATDM looking for new skills and opportunities," said Claypool.

## Virginia War Memorial seeks entries for essay contest

The Virginia War Memorial in Richmond is seeking entries for its Virginia War Memorial 2025 Veterans Day Student Essay Contest. The annual competition is open to all Virginia middle and high school age public, private, and homeschooled students. One winner will be selected from among all middle school entries (grades 6-8) and one from high school entries (grades 9-12).

The essay topic for the 2025 competition is "A Virginian Who Served in The Military who Inspires Me." Students may consider a member of their family, of their community, or any Virginian who served in any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces, anywhere in the world, from World War II to present day as their subject.

New this year, the Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH)-Department of Virginia will award each of the two students who write the winning essay a prize of \$500. The student winners will also be invited to come to Richmond and participate in the Commonwealth's 69th Annual Veterans Day Ceremo-

ny at the Virginia War Memorial in Richmond on Tuesday, November 11, 2025.

Essays should be 500-750 words in length and utilize interviews and primary sources whenever possible. Students may contact Sylvia Marshall, Virginia War Memorial Archivist ([Sylvia.Marshall@dvs.virginia.gov](mailto:Sylvia.Marshall@dvs.virginia.gov)) for additional resources regarding Virginia military veterans. Entries will be judged on clarity of thought, adherence to the contest theme and guidelines, proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Detailed information regarding rules, guidelines and how to enter are available online at <https://vawarmemorial.org/learn/contests-scholarships/essay/>.

All entries must be submitted through the Virginia War Memorial website by 11:59 p.m., Monday, October 13, 2025. For additional information or questions, please contact Elizabeth Oglesby, the Memorial's Education Outreach & Programs Manager, at [Elizabeth.Oglesby@dvs.virginia.gov](mailto:Elizabeth.Oglesby@dvs.virginia.gov) or by calling 804-786-9700.

website at [www.aphis.usda.gov/plant-pests-diseases/box-tree-moth](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant-pests-diseases/box-tree-moth), the VDACS website at [www.vdacs.virginia.gov](http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov).

[www.vdacs.virginia.gov/plant-industry-services.shtml](http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/plant-industry-services.shtml), or contact the VDACS Office of Plant Industry Services at 804.786.3515.

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# Two charged in connection with shooting incident



Ty'Marquis Nashawn Kershaw

Two people were charged in connection with a shooting incident on August 3, according to a release from the Henry County Sheriff's Office.

Around 1:50 a.m. that day, dep-

uties were dispatched to reports of shots fired in the area of the 1700 block of Chatham Road.

Shortly after the call, a female victim suffering from gunshot wounds arrived at Sovah Health Martinsville by personal vehicle. She was triaged by medical staff and subsequently airlifted to Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital for advanced treatment.

Investigators responded to the scene, collected evidence, and conducted interviews as part of the ongoing investigation.

As a result, Ty'Marquis Nashawn Kershaw, 18, of Fredericksburg, and a 16 year-old Henry County male were taken into custody and charged, the release stated.

Kershaw was charged with Ma-

licious Wounding and Use Firearm in Commission of Felony, according to the release.

The teen was charged with attempted malicious wounding, use firearm in commission of felony and possess handgun under age 18, the release stated.

Kershaw is currently being held at the Rappahannock Regional Jail with no bond.

The teen male is being held at the W.W. Moore Juvenile Detention Facility in Danville. Due to his age, the name of the juvenile will not be released.

The victim was identified as an 18-year-old female. She sustained a single gunshot wound and was transported by personal vehicle to Sovah Health Martinsville before being airlifted to

Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital. She is currently listed in stable condition.

The Henry County Sheriff's Office would like to thank the Martinsville Police Department, The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, Fredericksburg Police Department, and the Rappahannock Regional Jail for their assistance in this investigation.

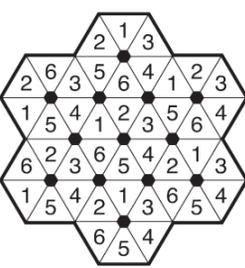
Anyone with information about this incident is urged to contact the Henry County Sheriff's Office at (276) 638-8751 or Crimestoppers at 63-CRIME (632-7463). The Crimestoppers Program offers rewards of up to \$2,500 for information leading to an arrest and conviction. The identity of callers remains strictly confidential.

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

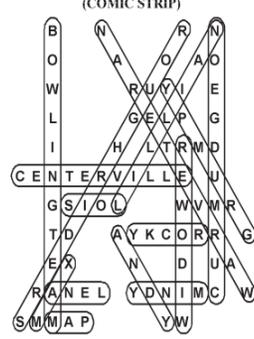
## Puzzle Answers!

### SNOWFLAKES

solution



### CRANKSHAFT (COMIC STRIP)



### SCRAMBLERS

solution

1. Purge
2. Permit
3. Vapor
4. Decent

Today's Word

**PAMPER**



answer



### Weekly SUDOKU

Answer

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

## Applications accepted for agricultural program

Farm Credit of the Virginias (FCV), a lending cooperative serving Virginia, West Virginia and western Maryland, announced that they are now accepting applications for the second round of grant funding through their Agricultural Career Enhancement (ACE) grant program.

The goal of the ACE grant program is to support agricultural career development programs at post-secondary education institutions serving FCV's territory, including those in agricultural sciences, agricultural technology, agricultural education, agribusiness, conservation and more. The ACE grant program allows the Association to meet their mission to serve the agriculture industry by investing in the advancement of agricultural education.

ACE grants will be awarded for up to \$10,000 in funding. Funding will be considered for agriculture-related programs at postsecondary education institutions that are either located in FCV's territory or that serve students from FCV's

territory. ACE grants will not be awarded to individuals, private farms, cooperative extension or agricultural research programs. Additional terms and conditions are available on the print and online application forms.

ACE grant applications will be accepted August 1 through September 30, 2025. ACE grants will be awarded in November 2025. Applications and additional program details can be accessed at the following link: [FarmCreditofVirginias.com/ACE](http://FarmCreditofVirginias.com/ACE)

Brad Cornelius, CEO of FCV, said, "We are pleased to support the future of agriculture in our rural communities by offering this important grant program for a second year. We realize the great impact postsecondary education institutions have on the next generation of agriculture professionals and are proud to offer ACE grant funds to help strengthen those institutions' agriculture-related programs, which in turn will bolster the rural economy throughout our footprint for years to come."

# Crossing the Lines

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

### Board moves forward with administrator evaluation process

The Patrick County Board of Supervisors approved a draft evaluation form to use when evaluating the county administrator in a 4-1 vote during its July 28 work session.

Blue Ridge District Supervisor Steve Marshall cast the lone dissenting vote.

"I originally asked for and agreed to formulate an evaluation protocol for the county administrator back in January as part of developing an overall policy and procedure in our county government," he said. "I did not agree to the evaluation as a contextual means of termination of any employee, so I vote no."

After the meeting, Vice Chairman Andrew Overby said the intent was to create a document the board could use both now and in the future.

