

News Journal

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Trees will be accepted until Jan. 14 at the marina parking lot. PHOTOS COURTESY OF FOCL

Christmas for the fishes: donate Christmas trees to Claytor Lake

Don't forget to drop off your live Christmas trees for the fish at Claytor Lake State Park. Help the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources and Claytor Lake State Park create fish habitat reef structures each year by saving your live trees. "Drop day," the day volunteers will drop the trees into the lake to create the fish habitats, is currently Jan. 18,

with a backup weather date of Jan. 23. The habitat structures "help ensure years of great fishing at Claytor Lake" and also recycle old Christmas trees. "Donated trees will be incorporated into reef structures to enhance habitat for game fish," announced Friends of Claytor Lake, Inc. "You can also observe similar habitat currently in use

See **Donate**, page 3

Local publishing company under new ownership

Heather Bell
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Pocahontas Press, a local publishing company in operation for nearly 40 years, is under new ownership. Lori Graham, author, newspaper reporter and American Sign Language Interpreter, recently purchased the company. Graham is a contributing writer for the News Messenger and Radford News Journal. "Mary Holliman began Pocahontas Press in 1985, publishing her father's autobiography, "A Teacher's Story," Graham wrote in an owner's message on the company's website, www.pocahontaspres.com. "For the next quarter century, she continued publishing



PHOTO COURTESY OF LORI GRAHAM
Lori Graham, author, newspaper reporter and American Sign Language Interpreter, recently purchased Pocahontas Press.

See **Local**, page 3

Radford Chamber announces Holiday Display Contest winners

RADFORD—The Radford Chamber of Commerce recently announced the winners of the Chamber's 2023 Holiday Display Contest. The 2023 winner of the Holiday

Display Contest for Residential is awarded to Jonathan Stewart and his display located at 2005 Seventh St. and Price-Williams Realty won the Commercial division at their location

on Tyler Avenue. "The Radford Chamber expresses its sincerest thanks for everyone that showed their holiday spirit and shared it with all of us," said Chamber Executive

Director Dan McKinney. "Thank you to all the businesses and residences who decorated their locations and showed us their holiday spirit!"
Staff report



2005 Seventh St. is the residential winner



PHOTOS COURTESY OF RADFORD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
Price-Williams Realty is the commercial winner

Packed audience experiences New River Voices Choral Society Winter Concert 2023

Lori Graham
Contributing writer

Every seat was filled for the New River Voices Choral Society debut concert Dec. 22 at the Salvation Army Worship Center in Christiansburg. The hour-long program, directed by Anthony Woodyard and accompanied by pianists Daniel Taylor and Benjamin Slaughter, presented a diverse range of cultural and traditional holiday, hymnals and Christmas music. The concert opened with a piano duet by Slaughter and Taylor during the prelude and processional of "Ding-Dong Merrily on High" by Mark Hayes, and "O Sanctissima", which is a prayer to the blessed Virgin Mary. The audience then rose to the singing of "The Star-Spangled Banner." Director Woodyard produced rich baritone sounds in his solo performance of "Oh Holy Night" with Taylor accompanying on the



The New River Voices Choral Society performed their debut concert at the Salvation Army in Christiansburg in front of a packed room.

piano. The audience was often included in the form of a sing-along with both traditional and fun Christmas carols such as "Frosty the Snowman," "Joy to the World" and "Jingle Bells." Many diverse spiritual hymns were beautifully performed by the group as well. Especially highlighting the mixes

of deep bass, alto, tenor, and soprano sections of the choral group was the recital of the Latin song "Adoramus Te", scored by Andy Beck. The layering of the harmonic sounds provided a rich production that resonated throughout the audience, creating a relaxing and warm atmosphere. Additional talented productions came from

bass trombonist Carrie Hibbert and euphonium player Benjamin Slaughter who performed a duet instrumental rendition of "In the Bleak Midwinter". Ken Owens solo performance of "Mary, Did you Know?" was a favorite of the evening as well. Soprano BreAnna Martin thrilled the audience with the last



BreAnna Martin was a featured soloist awing the crowd with a beautiful rendition of "Ave Maria."

solo of the evening accompanied by Slaughter on the piano. Her rendition of "Ave Maria" was brilliantly produced and revealed precision in her vocal

range and talent. The full concert can be viewed on the New River Voices Choral Society Facebook page.
See **Concert**, page 3

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, Jan. 4:

Game On

At the Christiansburg Library; 1 – 3 p.m. Gamers of all ages are welcome to play a variety of video games. Participants are encouraged to bring their portable device, but it is not required. In addition, we have a variety of board and card games. Connect with other gamers. Refreshments provided.

Friendship Bracelet Palooza

At the Blacksburg Library; 3 – 4:30 p.m. Big beads, small beads, colored string and mini rubber bands. Just bring your imagination! An all ages event. All supplies provided.

Friday, Jan. 5:

Paint and Sip

At the Blacksburg Library; 2 -3:30 p.m. Enjoy the afternoon with a hot beverage and a creative project! You will be provided all materials to paint a canvas and drink hot chocolate while working. No instructions are necessary as this is a time to relax and create whatever comes to mind. Paint a gift for someone else or yourself. Open to all ages. No registration required, but supplies are limited.

Saturday, Jan. 6:

Jigsaw Puzzle Tournament

At the Meadowbrook Library; 1 – 3 p.m. Looking for a fun way to kick off the new year? Join us for a jigsaw puzzle tournament to celebrate National Puzzle Month in January. Compete on teams to see who can finish their 500 piece puzzle in the least amount of time! Prizes will be awarded! For ages 10 and up. Registration is required.

Monday, Jan. 8:

Soup in Your Instant Pot

At the Meadowbrook Library; 5 – 7 p.m. Join us as we make soup in an Instant Pot! Angie Helm with

Virginia Cooperative Extension will be providing samples and sharing some great prep tips to save time using your Instant Pot to prepare delicious and healthy soups during winter. Registration is required.

Radford City Council meeting

The Radford City Council will hold its regularly scheduled meeting at 7 p.m. in council chambers at the Radford Municipal Building, 10 Robertson St., Radford. See the agenda at www.radfordva.gov.

Montgomery County Board of Supervisors meeting

Public meetings are the second and fourth Monday of each month at the Montgomery County Government Center, 755 Roanoke St. in Christiansburg. Closed sessions begin at 6 p.m. if needed. Open sessions begin at 7:15 p.m. Citizens are invited to attend and allowed to speak at each meeting. All regular meetings of the Board of Supervisors are rebroadcast on Montgomery County Comcast and Shentel Channels 190 daily.

