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## Radford Police ask for community tips in shootings investigation

RADFORD - Within less than 30 minutes of each other, on Sunday, Jan. 24, the Radford City Police Department (RCPD) responded to two shootings in the City of Radford that re-

sulted in one gunshot victim being taken to the hospital. The police department is asking the community to call or e-mail any information or witness statements to assist

in the investigation. According to the RCPD, units were first dispatched at 1:08 a.m. to the 100 block of Madison Street in response to a report of shots being fired. Then at 1:22 a.m., units were sent to the 400 block of Sanford Street for an additional report of shots fired. At the scene, officers located a gunshot victim, who was transported to New River Valley Medical Center.

In a Facebook video Sunday evening, RCPD Sgt. Emily Tribble and Radford Public Information Coordinator Jenni Wilder said the incidents appear to be connected, and that they hope the community can help with information.

"We ask for you to please, if there are any

witnesses or information that is available to please let us know," said Tribble. "We are relying on the community to help us out in this situation. We want to let everyone know that everything is safe at this time."

Wilder said the city feels the incidents are isolated.

"The city is aware of the community concern surrounding this incident as this is an unusual event in the City of Radford," said Wilder. "We appreciate the tips and statements that have come in at this time and ask that you continue to send those tips in."

Anyone with any information about either incident should email [crimestoppers@radfordva.gov](mailto:crimestoppers@radfordva.gov) or call 540-731-3624.



## Burglarized twice, TruHarvest Farms offers \$50K reward for information

With some \$250,000 worth of its smokable flower cured hemp product having been stolen in two burglaries within the last couple of weeks, Christiansburg's TruHarvest Farms is offering a \$50,000 reward to anyone who comes forward with information leading to the conviction of the thief.

TruHarvest general manager John Straw said that the identity of anyone who provides information will be protected. He said he has not ruled out an inside job, that the thief had knowledge of the farm's operation. Security cameras showed that the thief knew exactly where to go. "He went straight to

[the product] and straight out," Straw said. "We're not ruling anybody out."

Only a single perpetrator is involved, the general manager said. The burglar stole 61 pounds the first time and 50 pounds the second time.

According to Straw, the criminal knew enough not to drive through the gate onto the property, instead parking on a private drive off the property and away from the barn, loading the stolen product into duffel bags and then walking through a cornfield to the waiting vehicle.

Straw said both break-ins occurred during the 1 a.m. hour.

## Governor endorses Buchwald in state senate race

Heather Bell  
[hbelle@ourvalley.org](mailto:hbelle@ourvalley.org)

Democratic candidate for state senate Laurie Buchwald got the nod from Governor Ralph Northam Monday. Buchwald will face Travis Hackworth, a Republican from Tazewell County, in the March 23 special election to succeed the late Sen. Ben Chafin, who died Jan. 1 from CO-

VID-19.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the inequalities in our communities," said Northam in his endorsement. "The inability to access broadband means too many students are being left behind in the classroom. Not being able to count on school lunches means more and more of our children are going hungry. And as the economy suffers and jobs are lost, too

many families are worried about how they are going to keep the lights on. We need leadership to tackle these real, kitchen-table issues head-on and that's why I'm endorsing Laurie Buchwald for the State Senate."

Buchwald, who lives in Radford, is a nurse practitioner and a former Radford City Council member who served on the council from 2002-2010 before opting not to run for a third term. A residential and commercial builder, Hackworth won the Republican nomination for the seat after a primary that included six candidates.

Northam said he thinks Buchwald's background in health care will be helpful in the General Assembly. "As a health care provider, Laurie understands the challenges we have before us but is uniquely equipped to help us solve them," he said. "I'm confident in her ability to deliver for the people of Southwest Virginia and am looking forward to working with her in Richmond."



Travis Hackworth



Laurie Buchwald

## Moss Arts Center's 'HomeStage' presents world premiere of 'The City of Others' Thursday

The Moss Arts Center's "HomeStage" series of performances continues Thursday, Jan. 28, at 7:30 p.m. with the world premiere of "The City of Others," which showcases Colombia's Sankofa Danza Afro-Colombian and Afro-contemporary dance group with live drumming and song.

Co-sponsored by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration at Virginia Tech, the performance will actually take place in a theatre in Medellin, Colombia. The event includes a post-performance conversation with Sankofa Danza Afro Artistic Director Rafael Palacios, moderated by VT Assistant Professor of Sociology Andrea Baldwin.

Ticket holders have access to the "HomeStage" series performance as it happens and for seven days following the event.

Tickets are \$10 for the general public and are free for Virginia Tech students. They can be purchased online, at the Moss Arts Center's box office from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Friday, or by calling 540-231-5300 during box office hours.

Also available is the Spring Fan(fare) Pass, which provides access to all "HomeStage" events offered until May 31, 2021, guaranteeing a minimum of eight performances. While providing added support for the center, Spring Fan(fare) Pass holders also get exclusive infor-



Dancers with Sankofa Danza Afro perform "The City of Others."

mation through regular Fan(fare) Insider emails and are the first to know about new events added to the schedule.

