



Wednesday, December 21, 2022 • USPS 387-780 • ourvalley.org • \$1.00

Shentel announces Fiber-to-the-Home upgrade in Radford

EDINBURG - Shenandoah Telecommunications Company ("Shentel") has announced they will upgrade their current network in Radford with next-generation fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) broadband services.

According to a statement released Dec. 14, Shentel will "fully fund the multimillion-dollar construction project that will bring symmetrical multi-gig internet speeds to Radford residents and

businesses." Radford leaders say they are pleased the company is investing in the Radford system.

"It has been a priority to enhance the quality and availability of internet service in Radford over the last several years and we could not be more pleased that Shentel is improving and growing their network here," said Radford Mayor David Horton. "We look forward to this significant development for the

good of the community." "We are pleased with the investment Shentel is making in the City of Radford and the overall upgrade in broadband service reliability, availability and speed," said City Manager David Ridpath.

According to Shentel, construction on the upgraded system will begin in the second half of 2023, "bringing a future-proof fiber-to-

See **Shentel**, page 6

Virginia's Community Services Boards seek legislative help in addressing workforce shortage

As overdose rates and concerns related to mental health continue to rise, Virginia's public behavioral health providers are pleading with state legislators to address another crisis - an increasing lack of workers.

The 40 agencies that make up the Commonwealth's public network of community-based behavioral health services - known as Community Services Boards (CSBs) - are struggling to recruit/retain employees and the problem is only getting worse, according to data shared earlier in November by the Virginia Association of Community Services Boards (VACSB). The staff vacancy rate among all CSBs in the summer of 2022 stood at 27.4% - up from 24% a year earlier. (Note: These figures were pulled from a 2021 VACSB survey and a similar survey that was conducted earlier this year by the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services.)

In an email sent to CSB Executive Directors dated Nov. 21, VACSB Executive

Director Jennifer Faison indicated that her organization's top priority for the upcoming General Assembly session would be to advocate for state funds that support workforce stabilization. Specifically, VACSB is requesting \$162.6 million from the state in FY24 to provide quarterly recruitment and retention bonuses for direct care positions in CSBs.

Faison noted in her communication with CSB executives that state legislators had already taken similar action to address workforce shortages in the state's psychiatric hospitals, allocating approximately \$138 million over a three-year period to shore up staffing in those state-operated facilities.

"CSBs need a similar level of investment in order to stabilize the community-based system of care across all service lines, Faison continued. "Until workforce is addressed with a comprehensive strategy for the entire public system, the CSBs will continue to lose

See **Shortage**, page 6

The Highlander at Radford now accepting reservations for Spring 2023

A job fair is scheduled for today, Wednesday, Dec. 21 to hire staff members for the hotel and restaurant.

RADFORD - The Highlander Hotel Radford is expected to open this March, and reservations are now being accepted for visitor stays and special events beginning April 1, 2023.

Adjacent to Radford University, the "new, independent, lifestyle hotel celebrates the enthusiastic friendliness inspired by the area's Scots-Irish origins, delivering on spectacular views of the Blue



ARTIST RENDERING COURTESY OF THE RADFORD UNIVERSITY FOUNDATION

This artist's rendering shows what the Highlander will look like from the Calhoun Street point of view.

See **Reservations**, page 5

Graham named as Early Childhood Champion awardee

New River Community College Program Head and Professor of Human Services and Early Childhood Bonnie Graham was recently recognized by the Community Foundation for the New River Valley's First Steps as a 2022 Early Childhood Champions awardee.

First Steps recognizes individuals and teams serving young children and families through the Early Childhood Champion Awards. Five award recipients are selected overall, including one early childhood champion of the year, one runner-up, and three honorees. Each awardee receives a cash prize made possible by the Community Foundation. Graham was this year's runner-up.

"I am extremely honored to be nominated by a colleague and to receive an early childhood award from First Steps of the Community Foundation of the New River Valley," said Graham. "More importantly, it has been a special privilege to have taught

and studied with six of the 2022 Early Childhood Champion nominees while serving as the program head and professor of human services and early childhood at New River Community College."

"It seems the real story here—and a testament to Bonnie's

commitment and passion to early childhood in the NRV—is how well NRCC's early childhood program was represented among the nominees and award winners," said Dr. Sarah Tolbert-Hurysz, NRCC dean of arts and

See **Graham**, page 6



PHOTO COURTESY OF NEW RIVER COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Bonnie Graham (left) pictured at the Community Foundation for the New River Valley's First Steps awards event with nominee and NRCC student Chelsea Naughton Sharlow (right).

Survey: 1 in 3 Virginia men admit they wait until Christmas Eve to buy their partner's presents

According to a survey by the research company CouponBirds, 54% of Virginia men admit they wait until Christmas Eve to buy their partner's presents. Over half say that buying that Christmas gift causes anxiety.

Over half say they self-gift at Christmas. 1 in 3 admit they have secretly re-sold a gift their partner gave them for Christmas.

High inflation means 52% say they will be spending less on their partner this Christmas.

When it comes to Christmas, there are three types of people:

1. Those who did all their gift shopping months ago, have stocked the freezer with everything they need for the main meal, and, as the frantic run up to the big day continues apace, can smugly congratulate themselves they don't need to panic about anything.

2. In the middle are those who don't give it much thought until well after Thanksgiving, but who then get their act together and head to the stores before things get too crazy busy.

3. And then there's the other extreme: Those who are either so disorganized, forgetful, or, let's admit it, lazy, that they leave everything until the last minute.

They walk among us, but how many are there? Smart coupon, promo codes, and deal finder CouponBirds decided to find out and surveyed 3,150 respondents to find out just how many

people wait until Christmas Eve to buy their partners a gift for the next day. And, perhaps shockingly, they found that almost one-third of men in Virginia (32%, or extrapolated to over 496k men) wait until Christmas Eve to complete their purchases of gifts for their partners. On the other hand, 8% percent of women were guilty of the same festive panic buy.

Twenty-four percent of couples say they keep a mental note of how much their partner spends on them at Christmas compared to how much they spent on their partner. This sounds a little bit joyless - after all, it should be a gift from the heart, not a gift of equal value - but at least if the partner regularly spends under \$30 on you when the other half is splashing out several times that, spending habits can be amended accordingly. And couples say they spend on average of \$141 on their partner at Christmas, which sounds like a decent amount, enough for something they'll hopefully appreciate. A thrifty one-third do say they will delay their partner's Christmas gift shopping until the post-holiday sales start.

"You don't need to spend a lot to make your partner feel treasured. Sometimes it really is the little things that count" says Tricia Smith of CouponBirds.

Submitted by Sara Conway of CouponBirds



PHOTO BY LESLEY KENNEDY/GETTY

The origins, history, and traditions of Christmas

Christmas is celebrated on December 25 and is both a sacred religious holiday and a worldwide cultural and commercial phenomenon. For two millennia, people around the world have been observing it with traditions and practices that are both religious and

secular in nature.

Christians celebrate Christmas Day as the anniversary of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, a spiritual leader whose teachings form the basis of their religion. Popular customs include exchanging gifts, decorating Christmas trees,

attending church, sharing meals with family and friends and, of course, waiting for Santa Claus to arrive. December 25—Christmas Day—has been a federal holiday in the United States since 1870.

See **Christmas**, page 3

UPCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday, Dec. 21: Friday, Dec. 23:

Messy holiday trivia for teens
At the Radford Public Library; 2 p.m. Sign-up is required. Limited to 15 participants. Teens can compete against each other in a holiday themed trivia competition. Warning: this competition may get messy.

City of Radford Holiday closure
City offices closed. No solid waste pick-up, Friday trash collected on Thursday, Dec. 22. Drop center closed through Dec. 26.

Friday, Dec. 23 – Monday, Dec. 26:

Radford Library closed
The Radford Public Library will be closed for the Christmas holiday from Dec. 23 – 26.

MFRL closed
All branches of the Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library will be closed for the Christmas holiday from Dec. 23 – 26.

Tuesday, Dec. 27:

Melted snowman slime
At the Christiansburg Library; 3 p.m. All ages are invited to come by the library and make some melted snowman slime.

Wednesday, Dec. 28:

Afternoon movie and snack
At the Meadowbrook Public Library; 12:30 p.m. This will be a fun-filled afternoon complete with a tasty snack and an animated film (rated PG) about crime fighting

Super-Dog Krypto, who embarks on a mission to save his crime-fighting pal, the Man of Steel. Call (540) 268-1964 for more details.

Thursday, Dec. 29:

American Red Cross blood drive
At the Christiansburg Library; 10 a.m. Walk-ins are welcome or donors can sign up at <https://www.redcrossblood.org/give.html/donation-time>.

Pokémon party
At the Blacksburg Library; 2 p.m. Participants can bring their Nintendo Switch or DS with some Pokémon games, or their Pokémon Card Collection and make new friends while trading, exploring, and battling. Trainers of all ages are welcome.

Friday, Dec. 30:

Red Cross blood drive
At the Jessie Peterman Memorial Library; 11:30 a.m. Walk-ins are welcome, or donors may sign up at www.redcrossblood.org/give.html/find-drive.

Saturday, Dec. 31:

Family Movie Matinee: Ratatouille
At the Radford Public Library; 11 a.m. Participants can take a trip to Paris through Disney Pixar and meet a rat who dreams of becoming a gourmet chef at one of Paris's finest restaurants. Rated G; 111 minutes.

Ongoing:

Help Veterans with donations

The Meadowbrook Public Library is a collection point for items needed at the VA Medical Center in Salem. Donors can bring their donations of the following items to the library during December: deodorant, denture adhesive, 3-in-1 body wash/shampoo/conditioner, body lotion, toothpaste, nail clippers, sweatpants, sweatshirts, t-shirts (size M, L, XL), and new baseball caps. Co-Sponsored by VFW Post 5311 and Montgomery-Floyd Regional libraries.