Tuesday, Jan. 9:

Fall Prevention and Balance in the Home

Join Blacksburg Parks and Recreation at 2 p.m. for a presentation on Fall Prevention & Balance in the Home, by Cindy Henderson with CORA Physical Therapy. In addition to the presentation, this program offers participants free injury screenings, live demos, giveaways, and a Q&A session. This program will be held at the Blacksburg Community Center and is free to attend. Registration is required. To register, call 540.443.1142 or email jherbert@blacksburg.gov.

School Board meeting

The Radford City School Board will convene for its regular meeting at 6 p.m. at the School Administration Building, 1612 Wadsworth St. The agenda for the meeting can be viewed at www.rcps.org.

Blacksburg Town Council meeting

The council meets in regular session the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at 6:30 p.m. in

the Roger E. Hedgepeth Chambers of the Blacksburg Municipal Building, 300 S. Main St. These meetings are open to the public and televised live on WTOB Channel 2.

Christiansburg Town Council meeting

Regular Town Council meetings are held on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month beginning at 7 p.m. in the Council Chambers of Town Hall (100 E. Main Street). The public is welcome and encouraged to attend, with a citizen hearing time reserved at each meeting for residents to bring any matter they desire before the entire council.

Saturday, Jan. 13:

Mount Tabor Ruritan Biscuit Breakfast

Mount Tabor Ruritan Club will be serving up hot biscuits topped with delicious sausage gravy, or with the latest batch of our “world-famous” apple butter. We will also have scrambled eggs, juice and coffee. Breakfast will be served in the Fellowship Hall of Slusser’s Chapel, 1543 Mount Tabor Rd, Blacksburg; 8 – 10 a.m. This is below the Sanctuary, on the lower church parking lot level. This is a fundraiser for our club to help us as we serve our community, and donations will be accepted for the breakfast. More information at <https://fb.com/MtTaborRuritan>

On-going:

Now through Jan. 15:

Blacksburg Transit reduced service

Blacksburg Transit will operate on reduced service for the holiday season beginning Dec. 14. Reduced service will remain in effect until Jan. 15. There will be no bus service on Christmas Day and New Year’s Day. For more information, please contact 540-443-1500.

National average price of gas projected to see yearly decline in 2024 for second straight year

GasBuddy has released its annual Fuel Price Outlook with some good news for drivers: expect lower gasoline and diesel prices in 2024.

The outlook highlights key trends in gasoline and diesel prices, forecasting that, after two years of above average gas prices, 2024 will bring relief at the pump for consumers as several factors contribute to less of a pinch at the pump. GasBuddy expects the yearly national average will drop from \$3.51 per gallon this year to \$3.38 in 2024.

Highlights from GasBuddy’s 2024 Fuel Outlook:

Gas prices still could fall below a national average of \$3 per gallon this winter before starting to rise in late-February, getting close to \$4 per gallon as summer approaches, then mildly declining into summer, with hurricane season presenting uncertainty in late summer.

Drivers in some California cities could again briefly see prices above \$6 per gallon if major refinery issues develop during the summer, although most major U.S. cities will see prices peak at or slightly below \$4 per gallon in 2024.

Americans are expected to spend a combined \$446.9 billion on gasoline in 2024. Average yearly spending per household will fall to an estimated \$2,407, down 2% from 2023, and over 12% less compared to 2022.

Electric vehicles (EVs) and the 2024 presidential election have the potential to impact fuel prices in the year ahead, with a potential slowdown in the EV transition

at stake.

Memorial Day will be the priciest 2024 holiday at the pump, with the national average price of gasoline expected to be \$3.56-\$4.04 per gallon on the holiday.

“As 2023 fades away, I’m hopeful those \$5 and \$6 prices for gasoline and diesel will also fade into memory,” said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis for GasBuddy. “The global refining picture continues to improve, providing more capacity and peace of mind that record-setting prices will stay away from the pump in 2024. I anticipate that we’ll still have some volatility, unexpected outages and disruptions, and potentially weather-related issues, but I do not expect it to lead to record prices. Offsetting OPEC+’s production cuts is contributing to the rise of U.S. oil production, which now stands at record levels. Combined with Canada, North American oil production could further stabilize countries that have decided to curb oil production.”

The outlook forecasts the highest prices will be seen at the peak of the summer driving season in May, with the national average potentially rising as high as \$3.89 per gallon. More uncertainty is expected with hurricane season in late summer. Diesel prices are also predicted to fall incrementally from 2023, peaking at \$4.13 per gallon in March 2024.

Gas Buddy

Top financial resolutions for 2024 and how to keep them

Get a 5%+ return on your cash

In recent years, the APYs on bank accounts weren’t high enough to really bother comparing. Now, after numerous rounds of Federal Reserve rate hikes, you can save a lot of money by strategically selecting your bank account. Now, the average online savings account has an APY around 3.75%, and you can get a 5%+ annual return from the best deposit accounts.

If you’d like a recommendation, check out WalletHub’s picks for the best high-yield savings accounts and the best CD rates.

Protect your identity

More than 1 million identity theft complaints are submitted to the Federal Trade Commission each year, and having your identity stolen can be extremely frustrating, time consuming and expensive. Some of the fraud that identity thieves commonly perpetrate will get flagged by free credit monitoring services, including unauthorized credit card and loan applications. But things like fraudulent bank account changes and payday loan applications would not.

To better protect yourself, consider upgrading to an identity protection service. For example, WalletHub Premium provides

bank account and alternative loan monitoring, plus dark web monitoring, identity theft insurance and other helpful features.

Make a realistic budget and stick to it

The fact that we’re on pace to end 2023 with over \$1.2 trillion in credit card debt is a clear sign that we need to do a better job budgeting. The best way to make a budget is to gather your bills from the past few months and make a list of all your recurring expenses. Then rank them in order of importance, with true necessities such as housing, food and healthcare obviously taking the top spots. After that, you can simply cut from the bottom of your list until your take-home exceeds what you plan to spend.

Finally, keep track of your monthly spending throughout the year to make sure you’re abiding by your budget. This will help you finetune the allocation of your funds, too.

Explore ways to refinance high interest rates

Refinancing opportunities are most abundant when rates are falling, and we’re not there yet, but you might find opportunities to save if your credit score and income have gone up since you got your credit card or loan. For example, the best balance transfer credit

cards can help you consolidate debt and pay it off with no interest for as long as 21 months. The best personal loans for debt consolidation give you even longer to pay off consolidated debt, but the APR won’t be quite as low.

Both the best cards and the best loans require at least good credit for approval. You can check your credit score for free right here on WalletHub.

