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Governor announces new mitigation measures to slow COVID-19 spread

Virginians should stay at home from midnight to 5 a.m., wear masks in indoor and outdoor settings and limit social gatherings to 10 people under new COVID-19 mitigation measures announced Thursday by Gov. Ralph Northam.

The directives came in Commonwealth Executive Order Seventy-Two, which will take effect at 12:01 a.m. on Monday, Dec. 14, and will remain in place through Jan. 31, 2021, unless rescinded or amended.

"New daily case numbers are higher than they have been at any previous point in the pandemic, and while the trends in Virginia are better than most of the country, we are taking action now to slow the spread of this virus before our hospitals get overwhelmed," said Governor Northam. "We already have strong public health measures in place, and with these additional steps, we can turn this around. Virginians, if you don't have to be out, stay at home. Whenever we are around oth-

er people, we all need to wear a mask, indoors and out.

"These are common-sense things we can all do to take care of each other and stay safe," the governor said. "This is not about getting people in trouble. This is about everyone doing their part and reducing opportunities for people to get sick."

The mitigation measures include the following:

A modified stay-at-home order: All individuals in Virginia must remain at their place of residence between the hours of midnight and 5:00 a.m. Exceptions include obtaining food and goods, traveling to and from work and seeking medical attention.

A universal mask requirement: All Virginians aged five and over are required to wear face coverings in indoor settings shared with others and when outdoors within six feet of another person. This order expands the current statewide mask mandate, which has been in place since May 29, and requires

all individuals aged five and over to wear face coverings in indoor and outdoor public settings outside of their own household. These changes are consistent with new CDC guidelines, released Dec. 4, which recommend universal wearing of face coverings.

A reduction in social gatherings: All social gatherings must be limited to 10 individuals, down from the current cap of 25 people. Social gatherings include, but are not limited to, parties, celebrations or other social events, regardless of whether they occur indoors or outdoors. This does not apply to religious services, employment settings or educational settings. Restaurants and retail stores are already governed by strict social distancing requirements and are not included in this limit.

Continued limits on dining establishments: Virginia restaurants are currently governed by strict social distancing and sanitization

See **COVID-19**, page 7

Christiansburg's Dennis Bowman crowned world backyard grilling champion



PHOTOS COURTESY OF DENNIS BOWMAN

With a score of 177.142 out of a possible 180 for his ribs, Dennis Bowman of Christiansburg was recently named the world backyard grilling grand champion at a barbecue event in Kansas City, Mo.

When it comes to grilling in the backyard, Dennis Bowman has always been a connoisseur. Now, he has taken his skills to the highest level.

From Christiansburg, Bowman was recently crowned the world backyard grilling grand champion at a barbecue cook-off in Kansas City.

"I actually ended up winning first place in both meats we competed in (chicken and ribs), basically sweeping the event," Bowman said. "A perfect score is 180, and I received a 178.857 in chicken and a 177.142 in ribs. I have some really complicated

recipes I've created for competition BBQ, but I really started winning consistently in the spring of 2019 when I started using BBQ rubs from a company called JonesyQ BBQ," Bowman said.

The event was sponsored by the Kansas City Barbeque Society and included the World Invitational, Team of the Year and the Backyard Series Overall World Championship, the latter won by Bowman.

According to Bowman, this was the KCBS world invitational, so teams

See **Grilling**, page 7

Did John Wilkes Booth survive past 1865? VT computer prof's software helps refute 150-year-old mystery



PHOTO BY ERIN WILLIAMS FOR VIRGINIA TECH

Computer science associate professor Kurt Luther demonstrates his Civil War Photo Sleuth software in an interview with the History Channel at the Virginia Tech Research Center in Arlington, Va. Note the J.W. Booth photo in the background.

One of the more enduring theories surrounding the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln is that John Wilkes Booth may have survived beyond 1865.

Twelve days after the assassination of President Lincoln, history records show that Booth suffered a fatal gunshot wound while resisting arrest. Today, the Booth family believes he faked his death, reunited with his wife, and went on to marry again under an assumed name, eventually revealing his true identity in a series of clues.

To help put an end to the mys-

tery, the History Channel called on the expertise of Virginia Tech computer science associate professor Kurt Luther. Luther and his Civil War Photo Sleuth software were featured on the History Channel's The Escape of John Wilkes Booth last weekend as part of its "History's Greatest Mysteries" series.

Powered by a database of more than 30,000 images, Luther's software brings together the complementary strengths of both human intelligence and artificial intelligence (AI) using facial recognition.

The site uses visual clues such

as coat color, chevrons, shoulder straps, collar insignia, and hat insignia from photos of Civil War soldiers and then links them to search filters to prioritize the most likely matches.

The site then uses the facial recognition AI to further cluster photos based on their similarity. Both steps help "narrow the haystack" for the user that comes onto the site to search for a specific soldier. That's where human intelligence comes in: Users find the needle in the hay-

See **Booth**, page 8

COVID-19 vaccine expected to land in New River Valley this month

The New River Health District will begin administering a coronavirus vaccine within the next two weeks.

"It helps give us a light at the end of the tunnel," said Noelle Bissell, the district's medical director, during a Wednesday virtual meeting with news media in which she provided details about vaccines for COVID-19.

Health care workers and emergency services providers will be the first to receive the vaccine, followed by those in high-risk congregate settings, such as nursing home facilities. Next on the priority list will be health care providers who work in outpatient and specialty services, such as dentists.

Teachers, students and high-risk individuals working in education probably will be able to receive the vaccine by the spring. This includes Virginia Tech students and employees, Bissell said.

Drug companies Pfizer and Moderna are rolling out the vaccines, though Bissell said last week that

the health district is likely to receive Pfizer's version first.

The health district is considering how it will distribute the vaccine, and methods may be similar to ways that flu vaccinations are offered, including drive-up clinics, Bissell said.

"We don't know exactly how that will look at this point," she said. "This is the largest scale vaccination effort we have had to deal with."

The vaccine has two parts. After one dose is given, another is required in three to four weeks. Bissell said the health district is working on a system that will remind people when they need the second vaccination dose. It is important that people take a vaccine from the same drug company for both doses, she added.

Bissell emphasized that the vaccine does not inject the coronavirus into a person's body.

Still, it may have some side effects, including

See **Vaccine**, page 7

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas



The home of Craig and Jeanine Eddleton at 1425 Cambria St. NE in Christiansburg is all decked out for Christmas. The decorations are the handiwork of husband Craig, who has carefully tended the display and watched it grow for 31 years. He goes out

and lights it up early each morning as a tribute to the hard-working folks who pass by on the way to work. He then makes sure it's lit from 5 to 11 p.m. each evening.

The display didn't come suddenly or easily. Craig takes a

week's vacation early every November to get everything set up and ready to go for the holidays. His reason for taking all that time and trouble is simple: to put some smiles on the faces of and joy in the hearts of everyone who happens by.



County school superintendent Mark Mear honored by local organizations

Montgomery County Public Schools superintendent Mark Mear was recognized with the Distinguished Government Leader Award by the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce at the chamber's recent annual meeting.

Mear was honored for his leadership of the school division, including the development of an innovative strategic plan and supporting the community by feeding more than 600,000 meals to children via the school bus delivery system from March through August 2020.

In November, Mear was recognized by the Marine Corps League with a Distinguished Service

Medal. "We did this to recognize all that you do as school superintendent to bring credibility on the Marine Corps and, especially, for establishing the Junior Corps of Cadets and the very positive impact it has had on Montgomery County," said Ted Veggeberg of the Marine Corps League.

"I am humbled to be recognized by these community leaders," said Supt. Mear. "I lead a team of amazing educators and staff who are committed to the education and support of our students and their families. All of these accomplishments are the result of teamwork. I am honored to lead this great team."



Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library schedule of December events

All through December
Grab-and-Go Crafts - At the Meadowbrook Public Library during regular library hours. These are free crafts that may be taken home to make. Each week there will be new crafts.

StoryWalk - All month at the Christiansburg Library. Brains and bodies get exercise by reading and walking the trail. The walk begins at the library at the College Street entrance of Downtown Park. This month's book is *The Emperor's Egg*.

Virtual Cookie Recipe Exchange - All month at the Christiansburg Library. Share a favorite cookie recipe on Facebook. A special craft -- a take-and-make snowman with hot cocoa in a car -- will be available while supplies last.

Wednesday, Dec. 9
Virtual Book Talk - From 11 a.m. until noon at the Christiansburg Library. This month the book to be discussed is *I Still Dream about You* by Fannie Flagg, virtually.

Thursday, December 10
Talking About Books - 11:00 a.m. at the Meadowbrook Public Library. *Magpie Murders* by Anthony Horowitz will be discussed. Call ahead to reserve a copy.

Talking about Books - 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Jessie Peterman Memorial Library

The book under discussion is *The Buddha in the Attic* by Julie Otsuka. This novel tells the story of a group of young women brought from Japan to San Francisco as "picture brides" nearly a century ago. In eight unforgettable sections, *The Buddha in the Attic* traces the extraordinary lives of these women from their arduous journeys by boat to their arrival in San Francisco and their tremulous first nights as new wives; from their experiences raising children who would later reject their culture and language to the arrival of war.

They Came in Ships: Immigration and Naturalization Record - 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Zoom.

Register by emailing Becky at novygenealogy@gmail.com.

Have you wondered about your immigrant ancestors? How do you find them and what records did they leave? Join Rebecca Novy of Novy Genealogy as she discusses how participants can find details about their immigrant ancestors and the records they left behind. Learn about the records that were created by and for immigrants as well as helpful websites for researching those immigrant ancestors.

Friday, Dec. 11
Gingerbread program at 3:00 p.m. at the Christiansburg Library - An online program that lets partici-

pants use a take-home kit to make their own gingerbread house from home during our online program using our take home kit. Email shodges@mfrl.org for more information. Supplies are limited.

Friends of the Library Book Sale (outside weather permitting) - 11 a.m. until 4 p.m. at the Blacksburg Library

Stop by and grab a bag of books for five dollars and support the Friends of the Library. If the sale is moved inside, the number of people in the building will be limited to promote social distancing.

Monday, Dec. 14
Gingerbread House Take and Make - All day at the Jessie Peterman Memorial Library

Stop by and pick up a kit that shows how to build a gingerbread house. It supplies everything but the imagination. The kits will be available while supplies last.

Cozy Program-in-a-Bags - 10:00 a.m. at the Blacksburg Library

Stop by and pick up this series of cozy activities and crafts. Supplies are limited

Stem Club - From 1-2 p.m. at the MFRL Library Online

A virtual STEM club featuring Jordan Metzgar from the VT Herbarium. He will talk about mistletoe, a poisonous plant. Pick up the activity mate-

rials by Saturday, Dec. 12. Email shodges@mfrl.org for information about the meeting.

Around the World: Virtual Holiday Edition - From 2-3 p.m. at the Christiansburg Library

Go on an adventure by taking a virtual tour of the world. On Facebook, the holiday traditions of Iceland will be explored. Participants may stop by the library for a take and make craft.

Wednesday, Dec. 16
Gingerbread Program - 10:00 a.m. at the Blacksburg Library

Use a take-home kit the library provides to make a gingerbread house. Supplies are limited.

Art Club Virtual Meeting - From 2-3 p.m. at the Christiansburg Library

Canadian artist Ted Harris will show everyone how to create a colorful landscape painting. Stop by the library for a curated craft kit and catch a video tutorial on the Christiansburg Facebook Page.

Christmas Movie Trivia Contest - From 5:30 - 6:30 p.m. at the Jessie Peterman Memorial Library

Have fun testing your knowledge about the Christmas classics. How many times have you watched *A Christmas Carol*? Can you quote Scrooge? What about *Die Hard*? Is it actually a Christmas Movie? This will be an online program. To reserve a spot, email Joann at jverostko@mfrl.org.