Free GED Classes
At the Meadowbrook Public Library, 5 to 8 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays. New River Community College is offering free GED classes at the Meadowbrook Library every Tuesday and Thursday until Thursday, Dec. 15. For more information or to sign up, call the library at 540-268-1964.

Montgomery, Radford RSVP delivers holiday tote bags to Senior Living residents

The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of Montgomery County and Radford delivered 120 Holiday Tote Bags to 65 residents of Commonwealth

Senior Living and 55 residents of Noble Senior Living on Friday, Dec. 16, 2022, with the help of RSVP Elves.

Carol Trutt, Carol Cornish,

Nola Elliott, Jim Stilwell, Rosemary Jones, and Shirley Mullins helped deliver the tote bags, which were filled by members of the community including Montgom-

ery County employees, Calvary United Methodist Church, Holy Spirit Roman Catholic Church, the Retired Educators Association of Montgomery County, and

RSVP volunteers.

Submitted by Jennifer Tatum Harris, Montgomery County Public Information Director

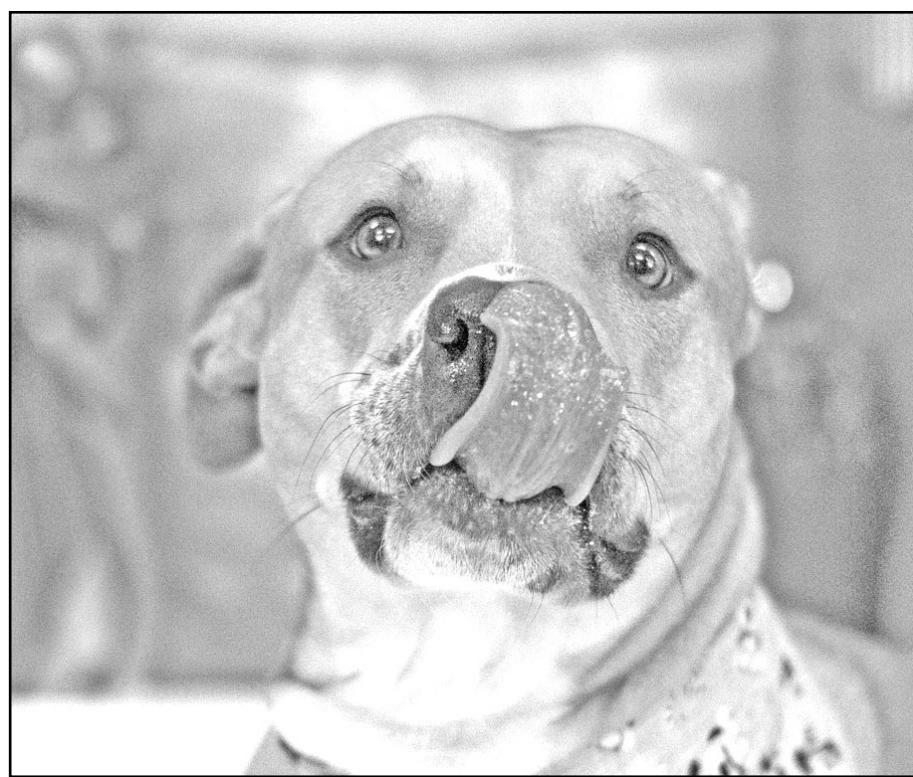


Carol Trutt, Carol Cornish, Jim Stilwell, and Rosemary Jones deliver holiday tote bags for the RSVP.

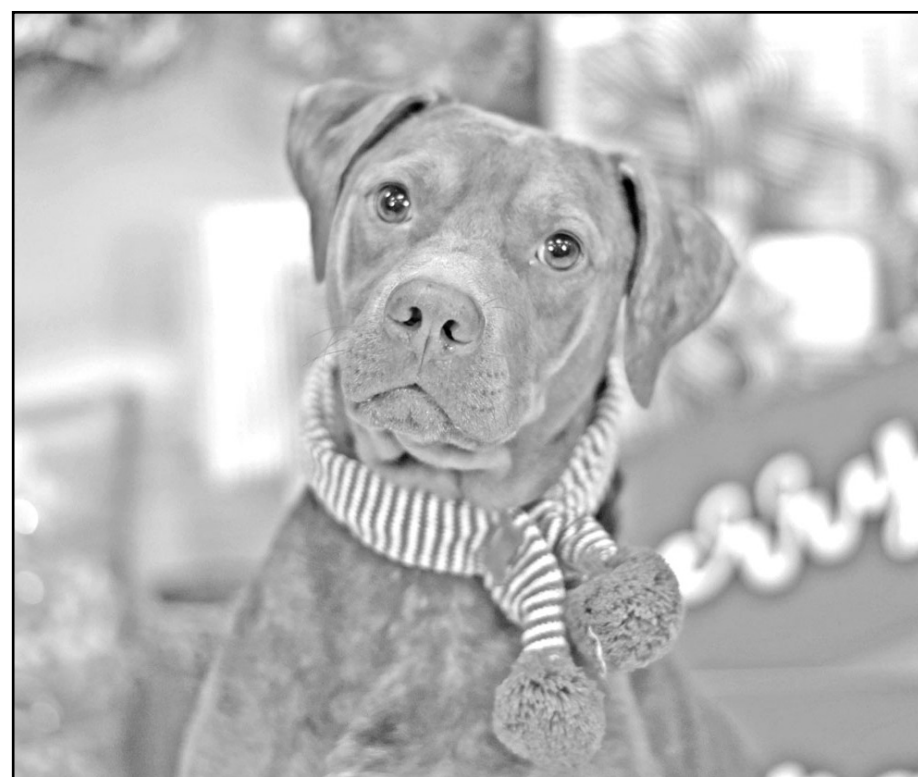


Rosemary Jones, Shirley Mullins, and Mary Lee Carroll were among the RSVP elves who brightened the holidays for the residents of Commonwealth Senior Living and Noble Senior Living, delivering 65 holiday tote bags Friday, Dec. 16.

PETS OF THE WEEK



If you're looking for a lap dog, Luna is the gal for you though you might need a bigger lap. Luna is a friendly doggo who loves people and attention. She isn't too keen on other canines and will need to be the only dog in her new home.



PHOTOS BY ROBIN HOBACK (CHESTER, VA).

Mocha is an energetic boy who likes to fetch and play with squeaky toys and ropes. He knows some commands and enjoys tasty treats. Mocha will do best in a home where he is the only dog. Stop by the Animal Care and Adoption Center to meet this pawsome dog!

Merry Christmas!



For 50 years, we have been proud to be a part of the community and serve our friends with the best prices and selection of electrical and lighting needs.

Thank you for your loyal support and friendship over the years.

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594 Depot Street, Old Cambria Section, Christiansburg • Phone: 540-382-6179 electricalsupply@verizon.net

May God bless and watch over you and your loved ones at Christmas and always. We hope the holiday season finds you together, sharing with family and friends.

We wish you a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Mullins Funeral Home & Crematory

120 West Main Street
Radford, VA 24141
540-639-2456

Glad Tidings to You!

Wishing you and yours a happy holiday season filled with good times, good friends and good memories.

We thank you for your support this past year and look forward to serving you in the new year.

Price's Body Shop

2592 Ellett Rd.,
Christiansburg
382-7300

Rejoice in the Gifts of the Season

May Christmas deliver the best gifts of all to you and yours this year: Peace, Love, Health, Happiness & Friendship

Merry Christmas, and best wishes for a blessed New Year.

Price's Service Center

1107 N. Main Street
Blacksburg

540-552-5041

New River Community Action selected to participate in safer children program

RADFORD - New River Community Action (NRCA) has been selected by Families

Forward Virginia (FFV) to participate in a three-year demonstration site program to build protective factors for children and their families within their communities.

Selected sites will utilize the Family Resource Center model, identified by the National Family Support Network, as a strategy to reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect, advance racial equity and support for underserved communities in prevention programs, and speak to the complex issues that often contribute to families becoming involved in the child welfare system.

The project seeks to demonstrate implementation and evaluation of Family Resource Centers through developing comprehensive child and family well-being systems that are co-designed with families and

communities. Sites will demonstrate a process for incorporating primary prevention and public health approaches into overall community well-being consistent with the social and environmental determinants of health and to create the conditions necessary for all families to thrive.

The Thriving Families Safer Children initiative demonstration Family Resource Centers are designed to focus on an individual census tract. The census tract that will be the focus of efforts led by NRCA is located in a portion of the Town of Pulaski and Pulaski County.

Census tracts eligible under the program have a Child Opportunity Index (COI) rating of “low” or “very low.” The COI uses 29 measures from a wide range of education, health, environment, social, and economic indicators. The COI is developed by Diversity Data Kids.

NRCA will work with a team

of agency partners including the Women’s Resource Center, the Calfee Community and Cultural Center, NRV Cares, and New River Valley Community Services, as well as community members, and people with lived experience to develop and implement the Family Resource Center demonstration site. The project begins with a six-month collaborative planning period in which additional partnerships and collaborations will be identified.

NRCA CEO Krystal Thompson said, “We are honored that Families Forward Virginia selected our area of the state and NRCA to participate in this prestigious demonstration project. NRCA’s experience administering programs with a two-generation focus, such as CHIP of NRV, Head Start, and Whole Family, is a source of strength. We are confident that the process and technical assistance provided by FFV will put this

site in an excellent position for success.”