Save more money

Millions of Americans do not have a rainy-day fund, according to the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority. Like someone without insurance, people who lack an emergency fund are tempting fate, putting themselves at risk of financial catastrophe in the event of unexpected unemployment or major medical expenses. A lot of people found that out the hard way over the past couple years.

So, building up some reserves should be one of the first orders of business for any financial makeover. We recommend ultimately building a fund with about 12 to 18 months’ take-home income. But it’s important to understand that won’t happen overnight. In other words, you don’t need to put the rest of your financial life on hold until your emergency fund is complete. Rather, chip away at it over

time.

Start with a goal to set aside two months’ pay so you’re better prepared for a significant downturn in the economy. According to a recent WalletHub survey, 54% of people say they’re not financially prepared for a recession. Once you have that safety net, you can add to it at your own pace.

Repay 20% of your credit card debt

Americans owe way too much credit card debt: more than \$10,000 per household. That debt is extremely expensive, too. Something eventually has to give. And you’d much rather that be your outstanding balance, paid down on your own terms, than your ability to afford monthly minimum payments and, in turn, your credit score. So it’s time to get serious about getting out of credit card debt.

Some of the other steps mentioned here – including budgeting, automation and the Island Approach – will help in terms of reducing your future reliance on debt. But the problem of what to do about existing balances still remains. The answer for people with at least “good” credit is the combination of a 0% balance transfer credit card and a credit card calculator, which has the potential to help

you save hundreds of dollars while getting out of debt months sooner than you would otherwise.

But it’s probably best to start small. So we recommend making a plan to pay off 20% of what you owe over the course of 2024. That would amount to about \$1,800 for the average household, requiring monthly payments of \$150 with a card offering 0% on balance transfers for at least 12 months. You can use a credit card payoff calculator to crunch the numbers in your situation, and if you can afford higher payments, by all means make them. The sooner you can reach debt freedom, the better off your wallet will be.

Use different credit cards for everyday purchases and debt

The Island Approach involves using different accounts to serve different financial needs, as if they are a chain of islands. The most basic example is using a rewards credit card for everyday purchases and a 0% APR card for balances that you’ll carry from month to month.

Doing so enables you to get the best possible terms on each card, rather than settling for average terms on a single card. It will also help you reduce the cost of your debt, considering

OBITUARIES

Sweeney, John Calvin

John Calvin Sweeney, 92, of Christiansburg, went home to be with his Lord and Savior on Thursday, Dec. 28, 2023, at Lewis Gale Montgomery.

He was born in Ellett, Va. on March 13, 1931 to the late John Walker and Leler Lovern Sweeney. He was preceded in death by his wife Patricia Hodge Sweeney.

He is survived by his daughters, Sandra Clontz and Sherry (David) Parsons; sisters Louise McCoy and Garnet (Fred) Linkous; grandchildren Angela Alderman (Jay Mathis), and Amy (Steven) Kokkinakos; and great grandchildren Mackenzie Mathis and John Kokkinakos. Services will be private.

PETS OF THE WEEK

Cinderella has her slippers on and is ready for the ball. She may be a little shy at first when she feels out of her element, but she is quick to warm up to folks. Cinderella's fairytale ending would be a furever home as the only pet with lots of treats and rubs. Visit the Animal Care and Adoption Center to meet this princess.



Miley is no wrecking ball. She's more like a party in the USA! (And by party we mean a snuggly nap partner!) Miley is a sweet girl who could share a home with other cats. Come by the Animal Care and Adoption Center to see if Miley is your purrfect match.



These pets and many others are available for adoption at the Montgomery County Animal Care and Adoption Center, 480 Cinnabar Rd., Christiansburg. Phone: (540) 382-5795

Concert

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The group was formed over the 2023 summer and encourages anyone that loves to sing to join their group. Before presenting their last hymn of the evening, Woodyard invited others to come out to future practice times.

Following the conclusion of the program, all audience members were invited to refreshments of hot cocoa and desserts in the downstairs reception area of the worship center.

"We would like you to join us, if you feel so inclined, we have a lot of fun. We practice on Monday nights from 7 to 8:30," Woodyard said.

Supporters can follow the group on their Facebook page as well and donations are accepted to help the group as they continue to grow and access new performance materials.



PHOTO BY LORI GRAHAM

Director of NRCS Anthony Woodyard gave an astounding solo performance of "Oh Holy Night" with Daniel Taylor accompanying on piano.

Finance

from page 2

everyday purchases won't be inflating your average daily balance. And if you ever incur interest on your everyday card, you'll know you spent too much that month.

having a late payment reported to the major credit bureaus, which is one of the easiest ways to damage your credit score. Furthermore, paying your bill early improves your credit utilization, and thus your credit score, by reducing the balance listed on your monthly statement.

Fight back against inflation

Prices are unusually elevated, but there are ways you can level the playing field a bit. For example, you could save 5% at your favorite retailers by getting their store credit cards. Most store credit cards require just fair credit for approval and have \$0 annual fees, and the best cards give up to 5% back on every purchase. You can start by applying for the card affiliated with the retailer you spend the most money at, then wait at least a few months before applying again.

We recommend setting up two automatic monthly payments from a deposit account: one for right after payday and another for a couple days before your monthly due date. The second payment will help you avoid interest on any purchases made between your first payment and the end of your billing period. If you don't know when your billing cycle begins and ends, simply check your monthly statement. You can also request to change it to whatever day of the month is best for you.

Look for a better job

Sometimes, we get so caught up in spending less and saving more that we forget to address the other side of the equation: how much we earn. But the benefits of finding a higher-paying job could actually end up outweighing everything else put together.

Pay bills right after receiving your paycheck

Taking care of monthly obligations before letting yourself indulge in any luxury expenses is a helpful budgeting strategy. It gives you a better sense of what you can truly afford and what you can't. It also helps you avoid ever

Even if you don't switch jobs altogether, you could find opportunities to supplement your income during your free time. Side gigs seem to be everywhere these days.

Make sure you have enough insurance for a catastrophe

The past year has shown just how

Local

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stories in the form of poetry, autobiography, and history. Upon Mary's death, published author Michael Abraham, along with his wife Jane Abraham, and published author Deborah Warren, have seen the business through the years to its continued existence today.

Graham credits Holliman with her start in writing and publishing, so this new venture is a full circle moment.

"Mary Holliman gave me my first opportunity to work in and learn about publishing in 1995," Graham said in a recent interview. "I began by writing blurbs for book releases, editing, and my most memorable piece of work was a late 1800s diary that I transcribed for a family."

Graham, who worked with a United Kingdom company as part of a team completing memoirs for people in southwest Virginia, said she will continue that type of outreach at Pocahontas Press.

