



Wednesday, May 12, 2021

USPS 387-780

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\$1.00

Radford Chamber director sets sail for Claytor Lake



Ciara Harris is moving from the Radford Chamber of Commerce to the Friends of Claytor Lake.

Ciara Harris, executive director of the Radford Chamber of Commerce, is taking the helm at Friends of Claytor Lake (FOCL), the organization's board of directors announced Monday.

Harris will be replacing current FOCL director Jeff Caldwell.

"Jeff has been a dynamic part of

the local environmental organization for over 10 years, working to educate and advocate for FOCL's mission," the organization announced. "FOCL remains dedicated to conserving and protecting the quality, sustainability, and tranquility of the environment of Claytor Lake for all to enjoy. Jeff

remains involved in the community as the new owner of Nesselrod on the New."

Harris, a Pulaski County native, will transition to her new post from the Radford Chamber of Commerce in the coming weeks.

"We are excited to welcome Ms. Harris as she brings past marketing experience and a fresh perspective to the organization," FOCL announced. "Ciara has been with the chamber for almost 2.5 years and has helped grow the membership network and events."

Harris has a degree in Recreation, Parks and Tourism and previously worked at Visit Lake Norman and other local businesses such as New River Retreat and Draper Mercantile.

"My time with the chamber has taught me so much, and I am thankful to have been in such a diverse role," Harris said. "I'm thrilled to keep learning and to keep advocating for the local community, just in a different way."

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Three cherubic children adorn the Radford Library entrance thanks to memorial donation



Three statues have been donated to the Radford Public Library from the family of Philip Young. This one is of a child reading a book with an attentive puppy helping her out.

RADFORD - Some adorable new art is gracing the exterior of the Radford Public Library in memory of a late member of the Radford community.

"These beautiful statues have been donated to the City of Radford in loving memory of Philip W. Young, who was born and raised in Radford," the library recently announced. "We thank the Peters Family and the Young Family for this collection."

"The recent placement of these statues in front

of the Radford Public Library at the Main Street entrance coincides with the one-year anniversary of Mr. Young's passing, and we are keeping Mr. Young's family in our thoughts. We hope the visibility of these statues will provide comfort to his family and also boost spirits to all those who see them," said a statement issued by the library.

The three statues can be viewed at the East Main Street entrance to the building. One reads a book on

See **Statues**, page 5

Radford University commencement ceremonies celebrate 2020, 2021 graduates

Seventeen separate commencement ceremonies were held recently on the Radford University main campus and at the Berglund Center in Roanoke to celebrate the achievements of approximately 1,930 undergraduate and graduate students in the RU and RU Carilion classes of 2020 and 2021 who attended in person.

The festive activities began at the Class of 2020 College of Graduate Studies and Research Hooding and Commencement Ceremony, held at Cupp Stadium. Graduates and their guests heard from keynote speaker Lyn Lepre,

See **Graduates**, page 3



New Radford University graduates walk to meet family members after a morning commencement ceremony on main campus.

VT honoring more than 6,000 graduates at spring commencement ceremonies

Virginia Tech is holding in-person commencement ceremonies in Lane Stadium that began Monday and will run through Sunday, May 16.

The university is celebrating graduating seniors, graduate school students, and their families, while adhering to public health guidelines.

All in-person ceremonies will be live-streamed, and details about attending commencement in-person can be found online.

The first of two graduate school commencement ceremonies was held Monday at 2 p.m., with the second one occurring Tuesday at 4 p.m. The Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine honored its graduates at 6:30 p.m. The complete schedule is available online.

The remainder of the week will

include in-person ceremonies for those receiving undergraduate degrees from both the Class of 2021 and the Class of 2020.

On Friday, the university will hold a virtual commencement ceremony at 6:30 p.m. with the pre-ceremony beginning at 6:15 p.m. to honor the Class of 2021. The virtual ceremony will include remarks from a keynote speaker, as well as messages from students.

Joseph Kozak, who is receiving his doctoral degree in electrical and computer engineering, is the graduate school student speaker. Kozak is the 2020 Outstanding Graduate Student of the Year, recognizing him for his character, service, and academic achievements. He earned his bachelor's degree in engineering physics and a master's degree in electrical engineering from the University of Pittsburgh. His re-

search interests revolve around making systems smaller and more efficient.

Class of 2021 President Grant Bommer will also offer a message to fellow graduates during the virtual ceremony. Bommer is receiving a bachelor's degree in business and finance.

Francis S. Collins, the director of the National Institutes of Health, was announced as the university's commencement keynote speaker last month. Collins has been a prominent figure in the nation's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and is the only presidentially appointed NIH director to serve more than one administration.

Virginia Tech will honor 47 associate degree candidates from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and a total of 5,554 bachelor's degree candidates from all colleges throughout the week.

This year, 3,127 graduating Hokies completed their baccalaureate degree programs with honors, having achieved cumulative grade-point averages of at least 3.4 on a 4.0 scale.

The Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets is recognizing 217 graduates from its program. Of those, 156 will be entering service in the military as commissioned officers, 65 in the U.S. Army, 48 in the U.S. Air Force, 36 in the U.S. Navy, and seven in the U.S. Marine Corps.

The Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine plans to hand out a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree to 128 recipients. The Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine honored its class of 38 graduates at a ceremony on May 8 in Roanoke.

Nominations open for 2022 Farm Bureau Farm Dog of the Year, People's Choice Pup Award



WASHINGTON—The support farmers receive from their canine companions is priceless, and American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) is once again recognizing the contributions of America's finest farm dogs.

Farmers whose dogs demonstrate helpfulness on the farm, playfulness and obedience can submit nominations for the 2022 Farm Bureau Farm Dog of the Year contest through July 2. This is the fourth year of the contest, which honors farm dogs and the ways they assist with U.S. food production.

The People's Choice Pup Award is also returning for its third year.

"We're excited to host this popular contest again and provide the general public with another glimpse into daily life on the farm," said American Farm Bureau President Zippy Duvall. "Farm dogs often play a dual role as both working dogs and companions to farm families, which is especially important because farming and ranching can be stressful, even on the best days."

To enter, dog owners must be Farm Bureau members. Prospective applicants can learn more

about becoming a Virginia Farm Bureau member at va.fb.com/membership-at-work/membership.

The Montgomery County Farm Bureau offices are located at 1095 Peppers Ferry Road in Christiansburg.

Nominations for the contest include written responses to questions, still photos of the animal and optional video clips. Eligibility guidelines and submission requirements can be found at fb.org/land/fdoty.

The grand prize winner of the contest, sponsored by Purina, will receive \$5,000 in prize money, a year's worth of Purina dry dog food and recognition as the 2022 Farm Dog of the Year during the AFBF convention in January 2022.

The People's Choice Pup contest, which allows the public to vote for, comment on, share and like their favorite farm dogs on social media, also is returning.

Profiles of the top 10 nominees from the Farm Bureau Farm Dog of the Year contest will be shared starting in October, and the public is invited to vote for their favorite pups. The 2022 People's Choice Pup will receive bragging rights and a \$50 cash prize.



PHOTO BY RAY MEESE FOR VIRGINIA TECH

A team of workers checks the spacing between seats in Lane Stadium in preparation for spring commencement ceremonies. Virginia Tech is hosting 16 in-person ceremonies that conclude on Sunday, May 16.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday, May 12:

Hahn Horticulture Garden Virtual Road Trip

At 2 p.m. from the Wisconsin Arboretum with VT alumnus David Stevens. Register online for these talks and a zoom link will be provided: https://virginiatech.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cumxRA4Mec96guy.

