



News JOURNAL

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Wilderness Road Ride set to begin Saturday in Radford

Heather Bell
Editor

The 33rd Annual Wilderness Road Ride is set for this Saturday, May 25.

The ride starts and finishes in Radford's Bisset Park, with five routes to choose from, ranging from a "26-mile relaxed journey for novices and e-bikes, to a century challenge for the fittest cyclist," explained Fellowship of Christian Athletes Endurance Director of Operations Mark Long.

FCA Endurance worked out an arrangement with the New River Bicycle Association to take over the ride 14 years ago.

"The Wilderness Road Ride is a scenic and historical adventure that follows part of Daniel Boone's Wilderness Road," said Long. "Spring cycling in the New River Valley is absolutely spectacular."

"This is a recreational ride on paved roads for all cycling levels to enjoy, with something for everyone, and is a great

ride for cyclists of all ages and athletic abilities. Rest stops are fully stocked to fuel the riders," reads a description of the event. "All routes will start and finish at Radford's Bisset Park, shelter #2, right, alongside the New River. Non-riders can enjoy beautiful Bisset Park, the New River, and downtown Radford, while their families and friends are out riding. Fully supported aid stations will be positioned at regular intervals along the course and the start/finish location. Aid stations will be supplied with Heed Hammer Nutrition fuel, as well as water and plenty of other snacks. SAG vehicles will be on the course for emergencies."

Long said he hopes motorists will stay alert to the hundreds of cyclists on the roads on Saturday.

"The WRR attracts about 250 cyclists, both local and out of state and region, so remember to share the road and keep a watchful eye for cyclists riding this Memorial Day weekend," he said. "FCA Endurance is a 5013c non-profit, so all

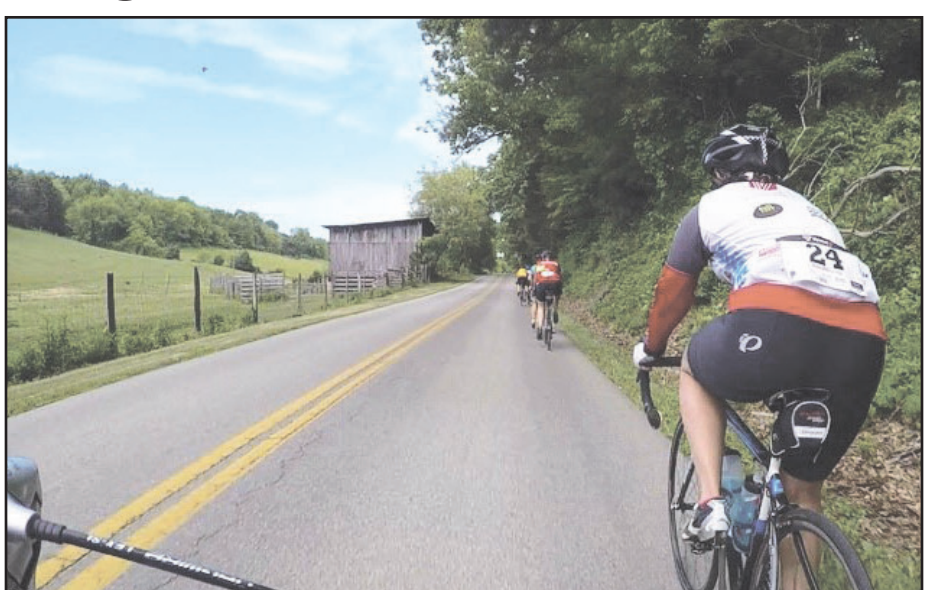


PHOTO COURTESY OF FCA ENDURANCE

The Wilderness Road Ride will bring hundreds of cyclists to Radford this Saturday.

proceeds go back into our community, primarily sending youth to FCA Summer Sports Camps."

Cyclists can register by logging on to wildernessroadride.org.

Good Morning Radford program invites seniors to sign-up

RADFORD – The Good Morning Radford is a voluntary program that Sheriff Mark Armentrout was inspired to create by his grandmother while he was campaigning.

His grandmother was very special to him and he wanted to honor her while helping the community at the same time. After he was elected in 2004, this program was implemented to help with the outreach of the growing senior demographics here in Radford.

Good Morning Radford focuses on seniors located in Radford who either live alone or have little to no home health professional services. Every day, including holidays, a call will be expected from a Radford City Sheriff's Office employee between 9 -10a.m. If the senior cannot be reached after 30 minutes of the original call, a deputy will be dispatched to check on them. While calls may not be lengthy, it may be a bright spot to the senior's day and ensures that there is no distress nor is medical attention needed. Participation ensures that someone will be contacting them every day at a certain time. If they do not answer, a deputy will be coming by their house to check on them.

The future goal of the Good Morning Radford Program is to continue growing the program to reach more Radford seniors while inspiring other agencies to incorporate a program that is much like ours.

If interested in participating in the Good Morning Radford Program, please call the Radford City Sheriff's Office at (540)731-5501.

*Deputy Konner Deeds
Radford City Sheriff's Office*



GRAPHIC COURTESY OF RCO



PHOTO COURTESY OF RADFORD UNIVERSITY

George Zama with his 2019 BMW i8.

A man with drive: George Zama fast-tracks his dreams

RADFORD - On the streets around Radford, you've probably noticed the 2019 BMW i8 with gull-wing doors, sleek and purring at a stoplight.

Perhaps you've even passed it on the street – or, more likely, it passed you.

Behind the wheel of this remarkable car is an even more remarkable young man. George Zama, Class of 2026, a marketing major born in Bamenda, Cameroon, has a life story steeped in resilience, dedication and defying adversity.

Zama was born in 2002, and his early days were marked by the harsh realities of a high mortality rate in his hometown. In 2004, his family won the American visa lottery, granting them the opportunity to migrate to the United States. However, their entry into the land of opportunity was anything but smooth.

Arriving with virtually nothing, they navigated the complexities of a new country, facing homelessness and the challenge of adapting to an unfamiliar culture. The initial struggle led them from couch-surfing to renting a room, with the only bed they owned salvaged from a dumpster, unknowingly infested with pests.

Finding their challenges insurmountable, Zama's parents made the difficult decision to send him back to Africa for a year. Upon his return, the family slowly rebuilt their lives, eventually securing a two-bedroom apartment. After a series of underpaid

and unconventional jobs, Zama's mother joined the United States Navy, ultimately achieving the rank of lieutenant.