Families Forward Virginia is Virginia’s leading organization dedicated to disrupting the cycles of child abuse, neglect, and poverty. Supported by both public and private funding, Families Forward provides statewide leadership for and unifies support for a multitude of Virginia programs through evidence-based and multi-generational prevention strategies. In 2017, Families

Forward Virginia was created as a result of the merger of Prevent Child Abuse Virginia, CHIP of Virginia, and Early Impact Virginia.

About NRCA: Established in 1965, NRCA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit agency serving the City of Radford and the Counties of Floyd, Giles, Montgomery, and Pulaski. The mission of NRCA is to promote and support the well-being and self-reliance of individuals, families,

and communities. In partnership with other human service agencies, community groups, grantors, and donors, NRCA provides assistance to approximately 8,000 people each year through programs that meet basic needs, strengthen families, and promote economic stability.

NRCA administers a variety of local programs designed to address the effects of poverty: Head Start; Children’s Health Improvement Partnership (CHIP); Homeless and Housing Programs (Rapid Rehousing, Homeless Prevention, Housing Counseling, Renter Education Workshops); VA CARES services for ex-offenders; Emergency Assistance/Food Pantries; Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA); the Floyd County Backpack Program; the To Our House thermal homeless shelter; and Whole Family two-generation comprehensive services.

Christmas from page 1

How Did Christmas Start?

The middle of winter has long been a time of celebration around the world. Centuries before the arrival of the man called Jesus, early Europeans celebrated light and birth in the darkest days of winter. Many people rejoiced during the winter solstice, when the worst of the winter was behind them and they could look forward to longer days and extended hours of sunlight.

In Scandinavia, the Norse celebrated Yule from December 21, the winter solstice, through January. In recognition of the return of the sun, fathers and sons would bring home large logs, which they would set on fire. The people would feast until the log burned out, which could take as many as 12 days. The Norse believed that each spark from the fire represented a new pig or calf that would be born during the coming year.

Saturnalia and Christmas

In Rome, where winters were not as harsh as those in the far north, Saturnalia—a holiday in honor of Saturn, the god of agriculture—was celebrated. Beginning in the week leading up to the winter solstice and continuing for a full month, Saturnalia was a hedonistic time when food and drink were plentiful and the normal Roman social order was turned upside down. For a month, enslaved people were given temporary freedom and treated as equals. Business and schools were closed so that everyone could participate in the holiday’s festivities.

Also around the time of the winter solstice, Romans observed Juvenalia, a feast honoring the children of Rome. In addition, members of the upper classes often celebrated the birthday of Mithra, the god of the unconquerable sun, on December 25. It was believed that Mithra, an infant god, was born of a rock. For some Romans, Mithra’s birthday was the most

sacred day of the year.

Is Christmas Really the Day Jesus Was Born?

In the early years of Christianity, Easter was the main holiday; the birth of Jesus was not celebrated. In the fourth century, church officials decided to institute the birth of Jesus as a holiday. Unfortunately, the Bible does not mention a date for his birth (a fact Puritans later pointed out in order to deny the legitimacy of the celebration). Although some evidence suggests that his birth may have occurred in the spring (Why would shepherds be herding in the middle of winter?), Pope Julius I chose December 25. It is commonly believed that the church chose this date in an effort to adopt and absorb the traditions of the pagan Saturnalia festival. First called the Feast of the Nativity, the custom spread to Egypt by 432 and to England by the end of the sixth century.

When Christmas Was Canceled

In the early 17th century, a wave of religious reform changed the way Christmas was celebrated in Europe. When Oliver Cromwell and his Puritan forces took over England in 1645, they vowed to rid England of decadence and, as part of their effort, they canceled Christmas. By popular demand, Charles II was restored to the throne and, with him, came the return of the popular holiday.

The pilgrims, English separatists that came to America in 1620, were even more orthodox in their Puritan beliefs than Cromwell. As a result, Christmas was not a holiday in early America. From 1659 to 1681, the celebration of Christmas was actually outlawed in Boston. Anyone exhibiting the Christmas spirit was fined five shillings. By contrast, in the Jamestown settlement, Captain John Smith reported that Christmas was enjoyed by all and passed without incident.

After the American Revolution, English customs fell out of favor, including Christmas. In fact, Christmas wasn’t declared a federal holiday until June 26, 1870.

Washington Irving Reinvents Christmas in America

It wasn’t until the 19th century that Americans began to embrace Christmas. Americans re-invented Christmas, and changed it from a raucous carnival holiday into a family-centered day of peace and nostalgia. But what about the 1800s piqued American interest in the holiday?

The early 19th century was a period of class conflict and turmoil. During this time, unemployment was high and gang rioting by the disenfranchised classes often occurred during the Christmas season. In 1828, the New York city council instituted the city’s first police force in response to a Christmas riot. This catalyzed certain members of the upper classes to begin to change the way Christmas was celebrated in America.

In 1819, best-selling author Washington Irving wrote *The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon, gent.*, a series of stories about the celebration of Christmas in an English manor house. The sketches feature a squire who invited the peasants into his home for the holiday. In contrast to the problems faced in American society, the two groups mingled effortlessly.

In Irving’s mind, Christmas should be a peaceful, warm-hearted holiday bringing groups together across lines of wealth or social status. Irving’s fictitious celebrants enjoyed “ancient customs,” including the crowning of a Lord of Misrule. Irving’s book, however, was not based on any holiday celebration he had attended—in fact, many historians say that Irving’s account actually “invented” tradition by implying that it described the true customs of the season.

How Christmas was celebrated in the 13 colonies

Also around this time, English author Charles Dickens created the classic holiday tale “A Christmas Carol.” The story’s message of the importance of charity and good will towards all humankind struck a powerful chord in the United States and England and showed members of Victorian society the benefits of celebrating the holiday.

The family was also becoming less disciplined and more sensitive to the emotional needs of children during the early 1800s. Christmas provided families with a day when they could lavish attention-and gifts-on their children without appearing to “spoil” them.

Although most families quickly bought into the idea that they were celebrating Christmas how it had been done for centuries, Americans had really re-invented a holiday to fill the cultural needs of a growing nation.

Who Invented Santa Claus?

The legend of Santa Claus can be traced back to a monk named St. Nicholas who was born in Turkey around 280 A.D.. St. Nicholas gave away all of his inherited wealth and traveled the countryside helping the poor and sick, becoming known as the protector of children and sailors.

St. Nicholas first entered American popular culture in the late 18th century in New York, when Dutch families gathered to honor the anniversary of the death of “Sint Nikolaas” (Dutch for Saint Nicholas), or “Sinter Klaas” for short. “Santa Claus” draws his name from this abbreviation.

When Santa Claus Was Deployed in Wartime

In 1822, Episcopal minister Clement Clarke Moore wrote a Christmas poem called “An Account of a Visit from St. Nicholas,” more popularly known to

day by its first line: “’Twas The Night Before Christmas.” The poem depicted Santa Claus as a jolly man who flies from home to home on a sled driven by reindeer to deliver toys.

The iconic version of Santa Claus as a jolly man in red with a white beard and a sack of toys was immortalized in 1881, when political cartoonist Thomas Nast drew on Moore’s poem to create the image of Old Saint Nick we know today.

Christmas Facts

Each year, 25 to 30 million real Christmas trees are sold in the United States alone. There are about 15,000 Christmas tree farms in the United States, and trees usually grow for between four and 15 years before they are sold.

In the Middle Ages, Christmas celebrations were rowdy and raucous, a lot like today’s Mardi Gras parties.

The first eggnog made in the United States was consumed in Captain John Smith’s 1607 Jamestown settlement.

Poinsettia plants are named after Joel R. Poinsett, an American minister to Mexico, who brought the red-and-green plant from Mexico to America in 1828.

The Salvation Army has been sending Santa Claus-clad donation collectors into the streets since the 1890s.

Rudolph, “the most famous reindeer of all,” was the product of Robert L. May’s imagination in 1939. The copywriter wrote a poem about the reindeer to help lure customers into the Montgomery Ward department store.

Construction workers started the Rockefeller Center Christmas tree tradition in 1931.

Citation information

History of Christmas, History.com Editors, HISTORY, <https://www.history.com/topics/christmas/history-of-christmas>, accessed Dec. 17, 2022, A&E Television Networks, last updated Dec. 13, 2022, originally published Oct. 27, 2009.

Research backs benefits of making exercise a priority

As the ball drops on the new year, exercise often tops the list of people’s resolutions. According to Zhen Yan, whose research highlights the benefits of exercise in improving health and preventing disease, science supports that choice for more than just getting in shape.

“Exercise is better than medicine,” says Yan, a professor and director of the Center for Exercise Medicine Research at the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute at VTC. “We need to start thinking beyond extending our lifespan and focus on extending our health span.” He is referring to that period of life free from chronic illness, pain and disease.

Yan’s research provides

scientific support for the role of exercise and its effect on mitochondria, which are critical to maintaining health. Yan has found connections between malfunctioning mitochondria and cardiovascular disease, metabolic disease, cancer, and cognitive decline. Among his research findings:

- Exercise can protect both muscles and nerves before surgery and restore blood flow for medical conditions such as heart attack or stroke.

- Regular exercise can produce a powerful antioxidant that can reduce the risk of acute respiratory distress syndrome, a major cause of death in patients with COVID-19.

Those who exer-

cise during pregnancy may reduce their children’s chances of developing diabetes and other metabolic diseases later in life.

- Resistance training leads to functional improvements such as balance, strength, mobility and glucose metabolism through muscle adaptation, insulin sensitivity and improved cellular turnover.

“Our body undergoes adaptations in response to exercise, not only to improve physical performance, but also to induce many other health benefits,” Yan says. “Physical activity and regular exercise are the best measures we have to promote good health and prevent disease.”