"Pocahontas Press will continue to provide support to authors in the publishing of their work in a variety of genres and styles but will also offer the gift of your family's story through memoirs or autobiographies," she wrote in the owner's message. "I will be continuing Holliman's outreach to specific stories centered in the Appalachian region as well, promoting the



PHOTO COURTESY OF LORI GRAHAM

understanding of culture, people, and community that has evolved over the years in this region."

Graham has a master's degree in English and Certificate in Appalachian studies from Radford University, as well as a bachelor's degree in American Sign Language, with more than 15 years working with people with disabilities.

"As an avid reader and storyteller, I dreamed of being an author someday, and I am currently working on my first novel that has a planned release by Spring, 2024," she said in the interview. "However, what I enjoy more than anything is listening to people's stories and helping them

transfer their thoughts to paper. Everyone has a story to tell; what's your story?."

"It is my mission as the next owner of Pocahontas Press to support writers in the sharing of their stories," she explained in the owner's message. "Although many published works will focus on the rich heritage of the Appalachian history, culture, music, memoirs, and poetry of the region's people, Pocahontas Press will accept a diverse range of submissions for consideration. Whatever your story is, I assure you it is as unique as you are."

For more information, go to www.pocahontaspres.com or www.facebook.com/PocahontasPress.

Donate

from page 1

at Claytor Lake on the underwater webcam."

Trees will be accepted from Christmas until Jan. 14 at the marina parking lot. All trees must be real and free of lights, tinsel, and other ornaments. Those making a tree donation will receive free park admission on the day of donation. Please follow the tree tag directions located at the drop site at the marina for proof of donation and parking pass receipt. Please note that the park will be closed Jan. 5-6, for natural resource management.

Interested in volunteering to help prep trees leading up to or helping on drop day? For more details and to sign up to volunteer go to www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks. If

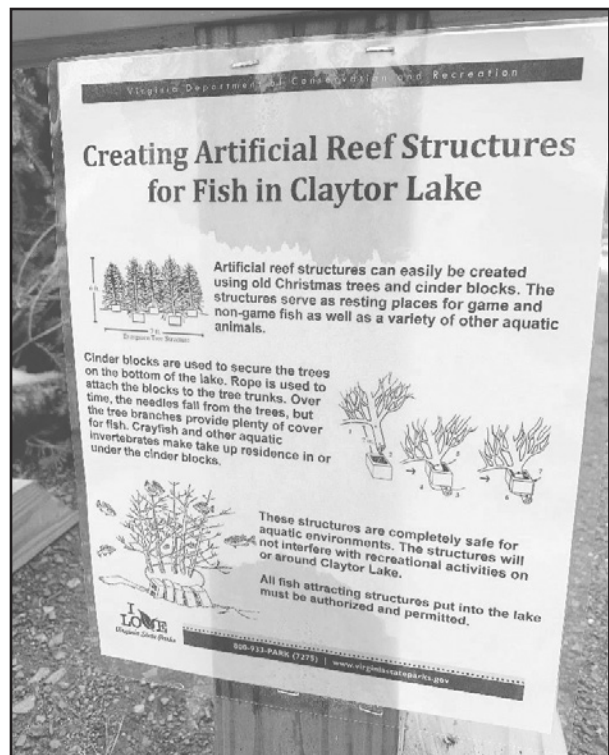


PHOTO COURTESY OF FOCL

Artificial reefs are made by connecting the discarded trees to cinder blocks.

incent weather is in the forecast, please email claytorlake@dcr.virginia.gov or call 540-643-2500.

Staff report

fragile and precious life is. And if other people depend on you, the last 12 months should illustrate the importance of making sure those people are taken care of, even if you're not around or able to work. In particular, that means taking steps such as purchasing life insurance and disability insurance, in addition to making sure you have enough health insurance coverage. Hopefully, your family won't need to file any claims for a very long time, but it's better to be prepared.

Focus on physical health, given its strong connection to financial health

There is a clear connection between physical, emotional and financial health. For starters, the average person spends around \$13,000 on health care each year. Inflation and the economy are also our biggest sources of stress, according to the American Psychological Association. And people who get regular exercise tend to have better credit scores.

This underscores the importance of getting your financial house in order as well as exercising regularly and engaging in other healthy practices aimed at reducing health care costs. It won't be easy, but this is one resolution that will certainly pay dividends in multiple areas of your life.

"If you begin to make small healthy changes to your diet, increase exercise in small increments, and practice yoga and meditation, you will feel better," says

Deborah Bauer, a distinguished senior instructor of finance at the University of Oregon. "Feeling better will lead to wiser financial decisions that focus on the long term."

Get an A in financial literacy

Financial literacy levels in this country are far too low, and they're headed in the wrong direction. As of 2023, roughly 40% of Americans grade their financial know-how at a "C" or below, according to WalletHub.

So, start 2024 by taking our WalletLiteracy Quiz and getting a baseline score. Then, throughout the year, study the areas where you struggled and periodically re-test yourself to gauge your progress. Your goal should be to get at least an A- by the time 2025 rolls around.

Improve your WalletScore

Your WalletScore is like your credit score, but it grades your finances overall. In addition to your credit history, your WalletScore evaluates areas such as your spending habits, emergency preparedness and retirement planning to give you a holistic understanding of your financial strengths and weaknesses.

You can check your WalletScore for free on WalletHub and get your personalized improvement plan. All you have to do is follow the recommendations, and your finances will be in better shape.

Wallet Hub

OPINION

It's budget time in Richmond

Right before Christmas, Governor Glenn Youngkin presented his vision for the Commonwealth's budget for the coming biennium to the Joint House and Senate Appropriations Committees. As with every budget document, the bill itself is massive. The House and Senate Appropriations Committees will now put forth their own versions

of Virginia's budget, and lawmakers will spend much of the 2024 legislative session reviewing and debating this legislation. I'd like to offer you some highlights that are worth keeping an eye on as the budget considered by the General Assembly.

Economists estimate that that the 2022-2024 biennium will end with

a surplus of nearly \$2.4 billion dollars, which will be available as a resource in the upcoming budget. In response to this surplus, Governor Youngkin wants to reduce by 12% all income tax rates, which means the top rate would be 5.1%. To offset the loss of income tax revenues, Virginia's sales tax would be increased by less than a percent to 5.2%.

This change would take place in the 2025 tax year, if successful.