Against the backdrop of a tough neighborhood in Hampton, Virginia, Zama thrived. Though surrounded by crime and poverty, he refused to succumb to negative influences, driven by a determination to make his mother proud. Witnessing her sacrifices and unwavering work ethic inspired Zama to pursue success at a young age.

At 15, he became an entrepreneur, delving into professional photography and reselling cars. Yet he yearned for faster financial growth, leading him to explore the world of finance and, ultimately, options trading. Despite initial setbacks, Zama persisted, honing his skills and achieving consistent success.

Recognizing the need for long-term stability, Zama diversified into real estate, gaining skills in real estate investing. His success allowed his mother to retire when he was 21, a monumental achievement and a testament to Zama's determination to fast-track his dreams.

However, his journey doesn't end there. Despite his financial achievements, Zama recognizes the importance of an American education and feels a deep sense of gratitude for the opportunities the United States has provided

See Dreams, page 2



PHOTO COURTESY OF CARILION CLINIC

(Left to right) Martha Camper, Karrie Moses, Wendi Jobe, Dr. Christopher Pierce, Linda Hodges, Amy Kageals and Michelle Franklin celebrate the opening of a new dedicated pediatric specialty clinic at Carilion New River Valley Medical Center.

Carilion expands pediatric specialty services in the New River Valley

RADFORD - A new, dedicated pediatric clinic is open at Carilion New River Valley Medical Center

Carilion Children's celebrated a newly renovated, dedicated pediatric specialty clinic at Carilion New River Valley Medical Center (2900 Lamb Circle, Suite 210). The Carilion Children's New River Valley Multispecialty Clinic houses relocated pediatric services under one roof while also introducing several new services to the valley.

"We are thrilled to officially celebrate this amazing space," said Dr. Christopher Pierce, interim chair of Carilion Children's. "Our department's mission is to improve

the health of all kids. Bringing these crucial services closer to home for our New River Valley families allows us to do just that, improving access to specialty care and building on our commitment to the region."

Pierce joined care teams in a ribbon cutting this morning followed by tours of the space.

Existing Pediatric Cardiology, Endocrinology and Gastroenterology clinics all relocated to the new space in April. The clinic also houses two new specialties to the New River Valley: Child Development and Pediatric Neurology Services.

The renovated space includes four exam rooms, a procedure room and a pediatric-only waiting room to enhance the care experience for patients and their families.

To access this suite, patients should park in the front parking lot and use the main entrance. Complimentary valet parking and shuttles are also available should patients need them.

Patients can be referred to these specialty clinics by their child's primary care doctor. They may also call 540-731-2611 with any questions.

Carilion Clinic

UPCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday, May 22:

Blacksburg Farmers Market

At Market Square Park, 100 Draper Rd SW, Blacksburg; 2 – 6 p.m. The Blacksburg Farmers Market is a local, family-friendly gathering place in downtown Blacksburg featuring farmers of locally grown produce and meats, alongside artisans of baked goods and handmade crafts. For more information, visit <http://blacksburgfarmersmarket.com>.

Thursday, May 23:

Spring into Summer Event

Join the Town of Christiansburg at Christiansburg Huckleberry Park for the park's plaque unveiling at 11 a.m., and a full day of free activities, including petting zoo, warrior challenge course contest, guided telescope stargazing, ultimate frisbee, 40-yard dash contest, yoga, bingo, dog training demo, fitness programs and horticulture walking tour. Be sure to check the Facebook event discussion regularly for updates: <https://www.facebook.com/events/4004717339799280/>.

Beach Bash

Join the Christiansburg Aquatic Center at 5:30 p.m. for an evening of music, food, games and swimming. The Beach Bash is a kid friendly event that will feature mermaids, a pirate, corn hole, pirate coin toss and raffles to win membership giveaways. Live music on the patio by Last Chance Duo, also compete in a limbo contest to win prizes. Tickets are now available for purchase with a limited number being sold. Each ticket is \$12 per person (for ages three and up) and will include a meal and drink provided by Simple Fixins. To purchase tickets, visit cappool.com or call 540-381-7665.

Saturday, May 25:

Wilderness Road Ride

The 33rd Annual Wilderness Road Ride starts and finishes in Radford's Bisset Park. The Wilderness Road Ride is a scenic and historical adventure that follows part of Daniel Boone's Wilderness Road. This is a

recreational ride on paved roads for all cycling levels to enjoy, with something for everyone - five routes to choose from ranging from a 26-mile relaxed journey for novices and e-bikes, to a century challenge for the fittest cyclist. This is a great ride for cyclists of all ages and athletic abilities. Rest stops are fully stocked to fuel the riders. For times and registration information, log onto wildernessroadride.org.

Blacksburg Farmers Market

At Market Square Park, 100 Draper Rd SW, Blacksburg; 8 a.m. - 2 p.m. The Blacksburg Farmers Market is a local, family-friendly gathering place in downtown Blacksburg featuring farmers of locally grown produce and meats, alongside artisans of baked goods and handmade crafts. For more information, visit <http://blacksburgfarmersmarket.com>.

Radford Farmer's Market

Every Saturday through October; 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. on the grounds of Glencoe Mansion, 600 Unruh Dr. Visit weekly for an ever-changing supply of homemade goodies, crafts, plants, meats, produce, and more.

Sunday, May 26:

Vintage Market

At Market Square Park, 100 Draper Rd SW, Blacksburg; 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. The market is made up of a carefully chosen group of vendors selling a wide selection of quality vintage items, upcycled crafts, and occasional antiques. For more information, visit blacksburgfarmersmarket.com/vintage-market/

Monday, May 27:

No Radford City Council meeting

Due to Memorial Day, the Radford City Council will NOT hold its regularly scheduled meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 10.

Va. Dept. of Veterans Services Memorial Day ceremony

The Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS) will again host four Memorial Day Ceremonies on

Monday, May 27, 2024, including at the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Dublin. The ceremony will begin at 11 a.m. The keynote speaker will be Vice Admiral Evan M. Chanik, (U.S. Navy, Retired). The cemetery address is 5550 Bagging Plant Road, Dublin, Va. 24084. Admission is free. The public is invited and encouraged to attend and participate.

Tuesday, May 28:

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 St.). 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.