Thursday, Dec. 17
Talking About Books: Nonfiction Virtual Meeting - 11:00 a.m. to noon at the Christiansburg Library

To be discussed virtually is *Hidden Life of Trees* by Peter Wohlleben.

Saturday, Dec. 19
Saturday Creative Writing Group - At the Meadowbrook Public Library from 11:00 a.m. until 12:30 p.m.

Those taking part should bring your work for small-group feedback and editing.

Teen Dungeons and Dragons - From 2-4 p.m. online. DnD is now virtual on Discord. The library staff suggest downloading Discord on your device for ease of access, but this is not required. To join the Discord server, contact shodges@mfrl.org for more info. For ages 11 years and up.

Community Conversations - From 2-4 p.m. at the Jessie Peterman Memorial Library

This week's topic is Media and Polarization. Community Conversations offers a safe format to listen to and learn about the opinions of others. It's an opportunity to discover shared interests, intentions and goals and to leave behind assumptions and judgments. Based on conversations and guidelines developed by Living Room Conversations.

Monday, Dec. 21
Around the World: Virtual Holiday Edition - 2:00 - 3:00 p.m. at the Chris-

tiansburg Library. This is another virtual adventure touring the world. To be explored on Facebook are the holiday traditions of Mexico. Stop by the library for a take-and-make craft.

Tuesday, Dec. 22
Rambling Readers - From 2-4 p.m. at the Jessie Peterman Memorial Library

This is a safety distanced group activity involving reading and walking for a little exercise and some intellectual stimulation. Readers taking part will walk and talk about what books they're all currently reading and enjoying. The walk will start at the library and cover roughly two miles. Dress warmly and with appropriate footwear for the hills and uneven footing. Call the library for more details.

Polar Express Storytime - 6:30 p.m. at the MFRL Library Online

Join in on Facebook live for a special Polar Express storytime. Complimentary hot chocolate packets and a small craft will be part of the fun. Supplies are limited.

Saturday, Dec. 26
Escape of the North Pole - 4:00 p.m. at the MFRL Library Online

On Discord, a live play of a North Pole Escape Room or participants may play at their own pace. Email shodges@mfrl.org for more information.

Monday, Dec. 28
Hibernation Station - 1:00 p.m. at the MFRL Library Online

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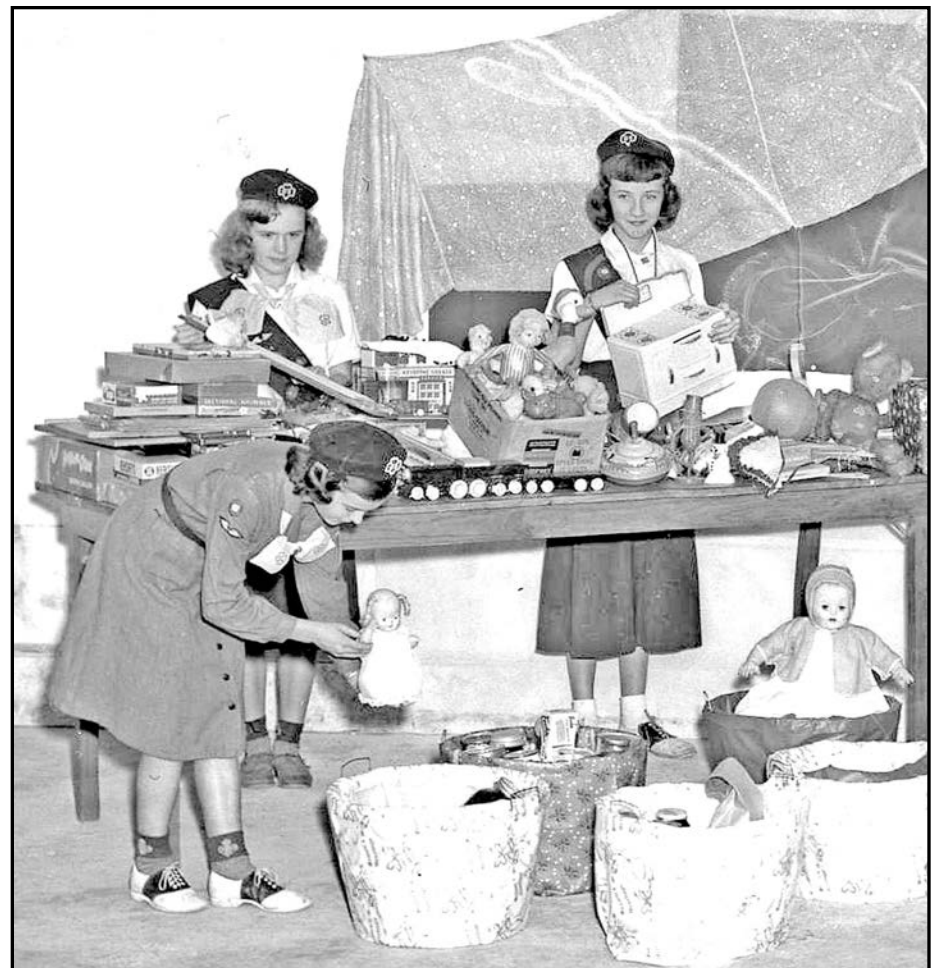
CLUES ACROSS

- Former NBA player Bison
- Rabbit
- Rectangular groove
- Formally declare
- A citizen of Oman
- Dull in color
- Pace of movement
- Athletic saucers
- Not crazy
- ___ denotes past
- 17th Greek letter
- "___ chihuahua"
- Sight, smell and touch
- Ribbon belts
- Products of human creativity
- Behave in a certain manner
- Breathing out
- First St. Louis bridge
- No variation
- 1/1000 of an ampere
- Palladium
- Cain and ___
- Small stone coffin-like box
- Failed 2012 candidate
- Point midway between E and SE
- Turns into noun
- Temper or anger
- Atomic #56
- Negligible amounts
- Wuthering Heights author's initials
- The cry made by sheep
- Exclamation of surprise
- Basics
- Wife of Mohammed
- Wing-like structures
- Smaller amount
- Lesion
- Transfer property
- Indian groom
- Round stone
- Sums up

CLUES DOWN

- Challenges
- Hedge
- Lease
- Before
- Singer Stewart
- Islamic prince
- African shirt
- Unusually (Scot.)
- Twelve
- Tooth caregiver
- Macaws
- Mother of Perseus
- Does as told
- Canonized
- Stray
- Speak haltingly
- ___ Dee, actress
- Air cooling machine
- Stanley's automobile
- Old world, new
- Foot (Latin)
- A citizen of Thailand
- Select
- Airborne (abbr.)
- River in NE Scotland
- Skilled in deception
- Hot condiment
- Not divisible by two
- Point midway between S and E
- Apportions cards
- Ruled by an abbe
- Expressed pleasure
- Bleated
- Storage buildings
- Stored in the gallbladder
- Reciprocal of a sine
- Point midway between S and SE
- 8th Month (abbr.)
- They ___
- Dental group
- Conducted

Historic Montgomery



These Girl Scouts prepared baskets of toys for donation during the late 1950s or early 1960s. Both local Girl and Boy Scouts participated in holiday toy and food drives during this era. We do not know who these girls were, nor which troop they were with. If you recognize anyone, please let us know.

Ideas for creating new holiday traditions and memorable moments during the pandemic



Even with social distancing and other COVID-19 protocols in place, it is still possible to create a memorable holiday season with traditions and memories that will extend beyond 2020, says Kaci Daniel

from the Virginia Cooperative Extension, which brings the resources of Virginia's land-grant universities, Virginia Tech and Virginia State University, to the people of the commonwealth.

Daniels shares the following family-friendly ideas for making holiday traditions special this year.

Make your own wrapping paper. Buy plain white freezer paper and decorate with markers and crayons,

or stamps, fruits and veggie stamps.

Get outdoors, especially at night. Cozy up in blankets, study the stars, play flashlight tag, and roast marshmallows around a fire pit if your outdoor space allows.

Research customs of various cultures and practice those traditions. Explore different countries, religions, and don't forget the rich Appalachian culture in Virginia.

Start a fitness routine together: yoga, walking, aerobics, hiking. Everyone waits until the New Year, but get a one-month head start. It also is great for your mental health.

"Gift" what you already have. For young children, the anticipation of a wrapped package is gift enough. Collect children's books from around the

house, wrap them and then unwrap one each night and read it as a family.

Have fun with "white elephant" gift exchanges. Pick something from your house and exchange with neighbors or family. Go for funny, absurd or just regifting something that you're not using and think someone else might.

Create a paper chain countdown to a special day. It could be a religious holiday, the New Year or something different. Break off one link of the chain each day and build excitement.

A lot of families have an Elf on the Shelf, but you don't need that toy to enjoy mischief and merriment. Play a "what's different?" game by moving or changing one thing in the house each day and let family members try to

guess. See how observant they can be. All ages can play, even families that don't have children.

Focus on healthy eating habits, such as following the "My Plate" guidelines each day. Can you consume enough fruits and vegetables? Or try to "eat a rainbow" every day and see how many different colors you can include in your diet.

Kaci Daniel has served as the 4-H Extension Agent since 2001. She has developed a strong 4-H program rich with traditional activities such as project clubs, 4-H camping, and agricultural education events. With a background in agriculture, Daniel coaches youth competition teams, creates school enrichment programs related to agriculture and helps project clubs strengthen their educational programs.

Virginia farmers grow millions of poinsettias for the holidays

Besides fresh Christmas trees, few florae exemplify the holiday spirit like poinsettias, and local growers are ready for the season.

Poinsettias are cultivated in all 50 states and are one of the top-selling plants in the nation. The 2018 U.S. Department of Agriculture Floriculture Crops Summary showed potted poinsettias accounted for \$149 million in U.S. floriculture sales that year. In Virginia, about 2.2 million poinsettias with a wholesale value of \$10.3 million were raised commercially in 2018.

"Many consumers may not be aware Virginia is fortunate to have a number of poinsettia growers around the state," said Tony Banks, senior assistant director of agri-

culture, development and innovation for Virginia Farm Bureau Federation.

Banks said the plant's popularity is an additional income opportunity for nurseries and farms during late fall. Vegetable and tobacco farms also can utilize their greenhouses between seasons to raise the flowering plant, he noted.

Stephanie Black, a grower and manager of Atlantic Growers in New Kent County, said she begins selling poinsettias Thanksgiving week, and most people start buying them right after that holiday.

"It's just tradition," she said. "It's one of the [plants] that's reliably the red color that everybody associates with Christmas with the pretty green leaves underneath."

Poinsettias come in a variety of dazzling colors

and patterns, but the solid reds remain bestsellers. Black said her customers marvel over varieties that are cream, pink and Red Glitter—one that has red leaves with white splotches—but most of them buy the red.

While buyers enjoy their poinsettias during the holidays, most don't save the plants afterward because they can be challenging to care for.

"They are extremely sensitive," Black said. "[People] will just throw it away and wait until next year."

Though they're associated with wintertime holidays, poinsettias are tropical plants that prefer warm temperatures. To ensure poinsettias thrive during the holidays, an indoor temperature around 65-70 degrees is ideal.



To nurture a poinsettia for next year, Virginia Cooperative Extension recommends cutting the plant back to about 5 inches from the soil surface and repotting in fresh soil once the leaves—or

bracts—fade or fall. Set the plant where it will receive indirect light and temperatures around 55-60 degrees and water sparingly. When new growth begins, place in a well-lit window and pinch new

growth to produce more stems.

In addition, the poinsettia needs continuous periods of darkness—at least 12 hours—each night to grow its colorful bracts.

There's a python living in my rain gutter

There's a python living in my rain gutter.

Or maybe inside my ceiling. We're not quite sure. We haven't seen the snake yet, but we know it's up there, slithering amid drying eucalyptus leaves and basking in the radiant heat from the tin roof.