Chair Yoga for everybody: Virtual

From 2:00 to 2:30 p.m. at the Blacksburg Library. Join Rachel for 20 minutes of chair yoga, a perfect practice for anytime you want a break but can't leave your seat.

Going Out Green

At 3 p.m. at the Montgomery Floyd Regional Library online. Learn about environmentally friendly burial options from the Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Virginia Blue Ridge. Email Kerri at kcopus@mfrl.org to register.

Evening Book Talk: Virtual Meeting

From 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Christiansburg Library. To be discussed this month is "A Woman of No Importance" by Sonia Purnell.

Thursday, May 13:

Radford Army Ammunition Plant community meeting

The Radford Army Am-

munition Plant (RFAAP) will hold its next Commander's Community Meeting from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Christiansburg Library. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, seating is very limited. The event will be broadcast on Facebook Live from the Radford Army Ammunition Plant Facebook page. These meetings are open to the public and are an opportunity to learn about the plant's modernization and environmental projects. Environmental compliance and corrective actions will be among the topics discussed.

Friday, May 14 and Saturday, May 15:

Lifeguard Training Recertification

At the Christiansburg Aquatic Center from 5:00 to 9:00 p.m. on Friday and 8:00 a.m. until noon on Saturday. The cost is \$100.

Caturday Storytime

At the Montgomery Floyd Regional Library online at 11 a.m. Come read to Creature the cat, who was adopted from the Montgomery County Animal Shelter two years ago by a library staff member and loves to lay and read. Email shodges@mfrl.org for info on the library's Go-To Meeting.

Monday, May 17:

Ice Cream Cone Planters

Pick up your own ice cream cone planter kit from the Christiansburg Library at 10:00 a.m. and watch it grow.

Tuesday, May 18:

Dungeons & Dragons

Join the Radford Public Library's very first Dungeons & Dragons adventure at 4:30 p.m. This is a one-shot adventure for level 1 characters. To participate, message the RPL on Facebook or email duncan.hall@radfordva.gov. Tuesday, May 18 at 4:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 19:

American Red Cross Blood Drive

At the Meadowbrook Public Library from 1:00 until 6:00 p.m. The American Red Cross will be having a blood drive at the Waldron Wellness Center Carilion Community Room. It is sponsored by Blue Ridge Church and the Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library. Help Save a life by donating blood. Schedule an appointment at www.redcrossblood.org. If patrons of the Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library have fines and donate blood, the library will forgive up to \$10, redeemable only at

the Meadowbrook Public Library. Donors will also be able to select a used library book to take home compliments of Friends of the Library Meadowbrook Chapter.

Thursday, May 20 - Friday, May 28:

Blended learning lifeguard training

At the Christiansburg Aquatic Center
May 20 from 5:30 p.m. until 7:30 p.m.: Pre-Test.
May 21 through May 26: Video portion of the training
May 27-28: 8 a.m. until 5 p.m.
The cost is \$200.

Friday, May 21:

United Way Drive-Thru Breakfast

At the Hampton Inn, 680 Arbor Drive, Christiansburg, from 6:00 to 9:00 a.m. Make a \$10 donation and pick up a breakfast bag that will include a breakfast biscuit, fruit, a pastry, a cup of coffee, and a newspaper.

Donations can be made to local first responders and teachers, and delivery will be provided.

Monday, May 24:

Radford Chamber of Commerce Golf Tournament: Birdies, Bogeys, and Business

At the Pete Dye River

Course at VT with Captain's Choice shotgun at 1 p.m. Registration and lunch starts at 11:30 p.m. Awarding of prizes via social media is at 6:00 p.m. Contests include Hole in One and Closest to the Pin with a \$200 prize. The team registration fee is \$350 per team. Email radfordchamber@govt.com to be emailed a registration form.

Wednesday, May 26:

Hahn Horticulture Garden Virtual Road Trip

At 2 p.m. from Lotusland with Paul Mills and Rebecca Anderson. Register online and a zoom link will be provided: https://virginiatech.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cumxRA4Mec96guy.

Monday, May 31:

Radford Memorial Day Service

Hosted by VFW Post 776 and the Harvey-Howe-Carper Post 30 of the American Legion at 11 a.m. at the Bisset Park gazebo, Radford.

Ongoing: Through May 14:

Young Chef Ingredient challenge

Through Friday, May 14, all day at the Montgomery Floyd Regional Library online. Calling all young chefs to challenge their creativity by making a meal with

spring peas, basil, and any kind of cheese (including vegan). They can add more ingredients to their recipe(s) but the meal must include all the ingredients listed. Please submit a photo and recipes by May 14. Email shodges@mfrl.org for further questions and for submission.

All month of May

StoryWalk

All the month of May, at the Christiansburg Library. Exercise your brain and body as you read and walk the trail. Begin at the library College Street entrance of Downtown Park. This month's book is "If You Give a Pig a Pancake."

Grab-and-Go Crafts

All day at the Meadowbrook Public Library. Drop by the library for Take-and-Make Craft Kits. Available for grab-and-go at the library or with curbside pickup. The kits are free, but supplies are limited.

Through Saturday, October 30:

Radford Farmers Market

The Radford Farmers Market will be held each Saturday through Oct. 30 from 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. in the New River Valley Community Service parking lot (Old Wade's parking lot) on West Main Street.

COVID Companions seeks to curb isolation among older adults by providing technology and a friend

Kirin Anand places the Amazon Fire high-definition tablet on the front steps of a house and rings the doorbell. Then he walks back to his car and makes a phone call. His COVID Companion answers and, after a brief conversation, she opens the door to retrieve the new technology on her doorstep.

The companion looks out at her street and sees Anand, a biological systems engineering major at Virginia Tech. The two wave an enthusiastic greeting to each other before Anand starts his car and pulls away.

Half an hour later, he will call his companion again to make sure she is acclimatizing to the tablet. Together they will navigate how the device connects to Wi-Fi, how applications such as Zoom and FaceTime work, and how to use the web browsers. Amid the technical discussion, they will talk of grandchildren, new recipes, and how the COVID-19 vaccinations work.

This scenario is how the COVID Companions program works, a new partnership among Virginia Tech's Public Health Program and

Center for Gerontology, the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets, the New River Valley Public Health Task Force, the Blacksburg Police Department, and the Blacksburg Health Department.

It is a buddy program that connects older adults with a friend within the New River Valley community. The program includes weekly phone calls, video-calls, pen pal correspondence, and technology assistance to help aid connectedness.

"The collaboration is so important," said Pamela Teaster, director of the Center for Gerontology, "because an initiative of this kind, one that needs focus, energy, and immediacy must have these organizations and more involved to help meet the needs of older adults in the New River Valley who are isolated because of COVID-19."

The initiative is the brainchild of Emily Hoyt and Laura York, both graduate students in public health and a certificate program from the Center for Gerontology. Together they have organized the effort with Callyn Niesen, a classmate in public health, who serves as the COVID

Companions' volunteer coordinator.

The program's origins stem from the New River Valley Public Task Force, which earlier during the pandemic worked with a group of students called COVID Crushers. These volunteers handed out masks and COVID-19 prevention information to the community.

The task force reached out to Virginia Tech, and Hoyt's and York's names came up because they are both in the Graduate Certificate in Gerontology program. Together they brainstormed on how to help the aging population. Isolation and technology were the two issues that first came to mind.