Montgomery County Board of Supervisors meeting

Due to the Memorial Day holiday, the BOS will meet Tuesday, May 28. Public meetings are normally held 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.

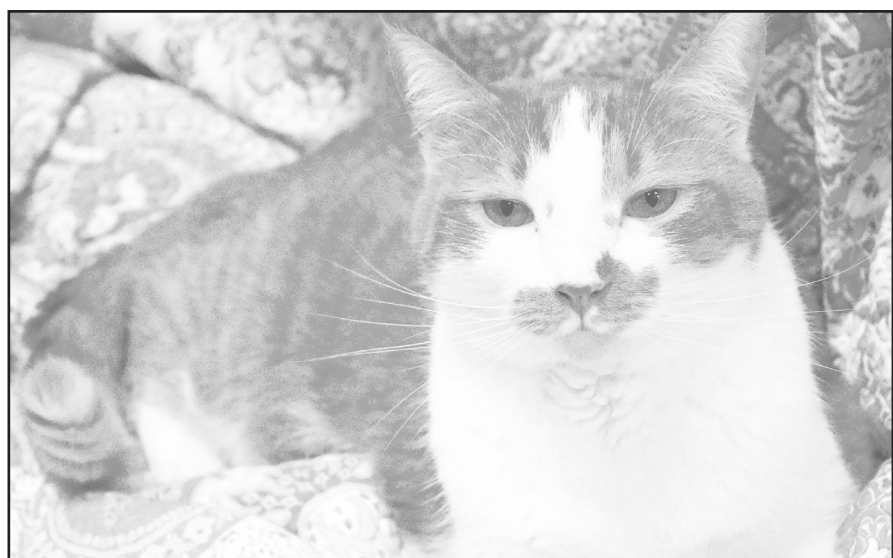
Saturday, June 8:

Red Cross blood drive

At St. Thomas Episcopal Church, 103 E. Main St., Christiansburg; 10 a.m.- 2 p.m. Appointments: <https://www.redcrossblood.org>

PETS OF THE WEEK

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.



Meet Oliver. He's a handsome boy and he might know it! He enjoys lounging and taking in the sights around him. He likes attention but tends to show an independent spirit and will let humans know when he wants time alone.



Draco is a shy, sweet cat who loves a good nuzzle or scratch under the chin. He is bonded with fellow feline Ashton. Stop by the Animal Care and Adoption Center to meet Draco and Ashton. They could be your purrfect match!

Dreams

from page 1

him. Today, he's not just a successful entrepreneur; he is also an active participant in the Virginia National Guard, driven by a desire to give back to the country that gave him freedom and opportunities.

Zama started his academic journey studying nursing at a different institution, inspired by his mother. But when the other school was not a right fit, he reflected on his life and what he wanted to achieve. He looked for a different field and a different university with a more student-centric approach. Zama chose Radford University and the Davis College of Business and Economics to help further his entrepreneurial pursuits.

Zama's story is not just about financial success; it's a testament to the power of

resilience, determination and pursuing dreams. He says his flashy car serves as a tangible reminder "that despite my background, despite the color of my skin, despite the true statistical fact that I shouldn't be where I am today... that no matter where you start and no matter where you seek to reach, there is NO excuse to achieving your goals."

Through his journey, Zama aims to inspire others, particularly his peers, to believe in their potential and strive for success.

"The life you wish to possess is just as attainable as the life most deem as 'realistic,' he said. "The question is, how hard are you willing to work for a dream that is rightfully yours?"

Evan Musgrave for Radford University



PHOTO COURTESY OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The 40 under 40 awardees include young professionals from throughout Montgomery County and in the City of Radford.

Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce names '40 under 40' awardees

The Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce is excited to announce our 2024 Forty under 40 recipients.

This group of individuals showcases exactly what it means to be an Emerging Leader, and we cannot be more grateful to have this kind of talent right here in the New River Valley.

At the Chamber of Commerce, we believe it's important for our members to recognize and support the talent we have in our community, especially these emerging leaders who have been acknowledged in the Forty Under 40. We appreciate the contributions these individuals make both to their respective organizations and our community's overall growth. These emerging leaders are crucial for promoting our area as an attractive place for talent retention and growth. We're grateful to our businesses that have taken the initiative to recommend these promising young professionals, and their involvement highlights our collective effort to foster a leadership environment that benefits our community and its future.

Remember, it's not about celebrating age, but highlighting our

emerging leaders that will one day become our community's decision-makers, and the companies that are investing their time and efforts to educate and empower.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to nominate this year. We had 108 submissions, and 74 nominees, both record-breaking numbers for this award.

Recipients include: Anita Zatori, Ben Tuck, Brooke Brinson, Carrie Williams, Chase Brinson, Courtnie Nichols, Daria Chicosky, Emily Cochran, Erica Mooney, Fredy Wright, Harmony Tripp, Ian Burne, Jay M Tucker, Jessica Shelburne, Josh Smith, Kadra Ochoa, Kassie Reese, Kayla Mullins, Kaylee Graves, Kelly Kendrick, Laura Davis, Lauryn Marshall, Liam Watson, Lily Oliver, Luke Brugh, Luke Williams, Madison Webb, Mariah Thompson, Marissa Smith, Max Bareiss, Michael Abraham, Michael Sutphin, Michelle Jones, Patrick Moran, Rachel Waters, Scott Whyte, Sergio Render, Stephanie Byers, Stephanie Kirkner and Tiffany Vaden.

Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce

Hands-on learning with Virginia State Police



PHOTO COURTESY OF RADFORD UNIVERSITY

Radford University criminal justice students at the Virginia State Police Division 6 headquarters in Salem.

In early April, a group of criminal justice students made a short drive along Interstate 81 to the Virginia State Police Division 6 headquarters in Salem, Virginia, to get an inside look at the multi-faceted agency and learn about potential job opportunities.

Radford Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice Stacy Clifton organized the event for the 26 criminal justice students. They engaged with several law enforcement experts, learning about K-9 units, polygraph, dispatch, search and rescue, drug enforcement and drug diversion, criminal investigations, motor squad, communications/radio tech and bomb and arson squads. The students also learned about LEICA, a 3D laser scanner that provides agencies with an avenue to create digital scene mapping and documentation for public safety and forensics; ANDE, a rapid DNA testing instrument that allows agencies to receive DNA results in less

than two hours; and the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN), which automates ballistics evaluations.