I saw the snake about a month ago on the first warm day as winter fades into spring here in Australia. I went out to check the mail in the early afternoon. My mailbox was empty, but there was a 7-foot-long carpet python basking on the warm asphalt on the driveway. Hello, snake!

We stared at each other for a few minutes, and then it slithered into the neighbor's storm drain.

Fast forward to last week, when I found a large hunk of snakeskin in my front yard. About 10 inches long, it was thick as my wrist and mottled with dark and light patches. Thrilled that the python was still around, I turned back to the house to shout for my partner, Troy.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw something fluttering in the breeze above me. It was another piece of snakeskin caught on the power line that runs from within reach of a low tree to our roof. Oh.

My eyes followed the

powerline to the rain gutter and then the rain gutter over to our balcony bird feeder where a mob of rainbow lorikeets are feeding noisily. Oh. Oh no.

Apparently this isn't the first time a python has taken up residence in the house. Our neighbor confirmed that another large python—perhaps even the same snake—used to hide in the rain gutter before we moved in, lying in wait for the parrots who like to bathe in the water after storms.

I have a bad feeling that we may end up feeding more than just the birds.

Normally I wouldn't flinch at the thought of a snake catching its next meal. I grew up devouring Attenborough-narrated wildlife documentaries where the lion always eats the gazelle. I'm comfortable with predators and prey, ecological food chains, the circle of life.

Except... our feeder has been busy for weeks with young birds and parrots and pigeons scarfing down seeds and fruit for their mates incubating eggs or downy young. Then just last week the first juveniles appeared on tentative wings, their feathers still scraggly in spots.

There's a young male king parrot we call Fruit Loop, who toddles right up to the window to watch

us watch him. We stare at each other, mutually curious, face and feathers inches from the glass. He earned his nickname when he flew in and hung upside-down from the side of the house, peering in the window and chattering to himself for a full minute.

Fruit Loop flies in each day in the early afternoon, perching in the tree and squeaking his head off until his mother arrives. Then they feed together, occasionally joined by an adult male, Tomato, named for his favorite food that he steals from our garden.

And then there are the lorikeets, a raucous rainbow of color. They feed in pairs, followed by a post-snack cuddle, or in garrulous groups of up to 15 birds. They're the bullies of the bunch, constantly squabbling amongst themselves and chasing away all other birds who dare to show up. They chatter and strut, head-butting other birds out of their space, and sometimes they seem to dance in a bizarre and hilarious display of head-bobs and body rolls, shimmies and shakes.

My favorites are the delicate pale-headed rosellas, bright yellow, red and blue

like a primary school color-wheel. They too appear in pairs with the parent birds chewing seeds and then delicately regurgitating them back into their little one's mouths. It's disgusting and delightful.

And so now I wait, wondering when my birdwatching will take a dark turn.

Will the python pluck a parrot from our feeder? Or will it snatch the baby brush-tailed possum that scratches down any leftover seeds each evening, waddling alongside its mother?

I can't help but hope our python will slide into the roof instead and take care of any curious rodents that try to make their home there.

Until then, I have my very own slow-motion wildlife drama taking place just out of sight.

—By Justine E. Hausheer

Justine E. Hausheer is an award-winning science writer for The Nature Conservancy, covering the innovative research conducted by the Conservancy's scientists in the Asia Pacific region. She has a degree from Princeton University and a master's in Science, Health, and Environmental Reporting from New York University.



PHOTO BY JARI CORNELIS/TNC PHOTO CONTEST 2019
A coastal carpet python (*Morelia spilota*) basks in the winter sun on the edge of a cliff of Lamington National Park.

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Ends 2 PM



4571 Webbs Mill Rd Floyd VA
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Ends 3 PM



1441 Indian Valley PO Rd Indian Valley VA
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Terms: 10% Buyer's Premium, \$5,000 Earnest Money Deposit, Close in 30 Days. Subject to Floyd County Circuit Court Approval. (Current Tenants - see bidder packet info). Download Bidder Packet for full details, terms and conditions at VaAuctionPro.com. (Lic#2907004059)

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OPINION

Vaccination report: Virginia residents among most likely to accept a COVID-19 vaccine

According to a survey from QuoteWizard.com, among the 50 states, Virginia residents are the seventh most likely to agree to a COVID-19 vaccination.

QuoteWizard is an online insurance marketplace that connects consumers with policy offerings for auto, home, renters, health and life insurance, thereby letting them shop by comparing insurance rates. To date, the company has helped over 32 million shoppers compare insurance quotes from its large list of partner carriers. They are the largest, privately held insurance lead company in the United States.

The company conducted the survey as the rollout of a COVID-19 vaccination be-

gins this month.

If pharmaceutical companies are able to supply every single American with a vaccine, it's almost certain to not have a 100% adoption rate. What could determine the adoption rate with the general public is their willingness to receive the vaccine and their health care access to receive it. With adoption rates unknown, QuoteWizard analyzed adult age-appropriate vaccination rates along with public opinion and access to health care to predict how widely adopted a COVID-19 vaccine will be.

To get its rankings, QuoteWizard analyzed the Commonwealth Fund's Health System Data on adults with

age-appropriate vaccinations. The final rankings are based on states that had the highest percentages of vaccinated adults in 2019. States with the highest percentages of adults with age-appropriate vaccines were ranked 1 to 50. Also included is the rate change over a five-year period from 2015 to 2019 for each state.

The United States is seeing record daily COVID-19 cases in what could be considered the second wave of the virus. There have been positive vaccine trials in the news that bring elevated hopes for a vaccine to be available in the coming weeks. Both Pfizer and Moderna have posted over 90% effective rates in their most recent trials.

Both of the pharmaceutical companies have applied for emergency FDA authorization, which upon approval could immediately release vaccines to use. Projections suggest the authorizations will be approved and vaccines will be ready for distribution by the end of the year.

What may present the greatest challenge to the vaccine's adoption rate is people's access to health care to receive the vaccination. While the nationwide push to distribute the vaccine is going to be on a scale like never seen before, many will likely face health care barriers to receive the vaccine.

To estimate the adoption of the COVID-19 vaccination, QuoteWizard looked at adult

age-appropriate vaccination rates across the country to see where vaccination rates are highest. According to vaccination data compiled by the Commonwealth Fund, only 40% of adults have age-appropriate vaccinations. While many adult vaccinations are optional, a rate of only 40% among adults presents health care challenges to increasing vaccine adoption.

According to QuoteWizard's survey, the top ten states with the residents most likely to accept a COVID-19 vaccination are 1) Massachusetts 2) Rhode Island 3) Maryland 4) Connecticut 5) Nebraska 6) North Carolina 7) Virginia 8) Washington 9) New Hampshire and 10) Iowa.

WalletHub names Virginia Beach as best city for affordable New Year's

The personal finance website WalletHub has compiled the results of a national survey to determine which of the nation's 100 biggest cities offers the best chance to ring in the New Year without laying waste to the wallet. Virginia Beach came out number one.

The New Year's holiday is usually an occasion for big crowds of people to gather and ring in the New Year together. This year, celebrations are likely to be much more subdued and socially-distanced due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Whether you live in a

city that provides ideal conditions for New Year's during a pandemic depends on a variety of factors, including safety, COVID-19 cases, quality food delivery options and costs. WalletHub compared the 100 biggest cities based on 15 key indicators of an enjoyable New Year's celebration.

In order to determine the best cities for New Year's, WalletHub compared the 100 most populated U.S. cities across two dimensions: 1) Safety & Accessibility and 2) Entertainment & Food.

Each metric was graded on a 100-point scale with a score of 100 representing the most favorable conditions for New Year's parties.

Finally, WalletHub determined each city's weighted average across all metrics to calculate its overall score and used the resulting scores to rank-

order the sample. WalletHub considered only the city proper in each case, excluding cities in the surrounding metro area.

The factors in the safety and accessibility dimension (a total of 70 points) and their respective weights were 1) average COVID-19 deaths in the past week per capita: triple weight (17.50 points); 2) average COVID-19 cases in the past week per capita: double weight (11.67 points); 3) Walkability: full weight (5.83 points); 4) traffic congestion: full weight (5.83 points); 5) neighborhood security: full weight (5.83 points); Note: This metric measures the crime rate. 6) car theft rate: full weight (5.83 points); 7) DUI-related fatalities per capita: full weight (5.83 points); Note: This metric considers incidents recorded in December. 8) pedestrian

fatality rate: full weight (5.83 points); and 9) forecasted precipitation for Dec. 31: full weight (5.83 points).

The factors in the entertainment and food dimension (a total of 30 points) were 1) legality of fireworks: full weight (3.33 points); 2) Google search interest for "New Year's Eve Celebration": full weight (3.33 points); Note: This metric measures the real intent of the population to find information about "New Year's Eve events", "New Year's Eve concerts", "New Year's Eve party" and "New Year's Eve dinner." "Real intent" is measured using the average monthly search volumes for those specific terms. 3) Beer, wine and spirits shops per capita: full weight (3.33 points); 4) availability of high-rated takeout or delivery food: double weight

(6.67 points); Note: In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, restaurants offer safer alternatives to in-person dining such as delivery or takeout. This composite metric refers to restaurants rated four stars or higher that offer delivery and takeout. 5) average alcoholic beverage price: double weight (6.67 points); Note: "Beverage" refers to wine and cocktails; and 6) restaurant meal costs: double weight (6.67 points).

The top 10 cities in the country for New Year's Eve celebration that won't bust everyone's wallet as determined by WalletHub were 1) Virginia Beach 2) Honolulu 3) Plano, Texas 4) Fremont, Calif. 5) Irvine, Calif. 6) Chula Vista, Calif. 7) Lincoln, Neb. 8) Santa Ana, Calif. 9) San Diego, Calif. 10) Anaheim, Calif.

News Messenger

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The News Messenger is a newspaper of, by and for the people of Montgomery County. We encourage letters from our readers on topics of general interest to the community and responses to our articles and columns. Letters must be signed and have a telephone number where you can be reached for verification. All letters will be verified before publication. We reserve the right to deny publication of any letter and edit letters for length, content and style.

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State education board says challenges facing schools will continue after pandemic ends

RICHMOND — In its annual report to the governor and the Virginia General Assembly on the condition and needs of Virginia's public schools, the state Board of Education says that the challenges schools face because of COVID-

19 will continue long after the pandemic ends.

"This has been an extraordinary year for public education in Virginia due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has placed huge demands on our schools, students

and parents," Board of Education President Daniel A. Gecker said. "The pandemic has highlighted areas of need for Virginia's public education system to ensure equity

See Challenges, page 5

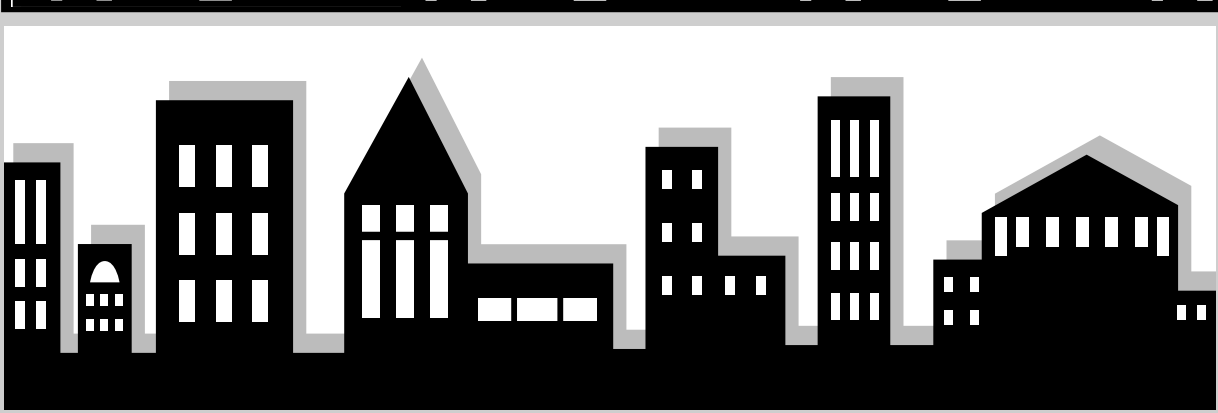
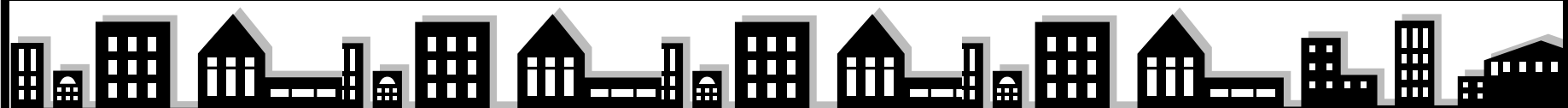
Correction:

A recent story in the sports pages

of the Messenger said Radford High School men's head basketball coach Rick Cormany was beginning his 40th season as the Highlanders'

head coach. This is incorrect. He is beginning his 40th season coaching but his 28th season at Radford. The Messenger regrets the error.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, Dec. 13:

Radford Santa's Police Cruise - Beginning at 3 p.m., Santa cruises throughout Radford neighborhoods. A map of Santa's route is on RadfordVA.gov. Sponsored by the City of Radford Police Department.