Zhen Yan’s research highlights the importance of the power plants of our cells, the mitochondria.

OPINION

Buddy King: Some random reflections on Christmases past

It's a beautiful, cold, snowy morning in north-central West Virginia, one week before Christmas day. I thought it an excellent time to do some random reflecting on Christmases past. While personal to me, I thought maybe these memories might help take other people back, whether "back" is 70 years or seven.

Life is about making memories. As my favorite poet Jimmy Buffett says, "Wrinkles only go where the smiles have been." Christmas makes memories, but it also brings a longing for days and people past so be careful. Enjoy the memories and relish the opportunities to make new ones.

One of my favorite stories of Christmases past is from the year my oldest daughter Beth was just six months old. She is bearing down on a memorable birthday next July, so you might be able to guess how long ago it was. 1983.

My parents were still hale and hardy, as was my Aunt Margaret, who had

a wonderful old home on Junkin Street in Christiansburg, directly across from the building where my Dad had attended high school and later served as superintendent of schools and where I had started first grade. The house had been built by my aunt and my mom and their mother in the early 1940's and was the place my parents first stayed after my Dad returned from World War II. Lots of memories in other words. Also, lots of icy drafts. Wood frame, pre-insulation days, coal heated, old iron radiators. The stuff Christmas movies used to be made of.

Like most of the Christmases eves of my life up to that point, we had dinner at Aunt Maggie's with the temperature hovering around minus 10. That's right, not 10, minus 10. Not unheard of on winter nights in the Alleghenies in those days. The inside of the house probably didn't warm above 60 degrees that night, and we had daughter Beth dressed in a bright multicolored jump-

er and cap. Precocious from birth, she was trying to stand, pulled herself up on a big basket and then toppled headfirst into it, legs in the air, reminiscent of the Wizard of Oz.

I remember eating country ham and biscuits while my Dad and my wife and Aunt Maggie had fried oysters with their ham. My Mom and I abstained, my tolerance for oysters only coming later in life. My Dad kept his Stetson and his overcoat on the whole evening.

Another cherished holiday memory was around the year I was in third or fourth grade. My cousins Joe and Bobby lived at the top of our street, and Joe was home from college. Cousin Bobby was still in high school. A couple of days before Christmas we had a heavy snowfall, the kind we no longer seem to have. They took me sledding in a neighbor's backyard on Cherry Lane while the snow was coming down in buckets. I came home soaking wet and shivering. But what could be cooler when you were a little kid than hanging with your older cousins?

A couple of days later, Bobby and Joe came to our house early on Christ-

mas morning and brought me a puppy (Tippy) and told me Santa had left him in their house with my name on his collar. I remember being excited (our previous dog having recently "taken a powder" as they used to say), but I was also a little dubious since their house didn't have a chimney and why didn't Santa just leave Tippy in my house and how did he carry dogs around in his sleigh? And why did I hear later that Tippy had siblings on the Lucas farm in Riner? Unsolved mysteries.

And there was the first Christmas in our "new" old house in Bridgeport, Laura's first Christmas. The time my wife and I "drew the line" and told our parents back in Virginia that they would have to come to our place. We were starting a new tradition with our girls. They made the trip, my aunts included, and I remember how proud I was to have Christmas in our own home with our two beautiful daughters.

About three years later my Dad and the "Weaver sisters" (my Mom and her two sisters, all 3 of whom were essentially married to my Dad) were in our

big old house again. By that time, Beth was probably seven and Laura four. Beth was enamored with the movie "White Christmas" (my influence), and she got her younger sister (reluctantly, very reluctantly) to do the "Sisters" scene from the movie (Rosemary Clooney and Vera Ellen, watch it). It was as precious as it gets. I think that was the same night the girls' mother and I decided finally to make it to the MIDNIGHT service at our church. We left Aunt Maggie in charge to keep the girls in their beds and took off for Bridgeport Methodist, my parents having long since turned in. How were we to know that midnight was when the service ended, not when it began? We exchanged Christmas greetings with lots of friends as they were leaving.

More random holiday memories. My first year at UVA and going to a 10 p.m. Christmas Glee Club concert on Friday night in Old Cabell Hall to see one of our hall mates sing and coming out on the Lawn to see it covered with new fallen snow. Being home from college that same year and caroling around Christiansburg with my

pal Jerry (actually following the girls who were caroling). As a little kid, helping my Dad put wet gravel in a big bucket and lugging it into the house to stand the tree up in, not wanting to buy one of those stands like normal people used. Selling Christmas trees outside of Krogers on cold winter nights as a Key Clubber with my great friends Jay and the Gregs and hoping some of the CHS girls who wouldn't speak to us at school would come to the store and we could force them to acknowledge us. Meeting Joyce "under the clock" at Kaufmann's in "dahntahn" Pittsburgh on our annual shopping trip in later years.

I hope this little piece brings back some good Christmas memories for my readers and that you make more this year. Merry Christmas!

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.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Where will you be on Christmas Day this year?

This year Christmas is on Sunday. Where will we be that morning? Christmas Eve will then be on Saturday night, so where will we be that evening? Will other "Christmas" activities take priority at these times?

Is the opening of presents more important than taking the children to church? Can we not make room

for both? Will we sit by the fire at home instead of acknowledging the coming of Christ into the world? We often hear that Christ is the greatest gift mankind could ever receive, but will we acknowledge this in any real way during Christmas?

When Jesus came into the world, there was no room for Him in the

inn. I hope we will all make room for Him this Christmas, even if we have to alter other traditions a bit. It is a matter of priority, a matter of importance, a matter of faith.

So where will you and yours be on Christmas Day?

Oh Come All Ye Faithful . . . Oh Come Ye to Bethlehem.

WalletHub: In struggle to find workers, Virginia ranks number seven

As the personal finance website WalletHub points out, during the COVID-19 pandemic, millions of Americans lost their jobs and experienced financial difficulties due to unemployment. Now, for many employers, the shoe is on the other foot. Lots of businesses are struggling to hire enough workers, which has sometimes led to delays in services and re-

duced business hours. In fact, WalletHub says, the labor force participation rate is still below pre-pandemic levels, and is at one of the lowest points in decades. Some businesses aren't even able to keep the employees they already have as Americans are quitting their jobs at record rates in what's been dubbed the "Great Resignation."

Within the U.S., workers are easier to find in some states than others. In order to see where employers are struggling the most in hiring, WalletHub compared the 50 states and the District of Columbia based on the rate of job openings for

both the latest month and the last 12 months. WalletHub based its comparisons on two metrics, the rate of job openings for the latest month and for the last 12 months. WalletHub gave the job openings rate for the latest month double weight in its rankings (two-thirds) and the job openings rate for the last year full weight (one-third). WalletHub then used these metrics to rank the states and the District from those that struggle the most with hiring to those that struggle the least. The Commonwealth of Virginia did not come out well in the rankings, land-

ing at number seven in the rankings of states struggling the most in hiring. According to WalletHub, the ten states having the most trouble finding employees are 1. Alaska 2. Georgia 3. Montana 4. Louisiana 5. New Mexico 6. West Virginia 7. Virginia 8. Wyoming 9. Delaware 10. Vermont. On the other hand, the website found that the ten places having the least trouble finding and hiring workers are 42. South Dakota 43. Nebraska 44. North Dakota 45. Pennsylvania 46. Illinois 47. Florida 48. New Jersey 49. Connecticut 50. District of Columbia 51. New York

Virginia's gas prices continue to fall

Average gasoline prices in Virginia continued their downward plunge last week, falling 11.5 cents per gallon to an average of \$2.99 per gallon as of Monday, Dec. 19, according to GasBuddy's survey of 4,081 stations in Virginia. Prices in Virginia are 43.7 cents per gallon lower than they were a month ago and are 18.7 cents per gallon lower than they were a year ago. The national average price of diesel fell 14.1 cents in the last week and stands at \$4.77 per gallon. According to GasBuddy price reports, the cheapest station in Virginia was priced at \$2.53 per gallon Monday while the most expensive was \$4.49 per gallon, a difference of \$1.96 per gallon. The national average price of gasoline fell 11.9 cents per gallon last

week, averaging \$3.09 per gallon as of Monday. The national average is down 57.1 cents per gallon from a month ago and 20 cents per gallon from a year ago, according to GasBuddy data compiled from more than 11 million weekly price reports covering more than 150,000 gas stations across the country. "The national average for a gallon of gasoline is down nearly \$2 compared to six months ago, and heading into Christmas travel week, is at its lowest in a year and a half, saving Americans some \$750 million every day," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy. "While the decline should take the national average under \$3 per gallon in the next week or so, it is soon likely to fade as oil prices have held in the \$70 per

barrel range," according to De Haan. "But while the declines for gasoline may fade, diesel prices still have considerable ground to cover, and could fall another 50 cents or more in the weeks ahead. Fuel prices across the board have been plunging back into territory more Americans feel is normal, which could certainly boost economic sentiment going forward," said De Haan.