“My goal in organizing this event was to provide students with an opportunity to engage with a criminal justice agency outside of the classroom environment,” Clifton said. “We can spend an abundance of time in the classroom discussing various aspects of the criminal justice system, but engaging students with practitioners in the field broadens student perspectives and provides networking opportunities.”

Tyler Russell, a rising sophomore criminal justice major, said he would recommend future trips to anyone interested in law enforcement. “I was excited to learn how much of a variety the state police department had to offer, from K-9 to scuba diving in the field to 3D mapping and ballistics behind a desk,” said Russell, an

aspiring game warden from Ellicott City, Maryland. “It was very clear that there’s a wide variety of specializations to pick from or grow into as you gain experience.”

Gaining insight into state police operations “can open up many different opportunities for you and can lead to finding what you truly want to do as a career,” explained Brooke Hall, a rising senior criminal justice major from Roanoke, Virginia. “It also opens up many different opportunities within the state police that I found super interesting, such as polygraphing or working for the Virginia Fusion Center. The trip was applicable to what I want to do with my career because beginning as a state trooper could lead me to begin my career as a crime analyst.”

Chad Osborne for Radford University

Town of Blacksburg receives Virginia Environmental Endowment grant for Heritage Park

BLACKSBURG – The Virginia Environmental Endowment has awarded \$232,335 to the Town of Blacksburg to pursue a major ecological restoration project in Heritage Park.

The project will take approximately two years to complete and will focus on removing invasive plants from both sides of Toms Creek within Heritage Park, re-establishing a diverse mix of native trees and shrubs in the riparian area, and developing a long-term stewardship plan for the park. The project will also involve extensive outreach to increase the public’s understanding of the impact of invasive species on natural landscapes and the value of re-establishing native plant communities to better support native and migratory wildlife.

“This grant will allow the town to be proactive in combating the invasive plant issue in the Heritage Park,” offered Director of Parks and Recreation Dean Crane. “This will help restore the diversity of tree species that will enhance the beauty of the park and help improve the quality of the Toms Creek stream

that runs through the park.”

This funding will allow the town to add 17 additional acres to a two-acre pilot restoration project already underway in Heritage Park, made possible by a partnership with the New River Conservancy.

“Addressing invasive species can feel like an overwhelming endeavor,” said Sustainability Manager Carol Davis. “This new funding from the Virginia Environmental Endowment allows us to tackle the challenge in a meaningful, sustained way and puts us on a path to improving ecological integrity and biodiversity in Heritage Park.”

Throughout the project’s implementation, there will be numerous opportunities for the public to get involved via on-site workshops and volunteer opportunities. For more information, or to ask a question about the Heritage Park Riparian Restoration Project, please visit the Let’s Talk Blacksburg project page or reach out to Town of Blacksburg staff who are involved with this project.

Town of Blacksburg

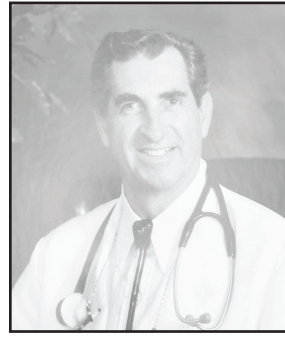
OBITUARY

Skewes, MD, David Jessop

David Jessop Skewes, MD, 93, passed away peacefully at his home in Dublin on Wednesday, May 15, 2024.

He was a member of the Dublin Presbyterian Church and a former Captain in the U. S. Air Force. David graduated from the Medical College of Virginia in 1956, and began his medical practice in Coalwood, W.Va. He later moved to Dublin, where he practiced until his retirement in 1999. After retirement he enjoyed many years of grouse and pheasant hunting, and wildlife management and conservation in Virginia and South Dakota. Known to everyone as “Doc”, he enjoyed spending time with his family and many friends, as well as his beloved dogs. He will truly be missed by all who knew him, please hold tight to all the memories.

He was preceded in death by his parents, William Jessop and Effie Anna Gardner Skewes.



Survivors include his wife and sweetheart of over 46 years, Sherry S. Skewes of Dublin; sons, David Skewes of Dublin, Dr. Matt Skewes (Tara) of Radford, and John F. Smith (Tammi) of Suffolk; daughter, Erin Lattanze (Greg) of Front Royal; nephew, William Gardner “Rusty” Skewes of Mooresville; grandchildren, Jessop, Sable, Jacob, Drew, Nick, Tom, Teaghan, Miranda, Audrey, Sophia, Max, and Josie; great grandson, Danny; very special friends and caretakers, Tommy and Lisa Akers; beloved dogs, Savannah, Sue and Hank; and many other relatives and friends.

Doc’s family would like to give a very warm thank you to Dr. Jose Rivero and all of his staff for the care that they provided to Doc over the years.

The family will receive friends 4 - 7 p.m. Friday, May 24, 2024, at the Mullins Funeral Home in Radford. Funeral services will be held at 11 a.m. Saturday, May 25, 2024, at Dublin Presbyterian Church, 409 Church St., Dublin, VA, with Rev. Tim Boyd and Rev. Mary Ann Armbrister officiating. Graveside services with full military honors will be held at 11 a.m. Tuesday, May 28, 2024, at the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery.

Immediately following the funeral service on Saturday, May 25, there will be a Celebration of Life luncheon at the Skewes residence, 5892 Hanks Avenue, Dublin, Va.

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



Aerial view of Heritage Park

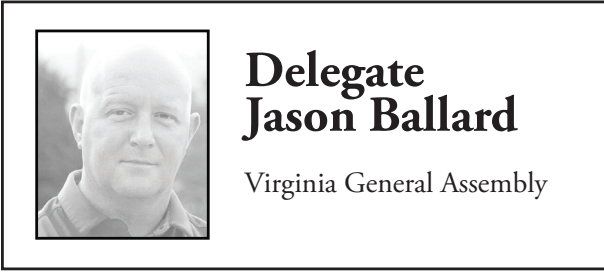
PHOTO COURTESY OF THE TOWN OF BLACKSBURG

OPINION

Final budget includes wins and losses for both sides of the aisle

On Monday, May 13, members of the Virginia General Assembly returned to Richmond for a special session to complete work on the Commonwealth's budget. As you may recall, the initial budget passed by General Assembly Democrats contained tax increases and a return to the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI); costly programs that Governor Youngkin amended or vetoed out of the spending plan. Since then, the governor and budget negotiators came back to the table to negotiate in good faith, and although not perfect, I'm happy to announce a budget agreement that contains no tax increases, nor a commitment to RGGI.