"We really didn't have anything up to this point. I can't really comment on what the evaluation criteria and everything has been, I just know that they've apparently never had a form or anything to actually conduct an evaluation," Overby said.

Chairman Jonathan Wood, of the Peters Creek District, said the board was working to draft an evaluation process to ensure fairness for employees, residents, and others involved.

While current administrator Beth Simms would be the first employee evaluated using the form, Wood said the board hopes to expand its use.



Board Chairman Jonathan Wood said the board was working to create an evaluation process that would be fair to employees, residents, and everyone involved.

"We have to start somewhere. There's no current evaluation that I know of," he said. "We're trying to make it a little more like a business, more like the school system, where evaluations are done regularly using a formatted method."

Simms has not yet been evaluated. She was hired for the post in September 2023 and officially started work on October 12.

During a retreat held in March, the board discussed the roles and responsibilities of the county administrator.

The draft proposal is currently under review by the county attorney to ensure legal compliance. Wood said he hopes it will be implemented within a month.

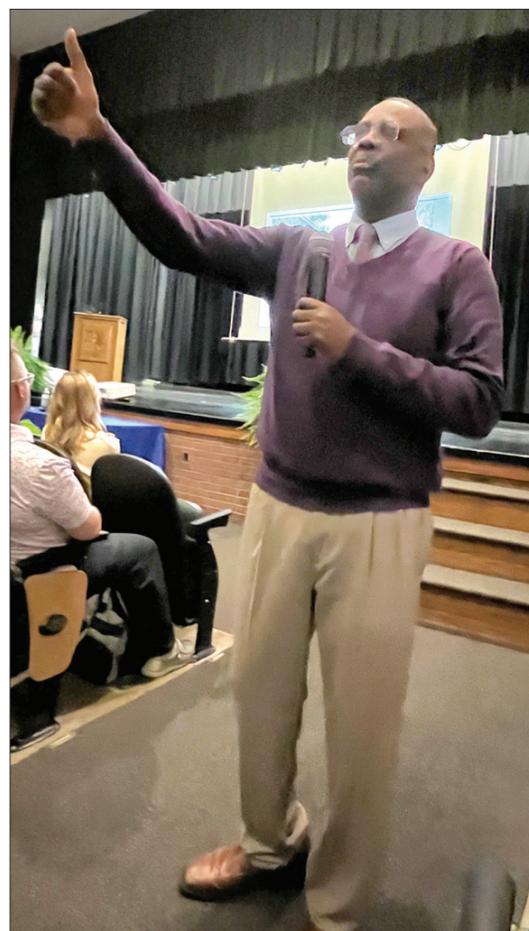
### Teachers gear up for start of new year; classes get underway Friday

Patrick County teachers returned to the classroom this week to prepare for the start of the 2025-26 school year, which begins Friday, Aug. 8.

As part of the back-to-school preparations, educators attended a presentation on the science of reading, led by Kareem Weaver, co-founder and executive director of Fulcrum Literacy. The science of reading refers to a body of research that explains how people learn to read and the most effective ways to teach reading.

Weaver said reading instruction must support consistent language development across all content areas to help students navigate complex texts.

"If you're trying to get them college-entry ready for real, this has to be an everyday thing. This is the whole game right here," he said. "That's how you get a kid who is not



Fulcrum Literacy Co-Founder and Executive Director Kareem Weaver spoke to Patrick County school staff about the importance of the science of reading.

speaking English, a tradesman. If a kid can just wrestle with complex texts a little bit, they're probably ready for higher education."

### Black bears the focus of educational program in Stuart



DRBA Assistant Educator Regina Flora, MS, VMN, led the July 26 presentation on black bears.

Blue Ridge Heritage hosted a program titled Living with Black Bears on July 26 to educate the public about black bear behavior, habitats, and how humans can reduce conflicts with the animals.

Held at the Patrick & Henry Community College site, the event was presented in partnership with the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR), the Southwest Piedmont Master Naturalists, and the Dan River Basin Association (DRBA).

DRBA Assistant Educator Regina Flora, MS, VMN, led the session, which was attended by about a dozen people. She discussed black bear habits, the reasons behind their growing presence in urban areas, and steps individuals can take to prevent unwanted encounters.

Flora explained that despite their name, black bears come in many colors—cinnamon, brown, blond, blue, and black.

"In our area of the country, they're going to be very black or a faded-out maybe black color," she said.

Black bears are found on every continent except Antarctica, she added.

"So they're not just in North America, they're everywhere. Because they're everywhere around the globe, that means there's more black bears in the world than any other kind of bear, because some of those have limited areas that they live in," she said.

About 75 percent of a black bear's diet consists of plant matter, such as berries, nuts, grasses, and fruits. The remaining 25 percent includes insects, larvae, carrion, small animals, and fish.

"Any time that there's an encounter or a nuisance going on, it's probably because of food," Flora said. "They are driven by hunger, so the only thing on a black bear's mind is food, food, food."

### Meadows of Dan Folk Fair returns Aug. 16

The Meadows of Dan Community Association invites everyone to the 21st Annual Folk Fair on Friday, August 16, beginning at 10 a.m. The event will stretch from Meadows of Dan Baptist Church to the Meadows of Dan Community Center.

As in previous years, the day will begin with local craftsmen selling their wares, including jewelry, wooden and metal crafts, and more. Windy Ridge Cattle Company will be on-site with meat for sale.

For book lovers, a group of local authors will attend to sell their books and meet readers.

"It's never too early to start planning for Christmas," organizers said, "and what better way than by purchasing gifts from local artisans?"

Outdoor Entertainment will provide inflatables for children, allowing parents to shop and browse the fair more freely.

New this year, Villa Appalachia will be offering tastings of its locally produced wines.

The day's festivities include a play written and performed by Meadows of Dan's own Christina

Boyd Holland titled, "Girl of the Holler." Following the performance, The Country Boys will take the stage, along with musical acts The Sauerkraut Band and Whosoever.

Later in the afternoon, there will be an old-fashioned singing at Concord Church at 5 p.m., followed by a performance by Right Turn at Meadows of Dan Baptist Church at 6:30 p.m.

Be sure to check the Meadows of Dan Facebook page or flyers around the community for a full schedule of performances and locations.

Visitors can also stop by Jane's Café, where the Royall family will be making and selling peach butter the old-fashioned way.

Craft booths will be set up throughout town at locations including Poppies, Concord Church, Poor Farmer's Market, and more.

Food will be available for purchase from the Meadows of Dan PTO's fish fry, Shan's Concessions, and the popular shaved ice truck will return to help guests cool down.

Admission is free.

**To read more about these and other stories, check out**

**Henry County Enterprise at**  
**www.henrycountyenterprise.com.**

Submit your community news and photos to [dhall@theenterprise.net](mailto:dhall@theenterprise.net)

**1-3-5-7-9**

**1-3-5-7-9**

**1-4-7-9**

**1-4-7-9:15**

**1-3-5-7-9**

**OPEN EVERYDAY \$5 tickets**

**Hollywood Cinema beside Walmart**  
Martinsville 276-656-3456



# PUZZLE TIME



## FEAR KNOT

By: rj Johnson

DOUBT? ...OR DARE!