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

CROSSWORD

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- CLUES ACROSS**
- 1. Baseball stat
 - 4. Blaze
 - 8. Sea eagles
 - 10. Tails in Italian
 - 11. Monocot genus
 - 12. Mother or father
 - 13. The Jungian inner self
 - 15. Covered with gold
 - 16. Residual oil
 - 17. Signs up for school
 - 18. Furniture for daily meals
 - 21. Extinct flightless bird of New Zealand
 - 22. Lower limb
 - 23. Guy (slang)
 - 24. Get free of
 - 25. Snakelike fish
 - 26. Adult female bird
 - 27. Formal window coverings
 - 34. Break into small pieces
 - 35. "1836 siege" of U.S.
 - 36. Made violet-red
 - 37. Food chopper
 - 38. Removes writing
 - 39. Ethiopian monetary unit
 - 40. Wine bottle containers
 - 41. English prelate
 - 42. Small storage
 - 43. A jelly-like substance
- CLUES DOWN**
- 1. A brief comment
 - 2. Sultanate of NW Borneo
 - 3. Importune
 - 4. Forelimb
 - 5. Models of ethical behavior
 - 6. Harangues
 - 7. This (Spanish)
 - 9. Springfield Area Mobile Intensive Care
 - 10. Sang at Christmas door to door
 - 12. Partly or nearly blind
 - 14. Posterior pituitary gland hormone
 - 15. American Nurses Association (abbr.)
 - 17. The 7th Greek letter
 - 19. Strives to equal
 - 20. Toff
 - 23. Coleoptera insects
 - 24. The color of blood
 - 25. Slipped by
 - 26. Of she
 - 27. A short musical passage
 - 28. CNN's founder Turner
 - 29. Radioactivity unit
 - 30. Exculpation defense
 - 31. Walking back and forth
 - 32. Come forth from
 - 33. Oxalis
 - 34. A soft twilled fabric of silk
 - 36. The two large chest muscles

After a 42-year interruption, Steve Gerus completes his doctoral degree

When Stephen “Steve” Gerus receives his doctoral degree in sociology at Graduate School Commencement on Dec. 16, his family, including his grandchildren, will be in the stands at Cassell Coliseum to watch him. At 75, he will be one of four graduate students in Virginia Tech’s history to complete a Ph.D. at age 75 or older.

He smiles at the distinction. “My research is more important than my age, but if it encourages someone to continue their education, that’s fine,” he said.

His degree marks the end of a journey begun 42 years ago at Pennsylvania State University, where he and his wife, interim Dean of Virginia Tech’s College of Architecture, Arts, and Design Rosemary Blieszner, were graduate students. In 1980, he earned his master’s degree in anthropology, completed his doctoral exams, and was looking forward to field work in South America when his committee chair, Napoleon Chagnon, left Penn State for another university. Gerus said Chagnon urged him to transfer so he could continue his research.

“But Rosemary convinced me that maybe it would be better if she got a job and I could continue down here,” he said. Blieszner accepted a faculty position at Virginia Tech and joined the university in 1981, and the two moved to Blacksburg. Shortly thereafter, the university’s sociology department discontinued its anthropology program.

“At that point, I decided to take a risk and start a business,” he said. “It was either that or change my major to sociology, and I was not interested in soci-

ology whatsoever.” While he did not have a business background, Gerus had served a four-year apprenticeship with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and had a strong background in commercial and industrial construction. His father had belonged to the union, and the family traveled throughout the east and south, thanks to his father’s specialized skills, before settling in Erie, Penn. Gerus said there were no opportunities to be a union contractor in Montgomery County, so he made a non-compete agreement with the Roanoke local and launched Bell Electric.

“I said I would never compete against a union contractor in my area, and I kept my promise for 37 years,” he said. “That way I could express my gratitude for my union apprenticeship and remain loyal to the union.”

Gerus worked with Professor Shannon Bell in the Department of Sociology after completing coursework and the preliminary doctoral examination. Bell remembers first meeting Gerus during her interview at Virginia Tech in 2017, after she gave her research talk.

“He came up to me after my talk, which was about my research in coal-affected communities in Appalachia, and he shared his experiences working with coal miners when he was an electrician,” she said.

During his graduate career, he was keenly aware of the fact that “when I walked into a classroom, there was nobody nearly my age.” But his anthropological background suggested that his classmates’ similarities were at least as

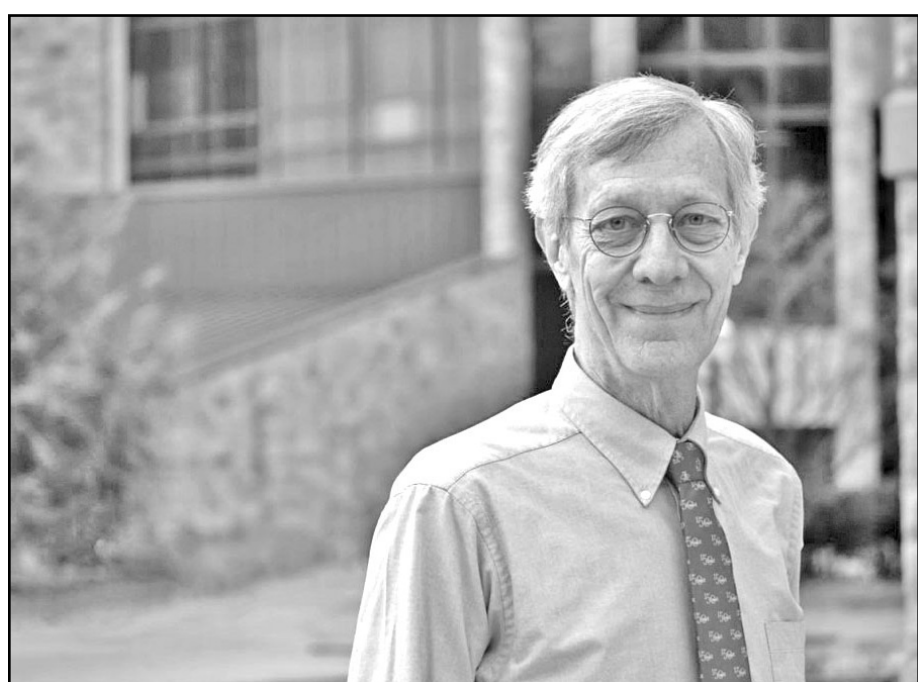
important as any differences. “I was particularly impressed by how respectful people were of all the diversity in those classrooms. That’s an important part of the sociology department’s culture,” Gerus said.

Gerus’s dissertation research focused on the people who live within what’s called “the blast zone” of the Mountain Valley Pipeline in Virginia and West Virginia. That is the area along the pipeline route that is most susceptible to incineration in the event of a pipeline explosion. He was interested in their perception of the risk associated with that danger and with disruption along the pipeline route.

“Risk is a social construct,” he said. “You have to take that into account. I was keen to include the perceptions and attitudes not only of those who opposed the pipeline, but also those who supported the project. My research explored how differences in landowners’ social history influenced attitudes toward the pipeline. Unless we understand why our neighbors may have a different point of view, there is no basis for common ground.”

Data for his dissertation drew from a secondary analysis of a mail survey that Bell and her collaborators, Professors Mike Hughes and Korine Kollivas, sent to 2,600 individuals living in 10 of the counties through which the Mountain Valley Pipeline is being constructed. They received 783 responses to the survey, split between people who live in the blast zone of the pipeline and a control group of people who live at least 10 miles away from the pipeline in the same counties.

Gerus was involved in



Steve Gerus will be one of four graduate students in the history of Virginia Tech to complete a PhD at age 75 or older.

the development of the 92-question survey instrument, which included questions that were directly related to his research interests. He also conducted follow-up interviews with 25 of the survey respondents who live in the blast zone.

Through his interviews, Gerus learned that people had different perceptions about danger, based on their lived experience.

“I assumed being so close, the physical danger of an explosion would be top of mind for them,” he said. “Well, they expressed that they were actually more afraid of ticks and copperheads and the occasional bear than that pipeline. Those were real to them and often made more sense in terms of probability.”

The disruption associated with the pipeline – the clearing operations, construction and threats to their water supply – were far more important than the potential danger and

were considered intrusive. Rural people in the path of the pipeline recognized that any disruption to their fragile water sources could be devastating to them as well as to their crops and animals. The residents of those areas also knew that the pipeline would bring few jobs to their region. Gerus said landowners recognized early on that construction workers would be from out of state because of the specialized skills needed.

Gerus said what he learned from the interviews offered a fresh and nuanced look at landowners’ perception of danger, both personal and to their water, and also to the disruption to people’s attachment to their land.

“Almost 50 percent of surveyed landowners reported that their families had lived in the same county for more than 100 years. Incredible,” Gerus said. “I found associations in the survey data that were not reflected in the

literature. So I went to the qualitative data from the interviews to explain those differences, and that’s where the new knowledge was.” He said much of that new perspective was related to the ideas that interviewees had about danger and disruption.

“I owe these people a lot for telling me their stories, on their porches and at their kitchen tables,” he said. He dedicated his dissertation to the individuals he interviewed.

Gerus and Blieszner are looking forward to a slower-paced lifestyle. In the meantime, he will teach Introduction to Social Anthropology in the Department of Sociology during spring semester.

Gerus will be one of three student speakers at the Dec. 16 Graduate Commencement. He said he knows what his granddaughters might say as he nears the podium: “Grandpa, tell us a story!”

Reservations

from page 1



ARTIST RENDERING COURTESY OF THE RADFORD UNIVERSITY FOUNDATION

The hotel includes several upscale amenities, including a private dining room, pictured here.

Ridge Mountains, and plans to offer impeccable service with a coffee bar, an in-lobby visitor center with concierge, a rooftop terrace, and 6,000 square feet of meeting and event space,” announced Aimbridge Hospitality, the hotel management company, on Monday.

The hotel is located at 600 Tyler Avenue, Radford.

The \$40 million Highlander Hotel Radford development project began in April 2021 and is a public-private partnership between Radford University, the Radford University Foundation, design firm Blur Workshop, Preston Hollow Capital, S.B. Ballard Construction Company, and Aimbridge Hospitality.