In "The City of Others," Sankofa Danza Afro portrays the reality of marginalized communities who have faced ethnic discrimination and social inequality for generations. The work evokes the sensitivity and enjoyment of dance and is a legitimate representation of a diverse, multicultural nation seeking the paths of reunion and coexistence.

When lockdown orders temporarily lifted in Colombia recently, the dancers and musicians of Sankofa Danza Afro came together for the first time in months to perform their most renowned work.

The performance features traditional Colombian songs and rhythms, such as the vallenato from the Atlantic region coastline, and dances such as the bullerengue (also from the Atlantic coastline) and the curulao and abozao dances from the Pacific coastline.

Using poetic movement to explore social and cultural narratives related to its home country of Colombia, the contemporary dance company is dedicated to training and creation in dance and has sought to build a bridge between Afro-Colombian peoples and the African continent. Sankofa's works are built on the ideas of social bonding, personal growth and the positioning of local cultures in the national dynamics.

## Blacksburg police investigating two burglaries



Officers from the Blacksburg Police Department are investigating a pair of recent burglaries that occurred at occupied residences.

On Friday, Jan. 22, 2021, officers responded to the 400 block of E. Roanoke St. for a breaking-and-entering of an occupied residence in the early morning hours. The suspect in the investigation is described as a college-aged white male wearing dark clothing and a face covering.

Blacksburg police are also investigating the separate breaking-and-entering of an occupied residence that occurred on Saturday, Jan. 23, 2021, in the early morning hours in the 500 block of Sunridge Drive.

Several items were taken during these incidents.

Anyone with information about either crime is urged to contact the Blacksburg Police Department at 540-443-1400. You can remain anonymous by calling the Blacksburg Police Tip Line at 540-961-1819.

Blacksburg police mind everyone to lock the doors and windows of their residences while they are away and to secure their vehicles while not in use. Anyone observing any suspicious activity at any time should report it to the police by dialing 911 or by calling the New River Valley Communications Center at (540) 382-4343.

## First case of COVID-19 variant identified in Virginia

RICHMOND — The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and the Department of General Services Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services (DCLS) announced Monday the first case of the SARS-CoV-2 variant B.1.1.7 has been identified in a sample from an adult resident of Northern Virginia with no reported recent travel history.

The B.1.1.7 variant,

which first emerged in the United Kingdom in late 2020, is associated with increased person-to-person transmission of COVID-19. DCLS confirmed the case using next-generation sequencing that provides a genetic blueprint of the virus that causes COVID-19. DCLS has informed the Centers for Disease Control and

See Variant, page 2



# Businesses, college students, community members support seniors through Silver Santa program



Warm Hearth Village resident Geraldine Grass receives her Silver Santa gifts from Resident Services Coordinator Cindy Wiley-Lamb.

BLACKSBURG -- Community members, local businesses, college students and Warm Hearth Village (WHV) employees adopted 120 low-income seniors at Warm Hearth Village in 2020 through the village's Silver Santa program.

The seniors were presented with \$10,617 in gifts in December.

Seniors filled out their needs/wish lists in September, and these were shared with donors. Lists included requests for food, personal care and pet supplies and any special items. Wishes ranged from a gift card to a local fast-food restaurant, to a cowboy hat, to special

food to meet a pet's restricted dietary needs. A sleigh load of gifts came pouring in from the community, and they were distributed to the seniors shortly before Christmas.

Among those receiving gifts was WHV resident Geraldine Grass, who said she was overwhelmed with delight when she opened the door and saw the gifts. "I could use everything in it, and it was absolutely wonderful of all those who donated," she said.

Warm Hearth Village is a nonprofit senior living community in Blacksburg that provides a full continuum of living options on its campus and in the home.

# PETS-OF-THE-WEEK

Each Saturday the paper features pets from the Montgomery County Animal Care and Adoption Center (480 Cinnabar Road, Christiansburg). Those interested in adopting a pet can call 382-5795 or visit [www.montgomerycountyva.gov/acac](http://www.montgomerycountyva.gov/acac). At this time, visits to the Montgomery County Animal Care and Adoption Center are limited to one party at a time in the lobby area. Animal areas are not open to the public. To schedule an appointment to meet a prospective pet call (540) 382-5795 or email [animalcenter@montgomerycountyva.gov](mailto:animalcenter@montgomerycountyva.gov).

