

Wednesday, December 16, 2020 • USPS 387-780 • ourvalley.org • 75 cents

# Radford church raises funds for 100,000 meals for hurricane victims



Two hurricanes recently devastated Puerto Cabezas and the surrounding areas in Nicaragua, including the mission partner of Radford's Community Life Church, Verbo Church Ministries.

**Heather Bell**  
*hbelle@ourvalley.org*

RADFORD - Community Life Church has a long-standing relationship with Verbo Church Ministries in

Nicaragua, so the devastation caused by recent hurricanes that hit the area had a particularly personal connection for the Radford church.

Renee and Rod Hidalgo, pastors of Community Life Church, wanted

to help and launched an effort to raise \$21,000 to provide a whopping 100,000 meals for Verbo Church Ministries, which is their mission partners, to give out through their orphanage and feeding program, which feeds not only the orphanage but the larger community.

"These hurricanes absolutely devastated the area," said Renee Hidalgo recently. "It was heartbreaking."

"Puerto Cabezas and the surrounding areas in Nicaragua have recently been devastated by two hurricanes," reads a message from the church. "The destruction has been immense, and there is an urgent need for meals to help feed local children at the feeding center, as well as those who are sheltering at Verbo Church after losing their homes."

Community Life Church partnered with Kids Around the World for

See Verbo Church page 2



Richard Barnett told his wife not to get her hopes up when she learned a winning Mega Millions lottery ticket had been sold at Triangle Market the day she had bought a ticket there.

## Christiansburg man claims \$1 million Mega Millions prize

Richard Barnett's wife had some interesting news.

She had heard Triangle Market at 3631 Radford Road in Christiansburg sold a Mega Millions ticket that won \$1 million, and the winner had not yet come forward.

She had bought a Mega Millions ticket at that very store the day before the drawing.

"I told her not to get her hopes up," the Christiansburg man later said.

It turns out that was indeed the winning ticket. The ticket she bought for him matched the first five numbers in the November 17 drawing to win Mega Millions' \$1 million prize. Had the ticket matched the sixth number, the Mega Ball number, they would have won a jackpot estimated at \$176 million.

The winning numbers were 8-13-35-46-68, and the Mega Ball number was 16. This was the only ticket in the nation to win the \$1 million prize in that drawing. The store receives a \$10,000 bonus for selling the million-dollar winning ticket.

Barnett said they have no immediate plans for the winnings.

"I'm still the same person I was before," he told lottery officials when he claimed the prize.

Mega Millions drawings are held Tuesday and Friday nights at 11 p.m. Drawings are broadcast on TV stations across Virginia and streamed live at [www.valottery.com](http://www.valottery.com). The odds of matching the first five numbers in Mega Millions are 1 in 12,607,306.

Authorized by Virginia voters in a successful 1987 referendum, the Virginia Lottery generates more than \$1.6 million per day for Virginia's K-12 public schools. In the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020, lottery customers helped generate more than \$595 million dollars in funding for public education.

## Governor welcomes first shipments of COVID-19 vaccine to Virginia



Virginia Governor Ralph Northam was joined Monday by Kelly Sweet, Director of Pharmacy for the Bon Secours Health System, in receiving the first shipments of COVID-19 vaccine.

RICHMOND—Governor Ralph Northam Monday welcomed one of the first shipments of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to a Bon Secours hospital in Richmond, and the vaccine was administered to frontline health care workers as early as Tuesday.

"These initial doses of the COVID-19 vaccine are a much-needed symbol of hope for our commonwealth and our country," said the governor. "With this remarkable medical achievement, we are beginning to see the light at the end of a long, dark tunnel. Yet even in this moment of celebration, we must remember that this is the first step in a months-long process to receive, distribute and administer the vaccine as it becomes available."

See Vaccine, page 5

## Upcoming Great Conjunction or Christmas Star an extraordinarily rare event, says VT astronomer

Star gazers should mark their calendars for the winter solstice on December 21 to observe the rare alignment of Saturn and Jupiter in the southwest sky.

Virginia Tech astronomer Nuhum Arav says "this rare event is special because of how bright the planets will be and how close they get to each other in the sky."

Known unofficially as the "Great Conjunction," the planets of Saturn and Jupiter will line up in a manner that makes for some amazingly bright star gazing. The last time these two were close enough to create the double planet effect was the year of 1226. It also happened again in 1623, but wasn't visible from earth.

"The two planets can easily be seen with the naked eye," Arav says. "They will be very close to each other, about a fifth of the moon's diameter. At their closest, some people will need a binocular to separate them."

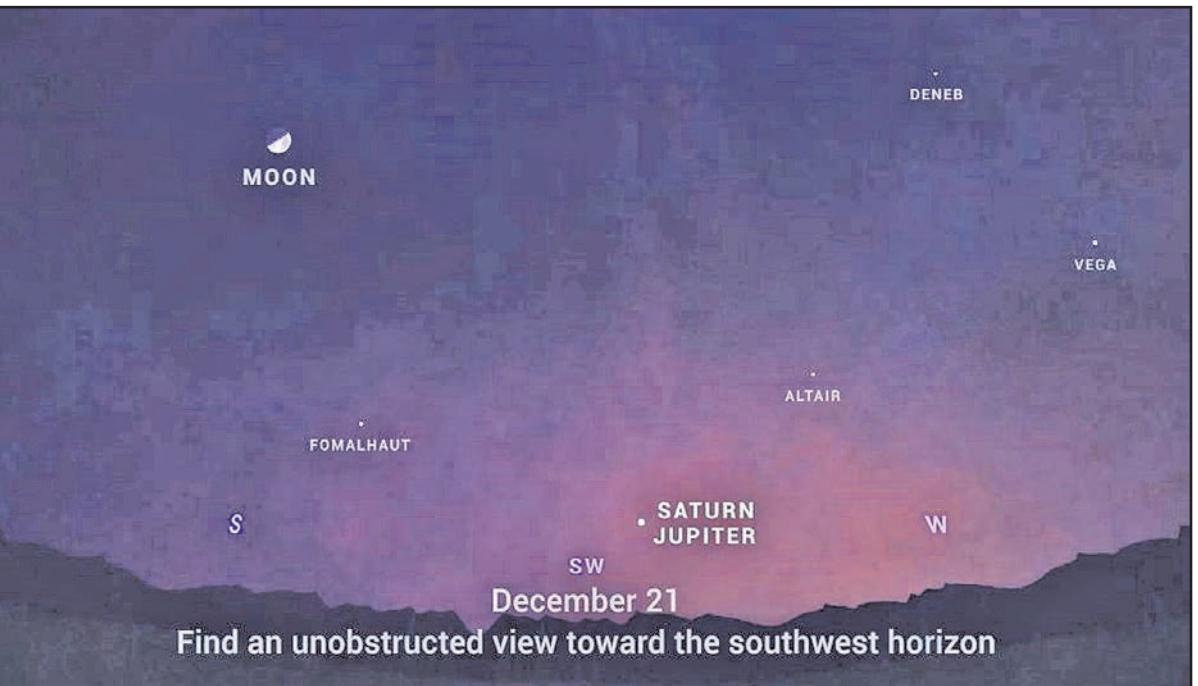
Even so, the planets will still be separated in space by about 450 million miles.