“We are delighted to bring this distinctive new offering to this region, to be partnering with Radford University, the Radford Foundation, Preston Hollow Capital, Blur Workshop, S.B. Ballard and so many wonderful and deeply committed partners to meet the growing demand for sophisticated amenities and visitor services in this area,” Andrew Casperson, Vice

President of Operations for Aimbridge Hospitality said. “We are eager to celebrate area commencements, sporting events, meetings, weddings, and other important special occasions with our guests in this distinctive new setting. And we are already looking forward to a very busy inaugural season that will include special events for both Radford University and Virginia Tech graduation, the grand opening of our four-star restaurant, Bee and Butter, and so much more.”

“What I am most excited about is how the Highlander Hotel Radford really captures the dynamic energy of this area. For me, this project really underscores what great minds at work can accomplish through collaboration. Very soon, this beautiful property will offer an unmatched level of service, a respectful nod to the region’s history and culture, and memorable sophistication for

our region’s growing number of out-of-town visitors and guests,” John Cox, Radford University Foundation Chief Executive Officer said. “The opening of this new property is an extremely exciting milestone for many at, and affiliated with, both Radford University and our broader New River Valley region. This new asset is going to be very valuable for travel and tourism in Southwest Virginia and we are certainly very proud to be a part of it.”

A job fair is scheduled for today, Wednesday, Dec. 21 at Radford VEC, 6226 University Park Dr., Radford from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. Applications are being taken for the following positions:

Accounting Manager, Director of Housekeeping, Front Desk Supervisor, Human Resources Manager, Night Auditor, Line Cook, Server, Bartender, Front Desk Agent, Housekeeping Attendant, and Kitchen Steward.

VDOT ROADWATCH

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

MONTGOMERY COUNTY
I-81 NORTHBOUND AT EXIT 105 NEW RIVER BRIDGE REPLACEMENT IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY – Traffic on northbound I-81 has been switched onto the newly constructed bridge over the New River at the Montgomery/Pulaski County line. The old bridge

is being demolished. Lane and shoulder closures may be in place near exit 105. Lane closure may be in effect during the week from 8 p.m. to 7 a.m. Shoulder closures may be in effect at any time during the week. Slow rolls may be performed on I-81 in the north and southbound lanes from mile marker 98 to 109. Speed limit is reduced to 60 miles per hour in the work zone. Shoulder closures will remain in place though the duration of the project. Project completion is estimated by summer 2023.

INTERSTATE 81
INTERSTATE 81 LANE WIDENING CONSTRUCTION PROJECT EXIT 137 TO EXIT 141 – A \$179 million design-build project

See VDOT, page 6



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Study: Virginia's 2021 agriculture, forestry industry's economic impact topped \$105 billion

During the recent Virginia Farm Bureau Federation annual convention, Gov. Glenn Youngkin announced the results of an economic impact study from the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service. Concluding in October, the research found that in 2021, the total economic impact of Virginia agriculture and forestry industries was over \$105 billion. This total represents an estimated 11.2 percent of the state's entire output. In addition, the total employment influence

for these two Virginia industries was 490,295 employees, representing 9.4 percent of total state employment.

"In addition to more than \$105 billion in total industry output, the total value-added impact of Virginia's agriculture and forestry industries was \$55.1 billion, which made up 9.3 percent of the state's gross domestic product," said Gov. Youngkin. "This study highlights the important role Virginia's agriculture and forestry industries play in the commonwealth's econo-

my. These industries are major employers, and their economic influence is far beyond the farms and forests where most agricultural and forestry commodities are grown and harvested."

"The study executed by the Weldon Cooper Center for Public provides a comprehensive representation of the contribution that our agricultural and forestry industries make to the economy of the Commonwealth of Virginia," said Virginia Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Matthew Lohr. "Like many in-

dustries, Virginia's agriculture and forestry sectors were profoundly impacted by the pandemic; however, both sectors have recovered lost ground and forged ahead to support Virginia's overall economy."

The study, led by Dr. Terrance Rephann of The Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia, updates previous studies that were done in 2008, 2013 and 2017. The new study indicates that the total economic impact of agriculture and forestry industries

has grown since 2017.

"The study highlights the importance of agriculture to Virginia's economy and how the diversity of the state's agricultural production helps position producers for success," said Joseph Guthrie, Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS). "The VDACS team is focused on helping Virginia farmers and producers move more of their products to local and national markets and within the global marketplace."

VDOT from page 5

to widen both directions of I-81 between mile markers 136.6 and 141.8 from two to three lanes is set to begin. Work will be performed on the inside and outside shoulders along a five mile section of both northbound and southbound Interstate 81 in Roanoke County and the city of Salem. The shoulders will be built up before barrier walls can be installed for road crews to work behind. Barrier walls will be installed along the shoulders in the spring and summer. Two lanes of I-81 traffic in each direction

Shentel from page 1

the-home network to the vast majority of homes and businesses throughout the city by the end of 2024."

"Fiber enables multi-gigabit internet access with symmetrical upload and download speeds," the announcement reads. "Using Shentel's 8,000-mile regional fiber network, Shentel can ensure high speeds, low latency, and increased reliability."

"Shentel's fiber business has been growing exponentially over the last couple of years and we are proud to continue this growth in our existing markets as well," said Chris Kyle, VP of Industry Affairs and Regulatory at Shentel. "Radford has been a fantastic partner over the last 12 years since we first offered

will remain open during the project with periodic lane closures scheduled during nighttime hours or outside of peak travel times as needed. Drivers can expect the following lane closures and upcoming impacts on northbound and southbound I-81:

WORK ZONE SPEED: With narrow spacing in lanes due to barrier walls, lack of shoulders and lane shifts in various locations, drivers should adhere to posted 60 mph speed limits in the work zone and allow space when following a vehicle.

service in the city. We hope this significant investment will help drive further economic development in the city and surrounding area."

Fiber provides a reliable, high-bandwidth connection that can handle multiple devices within a home or business without buffering while streaming, gaming or video conferencing. Optional Wall-to-Wall WiFi is available, allowing customers to connect anywhere in their home or business.

Radford residents will receive communication by mail approximately 30 days prior to construction activity in their neighborhood.

Radford News Journal staff report

Graham from page 1

sciences. "Bonnie fully understands that high quality care in the early years benefits individuals their entire lives. She sees her work not only as preparing early childhood educators to provide this high-quality care but also as a way of investing in and building a strong, healthy community. Her commitment to our students, children, and the community is unparalleled."

NRCC's early childhood education program was well represented among the nominees and award winners including honorees Chelsea Naughton Sharlow, a current NRCC early childhood student and director of Heart 'n' Hand Early Learning Center, and Judy Shelor, an NRCC early childhood graduate and center director of Valley Interfaith Child Care Center.

The following nominees are also NRCC early childhood education students and/or graduates: Lori Dobbins, office administrator at Radford Head Start; Alea Lacoste, lead teacher at the Virginia Tech Child Development Center for Learning & Research; Sheila Morrison, director of Imagination Station; and Stefi Scha-

fer, early childhood teacher at Blue Mountain School.

"My professional journey has been a wonderful life to serve children, families, and communities by preparing their teachers," said Graham. "I have been blessed to have jobs that I love coming to work, including Pulaski County High School Early Childhood, Virginia Tech Department of Human Development and Family Science, and New River Community College Human Services, Early Childhood, and Education."

"The most overlooked issue today is the significant impact high quality early childhood teachers have on health, academic achievement, future earnings, economic development, and community capacity. We must invest in, support, and even insist that our youngest children have highly talented and credentialed teachers."

For more information about NRCC's early childhood development programs, visit <https://www.nr.edu/ecdl/>.

Submitted by New River Community College

Shortage from page 1

their staff to not only private providers, but now also to state psychiatric hospitals. Furthermore, the CSB may struggle to meet the increased demand for behavioral health and developmental disability services in their communities."

New River Valley Community Services (NRVCS), the CSB that serves the counties of Floyd, Giles, Montgomery and Pulaski, as well as the City of Radford, has not been immune from the growing workforce shortage. At a time when the agency is providing services to more residents than ever before (12,133 individuals received services in Fiscal Year 2022), NRVCS has 117 open positions posted on its website (as of 11/29/22).

"Our mission and purpose is to provide quality services for individuals who are living with mental health and/or substance use disorders, as well as those with developmental disabilities," explains NRVCS Executive Director James Pritchett. "The nature of this work is that it can be rather intensive and this requires having a team of dedicated and reliable professionals who can meet that need — especially when you consider that several of our programs operate on a 24/7 basis."

The workforce shortage isn't unique to the CSB system, as many industries and professions have been impacted by "The Great Resignation" that evolved during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Still, higher levels of compensation and incentives like retention bonuses being

offered at state hospitals and also in the private sector make it more difficult for CSBs to recruit and retain quality staff. Chris Taylor, NRVCS' Senior Director of Human Resources, reports that the agency has seen a "significant decline" in the number of applicants for positions that require advanced degrees, including clinicians, nurses and physicians.

NRVCS employs approximately 800 full- and part-time employees, making it one of the largest employers in the region. The agency operates clinics and facilities throughout its five-jurisdiction service area and provides limited transportation services for some of the individuals it serves.

"It's not unusual for CSBs to be asked to do more with less," adds Pritchett. "In fact, I'd say we've become pretty good at it over the years — and even I'm impressed sometimes with what we've been able to achieve from the standpoint of expanding programs and connecting more than 12,000 residents each year with the treatment and supports they need."

"At the same time, we can only ask so much of our staff," Pritchett continues. "Increased caseloads, picking up extra shifts, filling in to ensure coverage of a program — those are things we all have to do from time-to-time in this line of work — but you can only be stretched thin for so long. We need help."

By Mike Wade, NRVCS

OBITUARIES

Boley, Dorothy Jean

The Chesapeake & Ohio Historical Society was deeply saddened by the death of Dorothy Jean Boley of Hinton, WV, on Dec. 13. She was 99.