RSI  
ERVRID  
ERGM I  
UEML  
♥LACERL  
UOD  
AVLI  
EVDLE  
MCU  
DOSTLE  
OGCAN  
♥REGO

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 BOLTIHOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Arm is raised. 2. Stripe is added to sleeve. 3. Light is moved. 4. Lid on ice cream cart is moved. 5. Tire is thicker. 6. Cart handle is shorter.

## MAGIC MAZE • CRANKSHAFT (COMIC STRIP)

FSBQNNKIFDRANXV  
TQOOMJAHFOCAOAY  
WUWRPNLRUYIJEHF  
DBLZXVTGELPRGQO  
MKI IHFHDLTRMDBZ  
CENTERVILLE YUWV  
TRGSIOLQOOWVMRN  
LKTDIHAYKCORRFG  
DCEXAZXNWVDHUAU  
SRANELRYDNIMCQW  
SMMAPONMKYWJISH

Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions forward, backward, up, down and diagonally. Unlisted clue hint: ED DRIVES A — BUS

- |                   |             |           |                         |
|-------------------|-------------|-----------|-------------------------|
| Andy Bowling team | Grumpy Lena | Max Mindy | Roughriders War veteran |
| Centerville       | Lillian     | Pam       | Widower                 |
| Curmudgeon        | Lois        | Rocky     |                         |

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## Super Crossword COMMON FEATURES

<b>ACROSS</b>	55 Irene of "Fame"	100 Floor numbers appear on them	8 Luau chow	45 Indy vehicle	81 Affect one another
1 Devices for basement water removal	57 Figure skater Midori —	104 Monetary penalties	9 Lead-in to cone	46 — II (Gillette razor brand)	83 Muralist Joan
10 Moves joltily up and down	60 Xbox or Switch accessory	105 "R.U.R." playwright Capek	10 Court case hearer	48 Pt. of NBA or NCAA	84 Look intently
17 Possesses	68 Spiteful	106 Like a res. of the U.S.	11 Very taxing	51 Vietnamese capital	86 "Green" sci.
20 Repetition of a process	69 Freak out in fear	107 On the job	12 Like lawns needing to be cut	54 Like sexist jokes	87 Jamaica's Ocho —
21 Faze	70 Italian actress Sophia	109 Every once — while	13 Lead-in to con	56 Arrives like fog or the tide	88 Anderson Cooper's network
22 #1 hit for the Jackson 5	71 Piece for two	110 Theme of this puzzle	14 Passé PC screen type	58 Of time past	90 Retired JFK jets
23 Clickers for couch potatoes	72 Events to rouse candidate supporters	119 And more, in brief	15 Lead-in night	59 "Better Call Saul" channel	92 Roof edge
25 Letter before omega	75 Start a volley	120 Small hardware item split lengthwise	16 Emmy-winning journalist Frank	60 Practical joke	93 Gets lathery
26 Bygone Brit	76 Op. — (kin of "ibid.")	121 Drink with tapioca pearls	17 Occurred	61 "Raggedy" doll	94 Left out
27 Bklyn., e.g.	77 Dwarf planet beyond Pluto	122 Squealer (big blood vessels)	18 No-show	62 Sticks in the mud	97 Madrid's land, in Italian
28 Neck backs	79 City of the White Sox, for short	123 Toppers for certain auto engine parts	19 Barber's tool	63 Luigi's three	101 In spite of the fact that, for short
30 Fire remains	82 Turnpike exit structures	124 Wandering pooches	24 Seth Meyers' network	64 Notes after dos	102 Colorful salamanders
33 Food zappers	85 More savage	<b>DOWN</b>	29 Very eager	65 Like Russia, continent-wise	103 "— tu" (Verdi aria)
38 Luge, for one	89 Bro's sib	1 "Park it!"	30 — Spumante	66 Morning bugle call	104 In a suitable manner
39 "— your best behavior"	91 Sweetums	2 Off-roading truck, in brief	31 Potential target of urban renewal	67 Enhanced Fr. woman	107 Truncated form of a wd.
41 Starving	93 Some dueling swords	3 Gibson of "Mad Max"	32 Certain six-pointed polygon	69 Sound of falling rain	108 Huge horn
42 Really liking	95 Kett of the comics	4 Come before	33 — scale of hardness	73 Ethereal	111 "Bail —"
43 Tops worn at proms	96 "Am not!" rejoinder	5 Puts asphalt over	34 Still having a shot to win	74 Animation	112 Unwell
47 Rudolph, e.g.	98 Actress Chaplin	6 Elec., water or gas	35 Victory signs	75 Feudal peasant	113 Org. for the Eagles, but not the Ravens
49 "— changed man!"	99 Beer grain	7 Fine rain	36 Book version	78 "Luka" singer Suzanne	114 0.5 fl. oz.
50 Headlining hip-hopper			37 Big snakes	79 More impudent	115 Crude house
51 Lilylike garden staple			40 Psychic "gift"	80 Nickname for Georgia's capital	116 Plains tribe
52 — Moines, Iowa			44 Sketched		117 Like nos. below zero
53 De Mille of dance					118 Carrier to Stockholm

## Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

- A whale shark's spot pattern is as unique as a fingerprint.
- While working as a weatherman in Indianapolis, late-night talk show host David Letterman once congratulated a tropical storm for being upgraded to a hurricane.
- The estimated temperature at the sun's core is 27 million degrees Fahrenheit.
- The cash register, invented in 1870 by James Ritty, was originally dubbed "Ritty's Incorruptible Cashier" and was designed to keep the employees of his saloon from stealing from him.
- Kids and adults with autism are immune to the effect of observing someone else yawn.
- Since a Krispy Kreme donut contains 350 calories, and a 150-pound man can burn around 380 calories in 30 minutes, said fellow could burn off that quickie breakfast with a quarter-acre lawn mow — unless he simply preferred going to the gym.
- Target will let customers breastfeed anywhere in the store.
- Besides being the final resting place for many Hollywood celebrities, Forest Lawn in Southern California features a museum with rotating exhibits and special art, music and educational events.
- It is possible to make actual cheese with bacteria from foot sweat.
- And speaking of cheese, it's the most stolen food in the world.
- The previous record for the world's longest train was broken by the BHP Iron Ore in 2001. Measuring 4.5 miles in length, it was made up of 682 wagons and required eight engines to run.
- Research has shown that throughout a sofa's life, it will host roughly 782 visitors.
- Actress Megan Mullally was fired from her role in "Finding Nemo" for refusing to reprise her high-pitched Karen Walker voice from the TV series "Will and Grace."
- Seventy percent of the dirt on your clothes is invisible.

**Thought for the Day:** "If you don't have wrinkles, you haven't laughed enough." — Phyllis Diller

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## Weekly SUDOKU

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

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

## 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!

Remove **GRUPE** \_\_\_\_\_

Grant **TEMPIR** \_\_\_\_\_

Mist **PARVO** \_\_\_\_\_

Good **CENTED** \_\_\_\_\_

## TODAY'S WORD

\_\_\_\_\_

## ADVERTISE!

### Advertise With Us!

- What we offer: .....
- Flexible pricing
  - Highly Customizable Packages that include print, digital or both
  - Deeply discounted rates
  - Seasonal Specials

What we have: .....