Monday, Dec. 14:

Radford Handcrafted Holiday Night Market - Located at the Radford Triangle Lot, W. Main St., 5-8 p.m., featuring the Java Brothers and local vendors. The event is sponsored by MountainTrotter Arts and the Radford Information and Welcome Center

Puppy Kindergarten Mini Course - This class is for puppies 10 to 17 weeks of age. The class is designed to get the puppy off to the right start. The puppy will learn how to interact with people by sitting to greet and how to bite nicely. The class lessons cover how to teach sit, down and come. Owners will learn how to teach their puppy in a positive and proactive manner. They will learn how to deal with the typical puppy problems such as chewing, barking, mouthing and jumping up. The puppy comes to all classes. Please bring a chair. The class is taught outside at 4 p.m. as course #312230-D5. The cost is \$60 refundable and \$70 non-refundable.

To register, visit www.blackburg.gov/recreation or call 540-443-1100.

Wednesday, Dec. 16:

Register to Light Up Your Home for the Holidays in Christiansburg - The Christiansburg Parks and Recreation Department is hosting a residential holiday decorating contest. Staff will visit each

destination to determine the top 10 entries, which then go on the town's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/cburgv.gov) for voting by the community. Voting begins Friday, Dec. 18, and runs through 9 a.m. Monday, Dec. 21. Once all applications are received, decorated homes who give permission will be included in a map for others to visit on a self-guided light tour. To register for the contest, complete form by Dec. 16 at noon.

Thursday, Dec. 17:

Radford Christmas Cruise Thru - At the Radford Recreation Center, 200 George St., from 6 - 8 p.m. The event will feature a car decorating contest and holiday treats. Applications can be found on RadfordVA.gov.

Thursday, Dec. 24, Dec. 25, Jan. 1

Christiansburg closings for Christmas, New Year's - The town's facilities will be closed Christmas Eve and Christmas day on Dec. 24-25.

Solid waste normally scheduled for Thursday, Dec. 24, will be collected on Tuesday, Dec. 22, along with Tuesday's regular collection.

Solid waste normally scheduled for Friday, Dec. 25, will be collected on Wednesday, Dec. 23, along with Wednesday's regular collection.

The town's facilities will be closed for New Year's Day on Friday, Jan. 1, 2021. Solid waste normally scheduled for Fridays will be collected on Thursday, Dec. 31, along with Thursday's regular collection.

Friday-Sunday through Dec. 16, daily through Dec. 24

Wrapping for a Reason - A

holiday wrapping booth to raise money for local emergency assistance is in operation in Up-town Christiansburg (formerly NRV Mall), near Bath & Body Works. The booth is open Fridays through Sunday through Dec. 16 and then is open daily through Christmas Eve.

Volunteers are needed to wrap gifts in a sanitary, socially distanced environment. All proceeds benefit Montgomery County Emergency Assistance Program, commonly known as MCEAP, which provides emergency food, clothing, utility, rent and mortgage assistance to Montgomery County residents year-round. The Sign Up link is <https://tinyurl.com/w4r2020>.

Persons unable to volunteer time and talents this year, may consider donating supplies such as hand sanitizer and disinfecting spray/wipes, so all proceeds can go directly to help community members in need. A monetary, tax-deductible, year-end donation to MCEAP is also welcome. Details are at mceap.org or 540-260-3173. For more information, email w4reason@gmail.com or text/call 540-239-1093.

Through Tuesday, Dec. 22:

Radford Business window and residential decorating contest - Throughout the city. Tour the commercial districts and neighborhoods from the safety of a vehicle and then vote for favorites. A map is available on RadfordChamber.com.

Through Thursday, Dec. 31:

Christiansburg Leaf Collection - The Town of Christiansburg's annual free leaf collection is underway and runs through Dec. 31, weather permitting. Public Works crews use a special truck that vacuums the leaves. There-

fore, they will collect only piles of loose leaves; leaves placed in bags will not be accepted. Please do not place your pile of loose leaves in a way that blocks sidewalks, sanitary sewers, solid waste carts, drainage ditches or utility meter boxes. If you are concerned your leaves may blow away prior to pickup, please place a tarp on top of your pile. Crews will remove the tarp when they get there, collect your leaves and leave your tarp behind.

Through Monday, Jan. 4:

United Way Festival of Trees - The United Way and some of its partner agencies are decorating Christmas trees in their offices as a way to help spread some holiday cheer in these troublesome times. Pictures of each tree will be posted on unitedwaynr.org/tree.

Residents of the NRV have the job of picking their favorite tree by visiting the United Way website anytime through Monday, Jan. 4, checking out the trees and casting a vote. A special trophy will be awarded to the winner.

Voting will be cast by donations of any amount.

Ongoing:

Aquatic, Rec Center hours for appointments - The Christiansburg Aquatic Center is open by appointment only on Mondays, Wednesdays and Friday from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m., on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. and on Saturdays from noon to 5 pm. To make a reservation, visit www.cacpool.com.

The Christiansburg Recreation Center is open by appointment only Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. until 7 p.m., on Saturdays from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. and on Sundays from

1 p.m. until 7 p.m. To make a reservation, visit www.christiansburg.org/recreation.

Montgomery-Floyd Library Curbside only - All branches of the Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library are offering only curbside pickup service (including remote printing). In-branch services are not currently available. Curbside hours are: Monday - Thursday 10 a.m. - 7 p.m.; Friday 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Saturday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Please return all library items in the outside Book Drop. Visit <https://www.mfml.org> for more information.

Radford Public Library Resumes In-Library Appointments - Same-day in-house browsing and computer use appointments can be made Monday through Saturday on the hour from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Staff will continue to ask screening health questions, take temperatures and require masks be worn as part of the ongoing process of in-library browsing. Children/youth under 18 are welcome to browse when accompanied by an adult. Please call (540) 731-3621 to schedule an appointment to browse or use the computers on Thursday through Saturday.

Radford Public Library Grab & Go Services - Monday through Saturday. Please remember that you can use the MyLibro app to search RPL's catalog and place holds as well as schedule pick-up times. For Grab and Go Prints, email the documents you would like printed to rad.lib@radfordva.gov, then call 731-3621 to make sure the document are received and schedule a time to pick them up at the building entrance. Prices are the same as usual (\$0.10 for black and white, \$0.25 for color), and exact change is appreciated when possible.

Challenges

from page 4

of opportunity for all students."

The board's annual report notes that as school divisions pivoted this year to support students through multiple

instructional models — including hybrid and virtual formats — four factors complicated efforts to provide quality remote instruction: lack of broadband infrastruc-

ture and access for all students; lack of devices for each student to access virtual instruction; lack of capacity of school divisions and professional development for educa-

tors to support the shift to virtual teaching and learning; and the inadequacy of virtual instruction to meet the needs of students with disabilities and young learners.

"We have learned a great deal at both the state and local levels since the initial closure of schools last spring," Board Vice President Jamelle S. Wilson said. "We know that Virginia's public school system today is much better prepared to continue instruction through short-term and extended emergencies than we were pre-pandemic. And while we are confident that most of the families that chose other options this year will return to public education, the Board of Education recognizes that many of our school divisions are facing the very real threat of shortfalls this fiscal year because of drops in enrollment, especially among early learners."

Statewide, public school enrollment this year is down by more than 45,000 students

compared with 2019-2020. In its report, the Board of Education notes that since school funding in the commonwealth is largely allocated on a per-pupil basis, enrollment declines caused by the coronavirus are expected to negatively impact local school division budgets when state funding is adjusted in the spring to reflect actual, rather than projected enrollment.

Given that federal emergency funding under the CARES Act has only partially offset pandemic-related expenses — including technology to support remote learning — the board recommends that the 2021 General Assembly hold divisions harmless for short-term enrollment losses.

"This will provide consistency for post-pandemic planning and recovery, and avoid potential staff layoffs due to budget shortfalls," Gecker said.


While the report notes that Virginia's public schools and students

continue to outperform most other states on national assessments, persistent achievement gaps remain and schools are underfunded.

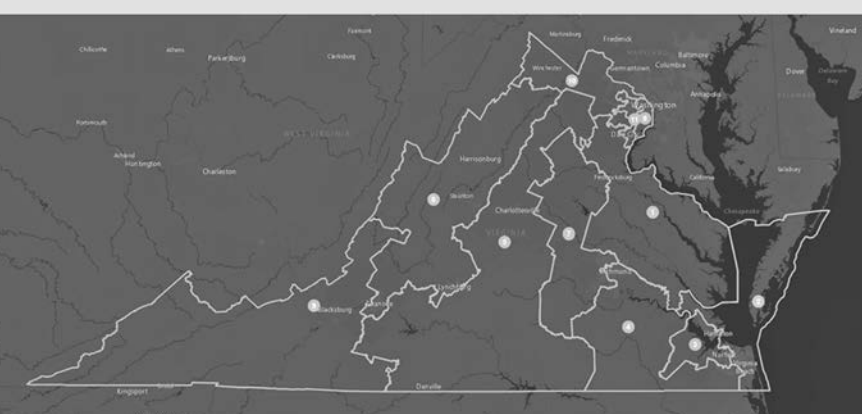
The annual report cites a 2020 Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission study that ranked the commonwealth 26th for state and local per-pupil funding, and 40th for state per-pupil funding.

The board notes that despite recent increases in state support, an external analysis this year found that state per-pupil spending for public schools remains below pre-Great Recession levels.

The annual report also warns that Virginia continues to face a shortage of quality educators entering and remaining in the classroom and predicts that the COVID-19 pandemic will exacerbate the shortage and increase teacher turnover. Virginia ranks 33rd nationally in average teacher salaries according to data for the 2018-2019 school year.



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HOLIDAY ADVERTISING DEADLINES

Our offices will be closed on Friday, December 25 for Christmas. The deadline for ALL ADVERTISING running in the Saturday 12/26 issue of the News Messenger/Radford News Journal will be Wed., December 23 at noon.

We will also be closed on Friday, January 1 for New Years. The deadline for ALL ADVERTISING running in the Saturday 1/2 issue of the News Messenger/Radford News Journal will be Wed., December 30 at noon.

PETS-OF-THE-WEEK

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



Meet Potato and Potato (po-TAHH-to)! These best spuds would love to go to the same home together. They enjoy being with each other, cuddling, and sitting on people's laps. Both are gentle male rabbits.



