

# News Messenger

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## County schools remain week-to-week on fate of athletics



Several hundred Montgomery County student-athletes and their families gathered outside Tuesday's regularly-scheduled school board meeting to protest the lack of play for winter sports in the school system.

In what continues to be a controversial stance, Montgomery County schools will not allow winter athletics (basketball, wrestling, swimming and cheer) to begin for another week.

At the root of the matter is the high number of positive COVID-19 cases in the county. Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) are following "Return to Play Criteria" approved late last year. In addition, they are using the Virginia High School Phase III Guide-

lines as they continue to see high numbers of positive COVID cases that have not been trending down for the past two weeks.

"We continue to look at those numbers and monitor them as we move forward," said Danny Knott, MCPS' Human Resource Director.

His remarks came during a school board meeting Tuesday night, and those numbers show that Montgomery County remains in the high-risk category. Once the metrics trend downward for a 14-day period, then high school athletic competition can begin.

Virginia health officials reported Wednesday morning a total of 377,300 coronavirus cases and 5,226 virus-related deaths since the pandemic began, including 5,387 new confirmed and probable diagnoses, marking the highest single-day spike in new cases since the start of the pandemic, and 35 new confirmed and probable fatalities across the commonwealth.

Montgomery County has been averaging 30-40 new cases daily. The

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## Radford state senator Ben Chafin succumbs to COVID-19

Heather Bell  
hbell@ourvalley.org

State Senator Augustus Benton (Ben) Chafin, Jr., died on New Year's Day from COVID-19 complications.

From Russell County, Chafin served the City of Radford as state senator of the 38th district. A Republican, he was elected to the Virginia State Senate in 2014 and was previously the Fourth District delegate in the Virginia House of Delegates.

In a statement following Chafin's death, Gov. Ralph Northam recalled him as a "kind and gracious man."

"With the passing of Senator Ben Chafin, Southwest Virginia has lost a strong advocate, and we have all lost a good man," said Northam. "I knew Ben as a lawmaker, an attorney, a banker and a farmer raising beef cattle in Moccasin Valley, working the land just as generations of his family had done before him. He loved the outdoors, and he loved serving people even more. He pushed hard to bring jobs and investment to his district, and I will always be grateful for his courageous vote to expand health care for people who need it."

"Pam and I are praying for Lora and their children, and I have ordered the Virginia state flag to be lowered immediately over the state capitol in his honor and to remain at half-staff until sunset on the day of his interment," the governor said. "This is sad news to begin a new year with the loss of a kind and gracious man. May we all recommit to taking extra steps to care for one another."

Republican Party of Virginia Chairman Richard L. Anderson also issued a statement in the wake of Chafin's death.

"Virginians everywhere are saddened tonight by the news of the passing of a great public servant, Sen.



State Senator Augustus Benton (Ben) Chafin, Jr.

A. Benton Chafin, Jr., said Anderson. "Ben was a man for all seasons and was broadly respected throughout Southwest Virginia and across the Commonwealth of Virginia."

"I was privileged to serve with Ben in the Virginia House of Delegates before his election to the Senate of Virginia," Anderson said. "The citizens of both the Fourth House District and 38th Senate District were fortunate to have his able representation in the Virginia General Assembly for many years."

"Ben made his mark on our Commonwealth as an attorney, a farmer and a selfless public servant," Anderson said. "He will be forever remembered for his conscientious commitment to serving his fellow man, and he will be especially remembered as a man of civility who treated others with simple human kindness and respect."

"The Republican Party of Virginia and all those who knew and served with Senator Chafin thank his family for sharing him with our commonwealth for so many years," Anderson said. "Our prayers go out to his wife, Lora, and their children at this very difficult time. May we remember Ben always for his legacy of service to the Commonwealth of Virginia that he loved so deeply."

Chafin was born on May 18, 1960, and was named

See Chafin, page 2

## Henry Bass succeeds Aaron Harris-Kirby as Montgomery Chamber board chair

Henry Bass, owner of Automation Creations, Inc., a custom software development and website automation company, is the 2021 board chair for the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, succeeding Aaron Harris-Kirby.