- A team of Advertising Specialists who will work with you to customize a package, STRETCH your advertising dollars, and accomplish your advertising goals
- A talented team of designers who will work to help you reach your base.

Join our family and put our talented team to work for you today.

For more information, call the office at (276) 694-3101

# State Grant

(cont. from page 1)

“In today’s competitive landscape, having project-ready sites available across multiple regions gives Virginia a real advantage,” said Secretary of Commerce and Trade Juan Pablo Segura. “The Virginia Business Ready Sites Program is making a measurable difference in communities throughout the Commonwealth by preparing sites that meet the demands of major employers.”

“Virginia is developing a next-generation portfolio of project-ready sites that are built to meet business needs from day one,” said VEDP President and CEO Jason El Koubi. “By preparing sites that align with the demands of today’s companies, we’re using infrastructure as a strategic tool to drive economic growth—and positioning every region to compete and win in the economy

of the future.” The program was developed by a coalition including VEDP, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, rail and utility representatives, engineers, and other public and private partners. Grants are awarded competitively by an investment committee composed of VEDP and administration leaders.

# email us

DHALL@THEENTERPRISE.NET

## LEGAL

### NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the City Council of the City of Martinsville, Virginia, will hold a Public Hearing on August 26, 2025, at 7:00 p.m., or soon thereafter, in the City Council Chambers, Second Floor, City of Martinsville Municipal Building, 55 West Church Street, Martinsville, Virginia, on an intended amendment by the City Council to the City’s fiscal year 2025-2026 budget. Interested persons may appear at the time and place above stated and may present their views at the public hearing. A copy of the full text of the proposed amendment is on file in the office of the Martinsville City Manager, 55 West Church Street, Martinsville, Virginia 24112 and is available for inspection during normal business hours. A brief synopsis of the proposed amendment is as follows: Streets revenue increase of \$323,175.14, Streets expenditure increase of \$323,175.14, General Fund Capital Projects revenue increase of \$422,411.95, General Fund Capital Projects expenditure increase of \$422,411.95, Water and Sewer Capital Project revenue increase of \$1,074,126, Water and Sewer Capital Project expenditure increase of \$1,074,126, School Capital Improvement revenue increase of \$1,197,145, and School Capital Improvement expenditure increase of \$1,197,145.

Notice Submitted By:  
Peyton J. Nibblitt  
Deputy City Clerk

## LEGAL

### COUNTY OF HENRY REZONING PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Pursuant to Section 15.2-2204 of the Code of Virginia, the Henry County Board of Supervisors will conduct 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 hearing 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

### ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS

HENRY COUNTY PUBLIC SERVICE AUTHORITY  
COLLINSVILLE, VIRGINIA  
FIELDALE LEAD SERVICE LINE REPLACEMENT PHASE 4  
CONTRACT 2 - REBID  
BID #25-08203-3134

Sealed bids will be received at the Henry County Administration Building, Purchasing Department, Room 210, Henry County Administration Building; PO Box 7 (for postal) Collinsville, Virginia 24078-0007 or 3300 Kings Mountain Road (for UPS or FedEx) Martinsville, VA 24112 or electronically at [eva.virginia.gov](mailto:eva.virginia.gov) (instructions will be in bid documents). The deadline for submitting bids is **3:00 PM on August 20, 2025**. The bids will be opened publicly and read aloud shortly thereafter at the same location.

A Bid Bond and Contract Security will be required of all bidders regardless of amount. Bidders shall be required to bind their bid for 30 days.

Bids will be received for the following:

Construction of the Base Bid includes replacement of approximately 6,200 LF of existing water mains with new 8” and smaller water line, replacement and reconnection of existing service meter assemblies, service line replacements, and related improvements. Additive Bid Item 1 includes approximately 1,900 LF of 8” water lines and related improvements. Additive Bid Item 2 includes approximately 500 LF of 6” water lines and related improvements. Additive Bid Item 3 includes approximately 1,500 LF of 6” and smaller water lines and related improvements. Additive Bid Item 4 includes approximately 1,900 LF of 6” and smaller water lines and related improvements.

The Issuing Office for the Bidding Documents is: The Lane Group, 119 North Main Street, Galax, Virginia 24333, Phone (276) 236-4588, e-mail [state@thelane-groupinc.com](mailto:state@thelane-groupinc.com). Prospective Bidders may examine the Bidding Documents at the Issuing Office on Mondays through Thursdays between the hours of 7:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.; Friday between the hours of 7:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m. and may obtain copies of the Bidding Documents from the Issuing Office or as described below.

Bidding Documents also may be examined at:

Henry County Administration Building, Engineering & Mapping Department, Room 208 or Purchasing Department, Room 210, 3300 Kings Mountain Road, Martinsville, Virginia 24112

Online at: Valley Construction News, 426 Campbell Avenue, Roanoke, Virginia 24016  
Carolinas AGC /iSqFt (subscription required)  
Dodge Data & Analytics (subscription required)

Printed copies of the Bidding Documents may be obtained from the Issuing Office, during the hours indicated above, upon payment of a non-refundable fee of \$120.00 for each set. A CD containing PDF files of the Bidding Documents may be obtained for a non-refundable fee of \$50.00. Checks for Bidding Documents shall be payable to “The Lane Group”. Upon request and receipt of the document fee indicated above, Bidding Documents may be picked up at the Issuing Office. The Issuing Office will transmit the Bidding Documents via delivery service for an additional fee. The date that the Bidding Documents are picked up/transmitted by the Issuing Office will be considered the Bidder’s date of receipt of the Bidding Documents. Partial sets of Bidding Documents will not be available from the Issuing Office. Neither Owner nor Engineer will be responsible for full or partial sets of Bidding Documents, including Addenda if any, obtained from sources other than the Issuing Office.

The procedure for withdrawal of bids shall be according to provision B.1 contained in Va. Code § 2.2-4330, as amended.

If a contract is for one hundred twenty thousand dollars (\$120,000) or more, or if the total value of all construction, removal, repair, or improvements undertaken by the bidder within any twelve-month period is seven hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$750,000) or more, the bidder is required under Title 54, Chapter 11, Code of Virginia (1950) as amended, to show evidence of being licensed as a “Class A Contractor.” If a contract is ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) or more, but less than one hundred twenty thousand dollars (\$120,000), the bidder is required to show evidence of being licensed as a “Class B Contractor.” The bidder shall place on the outside of the envelope containing the bid and shall place in the bid over his signature whichever of the following notations is appropriate:

“Licensed Class A Virginia Contractor No. \_\_\_\_\_”  
“Licensed Class B Virginia Contractor No. \_\_\_\_\_”

The Henry County Public Service Authority is an Equal Opportunity Employer and will not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, sex, national origin, age, handicap or familiar status. MBE/WBE firms are encouraged to submit bids.

The Owner reserves the right to reject any and all bids and/or to waive any informality in the bidding procedures.

Bidders must comply with the following: the President’s Executive Order #11246 prohibiting discrimination in employment regarding race, color, creed, sex, or national origin; the President’s Executive Orders #12138 and 11625 regarding utilization of MBE/WBE firms; the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Davis-Bacon Act, and Section 436 of P. L. 113-76, American Iron and Steel. Bidders must certify that they do not or will not maintain or provide for their employees any facilities that are segregated on the basis of race, color, creed, or national origin.

There will not be a Pre-Bid Conference held for this Project.

by: Mr. Dale Wagoner  
PSA General Manager

# 23 Years

(cont. from page 1)

investigator assigned to the case who works on it nearly daily. We are assisted by special agents from the Virginia State Police and the FBI,” said Davis.

Over the years, multiple people have been interviewed, and authorities continue to follow up on leads.

“In 2023, a new task force was created — two Henry County Sheriff’s investigators, special agents from the Virginia State Police, and members of the FBI,” Davis said, of the agency’s decision to have fresh sets of eyes reviewing the evidence. “We gave them the case file in its entirety.”

The task force “has made substantial progress over the last two years,” Davis said, including securing additional funding through



Michael, Mary and Jennifer Short

the FBI for DNA testing.

Currently, evidence collected in 2002 is being processed at DNA Labs International using “the most advanced technology available,” he said.

While the Short case is unsolved, Davis said it has led to other charges. “We have put numerous other child predators in jail,” he said, adding those in-

dividuals came to investigators’ attention during the Short investigation.

He was quick to add, “make no mistake. The Short case remains extremely active.”

Authorities continue to seek information from anyone who:

- Had contact with the Shorts between Aug. 1 and Aug. 14, 2002;

- Had a mobile home moved by Michael Short’s company, M.S. Mobile Home Movers, in 2002 and has not yet spoken with investigators;

- Had contact with Michael Short during his trips to South Carolina in the spring and summer of 2002, particularly in Bennetts-

ville, Florence, Conway or Myrtle Beach.

A reward of more than \$60,000 is still being offered for information leading to the arrest and conviction of those responsible.

“If I had just one goal I could do during my career, it would be to solve the Short family case and bring justice to the family. Nothing would be more gratifying to me than to bring those responsible to justice,” Davis said. “I am passionate about the Short case.”

Anyone with information is asked to call the Henry County Sheriff’s Office at 276-638-8751, Crime Stoppers at 276-632-7463, or the FBI Tip Line at 1-800-225-5324.

## LEGAL

### Notice of Public Hearing

Martinsville City Council will hold public hearings on August 26, 2025, beginning at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers 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 Commonwealth Blvd. from ED-G, Economic Development-General, to C-C, Commercial Corridor to correct existing non-conforming uses. The rezoning of property is a request that requires review by the Martinsville Planning Commission and review and approval of Martinsville City Council.
- 2) **REQUEST for REZONE** - Application of City of Martinsville requesting to rezone property located at 100 S. Jackson Street from C-C, Commercial Corridor, to R-T, Residential Transitional to allow for residential and commercial uses. The rezoning of property is a request that requires review by the Martinsville Planning Commission and review and approval of Martinsville City Council.
- 3) **REQUEST for REZONE** - Application of the City of Martinsville requesting to rezone properties located in the Five Points Neighborhood on W. Church Street and Emanuel Street from C-C, Commercial Corridor, to R-T, Residential Transitional to correct an existing non-conforming use. 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](mailto:hpowell@martinsvilleva.gov) or (276) 403-5156.

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

## 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](mailto:hpowell@martinsvilleva.gov) or (276) 403-5156.

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

## LEGAL

### COUNTY OF HENRY BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Pursuant to Section 15.2-2204 of the Code of Virginia, a series of public hearings has been scheduled for **August 27, 2025, at 1:00 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 citizen input into the possible issuance of a Variance and a Special Use Permit for the following cases.

#### Case S-25-12 Danny Gardner

A request for a Special Use Permit was received under Section 21-302 of the Henry County Zoning Ordinance to allow for the establishment of a campground facility to accommodate up to 23 sites. The property is approximately 24-acres, located on the north east side of River Rd and approximately 0.6-mile south of Field Ave. The property is in the Horsepasture District, is zoned Agricultural District A-1, as shown on Tax Map 40.2/113A.

#### Case S-25-13 Roger and Deborah Wheatley

A request for a Special Use Permit was received under Section 21-302 of the Henry County Zoning Ordinance to allow for the establishment of a campground facility to accommodate up to 20 sites. The property in the south east corner of the intersection of Riverside Dr and Governor Stanley Hwy, in the Blackberry District. The parcel is scheduled to be considered for rezoning to Agricultural District A-1, by the Henry County Board of Supervisors on August 26, 2025. The Tax Map number is 15.8/163A.

#### Case S-25-14 Miller Brothers Racing, LLC

A request for a Special Use Permit was received under Section 21-302 of the Henry County Zoning Ordinance to allow for the re-opening of the former Oak Level Raceway to host motorsports events and other types of entertainment. The property is located at the end of Raceway Dr, in the Reed Creek District. The property is zoned as Agricultural District A-1, as shown on Tax Map 6.4/11G, 6.7/11K & 6.4(3)/3.

#### Case S-25-15 Whitney Sligh

A request for a Special Use Permit was received under Section 21-702 of the Henry County Zoning Ordinance to offer a transitional living opportunity for young adults aging out of the foster system. The property is located at 1850 Daniels Creek Rd, is proposed to be rezoned to Office and Professional district B-3, as shown on Tax Map 29.7(60)/6.

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

Be sure to like the  
*Henry County Enterprise*  
on Facebook

Submit your community news and photos to [dhall@theenterprise.net](mailto:dhall@theenterprise.net)

# OBITUARIES

## Hattie French

Hattie French, 89, of Fieldale, passed away on Friday, July 25, 2025, after a brief illness.

Hattie will be remembered as a beloved wife, mother, and grandmother. Many in the community will remember her as "Mama French" from the Space Odyssey Game Room, which she operated with her husband, Melvin French, and son, Brian French.

Hattie was born in Dillons Fork in 1936. She attended Drewry Mason High School, where she was a star player and co-captain of the women's basketball team. She was a member of the first graduating class of Drewry Mason in 1953. Hattie remained close with many of her classmates and helped organize numerous reunions over the years, the last being their 66th reunion in 2019. She attended West Virginia University before returning home to marry the love of her life,



Melvin, in 1957.

Hattie worked for DuPont for 31 years before retiring. She then worked for her husband at State Electronics. Hattie and Melvin fully retired in 2000. She enjoyed her well-earned retirement by visiting family and friends, gardening, and spending time at Smith Mountain Lake. As Hattie said, "I have had a great life!"

Hattie's greatest pride and joy was her family. Her fierce independence, wonderful sense of humor, and unconditional love will live on with them. She is survived by her daughter, Lori Bailey

of Wesley Chapel, NC; son Brian French of Portland, Oregon; beloved granddaughter Caroline Bailey of Durham, NC; niece Teresa Griffith, and nephew Bruce Fulcher. Hattie was preceded in death by her husband of 61 years Melvin French, her parents Mr. and Mrs. Vance Fulcher, Sr., her brother Vance Fulcher, her sister Mary Page Jackson, nephew Duane Fulcher, and son-in-law Bob Bailey.

A Celebration of Life will be held on Sunday, August 3, at 3:00PM, at Collins-McKee-Stone Funeral Home Bassett, 30 Riverside Drive, Bassett, VA 24055. There will be a gathering immediately following the service at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints across the street from funeral home following the service.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to Wounded Warriors or SPCA of Martinsville and Henry County.



## Local VA250 Committee hosts first annual symposium

The Martinsville-Henry County VA250 Committee hosted its first annual symposium on Sunday, Aug. 3, at the M-HC Heritage Center & Museum.

The Colonel George Waller Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution presented the colors, and featured

speakers included Jeff Briggs, Hunter Haskins, and VA250 Executive Director Cheryl Wilson (pictured).

The event was well attended and enjoyed by all. The committee looks forward to future events commemorating the founding of our area and nation.

Thank you for reading Henry County Enterprise

## Mayor

(cont. from page 1)

old issues. That's a lot."

Jones criticized coverage of her in Texas, referencing articles in the Martinsville Bulletin that included a detailed report on her visit and an interview with her.

"I saw the Bulletin article," Jones said. "Why was it so important to fly all the way to Texas for that? That interview could've been done on the phone. It just feels like a targeted attack."

Jones said he wonders who funded the trip.

"Did Lee Enterprises (owner of the paper) pay for this? Who is paying for him to be out there?" he asked, referring to reporter Bill Wyatt. "It just doesn't make sense to me for a local newspaper to send a reporter to Texas for a story when we're having murders in Martinsville and Henry County, or shootings, every week."

He also questioned the nature of the interview itself.

"Is this an actual interview that she participated in, or is this a consensual conversation between him and her that he recorded and then turned into an interview?" he asked.

Jones said Ferrell-Benavides has been under immense pressure — some of which she talked about during the interview, including an investigation "that involved an interview with inappropriate questions," an alleged February break-in at her office, and fear for her personal safety.

In the Bulletin story, Ferrell-Benavides also is quoted as saying Richard Standfield, CFO, "became a whistleblower by declaring improprieties that didn't exist and taking credit for fixing financial problems that others had resolved."

Jones said Council Member Aaron Rawls has already spoken about the whistleblower complaint from Standfield, but believes Ferrell-Benavides should be allowed to tell her side.

"I wish she'd just start talking—really talking—about what she's been dealing with," Jones said. "But I get it. She can't even go get a pizza without somebody taking her picture."

"Like the credit card statements — it was in her budget. Talk about it. Talk about the goals of council she was trying to meet that were part of the retreat that she felt like she was fulfilling expectations in," he said. "Council members went. Talk about the council members who went the previous year before, which Councilman Rawls was a part of. Talk about how former Council Member (Tammy) Pearson went on trips and then canceled at the last minute, and the city — taxpayer money — was stuck with the bill because she



Aretha Ferrell-Benavides (right) and Martinsville Mayor LC Jones after a January meeting.

didn't cancel in time."

Jones said Ferrell-Benavides is invested in the city — not just with her time, but financially and personally.

"She bought a \$400,000 house here. She pays her taxes here. She joined clubs, paid out of her own pocket to put on events for this city," Jones said. "She wanted to be here. But politics ruined that."

He said replacing her won't be easy — or cheap.

"You're not going to get anyone worth hiring at \$215,000 in a city manager form of government," Jones said. "That's a CEO role. We're either going to be paying someone even more, or bringing someone in and hoping they figure it out."

He noted that other cities with smaller populations pay more, and emphasized the complexity of the job.

"This isn't about population. This is about the job. The experience. The responsibility," he said. "And what we've got here now would scare good candidates off."

According to Jones, Ferrell-Benavides was not made aware of the details of the internal investigation and did not request the raise she received on April 1.

"She asked for a review," he said. "The raise came from council members saying she deserved one. But even then, she had no context, no idea what was really going on with the investigation."

Jones said he was the one who first called for an investigation after credit card statements were released online and questions began circulating.

"People were posting the credit card stuff online saying, 'What's going on here,' but the big-ticket items weren't hers," he said. "People got mad about training, but it's stuff council members have been attend-



ing for years. This year, we just brought students and chaperones. Everyone had to eat. I stand by it."

The council recently approved a motion to commission a forensic audit. Ferrell-Benavides was quoted in the Bulletin calling it unnecessary, saying, "If council didn't want me, all they had to do was tell me. I would have left. This has all been too much for everyone."

Jones said he's concerned about the audit's cost and scope, which he said has ballooned under the guidance of the city's legal team.

"They were supposed to verify the complaint and give us advice. But then it turned into this months-long thing with \$22,000 invoices and zero answers," he said. "They're doing interviews with employees, charging \$1,400 a pop, and it's all being driven by one council member feeding them rumors."

Jones said both the city manager and the whistleblower should have been placed on leave at the start of the investigation.

"Both of them had access to systems and data. We should've just put them both on paid leave while the claims were being validated," he said. "That should've taken three weeks tops. Instead, we're three months in and \$60,000 deep with no resolution."

He reiterated his call for an external investigation by a state agency.

"This is no different than a police department trying to investigate itself," Jones said. "You don't do that. You bring in an outside agency. We didn't. And this is the result."

Jones said Ferrell-Benavides has been kept largely in the dark and now has "no real idea what's happening."

"She's got two council members trying to destroy her career, and all she knows is there's an investigation, she just got a raise, and now she's on leave," he said. "Of course

she's looking."

In the Bulletin story, Ferrell-Benavides also said she reached out to contacts in Petersburg, where she previously served as city manager, to help Jones secure employment after he resigned from the Henry County Sheriff's Office.

At the time, Jones said he was talking to her about his situation, and she suggested he talk to now-Economic Development Authority Director Eric Payne. At the time, Payne was the city's attorney designee.

"She said, 'Let me call him. You can try to talk to him and let him know what you're dealing with,'" Jones said, adding that Ferrell-Benavides later mentioned Petersburg Police Chief Travis Christian as a possible contact. According to Jones, he also knew Christian through training and community work.

"When she said, 'Hey LC, you know Travis. I can call Travis, and he'll give you a job in a minute,' I was still trying to process what was going on," Jones said. "I told her, 'Let him know my situation, I'll reach out to him, but right now I'm not looking for a job.'"

Jones said that while he hasn't applied for a position in Petersburg, he continues to receive interest from departments across Virginia and North Carolina.

"Really since I resigned from the Martinsville Police Department," during his campaign to serve on the council "a lot of people have reached out to me," he said. "They still to this day call me, send me text messages—or even emails—to say, 'Hey, we got an opportunity available if you're interested.'"

He also criticized how closed sessions are now being handled.

"We never used to come out of closed sessions at a set time. That's not how it works," he said. "Now we're being told we have to wrap up by a certain time so people can deliver sound bites to the media. That's not good governance. That's political theater."