As mentioned in a past column, the Governor's budget also provides a substantial amount of funding for mental and behavioral health response. It adds \$316 million over the biennium to eliminate the Priority 1 waiting list for Developmental Disability Waiver slots, funds the opening of additional crisis centers, and provides

\$10 million for ongoing student mental health services. Speaking of our children and those who help us care for them, the budget provides over \$448 million per year to expand childcare options through the Governor's Building Blocks program. Teachers will receive a 1% bonus in fiscal year 2025, and an additional raise is planned for fiscal year 2026.

To address economic development, Governor

Youngkin proposes \$3.9 million annually for Virginia's Community Colleges' Career Placement Centers. \$20 million will go toward a new "Diploma Plus" program, which provides grants to students to attain industry-recognized credentials. \$100 million will go toward Virginia's Biotech and Life Sciences industry, which includes Virginia Tech, and

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From Christiansburg to West Virginia, these are a few of my favorite restaurants

Evans "Buddy" King

Columnist

The gift that keeps on giving, storyworth.com, which allows me to submit columns to be electronically stored for future binding and gifting to family and friends when I run out of ideas or time, suggested this week that I write about my "all-time favorite restaurants." I previously wrote a piece about The Farmhouse and The Outpost, two all-time Christiansburg favorites from my youth, so here goes with my list of "others." As always with

my writing, there's some serious here and some whimsy. And a tad of nostalgia.

The Wonder Bar, Clarksburg, West Virginia. Originally opened in 1946 and operated for many years by John Folio, a professional boxing referee who officiated a couple of world championship fights during his time, remains in business and booming to this day. It is a quintessential steak house known for red carpet on the walls, the faint background sounds of Sinatra crooning, and a wonderful wait staff. In my early days there, Mr. Folio sat on a stool in a corner next to the

entrance to the main dining room, in full black tie, and you had better be well-dressed and you better pay your respects when you came in. Or you didn't come in. Reputedly the favorite restaurant of Bill Mazeroski and other members of the 1960's Pittsburgh Pirates, who came down frequently in the offseason. I have eaten in many great steak places in my travels, but none beat the Wonder Bar.

Julio's Cafe'. Another iconic Clarksburg restaurant located in a largely abandoned warehouse area and opened in the 1960's by Frank Iaquina, a successful plumbing

contractor who it is said ran the restaurant as a "hobby". It remains open to this day, only on weekends and by "appointment", operated by Frank's granddaughter Costanza and grandson Giuseppe, who took over from their parents. Frank would be thrilled to know the tradition continues. In the days of Frank's operation, he made his own wine and anisette and pasta. My readers will be shocked to learn that Julio's is an Italian restaurant featuring veal and seafood dishes and pasta. Lol.

See Restaurants, page 8

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I would like an opportunity to respond to a letter to the editor about our Delegate Jason Ballard and his proposed bills on the problem of gun violence. Several comments have been made about the most, by far, popular sporting rifle in the country, the AR-15. Some, even many, have chosen to publicly call this, incorrectly by the way, an "assault weapon". Factually, this is not an assault rifle as anyone with basic military knowledge will tell you. An "assault weapon" is a fully automatic weapon that has the ability to fire until the magazine is empty without removing your finger from the trigger. This, an AR15, is not, it is a "sporting rifle", one such model I am proud to own myself. It does not have the ability of an assault rifle but is a semiautomatic weapon that requires that you pull the trigger individually each time you choose to fire. Another piece of knowledge is that no standing army in operation in the world today uses the AR-15 .223 cal. or 5.56mm version as it is ineffective as a military grade weapon, the caliber is too small. Also, one other fact, the overwhelming majority of crimes are carried out with handguns, not AR-15's.

It was also reported this is used a "hunting rifle", which is also not correct as these calibers are illegal to use in hunting big game, again, the caliber is too small to be effective. I want to get into an area of conversation that I realize will not be very well received and that is based on a comment that stated "these weapons are used to hunt and kill people. The area I'm speaking of is the reality that guns don't kill people, people kill people. Much of trouble we have as a society is tied to the mental illness aspect that we are facing and I'm in no way denying that it does not exist, but If I might dig deeper, I would venture to say that much of the mental issue problem comes from the fact that there is evil in society that is causing these shootings. Many other factors could and do play into this but, the bottom line is that evil is real and because of that evil, there are people who desire to cause harm, maim and yes, kill.

It appears that the commenter's favor a "total ban," in other words strip society so that no one owns a weapon, well, the reality is, it's been tried in several countries around the world and it does not work. All you would have is a society of "totally defenseless citizens" and the only guns will be in the hands of criminals who don't give a flip how many laws like this proposal we pass. If they don't respect

the laws we currently have, why would we ever believe that the so called "total ban" would accomplish anything but the opposite effect where no one has the ability to defend themselves, a "right and privilege" enshrined in our Constitution by the way.

Instead of calling the efforts of Del Ballard "hypocrisy", maybe we should look at both sides here and realize that he is trying to find common on the issue of guns without allowing the government to become "totalitarian" and strip us of our Second Amendment rights, in other words, don't attempt to fix the problem by punishing every law-abiding citizen like myself, who legally possess and responsibly use firearms. Keep in mind, all our other rights guaranteed in the Constitution hinge on the second amendment "the right to keep and bear arms," which by the way to quote Gen. George Washington, that "every man should possess enough weapons and ammunition to protect themselves against anyone threatening to harm them, even their own government".

I sympathize with anyone who has suffered loss due to gun violence, but stripping law-abiding citizens is not the solution and I think if we take a serious look at our society, regardless of where you are with religion or faith, and be honest with each other and admit there is much evil in today's world and at some point, that evil may be at your door step and I would want you to have the ability to defend yourself, with deadly force, if that is the only option. The comment was made that "no one needs to have a semi-automatic rifle for hunting or self-defense", well, if you're planning on using a bolt action single round rifle for self-defense, I hope you are an expert shot, because if you miss, in the panic of the moment, your assailant would be on you before you could reload. Another comment was, "these rifles are meant to hunt people." Well, no one in their right mind, goes and purchases a rifle of this type to "hunt people".

In closing, my view on this is that the bill that Del. Ballard is opposed to, House Bill 2, is an attempt to get around the Second amendment and strip legal, law-abiding citizens of their right to own and keep firearms, regardless of type or caliber. Enforce the laws we already have and get people that need help off our streets.