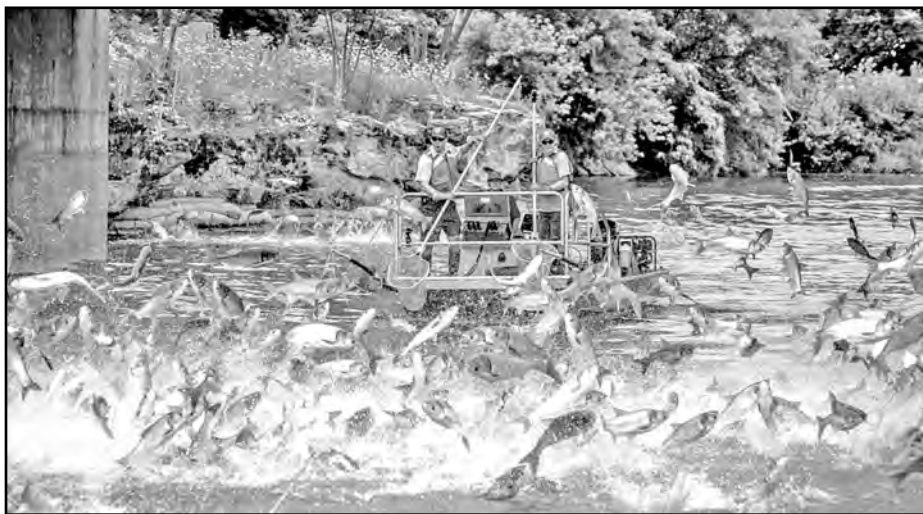


Meet little Trixie. Upon first meeting her, she can be a bit timid, but when she's comfortable in her surroundings and discovers her favorite human, she's a happy, attention-loving gal. She can be people- and dog- selective, so a meet-and-greet would be a must for Trixie.



Sweet Meg is ready for her purrfect home. She's a friendly four-year-old who happily accepts a good head rub and chin scratch. Some of her history is a little unknown. Meg's hind legs aren't the strongest and she does not have a tail, but that doesn't stop her from enjoying life.

# VT researcher has solution to Asian carp invasion: Eat them



Silver carp, one of several species of Asian carp, leaping from the Fox River during a removal effort by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



Clay Ferguson displays one of the large bighead carp his team pulled from the Ohio River in June 2019 while gathering specimens to test for fillet and edible yields.

Imagine you're driving a boat. You're enjoying a weekend day at the lake, the wind whipping through your hair and the sun warm on your face. You feel a gentle spray of water as your boat carves a path through the calm surface of the early morning water.

Suddenly, there's frantic splashing all around you. Dozens of giant, shimmering fish leap out of the water. Just as you turn to steer away, one of them jumps up in front of the boat and slaps you across the face.

You were hit by a silver carp, just one species in a family of invasive fish collectively known as Asian carp that have grown so numerous in the Mississippi River system in recent years they've become hazardous to boaters. The danger Asian carp pose to boaters — and they are dangerous, with people having suffered broken bones and concussions after being hit by the enormous, jumping fish — is only one symptom of the greater threat the spread of these fish poses: catastrophic ecological harm.

So how do you manage an invasive species of fish that in only a few decades has spread up and down the Mississippi River, out-competing native species and becoming more than 90 percent of the total biomass of some river systems? According to one Virginia Tech researcher, you eat them.

Believe it or not, these pestilential invaders causing some major ecological harm are a safe, plentiful, and healthy food source that is flavorful and nutritious. So

why aren't we eating them? Clay Ferguson, a fisheries researcher and Ph.D. student in Virginia Tech's Department of Food Science and Technology, thinks we should be.

He has published new research on the nutritional value and fillet yield of Asian carp to help establish them as a viable food fish in the United States.

"Of the roughly 4,300 invasive species in the United States, very few are actually conducive to suppression by consumption — meaning that they're at a large enough density population-wise, reasonably accessible and tasty enough," Ferguson said. "Asian carp are unique."

Asian carp were introduced to U.S. ecosystems in the 1970s after being brought over from Asia and were used to solve water quality issues in enclosed bodies of water. Once es-

caping to nearby water systems, the fishes' hearty nature and rapid reproduction made them almost impossible to contain. Efforts by ecologists and wildlife agencies to control their numbers have been expensive and largely unsuccessful, and now they find themselves racing against time to prevent the fish from making their way into the Great Lakes, where they fear the resulting population explosion would cause irreversible damage to local ecosystems.

So now, the obvious question: if they're so numerous and easy to catch, why are we not eating them? According to Ferguson, there are a few hurdles to overcome. The first of which is public perception. Many American consumers see all carp as "dirty," he said. They're thought of as bottom-feeders, largely due to this being true for cer-

tain carp species. But Ferguson says that the opposite is actually the case for Asian carp.

Ferguson said previous attempts at marketing the fish to consumers have addressed this by simply removing "carp" from the fishes' name. In some places, Asian carp are sold for consumption as "silverfin."

The other hurdle facing a successful Asian carp fishery is a serious lack of practical data. There just hasn't been much research on what it would take to harvest the fish for large scale consumption, making ecologists reluctant to turn to food-based solutions. That's where Ferguson's research comes in.

His initial project aimed to evaluate the consumptive value of Asian carp and provide relevant info needed for planning, such as economy of scale data. To do so, Ferguson and his team first traveled to western Kentucky where they joined a collaborative state agency effort to remove thousands of pounds of silver and bighead carp in a single day from the Ohio River, not as difficult a task as you might think when the fish are leaping into the boat on their own, he said. The team then took their haul back to the lab to process the fish. The team ground up and freeze-dried each component so they could test for nutritional value, including protein and lipid content.

Their results revealed that the fish were incredibly nutritious — shockingly so for a nonmarine species.

Ferguson's findings were published in July. With it now demonstrated that Asian carp are a safe, plentiful, and healthy food source, there's probably only one question still on your mind.

How do they taste? "They have white, flakey meat that's mild, not very fishy, and take to most any seasoning," Ferguson said with a laugh. "If you are one of the few who try and don't like Asian carp, that fish was either poorly handled, overcooked or you just don't like fish."