The budget passed by the Democrat-controlled House and Senate is similar to the last Appropriations Committee conference report in most ways. It spends roughly the same amount of money, but with a few changes. Bills vetoed by the governor had their funding removed, and the proposed sales tax on online streaming services was also removed. In addition, projected revenues from skill games and recreational marijuana sales expansion were also removed. Spending will be paid for through increases in revenue above forecasted levels – \$525 million – and moving \$516 million of capital projects from cash into bonds. The budget also adds back \$60 million for lab schools that had been cut in the conference report but includes a requirement that



Delegate Jason Ballard

Virginia General Assembly

the schools demonstrate financial stability before they are approved in the future. Speaking of education, I'm pleased to report that a 3% salary increase for teachers has been approved over the next biennium. This is something I'm strongly in favor of and was pleased to see included in the final budget compromise. It also includes \$70 million in General Fund dollars to expedite projects in the I-81 Corridor Improvement Plan. Additional language earmarks up to \$175 million from year-end revenue surpluses for the I-81 improvement program.

One item of disappointment was the lack of additional support for the Virginia Military Survivors & Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP). This program was set up by the General Assembly 25 years ago to provide education benefits to spouses and children of Veterans who are permanently disabled. As passed,

the budget would limit these educational opportunities to an associates or bachelor degrees, when in the past, graduate degrees were also included. The narrowing of benefits has been described by some as necessary due to the rapid growth of the program – it started with 50 beneficiaries and has since grown to over 400 – but this is no excuse to minimize benefits that our veterans and their families have come to rely upon. Restoring and increasing this funding must be an area of focus in future General Assembly sessions to ensure Virginia remains the best state in the nation for Veterans services.

It was not an easy – nor pleasant – process, but the final budget looks like what middle ground should be, with wins and losses for both sides. I am pleased that the core functions of our government will continue to be funded, but it's clear that there is more work to be done in the future.

As the Delegate representing the 42nd House District in the Virginia General Assembly, your concerns are my greatest priority. If ever I may be of assistance to you and your family, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at DelJasonBallard@House.Virginia.Gov. You can also follow me on Twitter @JasonBallardVA or like my Facebook page, Jason Ballard for Delegate, to keep up to date with what I am doing in Richmond and in our community on your behalf.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

National Law Enforcement Week is observed from May 12 to May 18, 2024, and it is a time to honor, remember, and support our brave police officers who dedicate their lives to protect our communities. I express my heartfelt gratitude to these courageous men and women who serve with professionalism, dedication, valor, and sacrifice. I also extend my appreciation to their families for their sacrifice.

Our law enforcement community is one of our greatest assets and they work

tirelessly with integrity and honor to make a positive difference. They risk their lives every day to keep us safe and secure.

As community leaders, they serve on and off duty, whether coaching life skills and character through sports, mentoring to youth groups or building lasting positive relationships with students as school resource officers. In addition, police officers volunteer in our schools, churches, fire and rescue departments, and non-profit organizations. They collaborate with our business communities to strengthen

economic wellness and growth.

For those who swear an oath, police work is not just a job; it's a calling, a resolve to serve and protect. These courageous officers are devoted to upholding our freedoms and Constitutional rights, even if it means making the ultimate sacrifice. Sadly, according to the Officer Down Memorial Page, there were 137 line-of-duty deaths in the country in 2023, and so far, this year, 56 officers have been killed in the line-of-duty.

As we honor all who serve and have served, let us never forget to pay tribute

and remember our fallen officers and their families. In Montgomery County, we remember Christiansburg Police Officer Terry Griffith, Christiansburg Police Officer Scott Hylton, Montgomery County Sheriff's Office Corporal Eric Sutphin, and Virginia Tech Police Officer Deriek Crouse for their ultimate sacrifice.

I encourage everyone to reflect on our freedoms and to remember and honor our law enforcement officers.

Sherri Blevins
Christiansburg

Blacksburg Breakfast Lions Club supports New Imagination Library affiliate

Angelica Ramos
Contributing writer

BLACKSBURG- The Blacksburg Breakfast Lions Club celebrated becoming a founding donor of the new Montgomery County affiliate of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library on May 15, 2024.

The Blacksburg Breakfast Lions Club became a founding donor for the new Imagination Library affiliate and celebrated with a life-size cut-out of Dolly Parton. The Blacksburg Breakfast Lions Club has donated \$5,000 in funding to the Imagination Library that debuted in February. Members of the Lions Club enjoyed taking a picture with "Dolly" and say they were honored to become founding donors.

"We were honored and happy to become founding donors to Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in Montgomery County," Lions Club President Peter Hartmann said, "Blacksburg Breakfast Lions club strives to improve the community by supporting the wellness and success in of its youth."

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is a program that supports the passion of reading in children from ages newborn up until their fifth birthday. Once enrolled, a child will receive a personalized book in the mail every single month until they turn five. Each child's first book from the Dolly Parton Imagination Library is The Little Engine that Could but the books differ from child to child from there as they are age-graded per what is appropriate for each child's current age-range. This program is completely free to sign up for. Since its opening in February, the Imagination Library has enrolled more than 1,100 children in Montgomery County. The Montgomery County branch of the Imagination Library is organized through the Mt. Tabor Ruritan Club to help support and



PHOTO COURTESY OF WENDY BALDWIN

Blacksburg Breakfast Lions smiling with "Dolly."

encourage reading in the children of Montgomery County. "Thanks for the opportunity, Ruritans," said Hartmann. "We all love Dolly."

With the help of donors like the Blacksburg Breakfast Lions, Kiwanis, 100+ Women Who Care, and many more community organizations and businesses, The Imagination Library has been able to catapult into the community. Local businesses such as Blacksburg Books, Fringe Benefits and O'Charley's have hosted donation days to help support this new and beneficial organization. Red Robin donated 20 percent of their receipts to the Imagination Library on May 15 as well as O'Charley's is set to donate 15% of their receipts on May 23 in community support for this new endeavor.

"We hustled," Wendy Baldwin, executive director, said regarding how hard her and her team have worked to bring this opportunity to the community quickly.

The Imagination Library has displays at the Lyric Theatre or at the Mt. Tabor Ruritan Club Fish Fries on every second Saturday of the month.