"While there was plenty to do on the front lines of the pandemic," said Anthony Wilson, chief of the Blacksburg Police Department and administrator of the program, "our task force wanted to make sure that we were aware of collateral issues that came with the restricted living and loss of services. Isolation was one of the issues that jumped out immediately. Many of our citizens were suffering both mentally and physically due



PHOTO FROM PIXY.ORG (CC0 PUBLIC DOMAIN)

COVID Companions provides older adults with both conversation and technology in an effort to curb isolation.

to the loss of contact and an inability to navigate technology.

"We had established a fantastic working relationship with the Virginia Tech Public Health program and had the topic come up in our weekly conversation," Wilson said. "Emily and Laura immediately jumped on the problem and came back with this amazing program concept. We would help fund it and they would take care of everything else."

Hoyt said they wanted to do something that was COVID safe and would not put older adults in

danger. They decided to do a telephone buddy program in which volunteers call older adults at least once a week and develop a friendship. But there would also be a technology piece. If the older adult had access to the Internet or Wi-Fi, there would be funding to provide a Fire HD tablet.

But the program does more than just help the aging population. It also provides an opportunity for students to enjoy a relationship they might not have otherwise been able to experience.

"It's through exposure

to that population that we can help reduce ageism among community members," Hoyt said. "So students can understand, it's not just, 'oh, they're these old people who are lonely.' No — they're real people who have real emotions and real-life experiences. And it's a symbiotic relationship between the volunteer and the older adult."

"This is truly one of the incredibly positive outcomes that can occur when a community faces adversity," said Wilson. "The community joined together to care for all."

The National Civil War Artillery Association in conjunction with Knibb's Battery

has a **Day of Training on Muzzleloading Cannons in the Blacksburg Area on May 15th • 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.**

Cost is \$40 and includes Certification, Manual, NCWAA Membership Card and Lunch

Contact (804) 356-8868, commander@knibbsbattery.org or knibbsbattery@aol.com

PETS-OF-THE-WEEK

At this time, visits to the 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



Socks



Pebble

Looking for your purrfect match? How about two? Pebble and her brother Socks are a bonded pair who hang out together at the Animal Care and Adoption Center, and they will need to live in the same home in the future. These young siblings love tons of attention and affection. They enjoy nuzzling up to human hands for chin scratches and head rubs.

Hokie Olympians share perspectives about competing on world's biggest stage

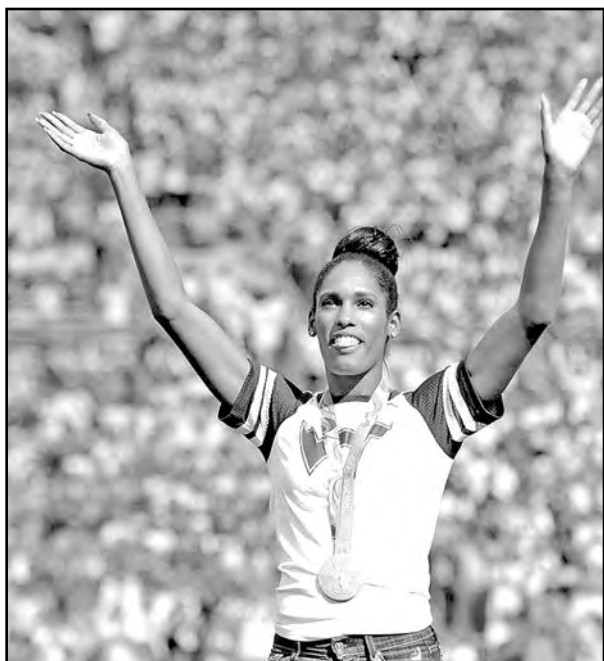


PHOTO BY DAVE KNACHEL, VIRGINIA TECH ATHLETICS

Kristi Castlin was the first female from Virginia Tech to win an Olympic medal, taking bronze in the 100-meter hurdles at the 2016 Summer Games. She was recognized for that accomplishment at a Virginia Tech football game later that fall.

Reliving their past Olympic experiences and discussing Virginia Tech's impact on their lives served as the main topics of discussion for five Virginia Tech Olympic athletes at the "Road to Reunion: Hokie Olympian Panel" held virtually recently.

Olympians Kristi Castlin, who was the first female VT athlete to an Olympic medal, Bimbo Coles, Queen Harrison, Marcel Lomnický, and Darrell

Wesh participated in the panel discussion. The event served as a preview to the type of programming Hokies can expect at the university's Reunion Weekend.

This year's reunion will be held virtually June 8-11. Hokies can sign up now to participate. Registration includes all online events, and participants can opt to score a box of Hokie swag.

Mike Burnop, a former Virginia Tech football player and a member of the

Virginia Tech Sports Hall of Fame, served as the moderator for the hour-long Road to Reunion event. Burnop, who earned both his bachelor's and master's degrees in health and physical education from Virginia Tech, asked questions for approximately 45 minutes. Those who registered for the event then received time to ask any of their questions.

As expected, all of the panelists agreed that participating in an Olympic Games represented the experience of a lifetime. Coles became the first Virginia Tech athlete to compete in the Olympics and to win a medal when he made the U.S. men's basketball team that won the bronze medal at the 1988 Summer Games in Seoul, South Korea. Castlin, Lomnický, and Wesh — all track and field athletes — competed in the 2016 Summer Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Harrison, a three-time track and field national champion at Virginia Tech, participated in the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, China.

"My experience was great," said Castlin, who earned her political science degree in 2010. "It took me quite some time to make my first team — eight years. So when I finally crossed the line and made it [at the

Olympic trials], I was happy and ecstatic just to go to the Olympics.

"It was a great experience for me, as it was my first Olympics and just going and my friends and family being there to celebrate and just doing great things," Castlin said.

Castlin was the first former Virginia Tech athlete to win an Olympic medal as she took home the bronze medal in the 100-meter hurdles.

"For Haiti, it's a little different than the U.S.," said Wesh (Human Development '15), who has dual citizenship with the U.S. and Haiti, but competed for Haiti in the 100-meter race in Rio.

"We don't have the trials because our country is so small, so all you really have to do is get the Olympic 'A' standard," Wesh said. "So, I remember getting that Olympic 'A' standard, and I was crying to my mom and crying to my dad. It was like, 'I did it.' I was set to go."

Lomnický (Management '13), who competed in the hammer throw for his native Slovakia, is one of two Virginia Tech athletes to compete in two Olympics. The other is Kaan Tayla, a swimmer, who competed for Turkey. Lomnický competed in the 2012 Olympic

Games in London and then again in 2016 in Rio.

"The Olympic experience was nice," the two-time national champion at Virginia Tech said. "In London, I was scared. I was young. I didn't know what to do. I didn't make the finals."

"In Rio, I learned from the first one. I had a lot more experience. In Rio, I made the finals and almost got a medal — I got fifth," Lomnický said. "It was amazing. I really loved it."

The Olympians talked extensively of their time in the Olympic Village, the location where nearly all of the athletes from all the countries stay while in a host city. Most of their discussions centered on the food.

Castlin and Lomnický found McDonald's much more to their liking than the food options offered within the village in Rio.

"They had a McDonald's that stayed open fairly late, and the line for McDonald's was like 25 or 30 meters long — no exaggeration," Castlin said. "I found myself getting tired of eating the same food that they were providing [in the Olympic Village]. I found myself going to McDonald's more often. I literally fueled an Olympic medal off of McDonald's."