—Written by Alex Hood

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# OPINION

## Being alone is not the same as being lonely

*"A man's home is his castle."*  
According to oll.libertyfund.org/quotes/502, that quote about a man's castle is credited to the English judge and jurist Sir Edward Coke in a famous decision from 1604. The same source says it's really a simplification of what he said, for he actually declared, "The house of every one is to him his castle and fortress." The gist is the same.

This pandemic we haven't seen the end of yet has left us in some rather ironic situations.

For one, in this age of technological wizardry from the cell phone to the computer, when we have more means than ever before to stay in touch with people, COVID has had the effect of relocating us into the Middle Ages. Europe's medieval period lasted from the fall of Rome in 476 A.D. until the beginning of the Renaissance in the 14th century, roughly a thousand years.

According to a BBC website, "Far from their dour reputation, the Middle Ages were a period of massive social change, burgeoning nationalism, international conflict, terrible natural disaster, climate change, rebellion, resistance and

renaissance."  
The Middle Ages were the time of Europe's most impressive architectural achievements: the construction of the massive cathedrals and the massive castles, structures with drastically opposing purposes. The cathedrals were built to let people in; the castles were built to keep people out.

And the pandemic has had the effect of destroying our sense of community. Instead, out of fear largely, we have retreated into our homes and, for the most part, kept visitors at bay. Like a castle. Our homes have once again become our castles. We don't just live in them anymore. As never before in our history, more of us now work at home, too.

In his message this past Sunday, our church pastor delivered the rather surprising statistic that with more Americans than ever before working from the isolation of their homes, we aren't working less. We're actually working more: some 20 to 30 percent more.

Some time ago, the decision was made by the powers that be in the company I work for to close our Christiansburg office. Our advertising and editorial person-

nel would henceforth work from home. So I am parked at my computer in the solitude of the second floor of my home gamely struggling to put together something at least halfway worth reading.

Theoretically at least, in forcing us to retreat into our homes, COVID has given us more free time. Our pastor called it the margins of our lives, the white space at the edge of a book's pages. The irony, as my pastor's statistic shows, is that we haven't used that white space particularly wisely. Instead, we're doing more of what we've always done: We're working.

The truth is, I like this working at home. I especially enjoy it on the days when my wife -- who teaches at Christiansburg High School -- is at home, too.

She often accuses me of being a bachelor, her point being that I don't mind being alone at all.

The truth is, I don't. While I certainly prefer to spend time with her, I am not wigged out by being alone either. For me, being alone does not at all mean being lonely.

When I was growing up, one of the punishments my mother doled out upon the extremely infrequent occasions that I misbehaved (gasp!)

was to send me to my room. She once remarked, though, that sending me to the contemporary equivalent of time out wasn't a punishment for me because I liked it there and was perfectly content. I'd usually grab a book and read or work crossword puzzles or such.

I still do that. Over the decades, I have built a library of close to two hundred books, most of them hardback classics. They provide me with a means of constant amusement and satisfaction. And, too, in recent years, I have become a Sudoku fan. Another good way to fill the hours and drive away any hints of loneliness.

Since the pandemic erupted shortly after my wife and I left Georgia and moved up here, one unpleasant fact about my life is true: Working at home has meant I haven't had the chance to make any friends, a situation my more gregarious wife frequently laments.

And church isn't any help either. We attend every Sunday morning, but in yet another COVID-19-induced irony, our church isn't really a community anymore. We show up on time, grab a cup of coffee, attend the service, and then leave. Before the pandemic, we lingered

and talked and chatted and socialized. No more. Masks aren't conducive to conversation, and social distancing isn't conducive to mingling.

These are lonesome times we live in, but I have found they are not necessarily lonely times.

I discussed in an earlier column how our school-age kids have it worse than we adults do because the foundation of the only lives they have ever known -- school and its activities -- has been swept away, leaving them foundering. We as adults -- especially we who have been kicked around a little bit -- are somewhat accustomed to being buffeted. We may not like it all that much, but we have learned to adjust and move on. One "new normal" we have had to adjust to this time around is being alone in the sense of not being part of a larger, wider community.

Thank God, we still have family.

*The author is a man of a certain age who does indeed miss not having good friends to visit with, party with, and swap stories and lies with. But he, like the rest of us in our isolation, will persevere and make it through.*

## Evans King: Another trip around the sun accomplished

This past week was my birthday, another trip around the sun in trendy parlance.

A good time to reflect or at least put down on paper some random thoughts that pop into my mind regarding my many trips in that orbit. While I was giving my approach some thought, I remembered an event from a few months ago that I felt was "Messenger-worthy."

The story that comes to

mind falls into the category of what a small world it is, or perhaps more accurately, how social media can connect us. For all of its evils and de-sensitization and invective-promoting excesses, at certain times the Internet age and social media can bring people together and put a smile on your face. This is a story of one of those times.

Now, to me, a baby-boomer, social media means

primarily Facebook. I hope it qualifies and that I'm not even more out of tune than I think. I tried Twitter, but it was too much and not how I wanted to spend my time, and I haven't used Instagram or any of the other similar social media platforms.

My law firm set up a Linked-In account for me, but I have rarely used it, and as I wind down my career I haven't tried to keep it up to date. I'd prefer to let our younger lawyers attract new clients and contacts. When I retire to the islands, I don't want to get messages from people asking me if I could handle a reverse triangular merger for them.

So it's been Facebook for me. Ridiculed or mocked by many who call it Fakebook or worse, I have found it a fun way to reconnect a little with old friends and acquaintances and to keep up with current friends, falling into the category of those who believe you can't have too many friends.

Also, if you have lost your life partner, live alone, grow tired occasionally of arguing with your cat, and believe that television is only for sports, Facebook is a welcome relief. Even more so in this time of isolation. As they say, the first step to recovery is to admit your problem. Well, I am "on" Facebook, not excessively but regularly. I'm not an addict. I swear.

When I look at those who have "friended" me or those whom I have "friended," they fall into four distinct categories: Christiansburg

friends, college friends, law school friends and West Virginia friends (those whom I would not know but for my career choice to join my law firm 41 years ago). The four special parts of my life, time-wise at least, clear lines of division and connection.

When it comes to Facebook, I have certain ground rules that I follow. First, posts should be used only for pictures of kids and grandkids (of which I have a wonderful supply), pets (my cat Scarlett has a loyal following) and travel and social gatherings. Occasionally, I can remember lost loved ones or departed friends or big events.

It should not be used for politics or personal attacks or selling things. I challenge anyone to determine my political or social beliefs from my Facebook page (or this column). Too many friends on each side of the spectrum of this crazy world. I like to paraphrase one of my favorite poets, Rod Stewart: "Do what you like, just don't do it here."

Back to this story. As I teased above, I recently had one of those experiences that make you see the possibilities of social media. Through the "friend of a friend of a friend" thing, or perhaps through one of the Facebook pages established for those of us with Christiansburg ties, I received a contact from an 88-year-old lady living in Florida. She saw my name and wanted to find out if I was related to "the Evans King and Katie King" she had known from her days

growing up in Cambria. She told me that Katie King had been one of her teachers and that Evans King had been her principal at Christiansburg High. I will call her "Imogene" because that's her name. Haha (I hear LOL is no longer used by the cool kids).

I responded of course and told this lady that I was in fact Evans and Katie's son. Mildly interesting you say, but when you were raised by school teachers in a small town and had as many connections to the schools as my family did for as long as it did, this is hardly surprising. Sadly, with the passage of time it happens less and less frequently, but at one point in my life most residents of Christiansburg had been taught by one or both of my parents or one of my aunts, or had been in school while my Dad was principal or superintendent. It is now a significantly depleted group of Christiansburgers I hate to say.

This is where this story gets significantly more interesting, at least to me. When I was "messaging" with Imogene, always happy to share histories, particularly with those who knew my parents, she told me that in January of 1953 she gave birth to her daughter at Jefferson Hospital in Roanoke. My mother was in the "maternity ward" with Imogene giving birth at the same time.

Imogene then asked if maybe that was a sibling of mine. I said, "Nope, that was me." She said she hadn't been sure. (It must have been that

my youthful appearance on Facebook made me look too young to be her daughter's age. I reject the other possibility.) So we exchanged a few more emails and she told me that she saw my Mom and Dad with me shortly after my birth and showed them her bouncing baby daughter. An exquisite mental image for me, my parents showing me off in this 1950's style maternity ward of this long gone hospital in southwest Roanoke.

Another endearing aspect of this story: I was born on my Mother's 40th birthday. Per my crack mathematical skills, Imogene was 20 years old, half my mother's age, when she gave birth to her daughter. God bless them both for their efforts.

Imogene told me she never saw my parents again. She left the hospital before my Mom did and she apparently was no longer living in Christiansburg. In other words, she didn't know the "rest of the story." She didn't know that I was the first or the only child born to Evans and Katie.

I'm very happy that my Mom and Imogene were able to reconnect through me. And the wonders of social media.

*Evans "Buddy" King is a proud native of Christiansburg, CHS Class of 1971. He resides in Clarksburg, W.Va., where he has practiced law with the firm of Steptoe & Johnson, PLLC, since 1980. He can be reached at evans.king@steptoe-johnson.com.*

### RADFORD NEWS JOURNAL

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# OBITUARIES

## Austin, Judy Davis

Judy Davis Austin, 67, of Blacksburg, passed away on January 22, 2021. She was born on June 23, 1953, to the late Walter (Ben) H. and Sally Shaver Davis. She was preceded in death by her brothers, Russell and Tommy Davis, and a nephew, Dean Davis. She is survived by her son, John (Johnny) W. Radford; sister-in-law Jeanne Davis; nieces Robin Miles and



Stephanie Linkous; nephews Stephen Davis, Tony Davis and Forrest Davis; 11 great-nieces and nephews; a special fur baby, Molly; and numerous cousins. No services will be held at this time. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Mountain View Humane Society, 225 Industrial Drive, Christiansburg, VA 24073.

## Wilson, Mary Mann

Mary Mann Wilson, 92, died peacefully on Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021, at her home in the Brookdale Meadowmont Community in Chapel Hill, N.C. Until 2013, Mary lived for 30 years in Blacksburg with her husband and the love of her life, Colonel Gene Frederick Wilson. Gene died in July 2013. Mary was born in Indian Mound, Stewart County, Tenn., and was the daughter of Noah McGregor Mann and Addie May Mann. She was predeceased by her siblings Roy, John, Rex, Lindy and Brenda. Mary dedicated her life to family. She gave unwavering support to Gene in his military career, which took the family on many adventures around the globe. She was devoted to her children and took delight in watching them grow, marry and have families of their own. Her happiest moments were creating festive gatherings at her home, the beach, skiing or anywhere the family was all together. She is survived by her three children and their spouses, whom she loved as her own children: Bruce Wilson (Cathy) of Danville, Va., Dennis Wilson (Susan) of Edmond, Okla., and Mary Ann Wilson Baldwin (Bruce) of Hillsborough, N.C. She took great joy in her six grandchildren: Evan and Hannah (Bruce and Cathy), Madison and Chandler (Dennis and Susan) and Matthew and Scott (Mary Ann and Bruce). She had one great-granddaughter, Elaina Louell Gilbert. Her grandchildren enjoyed piling into her beautiful, cozy home to be treated to feasts, fun, laughter and, most of all, love. Mary was a devout follower of Jesus who could sing (or whistle) many songs

from the Baptist Hymnal and did so most every day. She dedicated her life to serving in the church and helping others. The most impactful of all her acts of charity was her teaching of English as a Second Language to internationals. She first began this work in 1965 while living at Fort Richardson Army Base in Anchorage, Alaska. Family members, often spouses of service members or Alaskan company executives, came to English classes at the church as a joint church/base outreach. Mary was dedicated to serving them through teaching, but also through caring for them and their families while they were far from their homelands. A highlight for her was watching many of her students become American citizens. She continued teaching international students for 30 years and developed programs wherever she moved. She was honored for the development of an English language program in Blacksburg, which started in her home, moved to Blacksburg Baptist Church and operated for twenty years, serving hundreds of families. Mary's family owes a debt of gratitude to the staff at Brookdale Meadowmont, especially those who lovingly cared for her during her time in memory care. Their expertise and understanding provided our family with support and comfort during many challenging years. Because of COVID-19 precautions, Mary's life will be honored at a family-only graveside service. The family requests that in lieu of flowers donations be made to any charity that reflects Mary's acts of kindness for others. Arrangements by McCoy Funeral Home, Blacksburg.

## Demas, Doloris Gearhart

Doloris Gearhart Demas, 77, departed this life on January 21, 2021, at English Meadows, Blacksburg. She was born in Morgantown, W.Va., on Dec. 26, 1943, to the late Flora Linkenhoker Gearhart Sumner and Ralph W. Gearhart. Doloris is survived by two sisters, Shirley Gearhart Thompson McGee of Elon, N.C., and Norma Gearhart Saunders Lawson of Christiansburg, and several nieces and nephews. Prior to moving to Blacksburg, she lived in the Washington, D.C., area where she was a broker/realtor for many years before relocating to Southern Shores on the Outer Banks



where she continued her broker/ realtor profession. She maintained a colorful life, traveling to Europe and the Middle East. She was a delight to all who knew her. Special appreciation and unbounding love go to Barbara DeHart, who remained a lifelong friend and helpmate, and to Jim Demas, her loyal and loving friend always. Many thanks to English Meadows staff for their loving attention and care. A memorial celebration will be held in the spring or summer at the Outer Banks of North Carolina, a place dear to her heart. Online condolences are appreciated. Arrangements by McCoy Funeral Home, Blacksburg.

## Draper, Joseph Conner

Joseph Conner Draper, 'Joe,' 86, of Christiansburg, formerly of Boykins, Va., passed away on Thursday, Jan. 14, 2021. Joe and Lucy married in 1957 and traveled to Germany for a two-year Army enlistment where he served as a cryptologist. Upon returning to the United States they settled in Boykins and managed the family farm until he returned to VPI to study agronomy. Joe and Lucy were active members in the community and made many friends in the area through their many social and business relationships. Joe began his professional surveying career in 1965 and became a leader in the growth of the Christiansburg-Blacksburg-Montgomery County community. Joe was a founding partner and President of Draper Aden Associates (DAA) from its inception in 1972 and held that role until he retired in 1997. He also served several terms on the Montgomery County Planning Commission. Over the course of his life, Joe's quiet leadership, incredible memory and easygoing wisdom oversaw the growth of DAA from five employees in Blacksburg to well over 300 employees spread across eight offices in two states. He was known for his ability to solve problems and mentored many of DAA's employees. Joe's business partner and dear friend Bill Aden remarked, "I'm going to miss him terribly, but know he's going to be casting for his favorite bonefish in a better place."