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RADFORD SPORTS

Weekly reports: Lady Bruins regular season, tourney champs



PHOTOS COURTESY OF AUBURN HIGH SCHOOL

Both the boy's and girl's track teams claimed this past week's Mt. Empire District outdoor meet. The Auburn boys outraced Giles 156 to 99 with George Wythe third with 90 points. The Auburn girls scored 198 points to second place Ft. Chiswell's 95 and third place Giles' 93 points.

The Blacksburg High School girls' soccer team won the River Ridge District Tournament Friday night with a 4-0 win over Salem at Thompson Field at Virginia Tech.

Erin Bishop had two goals with Isabel Vikesland and Tasia Marmagas also scoring. This was the third time this season Blacksburg has defeated Salem.

Blacksburg improves to 15-0-2 on the season and Salem concludes the season

at 9-8.

Auburn wins MED baseball title

On a rainy night in Bland, the Eagles won the MED Tournament with a rain shortened 4-1 victory over Ft. Chiswell.

The Eagles scored four in the bottom of the first on a 2-run double by Brady Hale and a 2-run single by Zac McGlothlin.

Jared Lavergne singled in the third to extend his consecutive on base streak to 20. His streak did end in the fourth on a



PHOTO BY JON FLEMING

Blacksburg's Erin Bishop scored twice in a 4-0 win over Salem on Friday for the River Ridge District Championship.

groundout. Lavergne also picked up the win in relief throwing 3 1/3 scoreless and hitless innings with two walks and three strikeouts.

The Eagles begin Region C play on Thursday when they will host an opponent yet to be determined.

Auburn soccer teams advance

In was an all-Auburn semis in Mt. Empire District play. The Auburn girls' dominated Galax 8-0 to advance to the championship match.

Senior Logan Mundy had three goals and three assists. Senior Katie Light had three goals and two Assists. Senior

goalkeeper Jose Agee-Helms recorded the shutout. Auburn is now 14-4 overall on the season.

Meanwhile it took a shootout with Giles, but the boys' soccer team pulled out a 1-0 win in two overtimes to advance to the MED championship game.

Auburn Senior goalkeeper Coahan Gordon kept a shutout through regulation, two over times and then made stops in three of the four Giles County PK attempts to seal the Auburn victory.

Staff report



PHOTO COURTESY OF CONCORD ATHLETICS

Drew Bailey

Christiansburg native named new Concord coach

Concord University has selected former Bluefield State head coach Drew Bailey as the next CU head baseball coach, co-athletic directors Luke Duffy and Tesla Southcott announced Thursday.

Bailey, a former standout on the mound for the Mountain Lions, succeeds his college coach Kevin Garrett in the dugout at Anderson Field.

In four seasons at Bluefield State, Bailey compiled a record of 95-79, highlighted by the most successful season in program history as BSU went 33-15 this spring and won its second HBCU World Series last week in Montgomery, Alabama—the second such title in the last four seasons. Under Bailey's guidance, Bluefield State steadily improved from 15 wins in his first season to the program-record 33 wins.

"I would like to thank President Boggess, co-athletic directors Luke Duffy and Tesla Southcott and the hiring committee for giving me the opportunity to be the next head baseball coach at Concord University," Bailey said. "I am very fortunate to be presented with the opportunity to return to my alma mater and lead a group of young men at a place that helped mold me into the person I am today.

"I'd also like to thank my wife for all of her support and always being by my side. Bluefield State gave me an opportunity to become a head coach again and for that I am forever thankful and will always cherish my four seasons there," Bailey concluded.

While Bluefield State was Bailey's most recent head coaching stop, the Christiansburg native brings nine years of coaching experience to Athens. From 2014-17, Bailey was an assistant coach at Bluefield University where he helped the Rams to a 32-21 record in his final season. The first head coaching opportunity Bailey received was for the 2018 season at Division III Averett University in Danville, Virginia.

Beginning in 2018, Bailey was the head softball coach at Bluefield University. After his stint as the head softball coach in Bluefield, Virginia, Bailey was a volunteer assistant coach

for Concord during the fall of 2020 before being hired away by Bluefield State in January 2021.

"I'm excited for Coach Bailey to return to his alma mater, a place where he succeeded as a player," Southcott said. "His playing and coaching experience speaks for itself and is only magnified by the 30-win season that Bluefield State had this year. He will only heighten the expectations of a program that has seen a great deal of success over the last 25 years.

"Coach Bailey is a great recruiter off the field and he will find great young men that are not only good players, but guys that fit the culture of Concord University."

On Bailey's watch, the Big Blues set program records for pitcher strikeouts and stolen bases in 2023. He also coached BSU's first two all-region players in program history (Tahir Meulens and Jordan Varela-Payne) last spring.

"I am excited to get to work and continue to build on what Kevin Garrett has built here in Athens for so many years," Bailey said. "I won't take this opportunity for granted and will see to it that we produce the best product on the field possible, but more importantly our guys graduate and are prepared for the real world when they leave Concord."

As a player for Concord from 2008-10, Bailey was named All-WVIAC Second Team twice and was the program leader in saves until the 2022 season. Additionally, Bailey was inducted into the Concord Hall of Fame in 2017. He helped the Mountain Lions to a national ranking in 2008 and capped his career by being drafted by the Oakland Athletics in the 35th round of the 2010 MLB Amateur Draft.

Bailey spent parts of two seasons in the Athletics' farm system, making it to low-A ball in 2011. With the Vermont Lake Monsters, he posted a 5-0 record with a 2.34 ERA in 42.1 innings in 2011. From 2012-13, the newest CU head coach pitched in two different independent leagues, the American Association and Frontier League.

Concord Athletics

RU's Roberts earns player of the year

The Big South Conference recently announced Wedne three Highlanders have been named to all-conference end of year awards highlighted by Lexie Roberts being named Player of the Year.

Roberts was also named to first-team all-conference and all-academic while Kari Shedrick, Abby Wilson and Rachel Smith also earned all-conference honors.