W.P. Turpin
Blacksburg

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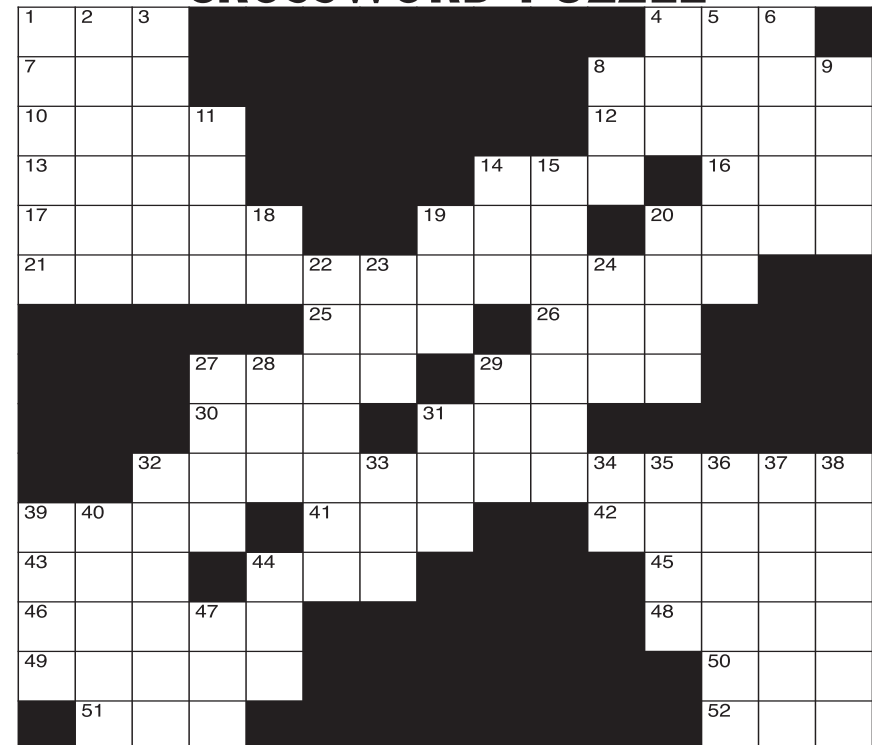
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CROSSWORD PUZZLE



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Basics
- 4. Swiss river
- 7. Constrictor snake
- 8. Building occupied by monks
- 10. Discount
- 12. Deal a blow to
- 13. Relating to the ear
- 14. Thyrotropin
- 16. Loud, unpleasant noise
- 17. Large intestines
- 19. Move with a curving trajectory
- 20. Witnesses
- 21. You need both to live
- 25. Dash
- 26. Network
- 27. Dig
- 29. C. European river

CLUES DOWN

- 30. Supplement with difficulty
- 31. Corporate executive
- 32. Carroll O'Connor's onscreen wife
- 39. No variation
- 41. Airborne (abbr.)
- 42. "Heidi" author
- 43. Affirmative
- 44. Pie ___ mode
- 45. W. Asian country
- 46. Grotesque or bizarre
- 48. Delicacy (archaic)
- 49. Textile
- 50. Denial
- 51. Electronic data processing
- 52. Attempt

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Engulf
- 2. Waterside hotel
- 3. Printed cotton fabric
- 4. Defensive nuclear weapon
- 5. One who follows the rules
- 6. Lace up once more
- 8. Fire byproduct
- 9. Hankerings
- 11. Outer
- 14. One-time aerospace firm
- 15. Seafood
- 18. Commercial
- 19. Epoxy hardener (abbr.)
- 20. Samoan monetary unit
- 22. Type of gland
- 23. Arrest
- 24. Check
- 27. Past participle of be

CLUES DOWN

- 28. Alias
- 29. A major division of geological time
- 31. Kids programming channel (abbr.)
- 32. Joked
- 33. Helps little firms
- 34. Roman numeral 50
- 35. Impressive in size or scope
- 36. Domineering leader
- 37. A person who delivers a speech
- 38. One after 89
- 39. Young hawk
- 40. The scene of any event or action
- 44. A team's best pitcher
- 47. Integrated data processing



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Part-time receptionist for Oakey's Funeral Service - Vinton Chapel.
Hours vary with some weekday evening and daytime shifts and every other daytime weekend available. Please contact Joshua Dama, Manager at (540) 982-2221 or email jdama@oakeys.com.

Help Wanted Part-time Administrative Assistant

Buchanan Presbyterian Church is searching for a part time Administrative Assistant.
Duties include working with the minister and music team to prepare weekly Sunday bulletin and monthly newsletter; prepare PowerPoint for Sunday worship and be there to operate it; assist with recording and uploading services to YouTube; performance of other administrative jobs to assist the minister.
To apply or obtain complete job description please contact Tricia at 540-589-3107 or send resume to the church at P.O. Box 517, Buchanan, VA 24066

Help Wanted - General

WANTED Models
Models needed for life drawing class, male and female, \$65 for 3 hour session. Call David 540-473-3713

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Legals - Botetourt County

NOTICE OF SPECIAL COMMISSIONER SALE OF 101 DRY BRANCH ROAD, BUCHANAN, VIRGINIA, 24066

Pursuant to a Decree of the Circuit Court of Botetourt County, Virginia, made and entered into November 29, 2023 in Case No. 23CL23-0036100, styled Barrett (Plaintiff) v. Cherokee rose Eubank (Defendant), a Will, on Friday 26, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. at the front door of the Courthouse of Botetourt County, Virginia, located in its new temporary quarters, offer for sale to the highest bidder for cash, the following described real estate: 101 Dry Branch Road, Buchanan, Virginia, 24066, being 2.56 acres in the Buchanan Magisterial District, Tax Map #53-4, property ID#99013634. A more accurate description can be procured as shown on a plat attached to Deed Book 128 at page 123 in the Clerk's Office of the Circuit Court of Botetourt County, Virginia.
Terms of Sale: Cash (10% on the day of sale with the remainder at closing within 60 days).
For further information, apply to:
Tommy Joe Williams, Special Commissioner, 2721 Brambleton Avenue, S.W., Roanoke, Virginia, 24015, office telephone number: (540)772-7848, cell phone number: (540) 797-4065.
I, Tommy Joe Williams, hereby certify that I have bond, with surety, as required by the decree.

Tommy Joe Williams
Special Commissioner

I, Tommy Moore, Clerk of the Circuit Court of Botetourt County, Virginia, hereby certify the Tommy Joe Williams, Special Commissioner, has given bond, as required by the Decree with Surety approved by the Court.

Tommy Moore, Clerk
Botetourt County Circuit Court

Legals - City of Radford

ABC NOTICE

RADFORD COFFEE COMPANY INC., trading as RADFORD COFFEE COMPANY, 333 WEST MAIN ST, RADFORD, VA 24141.

The above establishment is applying to the VIRGINIA ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) AUTHORITY for Restaurant-Wine, Beer, and Mixed Beverages license to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages.