After an early loss of a close friend, Joe became an avid fly fisherman and thoroughly enjoyed remote international fishing and shooting trips where he made many lifelong friendships. He was an enthusiastic Golden Hokie, enjoying numerous football games with family and friends. After retirement, he enjoyed woodworking projects at Lucy and Joe's cabin on the Little River in Riner. He was a sharp card counter which enabled him to be a fierce competitor in poker, bridge and other games of chance, all of which he enjoyed. Joe was preceded in death by his parents, Lucian Felton and Kat Draper, and his wife of 62 years, Lucille Webb Draper. He is survived by his brother, Sonny Draper; daughters Lynn Rader, Kurdy Biggs and her husband John, Susan Silas and her husband Greg; grandchildren Joe Rader, Gwen Harris, Connor Biggs, Kiernin Biggs, Aaron Durrence, Olivia Durrence, Alison Durrence, Meagan Matechak and Will Silas; great-grandchildren Harmony Rader, Richie Perry and Bryce Harris; devoted friend Jane Rivers; and many nieces and nephews. Joe will be missed by all. Graveside services were conducted on Monday, Jan. 18, 2021 with Pastor David Rhudy officiating in Beechwood Cemetery, Boykins, Va. A celebration of life will be held later in the year in Christiansburg when conditions allow. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the American Cancer Society or a charity of your choice.

## Zirk, Catherine Payton

Catherine Payton Zirk, 73, of Blacksburg, passed away on Thursday, Jan. 21, 2021. Catherine was preceded in death by her parents, William Payton and Iva Grubb Payton, as well as her daughter, Mariah Zirk Johnson. She is survived by her husband of 46 years, Gerald "Gerry" Zirk; two children, Evelyn Boyle and Senior Chief Jason and Heather Zirk, USN; grandchildren Aaron McCoy, Dylan McCoy and Willow Boyle; and two additional grandchildren, raised mostly in her household, Trinity Zirk and Payton Johnson. Her loving sister and best friend, Eleanor Garrison, resides in Blacksburg, as does a special cousin, Geoffrey Grubb. Catherine was born in Blacksburg



in 1947 and graduated from Blacksburg High School in 1965. She worked for the National Bank of Blacksburg for 42 years in the book-keeping department. She was an active member of her church, the Blacksburg Christian Church, where she was a member of the Disciples Women's Ministry. Due to the current COVID 19 restrictions and health considerations for friends and family, a memorial service and celebration of her life will be held at a later date that will be announced when more favorable and safe conditions exist. The family appreciates your understanding during this time of mourning. Arrangements by McCoy Funeral Home, Blacksburg.

## Moore, Kathleen Elaine Slusher

Kathleen Elaine Slusher Moore, 77, passed away on January 21, 2021. She was predeceased by her parents, Leonard and Sylvia Mabry Slusher of Blacksburg, and her husband, Ralph H. Moore. She is survived by her brother, Jeffery Slusher (Patricia), of Southport, N.C.; three nephews, Jay Slusher (Amy) of Flat Rock, N.C., William Slusher (Laurie) of Hayes, Va., and Andrew Slusher (Amanda) of Nashville, Tenn.; one niece, Lauren Slusher, of Austin, Texas, in addition to special friends (Cousin Evon, Julia and Marilyn), numerous cousins, three grand-nephews (Hayes, Wilson and Ben), one grand-niece (Logan), and an aunt (Diane). A Blacksburg native, Kathleen was a gifted vocalist, studying music at

Longwood College and earning her degree from Radford University. She was a former member of the Blacksburg Christian Church. Kathleen retired as a civilian employee of the Department of the Army where she served as a senior budget analyst in the pentagon for many years. She will be interred with her husband at Westview Cemetery in Blacksburg following a brief graveside service at a time to be announced. In lieu of flowers, contributions in her name to the Humane Society of Montgomery County (<http://www.hsmcshelter.com/donations.html>), PO Box 287, Blacksburg, VA 24063, would be appreciated. Arrangements by McCoy Funeral Home, Blacksburg.

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# RADFORD SPORTS

## Virginia Tech basketball player arrested, faces DUI, weapons charges

Redshirt sophomore guard Tyrece Radford, a member of the Virginia Tech men's basketball team, was arrested Sunday and charged with driving under the influence and carrying a concealed weapon.

According to police reports, Radford was pulled over for a routine traffic stop by Blacksburg police at 1:16 a.m. Sunday. He was subsequently released on \$1,000 bond.

In a statement released Monday, Virginia Tech officials said Radford has been suspended indefinitely from all men's basketball team activities, effective immediately, for not upholding the high standards the school has for its students and athletes. According to the athletic department, no further comments will be made until the matter is resolved.

Last week, Radford was named an ACC Co-Player of the Week, the award coming for his play against Wake Forest and Duke. He led the team in scoring in the games, both wins, averaging 19 points, eight rebounds and 3.5 assists as Tech beat then-No. 19 Duke 74-67 and Wake Forest 64-60.

The native of Baton Rouge, La., posted his first double-double of the season and the fourth of his career against Duke with 18 points and 12 rebounds while also dishing out five assists, all three team highs

on the night. He recorded his second 20-point outing of the season when he scored 20 points against the Demon Deacons. He also had four rebounds, two assists and two steals.

The Hokies are coming off a 78-60 loss to Syracuse on Saturday in which the 6-2 guard scored 10 points.