Roberts becomes the first Highlander since 2012 to earn the conference's coveted Player of the Year nod. Leading off the top of the order for the Highlanders all season, she set top marks in the Big South for steals, hits, batting average and runs. Those same marks were all top-10 single season records in Highlander program history as well. Her 29 stolen bases rank 15th in the nation. That wasn't the only award the sophomore took home as she also earned first team all-conference honors and the all-academic award. In conference play, she reached base in 13 of 18 games hitting .475 over 18 games which was a by-far best mark in the Big South. Her 16 runs and 3 triples also rank best in the conference. Roberts was perfect in center field, committing zero errors on 89 chances. Off the field, she's achieved a 4.0 GPA as a sports management major so far in her career.

Shedrick had a break-out year for the Highlanders and made the conference's all-conference lists for the first time in her career landing on the second team. Leading the power department, she slugged a career-high eight home runs and nine doubles. Her four homers inside Big South play rank tied for second. Shedrick was a primary source of Radford's offense as she finished the year with 31 RBI, 20 of which came in conference play which led the Big South. Her .759 slugging percentage against Big South foes also led the conference.

The preseason all-conference member was as-advertised for the Highlanders all season and made her debut on the conference's postseason awards list on the second team. Wilson split time for the Highlanders in the DP spot and as a catcher. Defensively, she set a career-high for fielding percentage at .989. She struck home 27 RBI tying her previous career-best while hitting a new career-best six home runs and 12 doubles.

The beat went on for Smith this year as she earned honorable mention honors from the Big South. The junior had a power surge to the tune of a career-high eight home runs on the season. Three of those home runs came in conference play, which ranked tied for fifth-most. Her season batting average, hits, and doubles were all also career-best marks in her third season at Radford. On the base paths, she was a perfect 11-11 swiping four of those bags in Big South games.

2024 BIG SOUTH CONFERENCE SOFTBALL AWARD WINNERS
FIRST-TEAM ALL-CONFERENCE

- OF - Lexie Roberts, Soph., Radford
- OF - Denver Lauer, Jr., USC Upstate
- OF - Lauren Fox, Sr., Longwood
- 1B - Sophia Knock, Soph., Longwood
- 2B - KaDedra Temple, Gr., Winthrop
- SS - Lauren Taylor, Gr., Longwood
- 3B - Celeste Delorenzo, Sr., USC Upstate
- C - Gracie Prince, Jr., Charleston Southern
- P - Nealy Lamb, Fr., Charleston Southern
- P - Reese Basinger, Jr., Winthrop
- DP - Andrea Lyon, Gr., Gardner-Webb
- UTL - Megan Powell, Jr., Winthrop
- Second-Team All-Conference
- OF - Emily Vinson, Jr., Longwood
- OF - Kayley DeVivi, Sr., Longwood
- OF - Adrienne Visintine, Gr., Gardner-Webb
- 1B - Kari Shedrick, Jr., Radford
- 2B - Maddy Lee, Soph., Charleston Southern
- SS - Alanna Deal, Jr., USC Upstate
- 3B - Korynna Anderson, Gr., Longwood
- C - Abby Wilson, Gr., Radford
- P - Sierra Maness, Fr., USC Upstate
- P - Maggie Chapin, Soph., Longwood
- DP - Carsten Sandvig, Fr., Charleston Southern
- UTL - Kasey Wolfe, Fr., Presbyterian
- Honorable Mention All-Conference
- Brianna Brooks, OF, R-Soph., Charleston Southern
- Rachel Smith, SS, Jr., Radford
- Peyton Rivas, OF, R-Sr., Winthrop
- Annicka McLaughlin, 2B, Soph., Gardner-Webb
- Abigail Pippen, C, Soph., USC Upstate
- All-Freshman Team
- Nealy Lamb, P, Charleston Southern
- Sierra Maness, P, USC Upstate
- Abby Polk, 2B, USC Upstate
- Kasey Wolfe, UTL, Presbyterian
- Carsten Sandvig, DP, Charleston Southern
- Maggie Hiatt, C, Longwood
- Cierra Gawryluk, P, Longwood
- All-Academic Team
- Annah Junge, P, Gr., Charleston Southern
- Andrea Lyon, P/OF, Gr., Gardner-Webb
- Korynna Anderson, 3B, Gr., Longwood
- Kaitlyn Tucker, 2B, Sr., Presbyterian College
- Lexie Roberts, OF, Soph., Radford
- Cassie Norris, 1B, Sr., USC Upstate
- Reese Basinger, P, Jr., Winthrop
- Player of the Year
- Lexie Roberts, OF, Soph., Radford
- Pitcher of the Year
- Nealy Lamb, Fr., Charleston Southern
- Newcomer of the Year
- Megan Powell, UTL, Jr., Winthrop
- Freshman of the Year
- Nealy Lamb, Fr., Charleston Southern
- Coach of the Year
- Chris Hawkins, USC Upstate

Radford University Athletics

Hokie signs professional soccer contract

Goalkeeper Alia Skinner joins a revered list of Virginia Tech women's soccer alumni competing at the professional level signing a contract with Brommapojkarna in Stockholm, Sweden.

"The opportunity to sign with Brommapojkarna (BP) has been a dream come true," said Alia Skinner. "My entire life I have been dreaming of playing professionally and to sign my first contract, truly means the world to me. The opportunity to start my career with a club like BP, and in a city like Stockholm, is such a blessing. I feel so thankful for the opportunity.

"Since my college career ended in November (2023) and I graduated in December, I have been busy training and preparing for the start of my professional career. I have collaborated with my agent to find opportunities worldwide. In February, I was fortunate enough to be called into preseason with the Houston Dash, an NWSL team. I was there for about two months training with the team while my agent was working hard to find me a contract. I then signed my contract with BP at the beginning of April and headed home to Tampa to get ready to make my journey to Stockholm, Sweden."

"We are very excited and proud to see Skinner signed in Sweden," said head coach Chugger Adair. "We have always thought of her as a professional and knew that she would be able to play with the professional ranks. This is exciting for us as a program, and a big congratulations to Alia and her family! We look forward to seeing her play at the professional level for many

more years to come."

While at Tech, Skinner tallied 55 career starts, 235 saves, and 14 shutouts. She ended the 2023 season ranked second in saves (79) with a save percentage of .823, and third in shutouts (seven) in the ACC. In 2021, she logged the third most minutes (1,788), fifth most saves (73), and the sixth best save percentage (.760) among ACC goalkeepers. Collected Tech to its first NCAA tournament victory since 2018, chalking four saves during the Hokies' 3-1, opening round win against Ohio State (Nov. 12).