"The only difference

[between Rio and London] was that, in London, the McDonald's was located right in the dining hall," Lomnický said. "You walked straight to the dining hall and the McDonald's was right there. People were not waiting in line. It was quicker. It was amazing."

"The food there, they tried to satisfy all the athletes," Lomnický said. "They had a Europe section and an Asia section and all the different styles of cooking, but the food, in my experience, was tasteless. That's why a lot of people went to McDonald's to get cheeseburgers."

Harrison, who earned her sociology degree in 2010, said she loved staying in the Olympic Village, where she got to know her U.S. teammates and tried all the various food options.

As a member of the U.S. men's basketball team, Coles and his teammates enjoyed the best of accommodations in Seoul.

"Our accommodations were great," said Coles, who earned his degree in apparel, housing, and resource management in 1990. "We pretty much did everything first class. The food was terrific. They had so many different foods from every country in the food court. Just a great area. My experience was terrific."

Harris

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Harris said she has a lot of enthusiasm for the lake, having "grown up camping around Claytor and continuing to visit family and friends by the water in my free time."

"She hopes to connect more businesses with the mission of FOCL and grow a volunteer and community network around keeping the lake clean, healthy, and enjoyable for all,"

according to FOCL. "Lake debris clean-up continues to be FOCL's main focus, but the organization has additional projects such as creating fish habitat structures, mussel salvage efforts, and water quality monitoring."

Other events and programs (COVID permitting) include the YMCA/Coast Guard Auxiliary Second Grade Wa-

ter Safety program, Veterans Fishing Day, Eighth-Grade Day, kids fishing day at Camp Powhatan, Christmas for the Fishes (Christmas tree drop off at State Park for fish habitat), FOCL Poker Run, along with the annual Spring Splash fundraiser. FOCL plans to further its mission and education to local residents and visitors by growing advocacy, awareness,

and the volunteer network.

The board also announced the new office for FOCL at the Pulaski County Innovation Center, 6580 Valley Center Dr. in Fairlawn, room 318. The office and meeting facilities the center has to offer will serve as the hub for FOCL-related meetings.

Other businesses that can be found in the center include

the NRV Regional Commission, JH Bards Spirit Co., MS Contracting, Virginia Career Works, the Virginia Dept. of Emergency Management and New River Security Investigations.

The Radford Chamber of Commerce has not yet announced a new director.

-- Heather Bell

Graduates

from page 1

Ph.D., provost and vice president for academic affairs.

"This is a life-changing moment for all of our graduates," Lepre said. "This is a day of justly deserved celebration. A day to also celebrate all those who have supported them along the journey to this stage."

"I am amazed at the drive, dedication, motivation and inspiration of our students, especially those of you who have overcome obstacles and barriers in your educational journey and in your life's path," the provost told the graduates.

"Your Radford education has prepared you to use life's setbacks as building blocks for future success. It has given you the skills to not only survive but to thrive."

Hundreds of the members of the Class of 2020 returned to campus for their graduation, which was postponed a year by the pandemic. Logan Richards, who earned his undergraduate degree in computer science, said he participated in person for his family.

"My parents and grandparents wanted to experience this once-in-a-lifetime moment with me," Richards said. Within a few hours of the commencement ceremonies, he was interviewing for his first job after a year spent interning in Salem.

"The pressure's on," he said. For Eric Molly of Gloucester, Va., commencement was "10 years in the making." Molly attended another university for three years, took three years off, and then transferred to Radford. His parents, brother, and girlfriend all joined him to celebrate the milestone. "I couldn't miss it,"

said Molly, who earned a degree in music education.

Chanera Durante chose to participate in the delayed ceremony as an example to her 10-year-old son, Camden. Durante and Camden, both dressed in graduate gowns, eagerly waited in line at the campus fountain with other Class of 2020 social work graduates.

The mother and son, originally from Fredericksburg, have lived in Radford for the past seven years so Durante could work toward both her undergraduate and master's degrees in social work. She also earned a minor degree in special education and a certificate in autism, an achievement especially important to Durante.

Camden, she said, is on the autism spectrum. Throughout her time at Radford, he would often join her in the classroom where dedicated faculty would help Durante navigate Camden's unique educational and social needs.

"It's been a blessing the way that Radford has included Camden and helped us as a family," Durante said. "He's as

much a Highlander as I am."

Durante is also a first-generation student and said she wanted to make attending college a "new norm" for her family.

The pandemic also presented unexpected challenges for the Class of 2021, and they were finally able to conclude and celebrate a year filled with change.

"We've been waiting for this a long time," said Cassie Wolfe, standing among a group of fellow communication sciences and disorders majors waiting for the Waldron College of Health and Human Services ceremony to begin. "It's great to be able to have commencement in person. I think everybody's really excited for this opportunity."

Wolfe came to Radford because of its speech-language pathology program.

During the ceremony, President Brian Hemphill and Provost Lepre honored New River Health District Director Noelle Bissell, M.D. with the Presidential Medalion for Service "for her tireless efforts and sheer determination to make a difference in the lives of

others, particularly during this past year when the world was devastated by the global health pandemic."

"It was her dedication as a community leader that guided us through a time like no other," Provost Lepre said. "Her knowledge, skills and positive attitude are an inspiration to all of us."

Across campus, the Davis College of Business and Economics ceremony was held on Moffett Lawn. Before the event, finance major Luis Segal spoke about the bitter-sweet moment of graduating and then moving on to start a job the following week in Richmond, his hometown.

"My Radford experience has been great," Segal said. "It's had its challenges because of the pandemic, but everyone here has been super supportive. Radford has given me all the tools I need. I couldn't ask for anything better."

At Cupp Stadium, President Hemphill spoke during the College of Humanities and Behavioral Sciences ceremony, where his son, Jordan, earned a degree in communication.

At RUC, three cer-

emonies were held at the Berglund Center to celebrate the 2020 and 2021 graduates. A ceremony at 10 a.m. recognized the 2020 graduates from all programs at RUC, and ceremonies at 1 and 4 p.m. recognized the 2021 graduates with programs split between

the two events.

President Hemphill conferred the degrees after which the ceremonies ended with a recession from the arena where RUC faculty lined up in a gauntlet, congratulating the new graduates — now RUC alumni — as they passed.

FISH DAY
It's Time to Stock Your Pond!
DELIVERY WILL BE: Thursday, May 27
Christiansburg 1:30-2:15
@Southern States
Wytheville 3:15-4:00
@Farmers Milling & Supply
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BUY \$10, GET \$1
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OPINION

QuoteWizard: Tornadoes down 14.4% in Virginia across last decade

Analysts at QuoteWizard, one of the nation's leading online insurance marketplaces, have released a new report tracking changes in tornadic activity across the United States that shows tornadic activity in the commonwealth has declined by 14.4 percent since 2010.

That percentage represents a net decline of 33 tornadoes in

the state.

The report also shows that tornado activity is increasing in the Deep South while states such as Kansas, Texas and South Dakota in what has traditionally been known as Tornado Alley have seen significantly fewer tornadoes. "Southern states like Louisiana, Kentucky and Mississippi have seen their number of torna-

does increase by 70% or more," said Nick VinZant, Sr. Research Analyst at QuoteWizard.

In other findings, the overall number of tornadoes increased 11.7% from 2010 through 2019.