This astronomical event is also called by some the "Christmas Star" because of the biblical account of the Star of Bethlehem and the timing so close to December 25.

Professor Arav's ideas for best viewing include:

- \*Be ready as soon as it is getting dark on December 21, as the two planets are in the southwest and will set early in the evening.
- \*Locate a place where the south-west horizon is clear.
- \*An amateur telescope will help reveal the four Galilean moons and perhaps Titan, the largest moon of Saturn, in the same field of view with the planets.
- \*Plan on peak viewing for up to one hour.
- \*If overcast skies are anticipated, try to look a day before or a day after. The two planets will be almost as close as on the 21st.

Even though it's been hundreds of years since the last time these two lined up like this, we won't have to wait nearly as long for the next conjunction, which is now on the books for March 15, 2080.



## Winterfest in Radford continues tomorrow with Cruise-Thru

The City of Radford is hosting a Christmas Cruise-Thru tomorrow, Thursday, Dec. 17. The event is a car decorating contest where cars will enter for a chance to win gift cards: \$75 for first place, \$50 for second place and \$25 for third place. Holiday treats will also be passed out using COVID-19 safety precautions and Santa Claus will be in attendance to get you in the holiday spirit. Come out with your car decorated and collect some holiday treats, while celebrating the season. You do not have to decorate your car to participate, but it is encouraged. Treats are while supplies last.

Winterfest in Radford includes numerous events that will be held virtually and in-person and will occur during the winter months. Due to the changing climate of the COVID pandemic, attendees are encouraged to confirm dates and times prior to the event and masks will be required at the in-person events.

Upcoming Winterfest activities include:

- Letters to Santa: Do you have a message for Santa Claus? You can drop it off at the Radford Public Library, and they will make sure it gets to Santa. If you leave a return address, you might even get a message back from him.

December 9-22-Business window and residential decorating contest throughout the city. Entry fees apply,

See Winterfest, page 5



Do you have a message for Santa Claus? You can drop it off at the Radford Public Library, and they will make sure it gets to Santa. If you leave a return address, you might even get a message back from him.



# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## All through December

### Grab-and-Go Crafts

At the Meadowbrook Public Library during regular library hours. These are free crafts that may be taken home to make. Each week there will be new crafts.

### StoryWalk

All month at the Christiansburg Library. Brains and bodies get exercise by reading and walking the trail. The walk begins at the library at the College Street entrance of Downtown Park. This month's book is The Emperor's Egg.

### Virtual Cookie Recipe Exchange

All month at the Christiansburg Library. Share a favorite cookie recipe on Facebook. A special craft -- a take-and-make snowman with hot cocoa-in-a-car -- will be available while supplies last.

## Wednesday, Dec. 16

### Gingerbread Program

10:00 a.m. at the Blacksburg Library  
Use a take-home kit the library provides to make a gingerbread house. Supplies are limited.

### Art Club Virtual Meeting

From 2-3 p.m. at the Christiansburg Library  
Canadian artist Ted Harrison will show everyone how to create a colorful landscape painting. Stop by the library for a curated craft kit and catch a video tutorial on the Christiansburg Facebook Page.

### Christmas Movie Trivia Contest

From 5:30 - 6:30 p.m. at the Jessie Peterman Memorial Library  
Have fun testing your knowledge about the Christmas classics. How many times have you watched A Christmas Carol? Can you quote Scrooge? What about Die Hard? Is it actually a Christmas Movie? This will be an online program. To reserve a spot, email Joann at jverostko@mfrl.org.

## Thursday, Dec. 17

### Talking About Books: Non-fiction Virtual Meeting

11:00 a.m. to noon at the Christiansburg Library  
To be discussed virtually is Hidden Life of Trees by Peter Wohlleben.

### Radford Christmas Cruise-Thru

At the Radford Recreation Center, 200 George St., from 6 to 8 p.m. The event will feature a car decorating contest and holiday treats. Applications can be found on RadfordVA.gov.

## Friday, Dec. 18-Monday, Dec. 21

### Voting in holiday decorating contest

The Christiansburg Parks and Recreation Department is hosting a residential holiday decorating contest. Staff will visit each destination to determine the top 10 entries, which then go on the town's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/cburgvagov) for voting by the community. Voting begins Friday, Dec. 18, and runs through 9 a.m. Monday, Dec. 21. Once all applications are received, decorated homes who give permission will be included in a map for others to visit on a self-guided light tour.

## Saturday, Dec. 19

### Saturday Creative Writing Group

At the Meadowbrook Public Library from 11:00 a.m. until 12:30 p.m.  
Those taking part should bring your work for small-group feedback and editing.

### Teen Dungeons and Dragons

From 2-4 p.m. online. DnD is now virtual on Discord. The library staff suggest downloading Discord on your device for ease of access, but this is not required. To join the Discord server, contact shodges@mfrl.org for more info. For ages 11 years and up.

### Community Conversations

From 2-4 p.m. at the Jessie Peterman Memorial Library

This week's topic is Media and Polarization. Community Conversations offers a safe format to listen to and learn about the opinions of others. It's an opportunity to discover shared interests, intentions and goals and to leave behind assumptions and judgments. Based on conversations and guidelines developed by Living Room Conversations.

## Monday, Dec. 21

### Around the World: Virtual Holiday Edition

2:00 - 3:00 p.m. at the Christiansburg Library  
This is another virtual adventure touring the world. To be explored on Facebook are the holiday traditions of Mexico. Stop by the library for a take-and-make craft.

## Tuesday, Dec. 22

### Rambling Readers

From 2-4 p.m. at the Jessie Peterman Memorial Library  
This is a safety distanced group activity involving reading and walking for a little exercise and some intellectual stimulation. Readers taking part will walk and talk about what books they're all currently reading and enjoying. The walk will start at the library and cover roughly two miles. Dress warmly and with appropriate footwear for the hills and uneven footing. Call the library for more details.

### Polar Express Storytime

6:30 p.m. at the MFRL Library Online  
Join in on Facebook live for a special Polar Express storytime. Complimentary hot chocolate packets and a small craft will be part of the fun. Supplies are limited.

## Through Tuesday, Dec. 22

### Radford Business window and residential decorating contest

Throughout the city. Tour the commercial districts and neighborhoods from the safety of a vehicle and then vote for

favorites. A map of the decorated homes and businesses is available on RadfordChamber.com.

## Through Dec. 24

### Wrapping for a Reason

A holiday wrapping booth to raise money for local emergency assistance is in operation in Uptown Christiansburg (formerly NRV Mall), near Bath & Body Works through Christmas Eve. Volunteers are needed to wrap gifts in a sanitary, socially distanced environment. All proceeds benefit the Montgomery County Emergency Assistance Program, commonly known as MCEAP, which provides emergency food, clothing, utility, rent and mortgage assistance to Montgomery County residents year-round. The sign-up link is https://tinyurl.com/w4r2020.

Persons unable to volunteer their time and talents this year may consider donating supplies such as hand sanitizer and disinfecting spray/wipes so all proceeds can go directly to help community members in need. A monetary, tax-deductible, year-end donation to MCEAP is also welcome. Details are at mceap.com or 540-260-3173. For more information, email w4reason@gmail.com or text/call 540-239-1093.