"Playing collegiate soccer allowed me to gain experience and play at a very high level for multiple years," said Skinner. "In Europe, most of the professional clubs have youth academy teams that are run similarly to a professional team. In the states, that isn't the case and to me college soccer sort of took the place of that experience. Arriving to Houston, as well as Sweden, I felt very prepared to jump right into action. Playing in the ACC with Virginia Tech allowed me to grow immensely, gain vital experience, and understand what it means to truly compete for something bigger than yourself."

"Having been in Sweden for a couple weeks now, I have experienced some new and exciting cultural differences, walking and biking everywhere being the main difference in my life so far. Although, IKEA is still the same over here!

Prior to moving here, I had never been to Sweden. However, my grandmother is actually Swedish. I am expecting and excited to visit some family I have never met while I am living over here.



PHOTO COURTESY OF VT ATHLETICS

Former Virginia Tech soccer player Alia Skinner is bound for Sweden to continue her playing career.

Swedish food is something I grew up eating little bits of here and there when my grandmother prepared some of it in the states for us, but having it here is a different experience. Real Swedish meatballs are unbelievable and something worth visiting for!

"Competing in Sweden is comparable to competing anywhere else. You have to show up everyday, put in the work, hope some things on the pitch align, and repeat. Every training matters and even more so, every game matters. In Europe, the leagues run on a promotion / relegation foundation meaning that each season teams get relegated from the top division down and teams get promoted from the lower divisions up. With that pressure added onto our season, it is really important that we use every minute we get on the pitch to work

hard. Every point matters for the season when promotion/relegation time comes in November.

"Playing professional women's soccer has evolved into a legitimate career over the past several decades. Being a college athlete is already an incredible accomplishment and something to hang your hat on, however, if you desire to take your talents further, don't shy away from it. There are so many opportunities worldwide and each year they continue to develop. Moving across the world can definitely be scary, but what I have learned being over here is that soccer is always a constant. It's just a game that people play and love all together worldwide. So if you are able, and hopeful, to play professionally, just do it!"

Virginia Tech Athletics

Blacksburg LAX advances in regional play



Blacksburg's Emeline Swift catches a pass against Hidden Valley in a first-round regional tournament game Friday night.



PHOTOS BY JON FLEMING

Blacksburg's Hayli Williams is a member of the Bruins senior class that led to a successful 10-4 regular season and a first-round win over Hidden Valley in the first round of the Region 4D tournament.

Sports notes: ACC baseball tournament set to begin

Coastal Division champion North Carolina and Atlantic Division champion Clemson are the top two seeds for the 2024 Atlantic Coast Conference Baseball Championship, which got underway Tuesday, May 21, and runs through Sunday, May 26, at Truist Field in Charlotte, North Carolina.

The championship will feature a pool-play format, leading into a four-team, single-elimination bracket to determine the league champion.

A consensus top 10 team in the country in the most recent national polls, North Carolina (41-12, 22-8 ACC) earned the No. 1 overall seed and will headline Pool A. The Tar Heels will be joined by eighth-seeded Wake Forest (36-19, 15-15) and 12th-seeded Pittsburgh (26-26, 10-20).

Atlantic Division champion and No. 2-seed Clemson (40-13, 20-10) will be the top seed in Pool B, along with seventh-seeded Louisville (32-22, 16-14) and 11th-seeded Miami (24-29, 11-19).

Earning the No. 3 seed, NC State (32-19, 18-11) is joined in Pool C by No. 6-seed Duke (35-18, 16-14) and No. 10-seed Virginia Tech (32-20, 14-16).

No. 4-seed Virginia (40-14, 18-12) drew the top seed in Pool D, which also features No. 5-seed Florida State (39-14, 17-12) and No. 9-seed Georgia Tech (31-21, 15-15).

Each team in the four pools will play one game against each of the other two opponents in its pool Tuesday through

Friday (May 21-24). The four teams with the best records within their respective pools will advance to Saturday's semifinals, with the winners playing on Sunday in the ACC Championship Game.

Highlander on second team

The National Fastpitch Coaches Association (NFCA) announced all-region teams Thursday afternoon revealing that Lexie Roberts has earned yet another impressive award being named to the Mid-Atlantic Region's second team.

Roberts is the first Radford University Highlander since 2022 to earn a selection to an NFCA regional team, and the sixth player overall to do so. Roberts was previously named Big South Player of the Year, a member of the first-team all-conference and all-academic teams. This past season, she set top marks in the Big South for steals, hits, batting average and runs. Those same marks were all top-10 single season records in Highlander program history as well.

Her 29 stolen bases ranked 15th in the nation during the regular season. Roberts was perfect in center field, committing zero errors on 89 chances. Off the field, she's achieved a 4.0 GPA as a sports management so far in her career.

RU left out of tourney

For the first time in program history, Presbyterian College is the No. 1 seed in the Big South Baseball Championship following the conclusion of the regular season this afternoon. The Blue Hose clinched their first outright Big South regular-season championship since becoming league members in 2007 and are seeking their second Big South Tournament title and first since 2021. The top four

teams in the final standings qualify for the league's postseason championship, which will be contested May 23-25 at Truist Point in High Point, N.C.

Presbyterian won the regular-season crown after finishing 18-6 (.750 winning percentage) in league play, while High Point is the No. 2 seed after finishing second at 17-7 (.708 winning percentage). USC Upstate posted a 16-8 record to earn the No. 3 seed, while Charleston Southern clinched the No. 4 and final seed in this year's tournament at 12-12.

Doyle named director of recruiting

Virginia Tech women's basketball head coach Megan Duffy tabbed Kathleen Doyle as the program's director of recruiting and player personnel Friday.

The 2020 Big Ten Player of the Year, Doyle averaged a career-high 18.1 points, 4.6 rebounds and 6.3 assists while starting all 30 games for the Hawkeyes during the 2019-20 season. Doyle was named third team AP All-American and started 114 of 123 games played with Iowa from 2016-20.

A second-round selection of the 2020 WNBA Draft, Doyle played for the Indiana Fever for one season before playing abroad in Poland for AZS AJP Gorzow and later in Turkey with Bursaspor and Botas Spor through the 2023 season.

At Tech, she will assist with coordinating on an off campus recruiting operations, on-court basketball development, scouting, analytics, camps and student-athlete development program. She was a three-time academic All-American and graduated with bachelor's degrees in journalism and Spanish from Iowa in 2020.

Staff report

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