Wyoming, Kentucky, and Pennsylvania had the largest increases in tornadic activity. South Dakota, Florida, and

South Carolina has the largest decrease in tornadic activity nationwide, tornadoes have caused more than \$14.1 billion in damages.

Virginia had 196 tornadoes from 2010-2019, according to QuoteWizard. Fourteen states had more tornadoes than did Virginia during the decade.

By comparison, Texas had

1196 tornadoes, the most of any state but still a decline of 134 total tornadoes; Kansas had 935 tornadoes during the decade, a decline of 89 tornadoes; and Mississippi had 881, an increase in the number of tornadoes of 75%.

Florida had the biggest decline in the number of tornadoes, 190.

WalletHub: Virginia's unemployment claims down by 77.45% from last year

In its latest study of how the states are recovering from unemployment claims, the personal finance website WalletHub said that while the number of the commonwealth's claims were higher last week than at the start of 2020, Virginia's claims are nevertheless down by 77.45

percent from a year ago.

The website's survey revealed that weekly unemployment claims in Virginia increased by 474.41% compared to the same week in 2019. This was the seventh biggest increase in the U.S.

Weekly unemployment claims in Virginia increased by 321.80%

compared to the start of 2020, the fourth biggest increase in the U.S.

And weekly unemployment claims in Virginia decreased by 77.45% compared to the same week last year. This was the 17th smallest decrease in the U.S.

WalletHub noted that the U.S. is making sig-

nificant progress in the fight against COVID-19 with the distribution of the vaccine, and this has been reflected in the job market, with new unemployment claims last week that were worse than the same week last year, the website said.

And, unfortunately, no state had unemployment claims figures last week that were better than be-

according to the website.

The most recent available figures revealed 498,000 new unemployment claims nationwide, which is a lot fewer than the 6.1 million during the peak of the pandemic (a 92% reduction).

Vermont had unemployment claims last week that were worse than the same week last year, the website said.

And, unfortunately, no state had unemployment claims figures last week that were better than be-

fore the pandemic.

Virginia continues to struggle in its recovery from unemployment claims. The latest WalletHub survey ranked the commonwealth as the state that is recovering at the sixth slowest pace among the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Only Michigan, New Mexico, Delaware, Rhode Island, and Vermont are recovering at a slower rate than is Virginia, according to WalletHub's figures.

Virginia's gas prices rise again; cyberattack shuts down pipeline, shortages threaten

According to GasBuddy's daily survey of 4,081 stations in Virginia, gas prices in Virginia are 5.2 cents per gallon higher than a month ago and stand \$1.07/g higher

than a year ago.

In addition, a cyberattack has shut down the Colonial Pipeline, which means that if the problem is not resolved and the flow of gasoline does

not resume soon, Virginia motorists could face gasoline shortages.

According to GasBuddy price reports, the cheapest station in Virginia is priced at \$2.17/g today while the most expensive is \$3.49/g, a difference of \$1.32/g.

The national average price of gasoline has risen 4.5 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$2.95/g today. The national average is up 10.0 cents per gallon from a month ago and stands \$1.12/g higher than a year ago.

"While average gas prices

jumped last week as the nation continues to see COVID-19 recovery, all eyes are now on the Colonial Pipeline and the fact a cyberattack has completely shut all lines, leading to what could become a major challenge for fuel delivery," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis for GasBuddy.

"The situation is growing more intense each day that passes without the pipeline restarting, and motorists are advised to show extreme restraint or exacerbate and prolong the challenges," De

Haan said. "If the pipeline returns to service in the next day or two, the challenges will be minimal, but if full restart doesn't happen by then, we're likely to see a slight rise in gas prices, but more importantly, challenges for motorists needing fuel in Georgia, Tennessee, the Carolinas, Virginia, Northern Florida and surrounding areas. I'm hopeful the situation will quickly improve as multiple levels of government are involved.

"This may become a nightmare should it continue just ahead of the start of

the summer driving season," De Haan said. "GasBuddy will continue to watch the situation and update as necessary."

GasBuddy is the authoritative voice for gas prices and the only source for station-level data spanning nearly two decades. GasBuddy's survey updates 288 times every day from the most diverse list of sources covering nearly 150,000 stations nationwide, the most comprehensive and up-to-date in the country. GasBuddy data is accessible at <http://FuelInsights.GasBuddy.com>.

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Radford News Journal (USPS 387-780) is published twice a week for \$44 a year in the City of Radford, \$53 elsewhere in Virginia, and \$57 out of state by Virginia Media Inc., P.O. Box 429, Lewisburg, WV 24901. Periodical postage paid at Christiansburg, VA. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to RADFORD NEWS JOURNAL 1633 W. Main St., Salem, VA 24153.

Submit letters to the editor to editor@ourvalley.org

OBITUARIES

Moore, William H.

William H. "Fish" Moore, 61, of Christiansburg, formerly of Coalwood and Bluefield, W.Va., passed away Wednesday, May 5, in Greensboro, N.C., where he had recently moved.

William had worked at several fast food restaurants and diners. His most recent employment in the area was at Hardee's #2347, Roanoke Street, Christiansburg.

He was a member of Truevine Baptist Church in Coalwood W.Va.

William was preceded in death by his parents, Joseph and Carrie Moore. He is survived by his first wife, Rhonda Moore of Florida, and his second wife, Kathy Hall Moore of Bluefield, W.Va.

He is also survived by his children, Lovie

"Lil" Carrie Moore of Florida, and Phillip Hall (Samantha) and Nicole of North Carolina, grandchildren Armani and Anivah of Florida, and Tye'via and Jakhai of North Carolina; brothers Pastor Joseph Moore, Sr. (Blanche) of Coalwood, W. Va., David Moore (Deborah) of Christiansburg, Doug Moore (Dilana) of Dumfries, and Jack Moore (Moneeka) of Radford; and sisters the Rev. Helen Moore and Jacqueline Robinson (David) both of Christiansburg, as well as a host of nieces, nephews, uncles, aunts, and friends.

Memorial services will be conducted Thursday, May 13, 2021, at 1 p.m. in the McCoy Funeral Home Chapel with Pastor Joseph Moore officiating. Arrangements by McCoy Funeral Home, Blacksburg.

Rogers, Elizabeth H.

Elizabeth H. "Liz" Rogers, 86, of Blacksburg, beloved mother, textile artist, shepherdess, and math teacher, died on May 5, 2021, leaving this world on her terms and exactly as she lived it: enjoying good food, a glass of wine, and surrounded by family.

She was born June 18, 1934, in Pasadena, Calif., to George J. and Anna (Turnbull) Hall. A gifted student, she received a scholarship and endured four years at Bryn Mawr College, leaving there with a bachelor's degree and a wedding engagement, which the president of the university denounced saying "only our failures marry."

Ever the rebel, she wed a Princeton graduate and U.S. Marine, Trenton, N.J., native Robert Frank Rogers, on Aug. 18, 1956, at the First United Presbyterian Church in Pasadena. Her husband, who became a zoning attorney in Burlington, N.J., died in August 2003.

Liz worked at a bank, then taught middle school math at Northern Burlington Jr.-Sr. High School. She birthed four children: Bob, Tony, Anna, and Amy, all of whom survive and are married to Shirley, Renee, Mark Shuster, and Brian Rensberger respectively. She was blessed with nine astounding grandchildren, all of whom survive, and supported their talents and exploits. In addition to her spouse of 47 years, she was preceded in death by her parents and an older brother, George (Flo) Hall. Her sister, Melinda, survives.

She will be remembered as a 4-H leader,



teaching sewing and entomology, as well as running a sheep farm in Columbus, N.J., where visitors often encountered lambs running around the kitchen and something delicious in the oven. Her artistry in textiles included spinning, sewing, crocheting, and knitting. But her true talent was in quilting, which combined her love of math with principles of art and deft use of color.

She attended Hedding United Methodist Church for many years. Upon moving to Blacksburg, she attended Blacksburg United Methodist Church, visited Reevesville Baptist Church, and most recently supported Newport-Mt. Olivet United Methodist Church. She was also a strong supporter of the Special Olympics, cheering on her grandson, George. She was an avid gardener, a voracious reader, and Hokies fan who loved sports of all kinds. She was outspoken and stubborn but had a great sense of humor. She made dear friends in New Jersey, Idaho, South Carolina, Virginia, and beyond.

A memorial service was held Saturday, May 8, at McCoy Funeral Home, 150 Country Club Drive SW, Blacksburg VA, 24060. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be sent to the funeral home but made payable to Special Olympics of VA Area 9, or Reevesville Baptist Church for meals ministry, or Newport-Mt. Olivet United Methodist Church. The memorial service was recorded, and a link will be provided to those who request it.

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CROSSWORD

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CLUES ACROSS

- Selects
- A cutting remark
- Teaspoonful (abbr.)
- Having two units or parts
- Quality perceptible to the sense of taste
- Expression of surprise
- Italian Island
- A coarse cloth with a bright print
- Propose a price
- Sedimentary material
- Tree toad genus
- Passed time agreeably
- Custodians
- 3rd largest city in Zambia
- 18th Hebrew letter (var.)
- Coasted on ice
- Libyan dinar
- Displayed exaggerated emotion
- Andalusian Gypsy dances
- Material
- Ballplayer Ruth
- AKA Cologne
- Not generally occurring
- Auto
- Print errors
- Interspersed among
- Electrocardiogram
- Churns
- Ice hockey feint
- Drive obliquely, as of a nail
- Dried leaves of the hemp plant
- Ardour
- CLUES DOWN
- Lyric poems
- Hungarian sheep dog (var. sp.)
- A pad of writing paper
- Lists of candidates
- Base, basket and foot
- Samoan capital
- Mythological bird
- Urban row houses
- Sensationalist journalism
- Carried on the arm to intercept blows
- Estrildid finch genus
- PA 18840
- S.W. English town & cheese
- Runs disconnected
- Mourners
- Old world, new
- Atomic #25
- Sweet potato wind instrument
- Legend
- 3rd tone of the scale
- Russian jeweler Peter Carl
- Capital of Mali
- Extremist sects
- Violent denunciation
- Tooth covering
- Music term for silence
- Smoldering embers
- Writer Jong
- Actor Kristofferson
- Adam and Eve's 1st home
- Fish eggs

OBITUARIES continued from page 4

Akers, George Anderson

George Anderson Akers, 83, of Christiansburg, died May 7, 2021, at LewisGale Medical Center, Salem, with his family by his side. He was born in Montgomery County on March 14, 1938, to the late Lucy and Freeman Akers. He was preceded in death by sisters Beulah Nester, Reba Meredith, and Betty Lou Linkous; and brothers Curtis Akers, Alvin Akers, Balford "Rowdy" Akers, Melvin James Akers, and Franklin Lee Akers. He is survived by his wife of 59 years, Joyce Graham Akers; a daughter and son-in-law, Norma and Ray Willis; a son and daughter-in-law, Mark and Chrystal Akers; grandchildren Brittany Akers Martin and husband, Daniel, and Brooke Akers Mast and

husband, Junior; a great-grandchild, Wyatt Anderson Akers; a sister and brother-in-law, Beva and Henderson Woods; brothers and sisters-in-law, Beamer and Ellewese Aker, and Raymond and Charlotte Akers; sisters-in-law, Edith Akers Conley and Nelva Akers; numerous nieces and nephews, and special friends Bob and Debbie Ashcraft. Funeral services were conducted Monday, May 10, 2021, at 2 p.m. in the McCoy Funeral Home Chapel with Pastor Jason Meredith and the Rev. Kenneth Poston officiating. Interment followed in the Akers Family Cemetery. The family received friends prior to the service at McCoy Funeral Home, Blacksburg.

Sampson, Bernice Louise Harper

Bernice Louise Harper Sampson made the journey to her eternal home on May 8, 2021. She was born in United, W.Va., on April 24, 1931, to Dora (Stanley) and Van Harper. She was the youngest of eight children. She grew up in Cabin Creek, W.Va., where she met her husband and the love of her life, Harry, when she was just a teenager. They married on June 19, 1948, when she was 17. They had a son, Harry Lee, Jr., who died at birth and later a daughter, Wanda. Bernice was a full-time homemaker until her daughter started school, at which time she decided to further her education and get her teaching credentials. She taught elementary school in Clay County, W.Va., and until today kept pictures of her students and a special memory of each one. She loved her teaching career, but gave it up to help raise her grandsons. Later, she worked as a department manager in a small department store. Her greatest mission on earth was to love and nurture her family and keep the nicest home possible for them. She excelled at cooking and cleaning and, according to Harry, her family owned the patent on cleanliness. There was never a visit that didn't include food. She was preceded in death by her husband, Harry; her son, Harry, Jr.; her father and mother, Van and Dora (Stanley) Harper; a brother and sister-in-law, Alva (Thelma) Harper; sisters and brothers-in-law, Lola (Earnie) Morris, Phleta (Mac) Davis, Bleka (Robert) Proffitt, Delphia (Thomas) Spencer, Leona (Fred) Rose, and Arlene (Joseph) Batton. She is survived by her loving and devoted



family, a daughter and son-in-law, Wanda and Johnny Gibson of Claytor Lake, Va.; grandsons and granddaughter-in-law, Garland (Cheryl) Vaughan of Blacksburg, and Glenn Vaughan of Fairlawn, Va.; and a host of nieces and nephews. Bernice was fiercely independent and private by nature, but she always had good words for her neighbors and described them as the friendliest group she had ever known. She tried to learn the first names of all the people whom she saw regularly and never failed to greet them. We have lost our wonderful mother, and we will miss her terribly, but she has given us the strength to continue. She has been the glue that held us together by her own sacrifices. Heaven has gained the greatest housekeeper of them all, and we have no doubt that she is eager to assist in maintaining the house of the Lord to keep it orderly and in harmony and to reunite with her husband. "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going." John 14:1-4 The family would like to thank Intrepid Hospice for their excellent care in a most difficult time. In keeping with her wishes, there will be a private graveside service in Oak Hill, W.Va. The Sampson family is in the care of Mullins Funeral Home & Crematory in Radford.

Korslund, Mary Katherine

Mary Katherine Korslund, 86, of Blacksburg, died peacefully in her sleep on April 29, 2021, in the Radford Health and Rehab Center following a long physical decline. She was born on September 18, 1934, in rural Thor, Iowa, on the family farm, the youngest daughter of Edwin and Clara (Foss) Korslund, to the delight of three older siblings, Allen, Jeannette, and Lois (all deceased). She is survived by a sister-in-law, Charlene Korslund of Edina, Minn.; four nephews, John Korslund of Fulton, Md.; David Korslund of Amsterdam, The Netherlands; Douglas Korslund of Chicago, Ill.; and James Korslund of Edina, Minn.; and two cousins, Brian Rainer of Champaign, Ill., and Mary Nan Meyer of Long Beach, Calif., plus eight grandnephews and nieces. Her loss is also mourned by her special companion dog, Happy, and numerous close friends in the Blacksburg area who were devoted in remaining close to her. Mary's professional career was driven by an interest in teaching that started in a country school in rural Iowa. She gained pedagogical experience tutoring a young cousin brought into the Korslund family. Mary graduated from Eagle Grove Iowa High School in 1952, and then earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Foods and Nutrition from Iowa State University in 1956, followed by the completion of dietetics internships at the Universities of Michigan and Wisconsin. She returned to Iowa State to earn a Master of Science degree in 1962. She accepted an assistant professor position at Virginia Tech in the Department of Human Nutrition and Foods in 1964 and remained on the faculty for 31 years until her retirement in 1995. During that time, she was granted a leave of absence to study at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and received a PhD from that institution in 1972. Dr. Korslund was active in both teaching and research. Many of her research projects focused on determining the nutrient needs of children and teens and how best to meet those needs. Her findings were reported in scientific journal articles she co-authored



with other investigators. She is remembered with fondness by the many students and colleagues for whom she provided guidance and wisdom over her many years of teaching classes at all levels and designing novel research projects. She is particularly acknowledged as an outstanding mentor for students to enable them to achieve accreditation in the field and for initiating and guiding a new dietetics internship program based in Northern Virginia and Blacksburg. Mary has been described by faculty colleagues and administrators as a collaborative colleague, a team player, and a powerful mentor in a relatively new and emerging field of science-based human nutrition and its application by dietitians. Her excellence was recognized by Virginia Tech, which named her an Associate Professor Emerita upon her retirement. Importantly in Blacksburg, Mary was an enthusiastic Hokie fan, holding her mid-field season ticket seat in Lane Stadium since Frank Beamer played in the backfield. For many years she and a group of friends also held season tickets to men's and women's basketball, yet she alone also was an avid follower of the wrestling team. Mary was a longtime active member of Luther Memorial Congregation in Blacksburg where she enjoyed singing in the choir. She also enjoyed chaperoning several collegiate opera tours for Radford University. For those wishing to remember Mary in some way, the family suggests that any gifts be directed through Luther Memorial Church to a hunger or spiritual mission of your choice in her memory. Funeral services will be conducted at 10 a.m. on Saturday June 5, 2021, outdoors at Luther Memorial Church, 600 Prices Fork Road, Blacksburg, VA, 24060, with the Reverend Monica Weber officiating (indoors in case of rain). Family and friends may linger as permissible after the service to share smiles, laughter, and perhaps a few tears in celebration of Mary's life. Interment of cremains will occur later with family graveside services near Eagle Grove, Iowa. Arrangements by McCoy Funeral Home, Blacksburg.

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Statues from page 1

a bench with an attentive puppy nearby while another balances a bird in her palm as she sits on a brick ledge outside the entrance. The third stands nearby holding a fluffy dog. The library also thanked the following people for the donation:

Philip Young's daughter, Samantha Peters, and her husband, Daniel, and daughter, Clara; Philip Young's sister, Becky Moore, and her husband, Barry; and Philip Young's brother, David Young. "Because of the generosity of these family mem-

bers, the Radford Public Library is able to share Mr. Young's statues with Radford and to enhance the series of art pieces that we have throughout Radford," said the library's announcement. -- Heather Bell



The three statues of children are now at the library's East Main Street entrance, welcoming patrons. This child cradles a fluffy dog.

The City of Radford is seeking citizen representatives to serve on various Boards and Commissions. The organizations listed below have terms coming to an end. For more information on a particular Board or Commission, please visit the "Boards & Commissions" section of our website, www.radfordva.gov.

Anyone who is interested in serving on a particular Board or Commission is encouraged to submit a resume and brief letter of interest by **June 12, 2021** to:

City of Radford
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# of open positions/Agency name	Length of appointment/any restrictions
(2) Agency on Aging	one year appointments ending 6/30/2022
(1) New River College Board	four year appointment ending 6/30/2025
(1) Economic Development Authority	four year appointment ending 6/30/2025
(2) Library Board	four year appointments ending 6/30/2025
(1) Library Board (teen rep)	one year appointment ending 6/30/2022
(3) Recreation Commission	three year appointments ending 6/30/2024
(1) Social Services Board	four year appointment ending 6/30/2025
(1) Building Code Board of Appeals	one year appointment ending 6/30/2022
(1) City/University Joint Advisory Commission (City Rep)	one year appointment ending 6/30/2022
(1) City/University Joint Advisory Commission (Business Rep)	two year appointment ending 6/30/2023
(1) City/University Joint Advisory Commission (Real Estate Rep)	two year appointment ending 6/30/2023
(4) Tourism Commission	two year appointments ending 6/30/2023
(1) New River Valley Resource Authority (alternate)	four year appointment ending 6/30/2025
(4) Beatification Commission	three year appointments ending 6/30/2024

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RADFORD SPORTS

Blacksburg High's Amanda Lowe named volleyball state Gatorade player of the year

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Blacksburg High School's Amanda Lowe has been named the Gatorade state player of the year for volleyball.

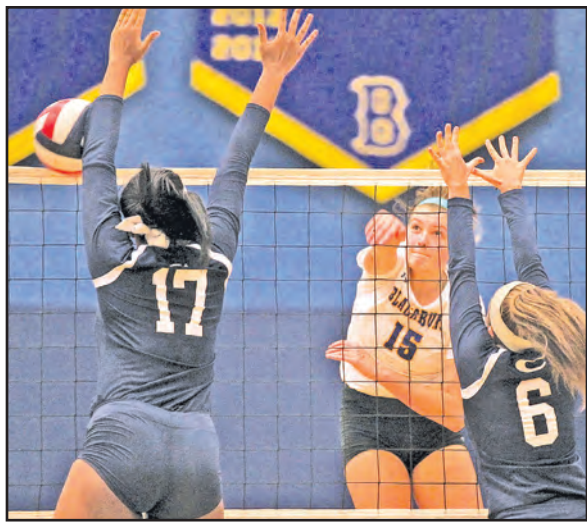
"It feels amazing to be able to represent my school, club, southwest Virginia, and state with this award," Lowe said Sunday. "I couldn't have done it without my coaches and teammates. I am just so excited about the honor of being recognized for playing the sport that I love."

Lowe started playing volleyball in the fifth grade. Her family moved to the Blacksburg area when she was in middle school, and since then, she has led the Bruins to four consecutive playoff runs including a state title. Her sister, Ali, played collegiately at the University of Alabama in Huntsville.

"I grew up watching my sister play volleyball and just wanting to be like her," said Lowe. "I went to every tournament, game, and practice that I could to watch her and was just in awe of her talent and the sport. I looked up to her and just wanted to one day be as good as her. So I would say that my sister has really been my drive to be the best that I can be."

In the last three years, her volleyball team has won three VHSL 4A Region D Championships and competed in team VHSL 4A semi-finals.

Lowe has earned first and second team all-state honors



FILE PHOTO

Blacksburg's Amanda Lowe (center) returns the ball during a match this season against Christiansburg High School.

as well as all-region and all-district honors while playing for the Bruins. This year, she had 300 kills, 101 digs, 50 blocks, and 38 aces. During her junior season, she received recognition for 1,000 career kills.

She has played travel volleyball with the River Valley Juniors for the past five years and played with the Alabama Juniors the prior three years. She garnered national recognition by being named to the 2018, 2019 American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) Phenom Watch Lists. Lowe was also selected by USAV High Performance (HP), a national team development program for American volleyball, and competed with the HP Old Dominion Region Youth Select Team in 2018 and 2019. Her 2018 HP Youth Select

Team played in the USAV High Performance Championship match, earning second place.

She will continue her volleyball career at Virginia Tech where she will join former high school teammate Anabel Zier.

"I decided to continue my career at Virginia Tech because it has been my dream school ever since I can remember," Lowe said. "During my recruiting process, I visited other DI schools but I kept comparing them to Tech. It just felt like home. Virginia Tech also has really good academic programs in the fields that I am pursuing. I have also always wanted to be a Hokie."

She has not yet decided on a major at Tech but is leaning toward the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

Former CHS wrestler killed in auto accident

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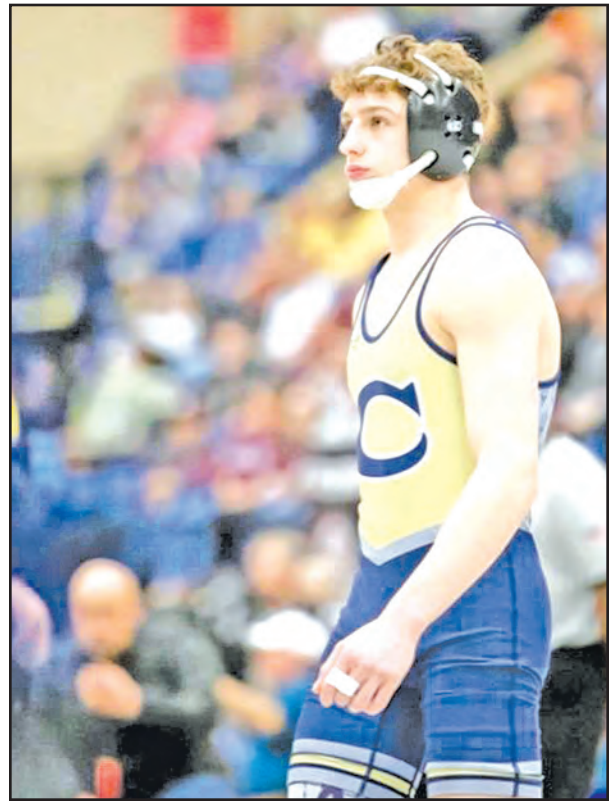
Kip Nininger, a stand-out wrestler at Christiansburg and Cave Spring high schools, has been killed in an auto accident. According to the Virginia State Police, the incident took place Friday around 10 p.m. on Route 11 in Botetourt County.

A 2011 Chevrolet Camaro was driving north when it lost control, ran off the right side of the roadway, hit an embankment and flipped multiple times before Nininger was ejected from the vehicle.

Nininger was not wearing his seatbelt and was transported to Roanoke Memorial Hospital where he later died.

State police said speed was a factor in the crash and the incident remains under investigation.

Nininger won state titles wrestling for Cave



FILE PHOTO

Kip Nininger

Spring as a sophomore and junior. He transferred this past year to

Christiansburg and finished his career with a 103-8 mark.

Sisters share love both on and off the court and the field

Marty Gordon
NRVsports@ourvalley.org

For Elli and Lilly Underwood, looking for each other on the basketball and volleyball courts and the soccer field has just become natural. The sisters have been playing together since they were 5 years old.

Elli is a senior at Eastern Montgomery High School while Lilly is a sophomore. Elli was named the Pioneer District volleyball player-of-the-year this past week, and Lilly joined her on the All-District First Team.

"I know I can count on her when I am on the court," Elli said. "She is reliable and is easy to read, and I know she will be in certain spots when I need her to be. We have each other's back because of being sisters."

Lilly describes her older sister as a hard worker and a strong leader. "It's great to play with her," she said.

Elli has been racking up district awards for the past three years, and now it might be time for Lilly to continue the tradition.

The two did separate this spring when Lilly played football and Elli did not. The younger Underwood was named second-team All-Pioneer District as a kicker.

"I brought it up to Coach (Jordan) Stewart, and he said come out," Lilly said.

Her gridiron teammates treated her just like any other player, she said, admitting they had her back when it came to tackling or blocking after she thumped the kick deep into the opponent's territory. She was even credited with a tackle this past season.

"I loved it and plan to continue it in the fall," she said.

Lilly might have gotten the kicking "itch" from her dad, Casey, who was a kicker at Radford High School.

"He has helped me a lot, and I feel I'm getting better," she said. Both dad and mom, Casey and Cathy Underwood, played several sports in high school.

How did Elli feel about her sister venturing into a "boys" sport with more aggression than is found in the sisters' usual sports of volleyball, basketball and soccer?

"I was very nervous for her," Elli said.

Lilly admits she will miss her sister on the field and the courts this coming year.

Elli plans to attend Virginia Tech and study business. She said she might play a club sport but so far hasn't shown interest in playing a varsity sport in Blacksburg.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The Underwood sisters, Lilly (left) and Elli, have found success together on the soccer field and the basketball and volleyball courts.

Radford seeded fourth in Big South softball tourney

Radford University's Highlanders have been seeded fourth in the Big South Softball Championship Tournament, which will be contested May 13-15 at Brinkley Stadium on the campus of Gardner-Webb University.

Campbell University earned the No.-1 seed for the first time since the Camels rejoined the Big South in 2012. Campbell won the regular season championship outright with a 15-3 Big South record.

USC Upstate claimed the No.-2 seed after finishing the season with a 13-5 conference record. Defending champion Longwood is

the No.-3 seed after its 14-7 record during the regular season

Radford and Winthrop University tied for fourth-place in the standings at 11-10, and the Highlanders clinched the fourth and final seed based on their 2-1 series record against the Eagles. Only the top four teams in the final standings qualified for the conference tournament in 2021.

The 2021 softball championship begins Thursday, May 13, with two games, continues with three games on Friday, May 14, and concludes on Saturday, May 15 with two potential championship contests starting at 1:00 p.m.

The games on Thursday will be carried on ESPN3 while the final two days will be available on ESPN+. Additional coverage will be carried on WYCW-TV in the markets of Greenville, S.C.; Spartanburg, S.C.; Asheville, N.C.; and Anderson, S.C.

The Big South's Tournament champion receives an automatic bid to the

NCAA softball regionals. The tournament schedule is as follows and is subject to change due to the weather:

Thursday, May 13 (Games 1-2)

Game 1: No. 2 USC Upstate vs. No. 3 Longwood, 1:00 p.m. - ESPN3, WYCW-TV.

Game 2: No. 1 Campbell vs. No. 4 Radford, 4:00 p.m. - ESPN3.

Friday, May 14 (Games 3-5)

Game 3: Loser Game 1 vs. Loser Game 2, 11:00 a.m. (elimination game) - ESPN+, WYCW-TV.

Game 4: Winner Game 1 vs. Winner Game 2, 2:00 p.m. - ESPN+.

Game 5: Winner Game 3 vs. Loser Game 4, 5:00 p.m. (elimination game) - ESPN+, WYCW-TV.

Saturday, May 15 (Championship Day)

Game 6: Winner Game 4 vs. Winner Game 5, 1:00 p.m. - ESPN+, WYCW-TV.

Game 7: If Necessary: Winner Game 6 vs. Loser Game 6, 4:00 p.m. - ESPN+, WYCW-TV.

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