Many closed sessions have been lengthy, including the one in which the investigation and Ferrell-Benavides' leave were approved. A special meeting set for Aug. 7 is expected to include closed session briefings on litigation — including the investigation, a retiree lawsuit, and potentially PSA-related matters. Jones said he's unsure who called the meeting but plans to attend.

While there has been no word about Ferrell-Benavides' success in her bid to return to Texas, Vice Mayor Kathy Lawson said if she is hired for the post, "I wish her well."

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

# All Vets, sheriff's office host 9/11 Memorial Stair Climb in September

All Vets, a Henry County-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, in partnership with the Henry County Sheriff's Office, announces the second annual Henry County 9/11 Memorial Stair Climb. The event will take place on Saturday, Sept. 13, from 9 a.m. to noon at the Martinsville Speedway Grandstand, 340 Speedway Road, Ridgeway.

Held in remembrance of the heroic first responders who lost their lives during the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, the stair climb challenges participants to ascend 2,071 steps — the equivalent of the 110 floors of the Twin Towers. The event is untimed and self-paced; participants may complete all 2,071 steps or as many as they can.

### Registration Details:

- Cost: \$20 per participant
  - Deadline for T-shirt: Register by Aug. 22 to receive a commemorative event T-shirt
  - Final registration deadline: Sept. 12
  - Check-in: 8–8:30 a.m. on event day
  - All ages welcome (minors must be accompanied by a registered adult)
  - Refreshments available
- Spectators are welcome to attend at no cost. While participants

climb the grandstand steps, spectators can view the event from the Martinsville Speedway track, where local fire departments and rescue squads will be on-site with trucks and equipment, engaging with the community.

Monetary donations will be accepted at a designated event table. All proceeds will benefit Henry County's volunteer fire departments and volunteer rescue squads.

All Vets was founded in August 2024 by U.S. Marine Corps veteran and Henry County native S. Patrick Rodgers. The organization is led by a dedicated board of directors and a committee composed of veterans, active-duty military, military families, and patriotic citizens. All Vets' mission is to Honor the Fallen and Strengthen the Living. The group hosts annual events like the Henry County Memorial Day Ruck and the 9/11 Memorial Stair Climb while promoting physical and mental well-being through community engagement and collaboration.

Register for the event by visiting <https://runsignup.com/Race/VA/Ridgeway/HenryCounty911MemorialStairClimb>.

Follow All Vets on Facebook at [facebook.com/AllVetsVirginia](https://facebook.com/AllVetsVirginia).

**Henry County**  
**9/11 Memorial Stair Climb**  
 At Martinsville Speedway Grandstand  
 9/13/2025 9AM to 12PM

Register by 8/22/2025 for event t-shirt

\$20 To Register

All proceeds benefit Henry County's Volunteer Rescue Squads and Fire Departments

Registration Open Until 9/12/2025

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Climb 2,071 steps: Equivalent to the Twin Towers

**Presented by All Vets and The Henry County Sheriff's Office**

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## Seats still available for September genealogy classes

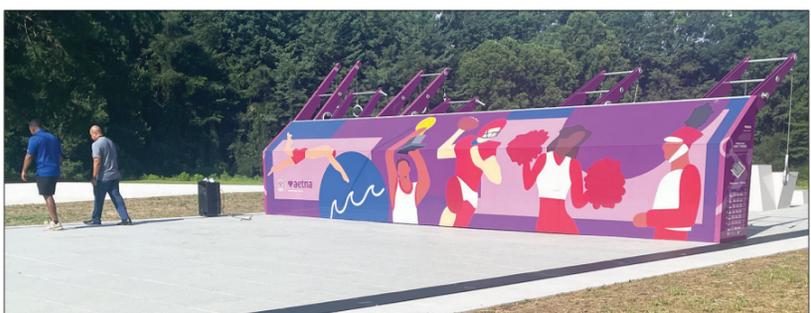
A few spots are still open for the series of four genealogy research classes that will be held from 10 a.m. to noon at the Bassett Historical Center on the first four Tuesdays in September — Sept. 2, 9, 16, and 23.

the public, but space is limited to 12 participants. When you sign up for the first class, you'll automatically be registered for the remaining three sessions.

To reserve your spot, call the Bassett Historical Center at 276-629-9191.

## Free

(cont. from page 1)



The new space was described as the first Fitness Court Studio in the state of Virginia. It offers free, accessible exercise opportunities to the Martinsville community and is available to all during the open hours at the park.

tative said, "is a testament to the Martinsville Bulldogs, to our school system. We believe we're a city of champions. From swimming to basketball, football, band—we wanted this space to reflect all of it."

Mayor L C Jones called the fitness court "a shining example of what partnerships can do for the health of our community."

"I also want to thank our Public Works team," Jones added, noting their role in evaluating multiple design drafts for the updated Baldwin Park. "And I want to thank you, the community. You're the ones who are going to use this. You're the reason health is becoming a focus here in the city."

Sandy Strayer, program officer at the Harvest Foundation, emphasized the project's accessibility. "This is a wonderful example of what it looks like when we align

missions," she said. "This studio is for any age, for any ability. It gives our community a place to gather, to connect, and to improve health."

Charisse Hairston, executive director of the Fayette Area Historical Initiative, highlighted the historical significance of the site.

"If you don't know, Baldwin Park used to be the football field for the former Albert Harris High School," Hairston said. "It's significant that we're continuing that legacy here."

Hairston also noted that professional athletes, including former NBA and WNBA players, recently returned for the Juneteenth Festival held at the park.

"We've got a new museum exhibit coming soon focused on professional athletes from Martinsville and Henry County," she said. "And now, they'll be able to come home and see this."



Veasley is pictured between Capt. Redd and Michael Jarrett, of Jarrett Marketing, LLC.

## Veasley named sheriff's deputy of the month

Henry County Sheriff's Deputy Allison Veasley was selected as the Deputy of the Month.

Veasley will receive gift certifi-

cates from sponsors that include Papa's Pizza, McDonald's, Livy's Ice Cream, Hollywood Cinema, and Food Lion — Stanleystown.

## New City

(cont. from page 1)

go along, we find out, 'Hey, this form doesn't work well. Let's switch this form up,'" he said.

Fincher said the policy revisions were a request from city employees.

Work on the new policies began about a month ago, during Fincher's first stint as acting city manager. After returning to the position in late July, he said he pushed to get them finalized.

"It was something that was started before, but one thing I've found with any type of project "is if you don't set deadlines, you could be working on something forever and never get anything accomplished," he said.

From now on, Fincher plans to have policies reviewed weekly. The Freedom of Information Act policy was scheduled for review last week.

"Setting up a regular review schedule helps ensure things get done," he said.

Under the city's charter, council does not vote on policy changes unless they relate to budget or oversight issues. Most administrative matters fall under the purview of the city manager.

"They don't actually have a direct hand in day-to-day operations. They appoint the city manager, but it's the manager who oversees day-to-day operations," Fincher said. "It's up to the city manager, in this case acting city manager, to approve the policy."