Dorothy was a Chesapeake & Ohio Railway retiree, an avid supporter of the Clifton Forge-based organization, and a pillar at the Hinton Railroad Museum.

Born on March 9, 1923, in Hinton, Dorothy was part of a World War II hiring wave on the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway that saw many women go to work for the railroad when huge numbers of male employees left their railroad jobs for the United States armed services. She was believed to be the last living female wartime hire on the C&O Railway. Like the well-known image of "Rosie the Riveter" representing women who entered the blue-collar workforce when men enlisted to serve in various branches of the military, women like Dorothy also stepped up in clerical and operational roles on American railroads. Hired by the C&O in 1943, she would go on to serve 43 years on the railroad.

In her railroad career, Dorothy was secretary to the division superintendent and, in her later life, dedicated her retirement to the Hinton Railroad Museum, serving as a living link to the history that organization preserves in her hometown.

She graduated from Hinton High School, class of 1941, and the Charleston School of Commerce.

C&O Historical Society President Totten remembered the mutual support and respect between the Hinton Railroad



Museum and their non-profit organization.

"On her 99th birthday this year, I called Dorothy to wish her a happy birthday," Totten said. "She said she received her C&O Historical Society magazine the day before, immediately read it, and wished us luck on our current projects, including the restoration of a former C&O Railway office car in

our collection."

The C&O Historical Society dedicated its 2022 calendar "Chesapeake & Ohio Railway Through the New River Gorge," to Dorothy Boley for her career as part of the "machines, nature, and human grit that conquered the wilderness of the New River Gorge" and for her tireless efforts to preserve local transportation history at the Hinton Railroad Museum.

In October, Totten and Boley had one final encounter, during 2022's Hinton Railroad Days, when the Autumn Colors Express excursion train brought hundreds of visitors to her hometown of Hinton as part of the town's annual festival. There the two caught up and discussed the future of the festival that is a local tradition and the transportation history that both the C&O Historical Society and Hinton Railroad Museum strive to preserve.

In remembering Dorothy, Totten said, "As we mourn the loss of our friend and supporter, we are grateful to have known her, and thankful for the work she did not only to preserve history, but to write it."

Submitted by Brandy Dudley, C&O Historical Society

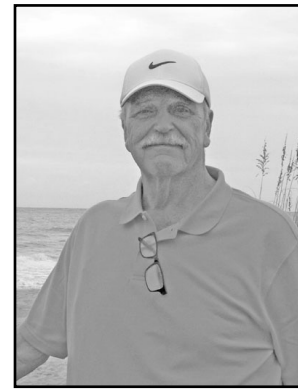
Crowder, Charles Keith

Charles Keith Crowder, 69, of Radford, passed away Friday, Dec. 16, 2022.

He was a member of Unity Christian Church and retired from Radford University in housekeeping.

He was a lifelong member of the Radford Jaycees and the Virginia Jaycees, where he held numerous offices. With the Jaycees he was actively involved with the Annual Christmas Parade, 4th of July, and the Christmas shopping tour for underprivileged children. He worked part time over 40 years for the Radford Park and Rec Department, delighting young and old as Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny.

Keith was preceded in death by his parents, Ralph and Alwayne Crowder.



Survivors include his wife of 48 years, Judith Crowder of Radford; sons Andrew Crowder of Christiansburg and Chuck Crowder of Pulaski; fur babies JoJo, MJ, Kya and Loras; and many other relatives and friends.

The family will receive friends from 4 until 6 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 23, 2022, at the Mullins Funeral Home in Radford. Funeral services will begin at 6 p.m. with Pastor Timothy Worles officiating.

Flowers will be appreciated, or donations can be made to the American Kidney Foundation or to the Radford Humane Society.

The Crowder family is in care of Mullins Funeral Home & Crematory in Radford.

Cecil, Robert "Bob"

Robert "Bob" Cecil of Christiansburg passed away on December 7, 2022, at the age of 81. He is survived by his wife, Arlene Hardin Cecil.

Other survivors include two daughters: Angie Cecil and Amber Nia (formerly Cecil), nephews and nieces Debbie Cecil Cobb, (CJ) Cecil Justice, Garrett Justice, Sammy Justice, Terry Edmonds, Amy Blankenship Frazier, and Amanda Edmonds Gray.

Bob was predeceased by both parents: James R. Cecil and Bertha Thornton Cecil, and one brother, (JD) Jason Cecil and his wife, Louise Dunagan Cecil; and three sisters, Anna Cecil Justice, Betty Cecil Blankenship, and Brenda Cecil Edmonds; and one nephew, Mike Cecil.

Robert graduated from Appalachian State University in Boone, N.C. and taught electronics technology at New River Community College for twenty years. He retired from Radford Army



Ammunition Plant as an Electrical Engineer.

He was an avid ham radio operator, musician, and computer enthusiast. Robert and Arlene, along with their chihuahuas, traveled to all states except Hawaii in their motorhome. Robert said he "loved RV'ing and Alaska was the trip of a lifetime."

A funeral service was conducted on Thursday, Dec. 15, 2022, at 11:00 a.m. in the Roselawn Memorial Gardens Mausoleum with his friend, Pastor Eddie Kendall of Pembroke officiating. Interment followed in Roselawn Memorial Gardens.

In lieu of flowers, the family asked that donations be made to the Shriners Children Hospital 3229 Burnet Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio 45229. A guestbook is available to send condolences by visiting www.kendallfuneralhome.com. The staff of Kendall Funeral Home is honored to serve the Cecil family.

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Legals - City of Salem
COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SALEM

Notice is hereby given to all interested persons that the Council of the City of Salem, at its regular meeting on Monday, January 9, 2023, at 6:30 p.m., in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 114 N. Broad Street, in the City of Salem, Virginia, will hold a public hearing, pursuant to Sections 15.2-2204 and 15.2-2285 of the Code of Virginia, as amended, to consider approval of the following requests relative to the CODE OF THE CITY OF SALEM, VIRGINIA: The request of Friendship Salem Terrace, LLC, contract purchaser, and White Whale Two, LLC, property owner of 1871 Harrogate Drive (Tax Map # 128-1-5), and Friendship Salem Terrace, LLC, property owner of 1851 Harrogate Drive (Tax Map # 128-1-13) for rezoning the properties from RMF Residential Multifamily District, with conditions to HBD Highway Business District, with conditions. Copies of the proposed plans, ordinances or amendments may be examined in the Office of Community Development, 21 South Bruffey Street, Salem, Virginia. At said hearing, parties in interest and citizens shall have an opportunity to be heard relative to the said requests.

THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SALEM, VIRGINIA BY: H. Robert Light Clerk of Council

Legals - Montgomery County
ABC NOTICE

SA 19 LLC, trading as G2s 145 College Ave. Blacksburg, county of Montgomery, Virginia 24060-7401
The above establishment is applying to the VIRGINIA ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) AUTHORITY for a Wine and Beer On and Off Premises license to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages.
George Abboud, Owner. NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 days from the publishing date of the first of two required newspaper legal notices. Objections should be registered at www.abc.virginia.gov or 800-552-3200.

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Legals - Craig County
ORDER OF PUBLICATION VIRGINIA: IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE COUNTY OF CRAIG

THE COUNTY OF CRAIG, VIRGINIA a political subdivision of) the Commonwealth of Virginia, Plaintiff, V. UNKNOWN HEIRS OF WILLIAM TABOR, BRUCE DONALD KING, DOUGLAS MARK KING, BRYANT C. FISHER, KIMBERLY FISHER, FREDERICK BROWN, PAMELA BROWN, and PARTIES UNKNOWN, Defendant(s). **Case No. CL22-234** The object of this suit is to enforce a lien for delinquent real estate taxes against the property known as Parcel No. 113-A-19 (property on Giles County/ Craig County line). An Affidavit having been filed stating that due diligence has been used, without effect, to ascertain the location of the named Defendant(s), that the Defendant(s) may be non-residents of Virginia and maintain no domicile within the borders of the Commonwealth, or are deceased, or that there may be parties who have an interest in the property but are unknown, namely, the heirs, devisees, and successors in title of the named Defendant(s), made Defendants by the general description of Parties Unknown, it is hereby ORDERED that the named Defendant(s) and all Parties Unknown appear on or before January 17, 2023, and do what may be necessary to protect their interests in this cause. I Ask For This: N. Reid Broughton (VSB No. 38899) Katie M. DeCoster, Esq. (VSB No. 82696) Sands Anderson PC P.O. Box 2009 Christiansburg, Virginia 24068-2009 (540) 260-9011 (540) 260-0022 (facsimile) Entered: 12/08/2022 by Sharon P. Oliver (Deputy) Clerk, County of Craig, Virginia

Legals - City of Salem

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RADFORD SPORTS

VT basketball teams with Carilion Children's Center to fight pediatric cancer

Virginia Tech basketball is teaming up with Carilion Children's to fight pediatric cancer.

In a first, players and coaches from the men's and women's teams are partnering with Carilion Pediatric Hematology-Oncology patients to raise pediatric cancer awareness.

More than 25 participating

children and teens will have the chance to paint custom shoes for the coaches and basketball staff to wear later this season. Players and coaches will join the kids and their families onsite at the Carilion Children's Tanglewood Center as they create their designs.

"We are looking forward to partnering with local kids

to raise awareness," said Mike Young, head coach of Virginia Tech men's basketball. "It'll be great to get to know them and an honor to wear their designs for such an important cause."

The specially-designed sneakers will be worn by the women's basketball coaches and staff at the Jan. 12 game against Louisville in Cassell

Coliseum. The men's basketball coaches and staff will wear their sneakers on Jan. 28 when the Hokies host Syracuse.