PHOTO COURTESY OF VT ATHLETICS

**Blacksburg police Sunday arrested VT's Tyrece Radford on DUI and weapons charges.**

## Auburn JV boys win county tournament



SUBMITTED PHOTO

**The Auburn High School boys' junior varsity basketball team claimed first place in this past weekend's Montgomery County tournament at the Christiansburg Recreation Center. Auburn downed Christiansburg in Saturday's championship game.**

## Blacksburg JV girls win county tournament



SUBMITTED PHOTO

**The Blacksburg High School junior varsity basketball squad won this past weekend's Montgomery County tournament held at the Christiansburg Recreation Center. The Lady Bruins finished 2-0 in the event.**

## Volleyball training facility to open at mall

**Marty Gordon**  
NRVsports@ourvalley.org

The River Valley Juniors (RVJ) Volleyball Club, a travel organization, Friday announced plans for a new volleyball training facility at the former New River Valley Mall, now Uptown Mall.

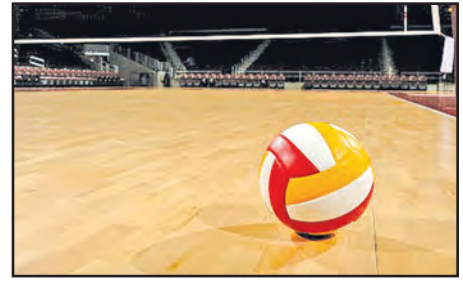
Nicole Kessner is the director for RVJ, which has more than 120 youngsters on the current roster. She called the need huge here in the region.

"Loads of AAU volleyball and basketball programs struggle to find practice spaces due to competing with school and rec sports," Kessner said. "We struggle every year to find the right amount of gym space for our kids, and sometimes we have to pay a heavy price for it."

The group has signed a lease on a 6,100-square-foot space behind Kirkland's in part of the former JC Penney retail store location.

According to Kessner, the facility will include a full court and a half court. The renovated space will also have strength and conditioning equipment with plans for a storefront of its own in the near future. RVJ has a five-year goal to expand into other stores at the mall and continue to grow.

River Valley Juniors is dedicated to giving girls in the New River Valley and



SUBMITTED PHOTO

**A new volleyball training facility is coming to the region with plans for a site at Uptown Mall in Christiansburg.**

beyond with a passion for volleyball a chance to excel and play at the next level.

A fundraising effort will help pay for the facility. Donors can contribute \$1,000 for a banner to be placed in the gym.

RVJ welcomes athletes ages 10-18.

"Our hope is to add additional space and courts, so we can run tournaments in Christiansburg," Kessner said. "This would be a great revenue source for the mall and the town of Christiansburg itself."

RVJ hopes to open the new training site by the end of February or the first of March.

More information about RVJ and the new facility is available at [www.rivervalleyjuniors.com](http://www.rivervalleyjuniors.com).

## VT men's soccer makes history with first pick in MLS draft



**Hokies men's soccer head coach Mike Brizendine Thursday saw two of his players, Daniel Pereira (left) and Kristo Strickler (right), picked in the first two rounds of the MLS draft for the first time ever. Pereira was the first overall number-one pick in program history**

The Virginia Tech men's soccer program made history Thursday when Daniel Pereira was selected by Austin FC as the No. 1 overall pick and Kristo Strickler was selected No. 30 by Houston Dynamo FC in the Major League Soccer SuperDraft 2021.

A midfielder from Roanoke, Pereira became the first No. 1 pick in program history and only the third Virginia Tech student-athlete to be selected first in a professional sports draft, joining Michael Vick and Bruce Smith.

Pereira was part of the 2021 Generation Adidas class, joining Patrick Nyarko as the only other Hokie to receive the honor. Nyarko was selected with the seventh pick in the 2008 MLS Draft.

Pereira is Austin FC's first pick in franchise history as the club approaches its inaugural playing season in 2021.

An underrated recruit, Pereira estab-

lished himself as a day-one starter in Blacksburg. In 27 games across two seasons, he scored six goals and recorded six assists. In 2019, Pereira was named to the ACC All-Freshman team.

A midfielder from Hilliard, Ohio, Strickler was selected with the third pick in the second round of the draft (No. 30 overall). A four-year starter for Tech, Strickler's versatility has led him to various honors, including being named to the VaSID First Team in 2018 and second team All-ACC in both 2018 and 2019.

With 27 career goals, Strickler is ninth all-time in program history for goals scored.

Thursday's draft marked only the second time two Hokies have been selected in the same MLS SuperDraft (2008) and the first instance in program history of two players being picked in the first two rounds.

## Aisha Sheppard sets all-time Tech record for 3-pointers

Thursday night against Notre Dame, Tech's All-ACC shooting guard Aisha Sheppard knocked down four threes and

became the program's all-time leading 3-point scorer with 273 career triples.

The Alexandria, Va., native owns the VT single-season mark of 84, which she set last season, and is filling it up at a historic rate in her senior campaign. She leads the nation with 54 threes and is tops in threes per game among players who have participated in 11 games or more.

Sheppard is co-holder of the VT single-game record for threes with eight, a feat she has accomplished twice. She has already eclipsed the 1,000-point mark and ranks 14th on the school's list of all-time leading scorers with 1,267 points. With the season still being played out, she will continue to move up on the list.

Sheppard ranks 10th all-time in the ACC for three-pointers made.



PHOTO COURTESY OF VT ATHLETICS

**Aisha Sheppard (left) became Virginia Tech's all-time leader in three-pointers Thursday night. Head coach Kenny Brooks (right) recognized the guard who now has 273 threes and counting.**

--VT Athletics

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