When a future city manager takes the helm, "or let's say the city manager returns and doesn't like the policy, then they can approve to make changes," Fincher said. "But I have a feeling that everyone would be in agreement that these are good policies."

### Policy Changes

The revised purchase card policy sets clear guidelines on what the

card can and cannot be used for, requires receipts for all purchases, and holds cardholders responsible for reimbursing the city if receipts aren't submitted.

"There has to be preauthorization and an approval process in place," Fincher said.

The updated travel and training policy also requires preapproval, and aligns with the General Services Administration (GSA) guidelines.

The GSA is "a guide that the government puts out" that details "how much you should be spending on meals and incidentals each day. Also, the amount that should be spent on hotel rooms, that sort of stuff. But also, there's this preapproval process before someone even goes to training," he said, adding that in Martinsville, "there's now a preapproval process before someone even goes to training."

Employees must submit a report within five days of returning from travel or training, documenting their expenses and what they learned.

"It has to include statements about what they learned, the purpose of the trip, and those kinds of forms, so people know exactly what we're doing," Fincher said.

All travel, training, or purchasing must fall within department budgets and align with city goals.

"There's an approval process in there. There's different requirements as far as submitting documentation, what can be done, what can't be done. There are requirements for submitting documentation, clarifying what's allowed and what's not," he said.

In government operations, he added, it's not enough to follow normal reporting practices—everything must be fully documented.



A theatrical production of "Finding Nemo Jr." was made possible by a partnership between P&HCC Productions and the Martinsville-Henry County Charity League.

Nigel, created by Landon George, made his entrance.

# Nigel the Giant Pelican soars in local production of 'Finding Nemo Jr.'

By Jessica Dillon

A theatrical production of "Finding Nemo Jr." helped close out summer with creativity, confidence, and an undersea adventure brought to life by local students.

The show gave students in grades K-12 a free opportunity to participate in a full-scale theatrical production as part of an annual summer camp made possible by a partnership between

P&HCC Productions and the Martinsville-Henry County Charity League. It was sponsored by Sarver Real Estate, and held in the Walker Fine Arts Theatre at Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC).

"There were 45 kids in the show," said Director Devin Pendleton. "So that night, you saw about 45 of our show buddies helping cheer on our actors who might've been a

little more nervous before opening."

The camp not only taught students performance skills but also incorporated lessons about ocean currents and marine life. "It was a great educational opportunity while the kids had a lot of fun," Pendleton said.

The first performance was a "Show Buddy Night," where young actors brought their favorite stuffed animals to ease first-

night jitters.

"It was an opportunity for our actors, especially those who had never been on stage before, to bring their favorite stuffed animal friend to help cheer them on," Pendleton said. "I don't know that that's a gimmick, and I wish I could take the credit for it, because I think it's a brilliant idea."

Pendleton emphasized that despite being a youth production, the effort mirrored the quality of Patrick & Henry Community College's adult shows. "We gave our actors K through 12 the same attention you would give to our adults," he said. "If you're thinking, 'Oh, this is a kid show, I'm not really interested in that,' it was every bit of a P&HCC production."

"This isn't a children's theater company," Pendleton said.

"But we offer this one time annually. It's a free camp experience."

This year's show ran from Friday to Sunday and featured favorite characters from Finding Nemo and Finding Dory. "It was something fun for the whole family," Pendleton said. "Everyone remembers Finding Nemo, Finding Dory, all the characters you love. We took a very similar Disney theme park approach to the show. So we had theatrical puppets, the lighting, all the things."

One of the standout features of the show was Nigel—a 15-foot-tall pelican puppet designed and built by student and actor Landon George.

"Nigel is about 13 feet tall, or at least his neck is. At total, I believe he's about 15 feet tall," George said. "He's made completely out of PVC pipe, pool noodles, chicken wire and stuff we had laying around."

George explained that Nigel's mouth was powered by a rope and pulley system. "His mouth was connected by two pieces of 1x wood with spring hinges and bungee cord. There was a rope pulley system that ran all the way down his neck and came out the back. We were able to move his mouth up and down," he said.

"I'm gonna cry a lot," George added. "We're probably gonna have to dismantle him. I mean, what truck would he fit in?"

Pendleton said Ni-

gel had been a "pipe dream," but George brought the bird to life with ingenuity and commitment.

For many of the students, the story of Finding Nemo was new. "It was kind of a full-circle moment to be able to bring a show like this to a generation of kids who didn't grow up with it the way we did," Pendleton said.

Nemo, played by Tristan Armstrong, was a crowd favorite. "Everyone loved Nemo," Pendleton said. "His name is Tristan Armstrong, and I couldn't picture a better Nemo."

Dory delivered comic relief, and Bruce the shark was a crowd pleaser, requiring two actors to operate.

The behind-the-scenes team included regular production crew and adult actors who volunteered to support the campers.

"It really did teach a whole level of confidence at such an early age," Pendleton said. "Oftentimes in our K through 12 spaces, we don't always have time to focus on that outside of the curriculum."

"Even if you didn't know a kid in the show and you were looking for something to do, especially in a cool space, it was super hot in Martinsville—it was the best \$15 you could've spent," he said.

"I'm so stinking proud. And, you know, next year's a milestone year 'cause we're gonna be hitting show number 50."

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## TIME IS APPROACHING FAST, NEED YOUR HELP!

G. W. Carver High School Documentation (History) Project In Salute and Praise First Generation of Teachers

### Open Letter to the Community,



Tyler Millner

The documentation-History Project I have been instrumental in starting is an initiative for the community. Not a person-"you have-you do" kind of project initiative. The history G. W. Carver High School and the teaching success of the first generation of teachers shouldn't be personal nor should it be forgotten and hid. They both--the school and teachers--have played a major role in the educating of students. Their success and contribution belong to the narrative.



# Yes!

G. W. Carver High School graduates and education partners and patrons—we need your helping hand. Help collect and share the artifacts... newspaper clippings showcasing your favorite teacher we would like a copy. Stories and comments of happenings--record them and contribute the tape. The end product is documentation. See the inset for more details and how in which you can contribute.



**The Community is Invited to get involved!**

George Washington Carver High School

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A most "fitting tribute" to the first generation of teachers at the George Washington Carver High School - Fieldale, Virginia...and to Black teachers overall.

**We need your help documenting George Washington Carver High School's history, including:**

- Names
- Backstory
- Oral History
- First Generation Teachers' Notes
- Memories of Major Events/Activities
- Special Experiences/Interactions

We're looking for yearbooks, newspaper articles, and anything else that can help us preserve the history of this beloved school and the first generation of teachers.

For information that may be helpful and/or to share information contact Rev. Tyler C. Millner  
Telephone Numbers: Church (276) 650-8255 Cell (276) 324-4147  
Email: [tcmpastorms55@gmail.com](mailto:tcmpastorms55@gmail.com)

For More Info: (276) 224-3514  
Email: [tcmpastorms55@gmail.com](mailto:tcmpastorms55@gmail.com)

Thanking you in advance, I am  
Tyler C. Millner, Lead Volunteer & Project Promoter

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