The event is part of an ongoing NCAA initiative called "Coaches vs. Cancer," whereby collegiate basketball coaches and staff nationwide wear sneakers at designated games to raise awareness for

the cause.

"Our players always look forward to getting out in the community," said Virginia Tech women's basketball head coach Kenny Brooks. "We're grateful for the opportunity to localize this national initiative with our partners at Carilion and put the spotlight on these kids."



The Virginia Tech men's and women's basketball teams are joining forces with Carilion Children's Tanglewood Center to fight pediatric cancer.

Fan experience new for reporter



From the Sidelines

Marty Gordon

Saturday's Virginia Tech basketball game against Grambling took on a whole new experience for someone who had sat along press row for the past 20 years. I typically find myself sitting quietly at a press seat in the end zone of Cassell Coliseum. Usually, there is no one around me; thus this was a different feeling of attending a basketball game in Blacksburg.

This weekend, I attended the game but sat in the opposite end of the arena. Most of the students were gone, and it was "kids' day" with staff and faculty receiving free tickets. Still the Cassell was much slimmer than it usually is.

Yes, there was "Enter Sandman," and, yes, there was the excitement of the game.

I can truly admit it was a different feel for me. I had decided to sit in the stands when a group of fans wanted to go to the game.

We started up high in the arena, causing me to have a nosebleed feeling. When a seat attendant told us to move down to the student section since it sat mostly empty, we quickly accepted.

If you've never been to a Hokie basketball game, take time to do so. Add it

to your bucket list.

Everyone should sit in the stands at least once in his life. Typically, Cassell has a packed house with as many as five sellouts this season. That alone makes it seem like a real Tech athletic event.

The Cassell Guard, a group of enthusiastic students, usually makes the game a little more enjoyable, but this Saturday, they were not present because of the Christmas break. But when they are there, they raise a ruckus.

I salute the Tech marketing staff for offering the game as special for area kids. Several were acting cameramen, others helped with warmups, and one lucky youngster got to be a guest public address announcer.

With all this being said, Saturday's game was also a good one for basketball fans.

I would love to step off press row and go to another game simply as a fan. Spending time with friends was also a plus.

I will give Tech this: The fan experience at a basketball game or a football game is one of the best in the country.

To say Tech has become a basketball school is an understatement. In addition to the men's outstanding play, the Lady Hokies are another reason to attend a game.

Hokie basketball is alive and well, and everyone should take a moment to enjoy a live game at the Cassell.

Back to my regular seat the next go-round.

Cave Spring girls defeat Blacksburg 54-45



Blacksburg's Brynn Ferguson drives and scores against Cave Spring in a Friday night home game. Cave Spring came away with the 54-45 win. Ferguson finished with 11 points.



Blacksburg's Kailyn Brawley slips by Cave Spring's Katie Carroll on her way to the basket. With the loss, Blacksburg fell to 3-4 on the season.



Blacksburg's Gabby Brooks drives in for a layup against Cave Spring defender Abby Smith. Brooks scored 15 in the loss.

PHOTOS BY JON FLEMING

Twenty Virginia Tech student-athletes take part in fall commencement

Twenty Virginia Tech student-athletes received diplomas Friday, Dec. 16, during the university's fall commencement inside Cassell Coliseum. The list includes 11 members of the football program, two from men's soccer, and one each from baseball, men's cross country, men's golf, men's track and field, and wrestling.

Of the 20 student-athletes, Kaleb Smith of football earned his master's degree in curriculum and instruction. The remaining 19 degrees were all undergraduate in areas such as real estate, management, criminology, human development, communication, sports media and analytics, nutrition and computer engineering.

The participants, their sport, and their degree major were Graham Firoved, baseball, real estate; Eldon

Phillips, men's cross country, sports media and analytics; Eli Adams, football, criminology; Enzo Anthony, football, management; Keshon Artis, football, management; Chamarr Conner, football, criminology; Josh Fuga, football, human development; Dimitri Georgiadis, football, religion and culture; Jesse Hanson, football, finance; Dax Hollifield, football, human nutrition, foods, and exercise; Nigel Simmons, football, sociology; Kaleb Smith, football, curriculum and instruction; William Walker, football, consumer studies; Conner Johnson, men's golf, management; Cameron Joice, men's soccer, human development; Tyson Jones, men's track and field; communication science and social inquiry; Hunter Bolen, wrestling, communication science and social inquiry.

Send community news and photos to communitynews@ourvalley.org

Late Christmas shopping ideas for sportsmen

Marty Gordon
NRV@sports@ourvalley.org

This time of year means lots of people are still looking for late Christmas gifts, especially for sportsmen in their lives.

The first place to start is the Virginia Tech Hokies Shop at <https://shop.hokiesports.com/>.

One of the best items still available for quick delivery is the Men's Nike Heathered Gray Virginia Tech Hokies Football Club Pullover Hoodie for \$64.99.

Anyone interested in helping Virginia and its Wildlife can check out <https://license.go-outdoorsvirginia.com/Shop>. A purchase of several items will help provide funding for projects to aid the sportsmen in

the Commonwealth.

One of my favorites is Adventure Dry Sack – Orange, for \$24.95. It's a dry bag for all recreational outings to keep those "need to be dry" items dry, like a phone, important guides and maps, and of course food and drinks. The blaze orange color makes it easy to find among all other gear and the DWR logo will remind sportsmen to enjoy the outdoors safely and with friends.

Also available is the federally endangered pollinator - the Rusty Patched Bumble Bee - with the exclusive bee bucket hat in dark green. Virginia is 1 of 13 states where the Rusty Patched Bumble Bee is found,

The Bison through

World Wildlife Fund allows for adoption of a bison through <https://gifts.worldwildlife.org/gift-center/gifts/Species-Adoptions>. With a gift from \$25 to \$100, a Bison can be adopted in the name of a favorite person.

One of my favorites from last year is still the LED Flashlight Gloves for \$21.99.

Amazon has several men's and women's survival kits for \$31.99.

Deer hunting sneakers add an extra excitement to a favorite hunter for \$57.99 at silverbrand.com.

The MeatEater Fish and Game Cookbook by Steven Rinella is available on Amazon for \$14.99 and provides recipes and techniques for every hunter and

angler. From the host of the television series and podcast MeatEater, the long-awaited definitive guide to cooking wild game, including fish and fowl, features more than 100 new recipes.

Or what about electric rechargeable heated socks with a three-level temperature setting? The snow rechargeable heated socks can be found at the SnowDeer store for \$79. They'll stay warm without building a fire with Radiate portable campfire for \$30 at uncommon-goods.com.

Sportsmen might use hunting as a way to unplug and unwind, but that doesn't mean they need to cut off completely from the outside world. This 10,000mAh capacity portable power

bank helps keep hunters connected when the battery on their Apple or Android devices runs low.

A BLAVOR Solar Power Bank, Qi Portable Charger 10,000mAh External Battery Pack is available for \$26.99 at the Balvor online store.

If the hunting excursions leave them with cold, wet gloves and boots, the DryGuy air-forced dryer will ensure they don't stay that way for long. It relies on heated forced air to dry four items at once in as little as one hour. Find it at the DryGuy online store for \$79.

Among my favorites is the PorpoiseTees "I Like Hunting and maybe three people" shirt. While these might be late for Christmas, they

would make a great sportsman Valentine's gift. For \$19.99 there are plenty to choose from at the company's online site.

Another favorite for those who wear glasses is a special glass eyeglasses cleaner.

Dirty eyeglasses are distracting and frustrating. Cleaning glasses with traditional cleaning products is messy and requires specific sprays. More information can be found at: <https://www.talktechdaily.com/glasses-cleaner> with a \$19.99 price tag from Peeps.com.

Whatever Christmas shoppers grab for that favorite sportsman, they can support them in their interesting hobbies. Merry Christmas everyone.

Send community news and photos to communitynews@ourvalley.org

VT's Price, Mitchell earn TopDrawerSoccer honors

TopDrawerSoccer announced its Freshman Best XI Teams on Wednesday, with Virginia Tech women's soccer players Taylor Price and Natalie Mitchell representing the Hokies' freshman class.

A native of Ashburn, Va., Price received First-Team honors for being one of the top ranked freshmen in the NCAA. Price ended the regular season ranked second among freshmen in the ACC in both goals (8) and points (19). Overall in the NCAA she is tied for 34th with four game-winning goals. Near the end of the regular season, TopDrawerSoccer ranked her fifth on the Freshmen Top 100 list, and she was named to the ACC All - Freshmen team and All-ACC Third Team. Price scored the first goal of the match five times this season including the game-winning goal

against #22 NC State (1-0) and the tie against #13 Virginia (3-3).

Originally from Temecula, Calif., Mitchell led the Atlantic Coast Conference freshman class with eight assists during the regular season and was ranked fourth overall in the conference. Shel started all 19 matches this season, taking 52 shots and going two for two on penalty-kick goals. She earned 14 points with three goals and eight assists, ranking third in overall points for Tech. During the season, TopDrawerSoccer ranked her 11th on the Freshman Top 100 list. Mitchell's accomplishments on the pitch earned her TopDrawerSoccer Second Team honors.

The Hokies ended the 2022 season with an overall record of 10-7-2 and received an at-large berth into the NCAA tournament.

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² Initial Annual Percentage Yield (APY) assumes, principal and interest remain on deposit until maturity. Interest is compounded daily and credited quarterly. To earn APY, the minimum balance must be \$100.00. A penalty for early withdrawal will be imposed. Fees may reduce earnings. Annual Percentage Yield (APY) are accurate as of 11.18.22. Promotional rate offered on personal accounts only.

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