Rachel Doyle-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

Legals - 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 8, 2024, 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:

1. Consider the request of E2ST John, LLC, property owner, for rezoning the property located at 68 St. John Road (Tax Map # 155-2-2.1) from HBD Highway Business District to HM Heavy Manufacturing District.

2. Consider the request of Poindexter SW Florida, LLC, property owner, for rezoning the property located at 2105-2121 Apperson Drive (Tax Map # 281-1-2.2) from BCD Business Commerce District to HBD Highway Business District.

If approved, Salem City Council intends to adopt the ordinance(s) associated with the above item(s) on first reading, with a second reading of those ordinance(s) at a subsequent meeting.

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

Notice is hereby given to all interested persons that the City of Salem Planning Commission, at its regular meeting on January 10, 2024, at 7:00 p.m., in the Community Room, Salem Civic Center, 1001 Roanoke Boulevard, 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:

1. Consider the request of T J Real Properties, LLC, property owner, for rezoning the property located at 1236 West Main Street (Tax Map # 141 - 1 - 4) from HBD Highway Business District to CBD Community Business District.

2. Consider the request of Helm Building Enterprises, LTD, property owner, for the issuance of a Special

Legals - City of Salem

Exception Permit to allow a two family dwelling on the property located at 301 Carey Avenue, (Tax Map # 74-2-6.1).

3. Consider the request of Helm Building Enterprises, LTD, property owner, for rezoning the property located at 416 Electric Road (Tax Map # 150-3-1) from HBD Highway Business District to HM Heavy Manufacturing District.

4. Consider the request of Virginia Baptist Children's Home (dba HopeTree Family Services), property owner, for rezoning the properties located at 1000 block Red Lane and a portion of 860 Mount Vernon Lane (Tax Map #'s 41-1-1, 41-1-2, 41-1-3, 41-1-4, 41-1-5, 41-1-6, and a portion of 44-3-10) from RSF Residential Single Family to PUD Planned Unit District.

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 PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF SALEM, VIRGINIA

BY: H. Robert Light
Deputy Executive Secretary

Legals - Montgomery County

TOWN OF BLACKSBURG - NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS BLACKSBURG TOWN COUNCIL will hold public hearings on Tuesday, January 9, 2024

beginning at 6:30 p.m. in the Roger E. Hedgepeth Chambers of the Blacksburg Municipal Building, 300 South Main Street, Blacksburg, regarding the following items:

Ordinance 2045: An Ordinance to Amend the FY 2023/2024 Operating Budget to Appropriate \$927,000 of Bond Proceeds to the Water/Sewer Capital Improvement Fund and \$800,000 of Bond Proceeds to the Stormwater Capital Improvement Fund.

The proposed ordinance will allow the Town's two previously approved agreements with Glade Spring Crossing, LLC for the Glade Spring Crossing housing development. One will be used for the sewer cost sharing of \$927,000 and another for \$800,000 for a regional Stormwater project. These projects will be funded by an upcoming bond offering.

Ordinance 2046: An Ordinance Granting a Lease of Office Space in Town Property Located at 141 Jackson Street, N.E.

Legals - Montgomery County

The proposed ordinance will grant space in the town owned property located at 141 Jackson Street NE to New River Land Trust for storage.

All persons affected by or interested in the proposed items above may appear and present their views. After each public hearing, Town Council will consider action on the item. Copies of materials related to the above items are on file and can be obtained in the Office of the Town Clerk, 300 South Main Street, Blacksburg, weekdays between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. For land use matters, copies of applications and all related items may also be found online at www.blacksburg.gov/public hearings or reviewed in person at the Blacksburg Planning and Building Department, 400 South Main Street, Blacksburg, Virginia. Individuals with disabilities who require special assistance to attend and participate in this meeting should contact Lorraine Spaulding, Town Clerk at (540) 443-1025 or 443-1000 (voice or TDD).

Montgomery Regional Solid Waste Authority Summary Statement of Financial Condition For the Year Ended June 30, 2023

Assets	\$5,942,205
Deferred Out Flows of Resources	\$33,031
Liabilities	\$1,993,477
Deferred Inflows of Resources	\$164,858
Net Position	\$3,816,901
Revenues	\$4,756,465
Expenses	\$5,207,667
Net Change in Net Position	\$(451,202)

Detailed financial statements may be obtained by writing to: MRSWA, P.O. Box 2130, Christiansburg, VA 24068



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RADFORD SPORTS

Radford's Clark, Christiansburg's Evans headline All-County/All-City football team

Marty Gordon
 NRVsports@ourvalley.org

Landon Clark led Radford High School to the school's first state title in 51 years and is ready to continue his playing career at Elon University. The 6-0, 205 quarterback passed and rushed for over 4,700 total yards and accounted for or was a part of 70 touchdowns. Clark finished 207 for 3,402 yards, but it was his legs that might have made the difference this past season as he rushed 136 times for 1,312 yards.

For his effort, Clark is the 2023 All-County, All-City football team player of the year. His favorite target, Max Kanipe, is the offensive player of the year.

Kanipe finished with 74 receptions for 1,598 yards with 17 touchdowns. He had nine catches in the state championship contest for 218 yards, pulling in 80 percent of Clark's passes for the title.

Tanner Evans is the all-purpose offensive player of the year. He led Christiansburg to a 6-1 record this past season as QB1.

Evans suffered a season-ending knee

injury in week 7, bringing a screeching halt to what was starting to be a memorable year. He finished the season with 117 rushes for 1,208 yards with 22 touchdowns and passed 50 of 84 for 782 yards with 12 touchdowns and just one interception.

The senior plans to continue his baseball career at the University of Charleston.

The All-County, All-City coach of the year is no surprise. Michael Crist led Radford to a state title and a 15-0 record in only his third season.

An unofficial coach of the year award is given to Scott Mikowicz, who took over an Auburn program, which had only played 15 games in the past four years. The Eagles were 0-5 in 2022 before shutting it down, 0-4 in 2021 because of similar situations and COVID knocked them out of entire season before that. The last season, the school played a full schedule was 2019 when they finished 6-7 and did have an appearance in the Single-A playoffs.

Mikowicz directed an Auburn program, which had questions for most of the year on whether it would have enough players to finish the season. Not only did they

finish the season, they're preparing for next year after a successful junior varsity season.

Radford's Charlie Davis was named the all-county/all-city defensive player of the year. He tallied 157 tackles this season with 62 solos.

The 2023 all-county/all-city offense stacked up like this:

Player of the year- Landon Clark, Radford

Offensive player of the year- Max Kanipe, Radford.