Sweet Ivette is a friendly 5-year-old, happily greeting anyone she meets. Ivette would do best in a home as the only pet. Sit, shake, and down are among the commands she recognizes. Ivette is getting a skin condition under control and she is Lyme-positive, but neither have impacted her zest for life.

ANGLICAN CATHOLIC

St. Peter the Apostle Anglican Church, 230 W. First St., Christiansburg, VA. Fr. Paul Beutell, "Priest-in-Charge", Fr. Alex Darby, "Associate", 540-382-0432/540-270-9166. Sundays: 10:00 am Holy Eucharist followed by Christian Education and refreshments. Holy Communion most Thursdays at 12Noon, other Holy Days as announced. Traditional services use the 1928 Book of Common Prayer and 1940 Hymnal. Handicapped accessible. All are welcome. Come worship with us! Website: www.stpetersacc.org. Follow us on Facebook

St. Philip's Anglican Church, 306 Progress Street, NE, Blacksburg, Virginia 24060, (540) 552-1771, www.stphilipsblacksburg.org. Reverend Fr. Wade Miller, Priest. Sunday Morning Prayer 9:45 AM, Sunday Morning Eucharist 10:30 AM, Traditional Anglican Worship using the King James Bible, 1928 Book of Common Prayer, And the 1940 Hymnal.

St. Thomas Anglican Church - located at 4910 Hubert Rd, NW Roanoke, Va. Traditional Liturgical Lenten Services, Sunday at 10:30 am. Call (540) 589-1299 or visit www.sttofc.org for midweek masses and events. (In Roanoke, go E on Hershberger, L on Hubert to 4910).

BAPTIST

First Baptist Church on 3rd Ave., 215 Third Ave. at the corner with Downey St. We are committed to personal spiritual growth and to providing leadership in community ministry. We celebrate the dignity and worth of all persons, created in the image of God. Sunday Bible Study Groups - 9:45, Sunday Worship - 11:00. Website: www.fbcradford.org, 540-639-4419. Worship is broadcast live on JOY radio, 93.1 FM and 890 AM.

Trinity Community Church, 1505 N. Franklin Street, C'burg. John Altizer, Lead Pastor, Brian Cockram, Associate Pastor, 382-8121. Worship at 10:45 a.m., Outreach Ministries - 6:00p.m. Wednesday, Growth Groups - 5:00p.m. Sunday, Youth and Children's Ministry - 5:00p.m. Sunday, www.trinitycburg.org

CHURCH OF CHRIST

Blacksburg Church of Christ, 315 Eakin St., 552-1331. Sun. Bible Classes 9:30 a.m., Sun. Worship 10:30 a.m. & 6 p.m., Wed. Bible classes, 7 p.m., Outreach Minister Curt Seright, Community Minister Tom Gilliam, Campus Minister, Deonté Watkins.

Faith Christian Church of Christ, 305 3rd Street, Christiansburg, David Rhudy, Minister, 382-4628, Sunday School 10 am; Worship 11 am; Evening Worship 6:30 pm; Wednesday night Bible Study for Women and Men 6:30 pm. We welcome you to any and all of our services.

CHURCH OF GOD

New Hope Church of God, 1404 Mud Pike Rd., C'Burg. Rev. T. Michael Bond, pastor, 731-3178. Sun. School 10 a.m., Worship 10:50 a.m., 6 p.m. Thurs., 7:00 p.m.

West Radford Church of God, 1824 West Main Street, Radford, VA 24141, Sunday School- 10:00A.M. Morning Worship- 11:00A.M., Children's Church 11:00A.M. Sunday Evening - 6:00P.M., Wednesday Night - 7:00P.M., Pastor Danny Newman, Church Office - 540-639-6562 or 804- 921-0828.

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

Christiansburg Church of the Brethren, 310 South Franklin Street. Pastor: Paul J. Stover Jr. 540-797-5015. Sunday School 10 a.m.; Morning Worship 11 a.m.; Bible Study

Montgomery County WORSHIP DIRECTORY

Trust the Truth

Read 2 Timothy 1:1 through 4:22

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

The Greek word orthotomeo, translated here as "correctly handles," is rendered "rightly dividing" in other versions. It carries the idea of cutting straight like a surgeon and getting to the heart of the matter.

Paul's letters to Timothy emphasize sound doctrine, which must be taught in the churches so believers will be established in the truth. Is false teaching being advocated? Stand firm on God's truth. Do unbelievers mock our Christian life? Stand firm on God's truth.

We are all to be students of God's Word—diligently studying it, faithfully putting it into practice in our daily lives, and effectively sharing it. We should never be ashamed to be identified with Christ, nor do we want to be embarrassed by our lack of preparation for witnessing. We need to be ready with knowledge of the truth and guided by God's Spirit in sharing it with others.

Thought for Today: Train in the truth and trust its teaching.

Quicklook: 2 Timothy 2:7-15

10:30 a.m. Tuesdays. Website: www.christiansburgcob.org. A loving family, fueled by the Holy Spirit, grounded in God's Word, and delivering Jesus forgiveness and love to all people. Come as you are... you are welcomed!

LUTHERAN

Luther Memorial Lutheran Church ELCA, 600 Prices Fork Rd, Blacksburg. Weekly Online Worship at www.lmlc.org. We are a Reconciling in Christ congregation that welcomes and affirms all people just as they are. For information on Bible studies and Wednesday Vespers, email luthermemorialblacksburg@gmail.com, or contact the church office, (540) 951-1000. Rev. Monica Weber, pastor.

MULTI-CULTURAL

NON-DENOMINATIONAL Christian Growth Center, 1850 Electic Way, Christiansburg, VA 24073 (beside Hubbell Lighting). Sunday Worship: 9:30am Prayer, 10:00am Service *Nursery Available. Lead Pastor: Todd Hallinan. Founding Pastor: Rob Sowell. Mission: Sow, Grow, & Go Sow Faith! Grow in Righteousness! Go into all the world in the authority of the believer! 540-382-2908

PENTECOSTAL HOLINESS

Merrimac Pentecostal Holiness Church, Rev. Richard Hall (540) 552-7194. pastorhall29@gmail.com. Sunday School at 10 a.m. and morning worship is 11 a.m. Evening service at 6 p.m. and Wednesday at 7 p.m.

Radford Worship Center, 1820 Second Street, Radford, 639-6287, Our music is passionate, our worship is real, and Pastor Hal Adams brings relevant messages for everyone at any place on their journey, Sunday Worship Experience at 9:00 AM & 10:45 AM, Wednesday Family Night at 7 PM, Children Ministry provided for all services, join us as Love, Grow, Serve, find us on facebook and Instagram

Walton Pentecostal Holiness Church, 4003 Morning Glory Rd., off Walton Rd. on Rt. 114. 731-1755. Lee Sarver, pastor. Sun. School 9:30 a.m., Worship 10:30 a.m. & 6: p.m., Wed., 7 p.m.

UNITED METHODIST Asbury United Methodist Church, 500 Stuart Street, Christiansburg. 540-382-0743. Rev. Ryan Schaeffer. Sunday School, 10:15 a.m., Sunday Worship, 11:30 a.m., Wednesday Bible Study 7pm, alternating month's with Schaeffer Memo-

rial Baptist Church, Senior Bible Study Thursday, 10:30 a.m. All are welcome.

Central United Methodist Church, 803 Wadsworth Street, Radford. 639-3529. 8:30 a.m. Sunday Services: 8:30am (interpreter provided); 9:45am Sunday School (interpreter provided); and 11:00a.m. Wednesday Bible Study: 6:30p.m. Child care is provided. www.centralmethodistchurch.com.

St. Paul United Methodist Church, 220 W. Main St., C'Burg. Rev. Moonsup "Paul" Song (540) 382-2410. Sunday Worship 10 a.m., Sunday School 9 a.m. Live streaming Sunday Service - www.twitch.tv/stpaulumc

WESLEYAN

Christ Wesleyan Church, 525 Harkrader Street, C'burg. Facebook LIVE service Sundays at 9:00 AM., Public Worship service at 11:00 AM. Sunday School for adults - 10:00 AM. Pastor: Gale Janofski 574-306-7682. Website: christwesleyan-church.org

Send community news and photos to communitynews@ourvalley.org

OBITUARIES

Casas, Elena Benavides

Elena Benavides Casas, 95, of Dublin, passed away Tuesday, Dec. 8, 2020.

She was a member of St. Jude Catholic Church. Elena was born in Matanzas, Cuba, the daughter of the late Francisco and Laudelina Benavides. She was preceded in death by her parents; her husband, Giordano R. Casas; a daughter, Maria Elena Casas Rainey; and a sister, Berta de Rojas.

Survivors include her children and their spouses, Layda Casas Hamblin of Dublin, Esther Casas Johnson (B.J.) of Greensboro, N.C., Giordano J. Casas (Susan) of Naperville, Ill., and Carlota Casas Urban (Kevin) of Fairfax Station; a son-in-law, John R. Rainey of Batesville;



19 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren; a sister, Olga B. Oliva of Tampa, Fla.; and many other relatives and friends.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be held today, Dec. 12, at 11 a.m. at St. Jude Catholic Church, 1740 Tyler Rd., Christiansburg. Interment will follow in Sunrise Burial Park in Radford. The family will receive friends prior to the service beginning at 10:30 a.m.

In lieu of flowers, please make donations in Elena's name to St. Jude Children's Hospital, 501 St. Jude Place, Memphis, TN 38105.

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

Saul, Jr., James "H"

James "H" Saul, Jr., 89, of Blacksburg, went to be with his Lord on Sunday, Dec. 6, 2020.

He is survived by his wife of 69 years, Donna Ray Holt Saul; a son, Jim Saul and his wife, Millie; daughters Louise Saul and Carrie Scaggs and her husband, Richard. Also surviving are four grandchildren, five great-grandchildren, two loving nephews and



many loving friends. James was preceded in death by his parents, James "Harry" and Ruby Saul; a brother, George; and a baby sister, Ruby Louise.

There will be no services due to COVID. A memorial service will be held at a later date. In lieu of flowers, a contribution to your favorite charity is appreciated. Job well done my good and faithful servant.

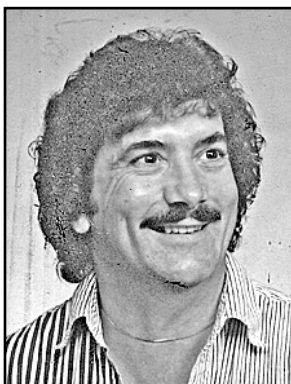
Yearout, Sr., Everett Lee

Everett Lee Yearout, Sr., went to be with Jesus on Dec. 6, 2020 at his home in Roanoke.

He served in many roles to many people throughout his life. He was a member of First Baptist Church when he lived in Radford. He was the son of Arnold William and Mathe McGuire Yearout and a brother to Joyce Bowman, Lois Caldwell, and Francis Marshall. He was a husband to Elizabeth Rebecca Eanes Yearout and later to Tina Marie Shaver Yearout. He was a wonderful father to his children, Everett Lee Yearout, Jr., Matthew Jacob Yearout, Rebecca Lee Yearout, Hope Victoria Yearout, Charity Dawn Yearout-Shelor, and son-in-law S. Lee Shelor.

He was a co-worker and friend to many others. He began his career as a meat cutter at White Front and then Thriftway in Radford. He was popular among Radford residents for his service and friendly personality.

Later, he became a long-term em-



ployee for K&W Cafeterias in Roanoke and Salem, serving as a manager during his career with the company. He enjoyed the outdoors, caring for animals and spending time with his family. He was a hard worker and always approached his career with passion. He instilled the qualities of hard work, honesty and integrity among his children, and he appreciated education and encouraged his children to be the best that they could be.

Visitation was at Mullins Funeral Home in Radford from 3:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 10, 2020, with services at First Baptist Church in Radford on Friday, Dec. 11, 2020, at 11 a.m. Burial followed at Sunrise Burial Park in Fairlawn. Flowers may be sent to Mullins Funeral Home or donations can be made to the Rescue Mission in Roanoke.