## Thursday, Dec. 24, Dec. 25, Jan. 1

### Christiansburg closings for Christmas, New Year's

The town's facilities will be closed Christmas Eve and Christmas day on Dec. 24-25. Solid waste normally scheduled for Thursday, Dec. 24, will be collected on Tuesday, Dec. 22, along with Tuesday's regular collection.

Solid waste normally scheduled for Friday, Dec. 25, will be collected on Wednesday, Dec. 23, along with Wednesday's regular collection.

The town's facilities will be closed for New Year's Day on Friday, Jan. 1, 2021. Solid waste normally scheduled for Fridays will be collected on Thursday, Dec. 31, along with Thursday's regular collection.

## Saturday, Dec. 26

**Escape of the North Pole**  
4:00 p.m. at the MFRL Library Online

On Discord, a live play of a North Pole Escape Room or participants may play at their own pace. Email shodges@mfrl.org for more information.

## Monday, Dec. 28

### Hibernation Station

1:00 p.m. at the MFRL Library Online

## Through Thursday, Dec. 31:

### Christiansburg Leaf Collection

The Town of Christiansburg's annual free leaf collection is underway and runs through Dec. 31, weather permitting. Public Works crews use a special truck that vacuums the leaves. Therefore, they will collect only piles of loose leaves; leaves placed in bags will not be accepted. Please do not place your pile of loose leaves in a way that blocks sidewalks, sanitary sewers, solid waste carts, drainage ditches or utility meter boxes. If you are concerned your leaves may blow away prior to pick-up, please place a tarp on top of your pile. Crews will remove the tarp when they get there, collect your leaves and leave your tarp behind.

## Through Monday, Jan. 4:

### United Way Festival of Trees

The United Way and some of its partner agencies are decorating Christmas trees in their offices as a way to help spread some holiday cheer in these troublesome times. Pictures of each tree will be posted on unitedwaynrv.org/tree.

Residents of the NRV have the job of picking their favorite tree by visiting the United Way website anytime through Monday, Jan. 4, checking out the trees and casting a vote. A special trophy will be awarded to the winner.

Voting will be cast by donations of any amount.

# More than 2,600 Hokies to graduate at fall commencement Friday

More than 2,600 Hokies will graduate on Friday during Virginia Tech's fall commencement ceremony, which will be held virtually this year due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The university-wide ceremony begins at 6:15 p.m. and will be streamed from vt.edu/commencement. During the online broadcast, graduates will be honored, degrees will be conferred, and special guests and student leaders will also speak. There will also be opportunities for friends and family to participate and offer well wishes.

The event will honor

approximately 2,694 students who completed their academic degrees during the summer and fall terms. Use #HokieGrad for all social media posts related to commencement.

Linsey Marr, the Charles P. Lunsford Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering, will speak at the ceremony. Other speakers offering the Class of 2020 well wishes include alumnus Homer Hickam, famed former NASA engineering and bestselling author; alumna Queen Claye, an Olympian, Pan American Games Champion, and championship record

holder; Grant Bommer, president of the Class of 2021; and Nikki Giovani, poet, University Distinguished Professor, and namesake of the Class of 2020 ring.

During the ceremony, 1,462 undergraduates will be recognized for earning bachelor's degrees.

Of the graduates, 383 earned a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.4 on a 4.0 scale.

Computer science is the most popular major, followed by business information technology and human development. The College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences will feature the most under-

graduates receiving degrees with a total of 321.

Additionally, Virginia Tech's five other colleges will award the following bachelor's degrees to summer and fall graduates:

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences: 140; College of Architecture and Urban Studies: 79; Pamplin College of Business: 261; College of Engineering: 290; College of Natural Resources and Environment: 73; and the College of Science: 298.

Virginia Tech will recognize 1,223 summer and fall graduates who will receive an advanced, master's or doctoral degree. Cortney Steele, a recent



recipient of a doctorate in human nutrition, foods, and exercise from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, will deliver opening remarks during the ceremony.

The graduate degree

candidates include 706 master's degrees, 20 education specialist degrees, 282 Ph.D.s and 12 doctors of education.

A total of 203 students will receive advanced graduate certificates.

# Verbo Church

from page 1

the 100,000 meals to send. Each meal costs 21 cents and includes vitamins, veggies, rice, and lentils. Hidalgo said Monday the church reached its \$21,000 goal on Sunday but more meals can be sent with additional donations.

Now comes the packing..

The church is responsible for individually packing the 100,000 meals. That effort takes

place this weekend and Hidalgo is hoping the community can help. People can either sign up to pack at home or pack at the church, located in the Norwood Room on East Main Street, this Friday and Saturday. Sign up at www.clife.church/nicaraguameals if you have a little time this weekend. More information about the overall effort is available at /www.katw.net/clife.



The Verbo Church Ministries feeding program feeds about 1,500 children per day.

## HOLIDAY ADVERTISING DEADLINES

Our offices will be closed on Friday, December 25 for Christmas. The deadline for ALL ADVERTISING running in the Saturday 12/26 issue of the News Messenger/Radford News Journal will be Wed., December 23 at noon. We will also be closed on Friday, January 1 for New Years. The deadline for ALL ADVERTISING running in the Saturday 1/2 issue of the News Messenger/Radford News Journal will be Wed., December 30 at noon.





# Team of Hokie alumni, fans creates mobile tool to help boost Blacksburg’s economy

Take a pandemic and mix in an unprecedented college football season with limits on fans in the stands and zero tailgating. It’s a recipe for trouble for small businesses nationwide that rely heavily on sales from college football fans, university alumni, and friends and families who flock to cities and towns each fall. It’s no different in Blacksburg, where the economic hit to businesses could be more than \$69 million, which is Virginia Tech football’s projected economic impact locally, according to a 2014-15 analysis of football operations and visiting fans. But there is a bright spot in this story. A group of Virginia Tech alumni and Hokie fans who all live in the New River and Roanoke valleys has designed a mobile method to help boost sales for businesses in Blacksburg. In August, Jeff Werner ’95, who works for a Blacksburg blockchain company, gathered 12 friends and former colleagues, all with skills in mobile and web development. They spent their nights and weekends working to create an app called Localyte, through which people can purchase gift cards at participating Blacksburg restaurants, boutiques, yoga studios, hotels and other local places of business. “We worked insanely long days to get this built,” Werner said. “But it’s something that everybody on the team believes in.” It all began with a question. “We asked ‘what can we do to help get in front of

all these out-of-town parents, alumni and fans who can’t come here, and say ‘invest in a future visit,’” said Kyle Thompson, who is a spokesman for Localyte and a 2006 Virginia Tech graduate who works in product development. There are more than 20 businesses currently listed on the app, which is available on Apple and Android devices. The list continues to grow. “We really wanted it to be available for any kind of business,” Thompson said. Still, the requirement is that each business on the app must be local and small, with no more than 15 locations. Unlike traditional gift cards, the money from each Localyte purchase goes directly to the business at the time of the sale, though purchases include a transaction fee that primarily shifts to the credit card company. Businesses do not have to wait for customers to redeem the gift cards in order for the funds to land in their account. Also, creating a mobile purchasing app eases people’s fears of physically going into a store or restaurant, which is a concern during the pandemic, Werner said. “The root cause is that businesses need cash flow and with a lot of these ideas, like [traditional] gift cards, the money sits in a bank in escrow until the customer can go into the store [to redeem the card],” Werner said. “But if the customer could go into the store, we wouldn’t have the problem to begin with.” With Localyte, custom-



Virginia Tech alumnus Jeff Werner led a team of Hokie alumni and fans to create Localyte, an app that allows people to buy gift cards for use at Blacksburg businesses. The team’s goal is to support the Blacksburg economy in the wake of changes to the Hokies’ football season due to COVID-19. Photo by Ryan Young for Virginia Tech.

ers’ gift card purchases save in the app. They scan a QR code that reveals proof of purchase when they present the card to the business. Since Localyte’s launch in October, Blacksburg residents, out-of-town alumni, and even parents of Virginia Tech students have used the app to make gift card purchases. The app already has generated several thousand dollars for participating businesses, Werner said. That includes In Balance Yoga in Blacksburg, which is offering a promotion through the app for a 10-class package at \$10 a class. “It helped us to promote that we are open,” said owner Nicole Fitzwater LaFon, explaining that the gift card purchases can be used for virtual and in-person classes at the studio. “It’s just a really sweet thing about our community that there are people out there who are thinking about our situation and want to help

contribute.” As the concept surrounding Localyte continues to grow, it could be a model for other cities and towns that rely on sales from college football fans. In fact, Werner said he’s already talking with localities in other states about signing on with Localyte. “We built the core product around the needs in Blacksburg, which we feel like will transfer to other markets,” he said. Still, the Localyte team’s primary motivation is a love for Blacksburg and Virginia Tech. While Werner and Thompson, both natives of Northern Virginia, took jobs in large cities after college, they have since returned to Blacksburg because they said they value the region’s quality of life. “We’ve done this because we think we can help our town,” Thompson said.

Written by Jenny Kincaid Boone

# Chicken is protein of choice during pandemic



WASHINGTON—Chicken is a staple protein in many households—and demand remains strong as consumers continue flocking to poultry products during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to a recent survey conducted by the National Chicken Council, half of Americans who eat chicken said they’ve eaten it more than any other protein during the pandemic. “I’m not surprised chicken is the most popular, given that so many more people are dining at home and are looking for convenient meals or taking time to prepare meals from scratch,”

said Tony Banks, senior assistant director of agriculture, development and innovation for the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation. “Chicken fits the needs very well.” The survey found that during the past nine months retail chicken sales have risen \$1.3 billion, up almost 20% from the same time last year. Three-quarters of poultry-consuming Americans said they prepare it at home at least once a week. “It’s probably the most readily available, low-cost protein source,” said Bob Threewitts, who raises broiler chickens in Rockingham County and serves on the Virginia Farm Bureau Fed-

eration’s Poultry Advisory Committee. Threewitts said that, combined with its low cost, the variety of chicken products gives consumers plenty of options. And “you can prepare it so many ways,” he said. It’s good news, he added, that retail demand is robust, especially after some initial uncertainty among producers when restaurants shuttered in the early months of the pandemic. Threewitts and other producers quickly shifted to accommodate the changing environment—switching from the restaurant market to focus on the retail grocery market. “We’ve found the company we grow for is anxious for all the meat they can get,” he said. “Now they’re taking all we can grow.” Banks noted that chicken consumption is expected to continue rising. U.S. annual per capita chicken consumption is around 95 pounds, about 65% greater than the

next most-consumed protein—beef. By 2029, it’s expected to exceed 96 pounds. Banks and Threewitts agree that while home consumption of chicken is helping poultry companies and growers, they’re ready for restaurant markets to rebound. “It doesn’t get them out of the woods yet,” Banks said. “I expect people purchase more chicken per meal when dining out than when dining at home. The sooner we can get back to normal routines, post-COVID-19, the better for everyone and the economy.”

# Historic Montgomery

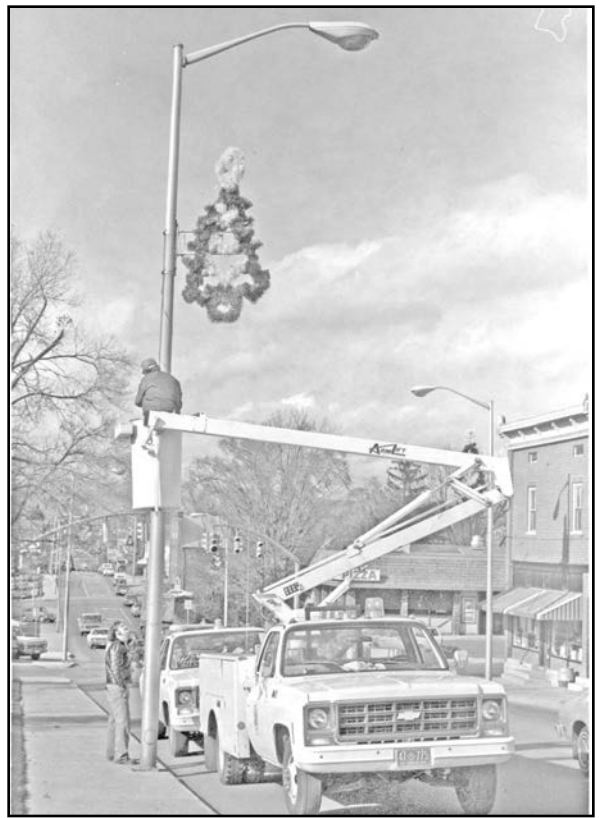


PHOTO COURTESY OF MONTGOMERY MUSEUM OF ART & HISTORY  
The Town of Blacksburg puts up holiday decorations in the late 1970s. (This image from the News Messenger Collection and many more are available from the Montgomery Museum of Art & History.)


## Virginia Department of Transportation road watch

The following is a list of forecasted highway projects that may impact traffic traveling in the 12-county Salem Transportation District this week. Work schedules and construction project timelines are always subject to change and weather dependent. The Salem District covers Bedford, Botetourt, Carroll, Craig, Floyd, Franklin, Giles, Henry, Montgomery, Patrick, Pulaski, and Roanoke.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY ROUTE 11 BRIDGE DECK REPLACEMENT -Work has begun on Route 11 southbound to replace the bridge deck over the Norfolk Southern Railroad. The bridge is located .4 miles north of the intersection with Route 748 (Big Spring Drive) and .4 mile south of the intersection with Route 603 (North Fork Road). The left lane of both Route 11 north and south will be closed daily, 7 a.m. – 5 p.m., between the intersections above as

crossovers are prepared for a Route 11 south detour. Once in place, the detour will re-route Route 11 south traffic through the left lane of Route 11 north, limiting each direction to a single lane. The detour will be in place until the completion of the project. The expected completion date is November 2021. ROUTE 11 CLOSURE FOR BRIDGE REPLACEMENT – Route 11 (Roanoke Road) is closed for a bridge replacement over Spring Branch. This closure is located at the intersection with Route 641 (Den Hill Road) and 0.80 mile from Route 753 (Old Town Road). A detour will be in place. All northbound lanes on Route 11 will be closed with traffic being detoured on the southbound side of Route 11 for 1.8 miles. Weather permitting, the project is expected to be completed at the end of December 2020.

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CLUES ACROSS

1. Selects

5. A cutting remark

9. Teaspoonful (abbr.)

12. Having two units or parts

13. Quality perceptible to the sense of taste

14. Expression of surprise

15. Italian Island

16. A coarse cloth with a bright print

17. Propose a price

18. Sedimentary material

19. Tree toad genus

20. Passed time agreeably

22. Custodians

24. 3rd largest city in Zambia

25. 18th Hebrew letter (var.)

26. Coasted on ice

27. Libyan dinar

28. Displayed exaggerated emotion

31. Andalusian Gypsy dances

33. Material

34. Article

35. Ballplayer Ruth

36. 5th largest Greek island

39. Hand drum of No. India

40. A style of preparing food

42. Former ruler of Afghanistan

43. AKA Cologne

44. Not generally occurring

46. Auto

47. Print errors

49. Interspersed among

50. Electrocardiogram

51. Churns

52. Ice hockey feint

53. Drive obliquely, as of a nail

54. Dried leaves of the hemp plant

55. Ardour

CLUES DOWN

1. Lyric poems

2. Hungarian sheep dog (var. sp.)

3. A pad of writing paper

4. Lists of candidates

5. Base, basket and foot

6. Samoan capital

7. Mythological bird

8. Urban row houses

9. Sensationalist journalism

10. Carried on the arm to intercept blows

11. Estrildid finch genus

13. PA 18840

16. S.W. English town & cheese

21. Runs disconnected

23. Mourners

28. Old world, new

29. Atomic #25

30. Sweet potato wind instrument

31. Legend

32. 3rd tone of the scale

33. Russian jeweler Peter Carl

35. Capital of Mali

36. Extremist sects

37. Violent denunciation

38. Tooth covering

39. Music term for silence

40. Smoldering embers

41. Writer Jong

43. Actor Kristofferson

45. Adam and Eve's 1st home

48. Fish eggs







# Pandemic will damage the travel industry for years to come, says VT expert

The travel and tourism industry has faced enormous hardship from the COVID-19 pandemic and will take years to recover, says Virginia Tech expert Mahmood Khan. For travelers, 2020 will be remembered as the year of canceled vacations and missed special occasions with family and friends.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has literally affected every continent and all travel destinations will need to rebuild from the ground level. Recovery will easily take two to three years and 2021 will focus on assessing the damage,” said Khan. “All travel agencies, tour guides, maintenance staff, government bodies, and modes of transportation will need to rebuild from scratch.

“For future generations, grandparents will talk about the coronavirus pandemic. Mask-wearing photos will become historical collective items just as we look back now at black and white photos of the past,” said Khan. “History will not forget it and diaries will

witness the catastrophes. All travel businesses are going through a period of shock, which will take years to recover.

“Historical monuments were left unprotected in many places and the architectural beauty of many cultural destinations were left with no one to care for them,” Khan said. “Many tourism professionals may have found other work and will be unable or unwilling to return back to their jobs. All this will be a great loss to the travel industry as well as to those who preferred leisure and heritage tourism.”

In an interview, Khan said that business travelers have also changed their outlook and professional pursuits and are now used to travel restrictions, hiring freezes and remote ways of working. Opportunities for development and investment in domestic ventures took priority, which will be difficult or unprofitable to change.

“Conference and business meetings drastically suffered in 2020 to an

extent that trickle-down chains and other affiliated businesses do not exist. This will indirectly affect the travel business,” said Khan. “Airlines have also gone through an unprecedented time with unimaginable losses. The recovery will be long and will need new innovative means and methods to rebuild.”

Related with travel, Khan said that the restaurant industry has also suffered inconceivable damage that has changed the age-old method of classification.

“The most to benefit in the hierarchy of restaurants are the businesses that were able to survive by using delivery services,” Khan said. “Fast-food restaurants have a different nomenclature now with third-party platforms infiltrating as major beneficiaries.

“Fine dining suffered the most damage with many going out of business or facing bankruptcies. In essence, the entire traditional classification of fast, fast-casual, casual and fine dining will



need a substantial revision,” said Khan. “Ghost kitchens, free-standing delivery only services, and restaurants with less available dining area space will have a direct impact on the way travelers or diners were used to prior to the pandemic.

“As we look to the New Year,” Khan said. “it’s unreasonable to expect that

a flood of tourists will emerge once vaccines are available as travelers will be hesitant, and the psychological damage to consumer’s outlook will take time to recuperate.”

*Mahmood Khan is a professor and director of the Pamplin College of Business Master of Science in Business Admin-*

*istration/Hospitality and Tourism Management program in the Washington, D.C., metro region. Major areas of his research include hospitality franchising, services management, customer relationships, food service and operational management, and consumer preferences in hotels, restaurants and institutions.*

# Budget cuts to D.C. Metro could alter long-term travel patterns in the region, says expert



IMAGE BY DAVID PEPPER FROM PIXABAY

Closing stations and reducing service hours may help the D.C. Metro system’s financial hardships in the short-term, but those changes will also hamper efforts

to win back customers next year as the region emerges from the pandemic, says a Virginia Tech expert.

Virginia Tech urban transportation expert

Ralph Buehler says the current Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority budget proposals to eliminate weekend rail service, close stations and reduce

service hours would severely impact area commuters and modes of transportation in the region.

“Metro’s budget proposal makes sense from a current financial perspective and current ridership; however, cutting service during a time when the region is trying to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic does not make sense from a transportation perspective,” says Buehler.

“The region will begin to transition towards a new normal for transportation in 2021,” Buehler says. “As vaccines become available, people will feel safe riding the Metro again. We’ll begin to see an increase in ridership as people resume their commutes to work and offices begin to reopen.”

Buehler says that if Metro service is poor (30-minute wait time between trains) or non-

existent (closed stations) and bus lines are eliminated, the transit agency will have a hard time winning back customers.

“Metro and bus service must be convenient to lure customers back. Unattractive service will make winning back customers difficult, if not impossible,” says Buehler. “Metro clearly needs help from local, state and federal governments to bridge this crucial time of recovery from COVID-19. Governments have helped the automobile industry many times; now it is crucial to support the transit industry.

“When COVID-19 numbers begin to decline in the region, Metro needs subsidies to offer attractive service to win back customers,” Buehler says. “Service can be adjusted a year later if ridership does not come back. Unattractive service, however,

will guarantee that fewer people will ride trains and buses.

“Metro is a sustainable mode of transport causing fewer emissions than driving,” says Buehler. “It’s also the mode of transportation for many car-free and carless individuals. People want to ride Metro if it is attractive. However, once people have made permanent adjustments on how they get around because of poor or non-existent service, it will be hard to win them back for buses or trains.”

*Ralph Buehler is a professor of urban affairs and planning in the School of International and Public Affairs at Virginia Tech in the greater Washington, D.C. metro region. His research areas focus on understanding individual travel behavior and the sustainability of transport systems in urban areas.*

## VDOT

from page 3

**ROUTE 636 BRIDGE REPLACEMENT AT SENECA HOLLOW** - The bridge on Route 636 over the Roanoke River at Seneca Hollow is being replaced. A road closure will be in place from Echo Hills Road to .36 mile south of Route 460. A detour will be in place. The detour will restrict access to Route 460 at Seneca Hollow and will require travelers to enter/exit Route 460 at Friendship Road near Wheeling Hollow. The project is expected to be completed in late June 2021.