QB- Landon Clark

RB- J.D. Grubb, Radford

Matt Annis, Christiansburg

Gage Akers, Eastern Montgomery

Austin Stump, Auburn

Xavier Brown, Eastern Montgomery

Receivers- Max Kanipe, Radford

Luke Poff, Blacksburg

Javier Waldron, Blacksburg

Sinere Taylor, Radford

Tight end- Donovan Richardson, Christiansburg

All Purpose offensive player of the year- Tanner Evans, Christiansburg

Kicker- Spencer Conner Christiansburg,

Punt returner- Izaiah Cotto Christiansburg,

Kick returner- Xavier Joplin, Christiansburg,

The defense included Charlie Davis from Radford as the defensive player of the year.

The 2023 defensive unit were:

Defensive lineman- Ricky Bailey, Radford

Dawson Martin, Radford

Jaiden Edwards, Christiansburg

Carter Stallard, Christiansburg

Linebacker- Charlie Davis, Radford

Gage Akers, Eastern Montgomery

Josiah Ratley, Christiansburg

Matthew Wheeler, Auburn

Defensive back- Izaiah Cotto, Christiansburg

Landon Clark, Radford

Luke Poff, Blacksburg

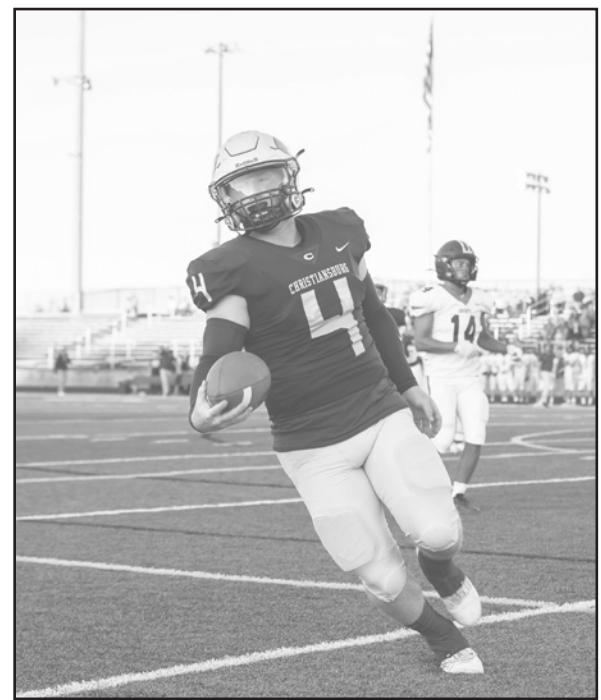
Brody Blount, Christiansburg

Punter- Matt Annis, Christiansburg

Defensive specialist- Landon Clark, Radford



Landon Clark



Tanner Evans



Charlie Davis



Max Kanipe

FILE PHOTOS

What we learned from the bowl win

From the Sidelines
Marty Gordon
 NRVsports@ourvalley.org

The Virginia Tech football team easily won this past week's Military Bowl, and with it comes questions on what we have learned about this team. For the most part, most of it is positive.

The current players support Pry as 19 of 22 starters were still in action for the Military Bowl. Kudos for the coaching staff, keeping everyone together. In addition, the staff also convinced several players from not only opting out but hitting the transfer portal. This is a credit to Pry and his coaching staff.

Kyron Drones is definitely a great player. He has proven himself not only for the last six games of the season but also in the bowl game itself.

Drones ran for 176 yards and a touchdown. He also threw for two TDs as Virginia Tech withstood a second-half downpour to beat No. 23 Tulane 41-20 in the Military Bowl.

His feet is the key for how the Hokie defense moves. For the season, Drones has 818 yards rushing and another 2,085 through the air.

For once, the team will know who their QB1 will be before spring workouts.

Brayshul Tuten finished with 136 yards and two touchdowns on 18 carries to help Virginia Tech win its first bowl game since 2016. Thus, he was another good portal pickup from this past year. He is returning and that spells trouble for opposing defenses.

Again, the word "returning" is big in Blacksburg. Over a dozen players have announced plans to return to the team this coming year, another great testimonial to Pry and his staff.

Speaking of the coaching staff, they have also proven to be able to recruit the 757 and the Commonwealth. Something that was lacking from the previous staff. Several of those new recruits were even present for the bowl win.

The Hokies definitely have a weapon in redshirt-Freshman kicker Jordan Love. He consistently hit from downtown including several from beyond 50 yards. He was rated a five-star kicking prospect by Kohl's kicking prospect coming to Blacksburg out of high school and was ranked as the No. 14 high school kicker in the country by 247Sports Composite.

Dr. Love knows how to kick.

The defense is also a bright spot, and with almost the entire secondary returning, they should be a force for next season. Add the return of a very experienced Front Four and the defense will be solid.

Fans showed up in groves to support the Hokies as the bowl location was a sea of Maroon. One thing for sure is that Hokie fans travel well.

Pry and several of his players should also be commended for giving words of encouragement to the Tulane QB, following a first half injury. Definitely

respect here.

This football program is moving the needle and scaling the mountain once again. There still is a long way to go, but the coaching staff has already reached new heights in just two years.

Next year's schedule now lays in front of the Hokies. The season opens at Vanderbilt, a SEC school. Then returns home for Marshall before a trip to ODU in Norfolk.

Rutgers than slides into Blacksburg for the fourth game of the season.

Conference games for 2024 include UVA, Duke, Miami, at Stanford, Syracuse, Boston College, Clemson and Ga. Tech.

The Hokies could easily be 4-0 heading into conference play and six more wins could await after that.

Fans will should just hold their breath on what the future holds for this squad. The nucleus is returning and barring injuries, should give the team something to look forward to.

Go Hokies.

Donate from page 2

a safe distance to allow yourself time to react. Use the two, three, four rule when driving on dry roads to determine the distance between you and the car in front of you.

Two seconds when traveling under 35 mph

Three seconds when traveling between 35 and 45 mph

Four seconds when traveling between 46 and 70 mph

Always use your turn signal when changing lanes. Making sure other drivers are aware of a change in your path ensures they have time to react and can help avoid a crash. Don't forget to check your blind spots too.

Remember to share the road with pedestrians and cyclists. We share the responsibility to keep vulnerable road users safe. Be especially careful when turning at intersections and when driving in heavily populated areas.

Move over. It isn't just courteous, it's the law. When you see emergency vehicles, road maintenance, motorist assistance vehicles, or vehicles on the side of the road with their hazards on, safely move over to provide space and proceed cautiously.

While planning for your holiday and new year, please note that DMV customer service centers will be closed on Monday, Jan. 1. More than 50 services are available at dmv.virginia.gov for those who need access to DMV during the closures.

Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles