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

Morehead, Harry Donald "Donnie"

Harry Donald "Donnie" Morehead, 70 of Austinville, Va. was called home on Dec. 1, 2020. Donnie was born Jan. 4, 1950, in Pulaski, the first son of the late Jennings Donnell and Bessie Caroline Morehead. He retired from the Department of Motor Vehicles as Quality Assurance Supervisor for the Bristol Division after 36 years of service. Donnie loved gardening, working in the yard and most of all, his wife of 40 years and his family.

Left to cherish his memory are his beloved wife, Patricia Ashbrook Morehead; his daughter, Gretchen Caroline Bell (Jim); his son, John Harrison

Morehead (Aimee); and his grandchildren, Samuel James and Emmaline Sophia Bell and Isabelle Patton and Harrison Maxwell Morehead.

A private graveside service was held at the Morehead Family Cemetery on the farm of his cherished grandparents, Peter Harrison and Mary Zelda Morehead.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Morehead Family Cemetery Fund, c/o Patricia Morehead 192 Mill Bank Lane, Austinville, VA 24312. McCoy Funeral Home, Blacksburg, was in charge of arrangements.

Tefft, Lyle Glenn

Lyle Glenn Tefft, 93, died Tuesday, Dec. 8, 2020, at Carilion New River Valley Medical Center of complications following surgery for a hip fracture.

He was born in 1927 in Lawrence, Kan. He joined the U.S. Navy toward the end of WWII and served aboard the U.S.S. Bandera. He returned to Lawrence, attended Kansas University and was employed by the Sunflower Ordinance Works, which was operated by the Hercules Powder Company. He came to Virginia after being transferred by Hercules to the Radford Army Ammunition Plant where he worked as an illustrator.

He enjoyed reading, documentaries and following politics, and he achieved his most recent life goal by living long enough to vote in the 2020 Presidential Election, and by the way, his "guy" won. Until well into his eighties, he enjoyed camping, canoeing and driving country roads with his son. Prior to the recent pandemic, he was a Tuesday night regular at the

River Company in Fairlawn. He was preceded in death by his wife of 49 years, Margaret "Maggie" Morrison Tefft, and two brothers, Elden Tefft of Lawrence, Kan., and Gaylord Tefft of Harleysville, Penn.

He is survived by a son, G. Lyle Tefft of Radford; a granddaughter, April "Nikki" Brewer of Rocky Mount, N.C.; several dear neighbors and a number of freeloading cats. He is also survived by his son's circle of friends, who called him "Papa Lyle" and enjoyed many a camping trip, canoe trip, live music event and bar run with him over the years.

His body will be cremated and a private remembrance held after an easing of the pandemic. Friends are urged simply to hold Lyle in their thoughts; however, contributions may be made to City Emergency Relief Fund, New River Community Action, 1093 E. Main St., Radford, VA 24141.

The Tefft family is in the care of Mullins Funeral Home & Crematory. www.mullinsfuneralhome.com.

Vaccine from page 1

headache, fatigue and body aches.

The long-term side effects are unknown, though "actual side effects from vaccines in general in the long term are very, very rare," Bissell said. "Vaccines are one of the most significant health interventions that we have."

Also, she said it is unclear how long immunity will last with the vaccine and if it will be effective for certain populations such as children.

It will take time for the vaccine to roll out, and in the meantime, the health district continues to offer COVID-19 testing. With more than 90,000 coronavirus tests conducted in the district, Bissell praised the district's partnership with the Fralin Bio-

medical Research Institute in Roanoke for providing strong testing services.

The health district has a population of 180,000, which includes university students.

"That's a pretty good testing per population number," Bissell said, adding that it's likely the highest in the state for testing per population.

Even as vaccines become available, she reminded the public to continue following health guidelines, from wearing a mask to staying home when sick, that will mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in the community.

"We know how we can control things," she said. "It's a behavioral choice."

COVID-19 from page 1

requirements, which remain in place. The on-site sale, consumption and possession of alcohol remains prohibited after 10:00 p.m. in any restaurant, dining establishment, food court, brewery, microbrewery, distillery, winery or tasting room. All restaurants, dining establishments, food courts, breweries, microbreweries, distilleries, wineries, and tasting rooms must close by midnight.

Teleworking: employees that can telework are strongly encouraged to do so.

While Virginia's new cases per capita remain lower than 43 other states,

all of the commonwealth's five health regions are experiencing increases in COVID-19 cases, positive test, and hospitalizations. Virginia is currently averaging more than 3,700 new COVID-19 cases per day, up from a statewide peak of approximately 1,200 in May.

Statewide test positivity rate is at 11 percent, an increase from seven percent approximately one month ago. More than 2,000 Virginians are currently hospitalized due to COVID-19 statewide, an increase of over 80 percent in the last four weeks.

Grilling from page 1

around the country that compete in the Backyard Division had to qualify by winning first place in chicken or ribs at a sanctioned contest during the previous competition year. The Christiansburg grillmaster had qualified by winning first place in ribs in Franklin, N.C., and first place ribs in a Wytheville event.

Bowman was shocked with the grand championship though he had expected to do rather well. He did not, however, expect to leave Kansas City as the world champion.

"My goal was to place in the top 10. I'm still disbelieving about how the contest played out," he said.

Throughout 2020, more than 2,800 "professional" and backyard pitmasters from across the U.S. and 42 countries competed in this program.

Bowman, an accountant executive for MSC Industrial Supply, got started grilling competitively in 2013. "I started with pork butts and then kept testing out different meats to cook with smoke. I was interested in BBQ competitions because of a TV show called BBQ Pitmasters and started looking up local competitions," he said. "I signed up for Smoke in

the Mountain in Galax in 2017 and immediately got hooked and started signing up for contests around the east coast shortly afterward.

There are two divisions in competition BBQ: Master series and Backyard series. The difference is the cost of entry fees and the number of meats the competitors choose to enter. Bowman has competed at both levels but is currently focused only on backyard.

"Based on which division you compete at, I've cooked chicken, ribs, pork and brisket. However, I've also participated in side events at contests called 'Ancillaries.' In these, I have competed in turkey, sausage and steak. I even won first place in steak at a contest last March in China Grove, N.C."

Bowman is originally from Hillsville, but he moved to the New River Valley in 2007.

At home, his specialty is pork tenderloin. "I tend to do a lot of grilling with [tenderloins] because they absorb flavors so well. In competition, it's definitely ribs. Ribs are what I have been most successful with in competitions compared to other meats," Bowman said.

And what is his grilling

method of choice—gas or coals?

"I definitely prefer coals over gas. However, I cook only with live fire burning wood most of the time. I have a BBQ trailer/smoker that I use for competitions and larger cooks. It has a firebox that holds a large amount of wood to keep the heat up, so I burn a mixture of hickory and cherry logs to cook with," Bowman said.

He is taking a few months off from competing and plans to start the 2021 season in March at a contest called BBQ Give Back in Urbana, Va. He plans to compete in at least 10 events on the East Coast next year and end the season again at the World Invitational in Kansas City. Depending on how the upcoming season goes, he may look at cooking in the Master Series Division full time the following year.

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Booth from page 1

stack by exploring the highest-probability matches in more detail and deciding on them.

Moving from the known photos of Booth, the database was put to the test to see if could make any identifications with two other photographs: one of a man named James William Boyd that had strong physical resemblances to Booth and the other a high-resolution scan of an old tin-type of John St. Helen, an assumed name allegedly used by John Wilkes

Booth. Luther found no match with the known photos of Booth in the database, refuting the theory that Booth survived under one of these assumed identities.

The History Channel provided Luther with two different photographs of Booth as a "test subject," said investigator Arthur Roderick, a retired U.S. marshal and law enforcement media consultant, who interviewed Luther at his Virginia Tech office in Arlington. The

software was able to successfully match the two different Booth photographs among more than 30,000 possibilities.

Through the Civil War Photo Sleuth Facebook page, the History Channel show's producers contacted Luther as they had been granted access to 60 boxes of rare documents at Harvard University that could speak to the mystery.

The producers were specifically interested in the photo sleuth's cutting-edge facial rec-

ognition technology to see if they could make any positive photo identifications to Booth. Since its launch in 2018, users have uploaded photos, tagged them with visual cues and connected them to profiles of Civil War soldiers with detailed records of military history to the photo sleuth website.

Luther also serves as a senior editor for Military Images, a quarterly magazine dedicated solely to the study of portrait photographs of Civil War sol-

diers, where he writes about his real-life accounts on the research trail.

"There is great excitement around artificial and facial recognition as its being used for an increasingly wide range of applications," said Luther. "The relationship between history and technology can also help us solve mysteries that have existed for decades and even centuries."

— Written by
Jenise L. Jacques

Virginia Department of Transportation road watch

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

MONTGOMERY COUNTY ROUTE 11 CLOSURE FOR BRIDGE REPLACEMENT – Route 11 (Roanoke Road) is closed for a bridge replacement over Spring Branch. This closure is located at the intersection with Route 641 (Den Hill Road) and 0.80 mile from Route 753 (Old Town Road). A detour will be in place. All northbound lanes on Route 11 will be closed with traffic being detoured on the southbound side of Route 11 for 1.8 miles. Weather permitting, the project is expected to be completed at the end of December 2020.

ROUTE 636 BRIDGE REPLACEMENT AT SENECA HOLLOW - Work has begun replacing the bridge on Route 636 over the Roanoke River at Seneca Hollow. A detour is in place. The detour will restrict access to Route 460 at Seneca Hollow and will require travelers to enter/exit Route 460 at Friendship Road near Wheeling Hollow. The project is expected to be completed in late June 2021.

ROUTE 685 TURN LANE CONSTRUCTION – Turn lane construction on Route 685 (Prices Fork Road) is underway between Route 1145 (Stratford View Drive) and Route 654 (Brookfield Road). Motorists should expect daily shoulder closures with intermittent lanes closures controlled by flagging forces. Work will be performed from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Completion is spring 2021.

ROUTE 603 BRIDGE REPLACEMENT – Work is underway on Route 603 (North Fork Road) for a bridge replacement over Flatwoods Branch from the intersection of Route 713 to .01 miles south of the intersection of Route 647. As of November 20, the bridge has reopened and the detour removed. Drivers will continue to see residual work taking place in the area with intermittent flagging operations and should use caution within the work zone. Weather permitting, the project is

expected to be completed December 2020.

WATERLINE CONSTRUCTION –Construction of a waterline along Route 659 (Vicker Switch Road), Route 719 (Switchback Road), Route 660 (Crab Creek Road), and Route 661 (Chrisman Mill Road) includes shoulder closures and lane closures. The work is expected to be completed in February 2021.

INTERSTATE 81 SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS AT S-CURVES IN BOTETOURT COUNTY - A project to improve the S-curves along southbound I-81 in Botetourt County between mile markers 167.4 and 169.5 is underway. This project will enhance safety and improve vehicle traction. Work includes repaving the travel lanes, applying new pavement markers and installing underground pavement drains. Nighttime lane closures will be in place and the speed limit will be reduced to 60 mph in the work zone. This project also includes permanently closing and removing the southbound off ramp at exit 167 (Buchanan) to reduce speed differentials, conflict points and lane changes associated with exiting vehicles. The estimated completion date is summer 2021.

INTERSTATE 81 LANE WIDENING CONSTRUCTION EXIT 141 TO EXIT 143 – A project to widen the lanes on I-81 in Roanoke in both northbound and southbound directions between Exit 141 to Exit 143 has begun. Installation of construction signs is taking place along with surveys and clearing operations. Work may be conducted within the median and barrier walls are being put in place. Weekday and weekend lane and shoulder closures may be in place for guardrail removal, shoulder wedging and paving. A left lane closure will be in place on I-81 northbound or southbound during nighttime hours from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. while equipment and materials are brought into and out of the median. Estimated completion date of the project is summer of 2022.

Weather permitting, drivers can expect a left lane closure on northbound and southbound I-81, 8 p.m. at night until 6 a.m. the following morning from exit 140 to a one.

I-81 at Route 640, a one lane flagging operation will be in place from Route 799 to Route 798

from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

I-81 NORTHBOUND AT EXIT 105 NEW RIVER BRIDGE REPLACEMENT IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY – Lane and shoulder closures may be in place near exit 105. Lane closure may be in effect during the week from 8 p.m. to 7 a.m. Shoulder closures may be in effect at any time during the week. Slow rolls may be performed on I-81 in the north and southbound lanes from mile marker 104 to 106 from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. Speed limit is reduced to 60 miles per hour in the work zone. Shoulder closures will remain in place though the duration of the project. Project completion is estimated by late 2021.

I-81 BRIDGE REPLACEMENT AT EXIT 114 IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY – The bridge replacement of the two Interstate 81 bridges over Route 8, northbound and southbound, is underway. Drivers can expect alternating lane and shoulder closures, northbound and southbound, from mile marker 114 to 115. Exit 114 ramp shoulder closures will be ongoing from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Speed limit is reduced to 60 mph in the work zone. Route 8 will have alternating northbound and southbound shoulder and lane closures, day or night, as needed between the I-81 on and off ramps. A temporary traffic signal will direct traffic on Route 8 throughout the duration of the project. Access to all properties will be maintained during construction. Estimated completion is summer 2021.

The bridge on I-81 northbound at mile marker 114 currently has a restricted width for wide loads of 26 feet or larger.

I-81 PAVING & MARKING OPERATIONS – Paving operations are being performed throughout the district.

BOTETOURT COUNTY: Alternating lane closures for milling and paving on I-81 northbound in Botetourt County between mile marker 161.5 and 162.5, Sunday through Friday, 7 p.m. to 6 a.m., weather permitting.

I-81 RAMP CLOSURES FOR PAVING OPERATIONS IN ROANOKE & BOTETOURT COUNTIES– Weather permitting, crews will be milling and paving along Interstate 81. Right and left lane closures will be in place along northbound and southbound lanes during nighttime hours. Drivers should expect pos-

sible delays.

I-81 POTHOLE PATCHING OPERATIONS – Weather permitting, crews will patch potholes along Interstate 81. Mobile right and left lane closures will be in place and moving along northbound and southbound lanes during nighttime hours, 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. the following morning. Drivers should watch for moving vehicles and equipment. Expect possible delays.

I-81 BRIDGE DECK REPAIRS – Weather permitting, crews will repair bridge decks on Interstate 81. Between mile markers 97 and 162, right and left lane closures will be in place northbound and southbound during nighttime hours, 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. the following morning. Drivers should watch for signs and expect possible delays.

INTERSTATE 581 I-581/220 LANE & RAMP CLOSURES FOR PAVING AND MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS IN ROANOKE COUNTY– Weather permitting, crews will be milling and paving along Interstate 81. Right and left lane closures will be in place along northbound and southbound lanes during nighttime hours. Drivers should expect possible delays.

I-581 BRIDGE DECK REPAIRS – Weather permitting, crews will repair bridge decks on Interstate 581. Right, center and left lane closures will be in place northbound and southbound during nighttime hours, 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. the following morning. Drivers should watch for signs and expect possible delays.

INTERSTATE 77 (CARROLL COUNTY)

I-77 LANE & RAMP CLOSURES FOR PAVING AND MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS IN CARROLL COUNTY– Weather permitting, crews will be milling, paving and performing maintenance along Interstate 77. Right and left lane closures will be in place along northbound and southbound lanes during nighttime hours. Drivers should expect possible delays.

I-77 POTHOLE PATCHING OPERATIONS – Weather permitting, crews will patch potholes along Interstate 77. Right and left lane closures will be in place along northbound and southbound lanes during daytime hours, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Drivers should watch for

moving vehicles and equipment. Expect possible delays.

I-77 BRIDGE DECK REPAIRS – Weather permitting, crews will repair bridge decks on Interstate 77. Right and left lane closures may be in place northbound or southbound during nighttime hours, 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. the following morning. Drivers should watch for signs and expect possible delays.

ROANOKE CITY ROUTE 460 (ORANGE AVENUE) INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS – Intersection improvements on Orange Avenue and Hollins Road are underway. Turn lanes will be extended on Orange Avenue and a new traffic signal will be replaced at the intersection. Hollins Road will be widened from Orange Avenue to McDowell Avenue. On Hollins Road and McDowell Avenue, all lanes of traffic will remain open during peak hours, Monday through Saturday, 6 a.m. to 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. Single lane closures will be allowed during non-peak hours with flagging operations. Nighttime lane closures may be in place during the week and weekends on Orange Avenue. Estimated completion is fall 2021.

ROANOKE COUNTY ROUTE 646 CLOSURE – Route 646 (Barley Drive) is closed at Mayfair Drive. Work has begun to repair the damage to the rail bridge. Local traffic are able to access the area through a flagging operation with alternating lane closures. The closure is due to a train derailment that resulted in needed road and bridge repairs. Drivers should expect this closure to remain in place through December 2020.

ROUTE 221 BRIDGE REPLACEMENT WITH BOX CULVERT OVER MARTINS CREEK – Work is underway at the existing bridge on Route 221 over Martins Creek that will be replaced with a box culvert at the intersection with Route 696 (Martins Creek Rd). Paving of the roadway over the new precast box culvert is underway and once it is complete, traffic will be switched back onto the road over the new box culvert. The speed limit has been temporarily reduced to 35 MPH in the work area. Flagging operations will be in place as needed from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Estimated completion is fall 2021.

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MONTGOMERY SPORTS

Commonwealth Clash returns to Lane Stadium tonight

The Virginia Tech football team is back on the field tonight, Dec. 12 as the Hokies host the rival Virginia Cavaliers. Kick-off is set for 8 p.m. and will be broadcast on ACC Network.

The in-state rivalry dates back to 1895 and the 102nd incarnation of the series will take place in December for the first time. Tech has won 19 of the last 21 games in the series and is seeking to reclaim the Commonwealth Cup after UVA snapped a 15-game VT winning streak in 2019.

The third time's hopefully a charm for the 2020 Commonwealth Clash which was originally set for Nov. 28, then moved to Sept. 19 and finally rescheduled for tonight.

UVA hasn't won in Blacksburg since posting a 36-32 victory (11/28/98) and hasn't recorded back-to-back wins vs. Tech since 1997-98. The only two players on the current VT roster born prior to 1997

are grad students Justus Reed and Tyrell Smith.

The Hokies have won 10 straight home games vs. UVA dating to a 42-21 Tech win led by quarterback Michael Vick (11/25/00).

Tech owns a 4-0 record under Justin Fuente in regular season home finales (Senior Day games), owning a 121-44 scoring edge in wins vs. UVA (11/26/16), Pitt (11/18/17), Marshall (12/1/18) and Pitt (11/23/19).

UVA is coming off a 43-32 win vs. Boston College (12/5).

The last three VT-UVA contests have been close contests with Tech holding a slim 74-70 scoring edge.

Tech owns a 32-4 mark under Fuente when leading at the half.

Tech has led at the half in all four of its wins in 2020, outscoring those foes by a 79-38 margin in the first half.

VT is 27-7 when scor-

ing 30+ points under Fuente and 13-1 when scoring 40+ points.

Tech has produced four 40-point games in 2020. Since joining the ACC in 2004, the Hokies are 25-2 in ACC play when scoring 40 points or more.

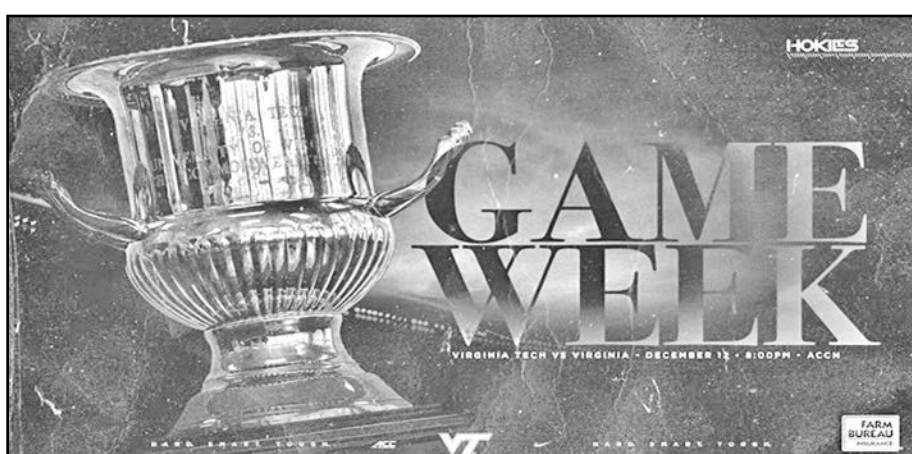
UVA is 7-23 under head coach Bronco Mendenhall when allowing 30+ points, including a 1-10 mark in ACC road games.

VT is 32-2 when holding opponents to 21 points or fewer dating back to the start of the 2015 season (6-1 in 2019).

Virginia is 2-22 under Mendenhall when scoring 21 points or fewer, including seven straight losses.

VT has won 25 straight games when limiting opponents to 17 points or fewer.

UVA is 1-15 under Mendenhall when scoring 17 points or fewer. Lone win was 16-13 vs. Miami (10/13/18).



VT leads the ACC in rushing offense (238.9 ypg), while UVA ranks

fourth in rushing defense (125.9 ypg). Tech ranks seventh in

the ACC in total offense (438.4 ypg) while UVA ranks eighth (434.6 ypg).

Commonwealth Clash tale of the tape

Stat	Tech	UVA	VT Advantage
Points	466	219	+15.4 (29.1-13.7 ppg)
Turnovers	23	31	+8 takeaways
Total Off.	407.1	286.5	+120.6 ypg
TD/INT	22/13	10/16	+12 TDs -3 INTs
Fum Lost	10	15	-5 Fumbles Lost
Rushing	196.7	111.8	+84.8 ypg
Rush TDs	30	13	+17
Sacks By	43.0	36.0	+7.0
3rd Down	39.5	30.1	+9.4%

RU women's basketball program put on hold

Marty Gordon
NRVsports@ourvalley.org

Radford University is halting its women's basketball program out of precaution because of COVID-19.

Tuesday, Georgia canceled its women's basketball game against Radford this weekend because of a positive COVID-19 test within the Highlanders' program. Radford's Wednesday home game against William and Mary was also cancelled.

During a preseason conversation, Radford Coach Mike McGuire had said he was taking the season day-by-day, knowing the virus could have an effect on this team at any time.

This is the second time the women's program has halted day-to-day operations because of the COVID protocol. The university announced on Nov. 27 it was pausing activities because of a positive case and canceled a Nov.

29 game at N.C. State.

The Highlanders last played this past Sunday, losing 69-58 to Marshall. Now, Radford is slated to begin Big South Conference play at Longwood on Dec. 15. Radford spokeswoman Asha Edwards confirmed the positive case on Thursday but would not go into any details.

The Big South Conference, of which Radford is a member, has taken unprecedented steps in trying to find ways for teams to play. Earlier this month, the conference announced Big South teams could play with seven players during the first of a two-game conference scheduled contest. On the second day, they could play with six-players.

In addition, out of precaution, the conference instituted a two-day schedule when teams would play over that period against the same conference opponent.

In November, Gardner-Webb cancelled a men's basketball game

after a positive COVID case within its program. Gardner-Webb athletic officials said the player who tested positive was asymptomatic and the team had done contact tracing.

Mark Simpson, the Big South's associate commissioner for public relations, said the conference has developed Return to Play Guidelines outlining testing and contact tracing that mirror NCAA guidelines.

"We continue to monitor the environment and will take a flexible approach to making up games with the health and safety of all involved at the forefront or our decision-making process," he said.

In terms of games canceled/postponed, below is a list for both men's and women's basketball as of Thursday, Dec. 10:

Men's Basketball Non-Conference

Postponed & Rescheduled (4)
Nov. 25 - Gardner-Webb at Duke (rescheduled for Dec.

19); Nov. 27 - Gardner-Webb at Florida State (rescheduled for Dec. 21); Nov. 29 - Winthrop vs. UNC Greensboro (rescheduled and played Dec. 1); Dec. 2 - Radford vs. Mars Hill (rescheduled and played Dec. 9).

Postponed (4)

Dec. 3 - Longwood vs. Regent; Dec. 8 - East Tenn. State at UNC Asheville; Dec. 12 - Charleston Southern at Duke; Dec. 15 - Charleston Southern at N.C. Central.

Canceled (12)

Nov. 25 - Longwood vs. Alabama State; Nov. 26 - Longwood vs. Delaware State; Nov. 29 - Gardner-Webb at Georgia; Dec. 3 - Hampton at William & Mary; Dec. 3 - Charleston Southern vs. St. Andrews; Dec. 4 - Winthrop vs. Duquesne; Dec. 5 - USC Upstate vs. N.C. Central (NCCU replaced by Georgia Southern); Dec. 6 - Presbyterian vs. Wofford; Dec. 9 - Radford vs. Lancaster Bible College; Dec. 10 - Hampton

vs. Regent; Dec. 13 - Presbyterian at Wake Forest.

Men's Basketball Conference (4)

Dec. 4-5 - Campbell at Gardner-Webb (PPD - rescheduled for Jan. 29-30); Dec. 9-10 - Presbyterian at Gardner-Webb (PPD - rescheduled TBD).

Women's Basketball Non-Conference

Postponed & Rescheduled (1)

Dec. 12 - Presbyterian at East Tennessee State (game back on and will be played as originally scheduled)

Canceled (9)

Nov. 25 - Presbyterian at Kennesaw State; Nov. 29 - Radford at N.C. State; Dec. 1 - Presbyterian at Furman; Dec. 6 - Presbyterian vs. Georgia Southern; Dec. 9 - Radford vs. William & Mary; Dec. 10 - Presbyterian vs. Mercer; Dec. 12 - Radford at Georgia; Dec. 16 - Charleston Southern vs. Florida A&M; Dec. 21 - USC Upstate at Florida A&M.

Blue Demon catcher Reagan Harris to walk-on at VMI



FILE PHOTO

Reagan Harris has added his name to a long list of Christiansburg High School baseball players continuing their playing career in college. The senior catcher has committed to VMI for the upcoming year.

Marty Gordon
NRVsports@ourvalley.org

In announcing his decision to walk on at Virginia Military Institute (VMI), Christiansburg High School senior catcher Reagan Harris is the fifth of seven Blue Demon baseball seniors to declare his intention to play in college.

The Lexington school spoke to him during several visits in the past year.

"I really saw the connections and how no matter if you are a past, present or future attendee, you are in the VMI family," Harris said. "As I had conversations with many people, it was always a 40-year decision, not a four-year one."

The 2020 high school baseball season was derailed because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but in 2019, Harris averaged .352 at the plate with an impressive .581 on-base-percentage. He was second on the team with three home runs and 16 RBI's. Harris, who made the varsity squad as a freshman, has played catcher for the last three years and was All-River Ridge District in both 2018 and 2019.

He is optimistic for a Blue Demon season, but if it happens, he will have to fight through the aftermath of Tommy

John surgery, which has sidelined him for the past few months.

"The recovery process has been going really well. I had an appointment last Monday and the doctor was really ecstatic and excited about how far ahead and how well I was recovering," Harris said.

While he has been a constant behind the plate for the past three years, the injury and rehab will force him to watch from the sidelines. The Christiansburg coaching staff expects him to be a designated hitter with the possibility of playing another position.

His goal on the diamond is to never be outworked every day and leave everything on the field every time he steps on it.

"While I hope to become an MLB Draft prospect, I am also wanting to learn the skills needed to provide for my future family as well as my parents and family. I just eventually want to be able to provide for my loved ones," Harris said.

He has been accepted into VMI's Engineering and Air Force ROTC programs.

Jonathan Hadra, who recently concluded his sixth season as the head coach of the Keydets, led the team to a 4-13 mark in a shortened season this past spring.

Deablo, Herbert accept Senior Bowl invitations

BLACKSBURG - The Senior Bowl and Virginia Tech Football confirmed that safety Divine Deablo and running back Khalil Herbert have both accepted invitations to participate in the 2021 Reese's Senior Bowl.

The game is currently slated for Saturday, Jan. 21, at Hancock Whitney Stadium in Mobile, Ala. The contest is scheduled to be broadcast by the NFL Network.

Herbert currently leads the nation with 1,629 all-purpose yards and ranks third among Power Five players (min. five games), averaging 162.9 yards per game. The Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., native leads all active ACC players with 102.0 rushing yards per game. Saturday versus Clemson he became the 14th player in Tech history to register a 1,000-yard rushing season. Herbert was named to the 2021 East-West

Shrine Bowl All-Star list.

Deablo is currently tied for the ACC lead with three interceptions. The Winston-Salem, N.C., native has played in 50 career games (32 starts) for Tech, accumulating 200 total tackles (112 solo) to go along with 12.5 tackles for loss, five interceptions, nine pass breakups and 14 passes defended. After beginning his Tech career at wide receiver, he has thrived in the secondary for

Tech and returned a fumble for a 98-yard TD last season at Notre Dame.

In addition to Herbert, a pair of Tech defenders - linebacker Rayshard Ashby and defensive end Justus Reed - have also been named to the 2021 East-West Shrine Bowl All-Star list. Despite the 2021 East-West Shrine Bowl being cancelled due to challenges presented by COVID-19, game organizers are announcing all-star

selections throughout December to recognize outstanding senior seasons. In conjunction with the National Football League, players will participate in virtual training sessions in preparation for the NFL Draft.

The 96th annual East-West Shrine Bowl had been scheduled for January 23, 2021, at Tropicana Field in St. Petersburg, Fla. The student-athletes will participate in various virtual training/informational drills with current NFL coaches and members of the NFL Operations staff.



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"Thank you for such a resilient year of business in Radford. We look forward to an even stronger year in 2021!"

- Executive Director, Ciara Harris



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New scoreboard at Auburn High School

Marty Gordon
Contributing writer

Auburn High School has a new scoreboard at its football stadium that can also be used for soccer.

Auburn Athletic Director Paul Dominy said getting the new scoreboard was a no-brainer. "We got to the point that the current scoreboard) was so old the company that manufactured it was no longer making replacement modules to repair breakdowns. Once that happened, it forced us to look at getting a new scoreboard," Dominy said.

The funding for the new scoreboard came largely from the Eagles Nest Fund, collected over the years to support the structures of the football stadium for the football team. The original hope for the fund was that it would help with construction of a fieldhouse and locker room, but with the construction of the new Auburn High School with locker rooms near the stadium, that was no longer necessary. According to Dominy, the scoreboard is



PHOTO COURTESY OF AUBURN HIGH SCHOOL

Auburn High School has a new scoreboard that will be ready for use in the spring by its football and soccer programs.

the first major stadium project that has been worthy of the use of the funds.

"The new scoreboard is up and running and looks fabulous," he said earlier this week.

The new scoreboard has brighter numbers in both red and yellow. Atop the scoreboard is a new Auburn sign, and the new board is ecofriendly, using less than half of the electricity of the old one. The control panel is remote, so there are no hardwire connections to maintain, making it a simpler system.

Dominy said a lot of people were involved in this effort.

"I would like to thank those who donated to the Eagles Nest Fund for making this renovation possible," the AD said. "I'd also like to thank the Montgomery County Public Schools central office and Greg Burgess in particular for their support in making this project happen. And I'd like to thank Chris Stewart for his support in working with the donors to approve this as the best use of the Eagles Nest funds."

Former VT guard Justin Robinson signs NBA contract with 76ers

Philadelphia 76ers President of Basketball Operations Daryl Morey announced Wednesday that the team has signed former Virginia Tech guard Justin Robinson.

Per team policy, terms of the deal were not disclosed. Robinson was acquired by the Delaware Blue Coats, the 76ers' NBA G-League affiliate, last Jan. 21 off waivers. As a rookie last season, Robinson appeared in 33 G-League games (24 starts) with Delaware and the Capital City Go-Go, averaging 14.2 points, 3.5 rebounds, 6.2 assists and 1.4 steals in 31.2 minutes per game. His 6.2 assists per game ranked fourth among rookies, and he scored in double figures 26 times, including

six 20-plus point performances. Robinson also saw action in nine games at the NBA level with the Washington Wizards.

A Manassas, Va., native, Robinson played four collegiate seasons at Virginia Tech. He was named to the All-Atlantic Coast Conference second team as a junior in 2018 after averaging 14.0 points, 5.6 assists and 1.2 steals in 30.9 minutes per game. In 24 contests as a senior during the 2018-19 campaign, he averaged 13.5 points, 5.0 assists and 1.6 steals in 29.6 minutes per contest and finished his career as Virginia Tech's all-time leader in assists (562).

Highlander fan cutouts are ready

Radford Athletics is offering fans the opportunity to join the Highlanders for game day, even if they can't physically be there. Alumni, fans and students alike

can purchase a fan cutout to be placed in the venue (or two) of choice to support Radford's team(s).

The cost of the cutout for the season is \$55.

For an additional \$20,

the fan cutout can be placed in the Dedmon Center and any spring venue of the fan's choice.

Venue options are as follows: Dedmon Center: men's and women's basketball, volleyball; Sherman Carter Memorial Stadium: baseball; Patrick D. Cupp Stadium: men's and women's soccer, women's track and field; Radford Softball Stadium: softball; and the Student Outdoor Recreation Complex: women's lacrosse.

A member of the Radford Athletics staff will be in touch with the purchasers to confirm their second location preference.

Fans may also send their cutout home for \$25. The cutout can be shipped anywhere the fan prefers following the conclusion of the spring semester.

Each cutout will count as one virtual ticket, and proceeds will go to the Highlander Club Annual Fund in support of RU's 275 student-athletes. Funds received will help to offset budget deficits intensified by COVID-19 and aid critical areas, such as scholarships, academic support, athletic training and nutrition.

Each cutout is limited to one person.

Following the conclusion of the spring semester, fans can pick-up their fan cutout at the Dedmon Center. Information on pick-up dates, times and locations will be provided at a later time.

The earlier purchases are made, the closer to the action the cutout will be.

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NRV MPO SEEKS PUBLIC INPUT FOR BIKE/PED PLAN UPDATE

The New River Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is updating its 2014 Bicycle-Pedestrian Plan as a multimodal systems plan, which includes transit, bicycle, and pedestrian planning. An overview and an opportunity for public input will be provided. Registration and information about the December 17, 2020 online (virtual) event are found at <http://tinyurl.com/nrvmpo-bikepedplan>. There will be further information on the NRV MPO website at: www.montgomerycountyva.gov/mpo



The public can speak or provide written comments during the December 17, 2020 MPO Multimodal (Bicycle and Pedestrian Update) Systems Plan Public Input virtual Meeting between 4:00-6:00 PM. Written comments can also be received until 5:00 PM, December 23, 2020.

This public notice and opportunity to comment on the bike/ped plan update meets the program of projects requirements as established by the FTA pursuant to 49 U.S.C. Section 5307(c).



The NRV MPO ensures nondiscrimination and equal employment in all programs and activities in accordance with Title

VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need more information or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, contact Dan Brugh at: brughjd@montgomerycountyva.gov or 540-394-2145, TTY/TTD 711.