**ROUTE 685 TURN LANE CONSTRUCTION** - Turn lane construction on Route 685 (Prices Fork Road) is underway between Route 1145 (Stratford View Drive) and Route 654 (Brookfield Road). Motorists should expect daily shoulder closures with intermittent lanes closures controlled by flagging forces. Work will be performed from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Completion is spring 2021.

**ROUTE 603 BRIDGE REPLACEMENT** - Work has been underway on Route 603 (North Fork Road) for a bridge replacement over Flatwoods Branch from the intersection of Route 713 to .01 miles south of the intersection of Route 647. Drivers will continue to see residual work taking place in the area with intermittent flagging operations and should use caution within

the work zone. Weather permitting, the project is expected to be completed by the end of December 2020.

**WATERLINE CONSTRUCTION** - Construction of a waterline along Route 659 (Vicker Switch Road), Route 719 (Switchback Road), Route 660 (Crab Creek Road), and Route 661 (Chrisman Mill Road) includes shoulder closures and lane closures. The work is expected to be completed in February 2021.

**INTERSTATE 81 SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS AT S-CURVES IN BOTETOURT COUNTY** - A project to improve the S-curves along southbound I-81 in Botetourt County between mile markers 167.4 and 169.5 is underway. This project will enhance safety and improve vehicle traction. Work includes repaving the travel lanes, applying new pavement markers and installing underground pavement drains. Nighttime lane closures will be in place and the speed limit will be reduced to 60 mph in the work zone. This project also includes permanently closing and removing the southbound off ramp at exit 167 (Buchanan) to reduce speed differentials, conflict points and lane changes associated with exiting vehicles. The estimated completion date is summer 2021.

**INTERSTATE 81 LANE WIDENING CONSTRUCTION EXIT 141 TO EXIT 143** - A project to widen the lanes on I-81 in Roanoke in both northbound and southbound directions between Exit 141 to Exit 143 has begun. Installation of construction signs is taking place along with surveys and clearing operations. Work may be conducted within the median and barrier walls are being put in place. Weekday and weekend lane and shoulder closures may be in place for guardrail removal, shoulder wedging and paving. A left lane closure will be in place on I-81 northbound or southbound during nighttime hours from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. while equipment and materials are brought into and out of the median. Estimated completion date of the project is summer of 2022.

Weather permitting, drivers can expect a left lane closure on northbound and southbound I-81, 8 p.m. at night until 6 a.m. the following morning from exit 140 to 143.

I-81 at Route 640, a one lane flagging operation will be in place from Route 799 to Route 798 from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

**I-81 NORTHBOUND AT EXIT 105 NEW RIVER BRIDGE REPLACEMENT IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY** - Lane and shoulder closures may be in place near exit 105. Lane

closure may be in effect during the week from 8 p.m. to 7 a.m. Shoulder closures may be in effect at any time during the week. Slow rolls may be performed on I-81 in the north and southbound lanes from mile marker 104 to 106 from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. Speed limit is reduced to 60 miles per hour in the work zone. Shoulder closures will remain in place though the duration of the project. Project completion is estimated by late 2021.

**I-81 BRIDGE REPLACEMENT AT EXIT 114 IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY** - The bridge replacement of the two Interstate 81 bridges over Route 8, northbound and southbound, is underway. Drivers can expect alternating lane and shoulder closures, northbound and southbound, from mile marker 114 to 115. Exit 114 ramp shoulder closures will be ongoing from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Speed limit is reduced to 60 mph in the work zone. Route 8 will have alternating northbound and southbound shoulder and lane closures, day or night, as needed between the I-81 on and off ramps. A temporary traffic signal will direct traffic on Route 8 throughout the duration of the project. Access to all properties will be maintained during construction. Estimated completion is summer 2021.

DMV Notice: The bridge on I-81 northbound at mile marker

114 currently has a restricted width for wide loads of 26 feet or larger.

**I-81 PAVING & MARKING OPERATIONS** - Paving operations are being performed throughout the district.

**I-81 RAMP CLOSURES FOR PAVING OPERATIONS IN ROANOKE & BOTETOURT COUNTIES**- Weather permitting, crews will be milling and paving along Interstate 81. Right and left lane closures will be in place along northbound and southbound lanes during nighttime hours. Drivers should expect possible delays.

**I-81 POT HOLE PATCHING OPERATIONS** - Weather permitting, crews will patch pot holes along Interstate 81. Mobile right and left lane closures will be in place and moving along northbound and southbound lanes during nighttime hours, 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. the following morning. Drivers should watch for moving vehicles and equipment. Expect possible delays.

**I-81 BRIDGE DECK REPAIRS** - Weather permitting, crews will repair bridge decks on Interstate 81. Between mile markers 97 and 162, right and left lane closures will be in place northbound and southbound during nighttime hours, 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. the following morning. Drivers should watch for signs and expect possible delays.

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## Help Wanted - General

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The Salem Times-Register has openings for afternoon/evening shift work inserting, labeling and bundling newspapers for delivery. No experience necessary. Hours may vary. Will train. \$7.50 per hour. Contact Lynn Hurst, General Manager, Salem-Times Register (540)389-9355 or email [hurst@ourvalley.org](mailto:hurst@ourvalley.org)

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## Lost & Found

**LOST:**  
Yearling all black Angus bull (700- 800 pounds) and 8 month old all white Charolais type bull. No ear tags. Missing from the corner of Springwood Rd and Timber Ridge Rd since early November. If you have any information, please call 540-354-2514

## Legals - City of Salem

## NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Notice is hereby given to all interested persons that the Board of Zoning Appeals of the City of Salem, Virginia will hold a public hearing, in accordance with the provisions of Sections 15.2-2204 and 15.2-2309 of the 1950 Code of Virginia, as amended, on December 23, 2020, at 4:00 p.m. in the Community Room of the Salem Civic Center, 1001 Roanoke Boulevard, in the City of Salem, Virginia, to consider the following applications.

Request of The Trustees of Roanoke College, property owners, for a variance from Section 106-226.7 pertaining to development restrictions in a floodway, for the property located at 301 Campus Lane West Riverside Drive, Tax Map # 86-3-4. The petitioners are requesting to construct a pavilion within the floodway.

At this hearing, all parties in interest will be given an opportunity to be heard, present evidence, and show cause why such requests should or should not be granted. For additional information, contact the Office of the Zoning Administrator, 21 South Bruffey Street, Salem, Virginia (Phone 375 3032).

THE BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS OF THE CITY OF SALEM

BY: Mary Ellen H. Wines, CZA, CFM  
Zoning Administrator

## Legals - Montgomery County

## ORDER OF PUBLICATION

Commonwealth of Virginia VA. CODE § 8.01-316  
**Case No. JJ004492-01-00 & JJ004492-02-00**  
RADFORD J&DR-JUVENILE DIVISION Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court Commonwealth of Virginia, in re BOWLING, ALAYNA DAWN RENEE HILL, STEPHANIE /v. BOWLING, DAVID H.

The object of this suit is to: LOCATE PARENTS.

It is ORDERED that DAVID H. BOWLING appear at the above-named Court and protect his or her interests on or before 1/19/2021 2:00pm.

11/16/2020

Sally Davis Clerk

## Legals - Montgomery County

## ORDER OF PUBLICATION

Commonwealth of Virginia VA. CODE § 8.01-316  
**Case No. JJ004492-01-00 & JJ004492-02-00**  
RADFORD J&DR-JUVENILE DIVISION Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court Commonwealth of Virginia, in re BOWLING, ALAYNA DAWN RENEE HILL, STEPHANIE /v. LAPP, KRISTEN

The object of this suit is to: LOCATE PARENTS.

It is ORDERED that LAPP, KRISTEN appear at the above-named Court and protect his or her interests on or before 1/19/2021 2:00pm.

11/16/2020

Sally Davis Clerk

## ORDER OF PUBLICATION

Commonwealth of Virginia VA. CODE § 8.01-316  
**Case No. JJ004494-01-00 & JJ004494-02-00**  
RADFORD J&DR-JUVENILE DIVISION Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court Commonwealth of Virginia, in re CARSTENS-ZIEGLER, ARIANA LEIGH EAST, AMANDA /v. CARSTENS, RICHARD FRANK; III

The object of this suit is to: GAIN CUSTODY.

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# RADFORD SPORTS

## New performance center opens to Tech athletes



PHOTOS COURTESY OF VT ATHLETICS

**The performance center at Virginia Tech features a full-service kitchen and provides dining space for student-athletes from all 22 of Virginia Tech's varsity sports**

Looking to gain an edge over its Atlantic Coast Conference counterparts, Virginia Tech Athletics unveiled the recently completed Student-Athlete Performance Center last Thursday morning.

The nearly \$20 million center replaced the old Bowman Room on the fourth floor of the Jamerson Athletics Center and now serves as the primary space for the sports nutrition staff to meet the nutrition needs of student-athletes from all 22 of Virginia Tech's varsity sports.

"This project, in addition to what it represents on the face value, also represents that we've now completed a total renovation of the Merryman Center and Jamerson Center," Director of Athletics Whit Babcock said. "The new Student-Athlete Performance Center has more than 25,000 square feet of space.

It triples the previous space. It will provide constant nutrition for our student-athletes and wonderful event space for athletics activities, graduations and more."

The 19-month renovation project came about primarily as a result of the generosity of an alumni couple who made an anonymous \$15.2 million gift, the largest gift ever to Virginia Tech Athletics. Both are natives of Virginia, and they, along with several other donors who made contributions to the project, did so mostly out of a desire to do something to benefit all of Virginia Tech's approximately 550 student-athletes.

The center includes a full-service kitchen that allows for the preparation of meals for student-athletes and a large dining space for them that features panoramic views of Lane Stadium and the



**Virginia Tech's newly renovated Student-Athlete Performance Center was unveiled Thursday morning.**

Beamer-Lawson Practice Facility. A balcony on the outer edge of the center overlooks the Steve Johnson Practice Fields.

"Facilities are a part – it's not the only part, but it's a big part – of recruiting," head football coach Justin Fuente said. "It shows a commitment to servicing the student-athlete in terms of making sure all their needs are met through their athletic development, their academic development, their social development and their spiritual development. I think this is another huge step for Virginia Tech demonstrating the commitment to the young people and their families who decide to attend Virginia Tech and participate in intercollegiate activities.

"Between school, study hall, training, practice or lifting and meals, to have a

facility like this that's located right in the middle of all of those things I think only enhances the efficiency of their day," Fuente said. Obviously, for our program, development is a huge part of what we're trying to do, and what you ingest in your body, what you feed your body is a huge part of our players and their development."

"We ask our wrestlers to be 100% committed to the process of being great in all the areas of their lives," said head VT wrestling coach Tony Robie. "How they fuel their bodies for practice and competition is a huge part of that process.

"The new Student-Athlete Performance Center will make that more efficient and effective," Robie said. "The state-of-the-art facility is absolutely spectacular and located just steps from the

wrestling room. This will be a game changer for all the student-athletes at Virginia Tech."

The center also allows for donor hospitality events before games, particularly basketball games. A large hallway leads directly from the center to the concourse of Cassell Coliseum.

In addition, Tech's coaches expect to use the center for recruiting events, team gatherings and other student-athlete development events.

"We see the new performance center as a transformational facility for our program," said VT softball coach Pete D'Amour. "It will give us a chance to provide our players with optimal nutrition, as well as being a state-of-the-art gathering place for all student-athletes at Virginia Tech. I speak for our softball program when I say we're extremely excited to put the new performance center to use"

Though multi-functional, the center will be used primarily for nutrition purposes, an area in which Virginia Tech Athletics has invested heavily over the past decade. Officials within the athletics department spend more than \$3 million annually on food for student-athletes, citing the need for proper nutrition, fueling, and hydration to receive better performances in the playing venues.

—VT Athletics

## Hokies run past UVA 33-15 in regular-season finale

BLACKSBURG – Getting the cup back in convincing fashion, the Virginia Tech football team defeated in-state rival Virginia 33-15 Saturday night at Lane Stadium.

Tech (5-6, 5-5 ACC) got out to a 20-point lead at halftime over the Cavaliers (5-5, 4-5), 27-7, thanks

to its second-most yards of offense at halftime this season (NC State, 336 yds). And a big reason why was tailback Khalil "Juice" Herbert's 138 rushing yards the first 20 minutes, including a 76-yard run that went for six.

The first half saw many third-down conversions with UVA get-

ting three on its first drive to go up 7-3 and then the Hokies following suit with seven of their own the rest of the way in the first. Tech put together its longest drive of the season, culminating in a 17-play, 75-yard drive that took 7 minutes, 40 seconds with Tre Turner finishing it off on a jet sweep for a six-

yard touchdown.

Getting steady play from its quarterback, Tech's Braxton Burmeister racked up 212 passing yards on 15-of-22 passing with a passing touchdown while earning 36 yards on the ground.

Tech's defense turned in a stout outing, holding the Cavaliers to

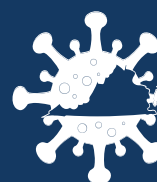
under 60 rushing yards and their second-fewest points this season (Miami, 14 pts.). Safety Divine Deablo showed out with six tackles, two pass breakups and an interception.

The Hokies have now won 20

See **Hokies**, page 10

# HAPPY SMALLIDAYS.

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IS IN OUR  
HANDS.**  
Do your part,  
stop the spread.

For many of us, being with friends and family is a holiday tradition. But this year, instead of having large gatherings, it's smart to keep things small. To help prevent spreading COVID-19, limit the number of people in your home. And instead of personal visits, opt for video chats or long phone calls. Keeping it small can make a very big difference.



# Hokies

from page 9

of the last 22 games against UVA.

**POST GAME NOTES**

- Virginia Tech is now 59-38-5 against the Cavaliers and 16-1 since joining the ACC in 2004.
- The Hokies' 17-play touchdown drive was the longest since a 17-play drive at Pitt in 2018.
- Khalil Herbert's 76-yard TD run in six seconds was the longest one-play touchdown drive in VT history since at least 1987 to last six seconds or less.

**HEAD COACH JUSTIN FUENTE**

- Record moves to 38-26 at Virginia Tech and 64-49 in his career.

- Recorded the fifth ACC win of the season for the fourth time at Tech (2016, 2017, 2019).

**VIRGINIA TECH TEAM NOTES**

- The 33 points scored against the Tigers mark the 333rd consecutive game Virginia Tech has scored, the third-longest active streak in the nation among FBS schools. It's also the sixth-longest streak in FBS history.
- The contest was the first played on Dec. 12 in Virginia Tech football history.

**PLAYER NOTES**

**QB BRAXTON BURMEISTER**

- Record moves to 3-1 as starting quarterback.
- Completed 15 of 22 passes for 212 yards and a touchdown.
- Ran the ball seven times for 37 yards.

**RB KHALIL HERBERT**

- Registered his sixth 100-yard rushing game of the season with 162 yards on 20 attempts.
- Scored a touchdown on a 76-yard rush, which was the longest rushing play of the season.

**RB JALEN HOLSTON**

- Had 14 carries for 58 yards.

**WR TRE TURNER**

- Recorded his second rushing touchdown of the season on a six-

yard carry.

- Caught three passes for 25 yards.

**WR TAYVION ROBINSON**

- Had five receptions for 98 yards and a touchdown.
- His 60-yd touchdown reception was the longest pass play of the season.

**TE JAMES MITCHELL**

- Had three receptions for 67 yards.

**DB DIVINE DEABLO**

- Recorded his fourth interception of the season and also broke up two other passes.
- Led the team with six total tackles.

- Wore Coach Beamer's 25 jersey for the contest.

**DB DEVIN TAYLOR**

- Had five total tackles.

**DB CHAMARRI CONNER**

- Made five stops and broke up two passes.

**DB ARMANI CHATMAN**

- Recorded a sack and broke up a pass.

**DB DORIAN STRONG**

- Tallied his first career interception and had a 27-yard return.
- Had five total tackles in the game.

**LB RAYSHARD ASHBY**

- Made five stops in the game and had a sack.=

# Catching up with VT men's basketball Coach Mike Young

The 2020-21 Virginia Tech men's basketball season has already given people plenty to talk about, and Head Coach Mike Young is the perfect person for the conversation.

The Hokies are off to a 4-1 start after suffering their first loss of the season, 75-55 to Penn State last Tuesday night. They also had a game against Clemson scheduled for Tuesday, Dec. 15. The squad has already successfully navigated a COVID-19-related schedule shuffle, defeating then No.-3 Villanova in an impromptu game.

Virginia Tech's hot start follows an offseason full of precautionary restrictions while acclimating many new players to the team. The Hokies added four scholarship transfers, three of which are graduate transfers, and four freshmen to the team.

The success also comes on the heels of Young's establishment of MY TURN, a nonprofit inspired by his father, Bob Young, that takes on bullying. The program works with public schools in the New River Valley while also giving players the opportunity to serve others.

Following the team's victory over VMI, Young took some time to share his thoughts on the offseason, the culture the team aims to create and what they'll need to do to continue having success.

How has it felt to be back on the court for regular-season games?

"Honestly, it's been great. So much hard work was put in by our players, with them being disciplined and sacrificing to play by being great teammates, that it brings me joy to see them out there competing again on the floor. Sure, it's still a little different with no fans and the crowd noise playing on the speak-

ers, but it's been so good being back at doing what we all love."

What's been the biggest change or challenge in how you all prepare and practice this season related to the pandemic?

"Probably the biggest challenge has been being together in close quarters. About everything we do is spaced out, and that includes group huddles on the court, our team breakdown to end a practice and when we're watching film together. So it's challenging, but I feel like our guys have been able to stay focused with that and abide by our protocols that have been set in place for good reason."

What have you found to be the key or keys towards building community and collective culture within a team of that make-up, as well as your staff, at a time when gathering can be quite limited?

"There is one key thing that we have tried to instill in our guys regarding culture and community. One of my favorite lines is, 'Love your neighbor,' which certainly is true now and it's arguably harder with not as much gathering time. So, with so many new guys on our roster this year, it's been pivotal for our players to love one another, be respectful of others around them, and be always reminded that we are all here for each other, even on those tough days when we need it most."

"I've been so fortunate to be surrounded by great people my whole career, and that rings true now more than ever with the bunch we have on our roster and staff. Being present and in the moment with everyone has been a key ingredient to our culture."

What types of bonding activities

have you found to be helpful?

"It's been tough these last few months with following Covid-19 protocols and doing larger-type gatherings, but I know quite a bit of our players have really enjoyed their participation in MY TURN. Our players have had the pleasure of reading children's books to elementary school kids over Zoom. It's been wonderful to see the players truly get more out of it than the kids. They've been able to reap and sow some pretty good things out of that and grow with one another as well, with acting out certain scenes and things of that nature."

"In the past, we've also done cooking classes as well, giving the players tools to succeed for making meals for themselves. We have an exceptional nutritionist who has really readied the guys for treating their bodies the right way with food intake and smartened them up on the best way to refuel after workouts, practices and more."

Why was it important for you to go ahead and launch that program despite the additional obstacles caused by the pandemic?

"It just felt like the right time. I felt like it's something that had been on my heart for some time, and I just felt led to launch it this fall. It did come with some hurdles and speed bumps due to COVID-19 protocols of what we could and couldn't do. But overall, I don't regret beginning it now, and it has been such a great thing so far."

The main aim of that program obviously is to help young people in the area, and your players are only involved to the level at which they desire, but how do you hope your players and team might also benefit

from MY TURN?

"I would hope they get more out of it than they would anticipate, and I think that has been the case so far. Spending time not thinking about yourself when you're not practicing, doing school work, or playing a game is crucial for someone's development off the court. It's great to give back and spend time with those maybe you wouldn't have if not given the opportunity."

"This has been a terrific time for the local children in the NRV with our players making an impact on them in a positive light and giving them someone to look up to. And I would argue the same influence has been able to trickle into our players' minds as well with seeing how great these young kids are and giving them a sense of hope that our future in the area is strong."

What are the key character traits your players will need to successfully face the challenge of such an ever-evolving situation?

"Adaptability has to be up there. It happens in a game with how it ebbs and flows and teams going on runs and being able to respond to that. But now, it has happened with our game schedule. That's a different dynamic, one that will take some time to become accustomed to."

"But I believe our guys are off to a good note on that end and are truly taking it one day at a time. That's what I tell them, 'One day at a time,' and they've been able to take that to heart and stay level-headed through it all."

How have you seen your staff and other people within Virginia Tech Athletics rise to meet challenges this year?

"Our athletics staff here at Virginia Tech has been terrific. From facilities to game ops to sports medicine, everyone has pitched in and contributed in an impressive way to be able to pull off one of the most unprecedented seasons ever. I'm very proud of what has transpired with our first few home games. Our people haven't missed a beat and am grateful for that. I feel safe, I know our players feel safe playing in Cassell. So, kudos to everyone involved. Their presence is felt."

With game attendance obviously limited, what are some other ways the Virginia Tech community can support you and your players?

"Though I'm not on there too much, I've enjoyed scrolling on Twitter and seeing the love from Hokie Nation. The support this season from our fans has been tremendous. I know they want to be in Cassell badly, but they have been very supportive through it all so far and I know they will continue to do so."

Speaking of attendance being limited, that could also impact concessions. Do you have a backup plan for what's become somewhat of a pre-game ritual if popcorn becomes scarce?

"Tell you what, it's been a little different with not being able to do my typical bag of popcorn before the game. I do miss it a bit, but at the end of the day, my pregame routine will be fine without it. I'm more grateful than ever to be the head coach of Virginia Tech men's basketball and sure am happy we are playing games after all."

*-Written by Travis Williams*

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