In a statement to the chamber members, Bass said, "I will be working with some incredibly talented business leaders to keep your chamber relevant to your needs. I hope many of you joined us for the live streaming of the 2020 annual meeting, which was a fantastic way to end 2020 and to celebrate a very challenging year."

"I have chosen the theme 'Accelerate' as our mantra this year. I say we accelerate health and well-being through vaccinations to move into a new normal. Until then, we can accelerate health through our continued support of mask wearing accelerating positive business growth. We have several committees that I encourage you to become more involved with for engagement in the community."

"Our Infrastructure Committee will identify new and upcoming projects that impact the businesses and the infrastructure necessary for

our growing community.

"Our Talent and Education Committee will improve the talent pool in our community through early childhood education, schools, higher education, employee development and programs such as our 40 Under 40 recognition, Best Places to Work Recognition and our Leadership in Changing Times Conference."

"Our Business Resource Committee encourages support for the local economy through our Buy Local campaign #MyFootprint, Minority Business Accelerator programming, the Women's Leadership Conference, CASE (Chamber Accelerating Sales Executives) and other programming that supports business education."

"Our Legislative Committee focuses on keeping you informed of policy or potential legislative changes relevant to businesses. This year we are providing a new way to track key bills that can impact your business. Be on the lookout for an announcement on social media later this week. This committee works with the membership and develops the legislative agenda presented to legislators at the federal, state and

local government levels.

"This is your chamber, and your board wants to accelerate our business community's strength and grow your business. Join a committee and attend a program such as our Jan. 21 event at which Mauricio Velasquez will discuss how to create a more diverse workplace."

"Join us for being a change agent for diversity and inclusion in business."



New Montgomery Chamber board chair Henry Bass

## Liam Watson announces his candidacy for Montgomery Co. Board of Supervisors

In a press release on Monday, Jan. 4, 21-year-old Liam Watson declared his candidacy from District A for the Montgomery County Board of Supervisors.

Watson said in his release, "Today, I gave the Montgomery County

registrar my certificate of candidate qualification, and I am concurrently proud to announce my candidacy for the Montgomery County Board of Supervisors."

"When I decided to run for office in my home county, one thing was

very clear to me: the campaign from the outset needed to be issue-oriented and focused entirely on developing the best community for the neighbors and friends who count on me to represent them with dignity and integrity."

"At 21 years old," Watson said, "I am, to the best of our campaign's research, the youngest candidate ever for the Board of Supervisors of Montgomery County, and I likewise aim to propose vigorous efforts designed to bring about a new era of energetic leadership, a kind of leadership that our county has sorely lacked and will greatly benefit from."

Watson said, "I've compiled 23 policies that best suit our community and its needs in the coming years. These policies, which include, importantly, affordable housing access, broadband expansion and the construction of new schools, serve as the bedrock of all our campaign will do. Our campaign is also entirely dedicated to the ending of the Mountain Valley Pipeline project, the promotion of gun safety legislation in our hometown, an expansion of our efforts to protect and champion our teachers and more than a dozen other policies that can be viewed at: <https://www.liamwatsonva.com/plans>.

"But," the candidate said, "I do not

See Watson, page 2

## Gandees' Sleepy Hollow Road home wins town's 'Light up Your Home' contest



Town of Christiansburg Assistant Events Coordinator Marty Gordon (right) presents a trophy for winning the town's first-ever holiday decoration contest. The Gandees' interactive light show and decorated home on Sleepy Hollow Road received the most Facebook "likes" during Christiansburg's Light Up Your Home for the Holidays contest in December.



Liam Watson is a candidate for the Montgomery Board of Supervisors.



# UPCOMING EVENTS

## Monday, Jan. 11:

**Montgomery County Board of Supervisors Meeting**  
7 p.m. for Closed Meeting, 7:15 p.m. for Regular Session; Montgomery County Government Center, 755 Roanoke St., Christiansburg.

**Radford City Council Meeting**  
7 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 10 Robertson St., Radford. Find the agenda at [www.radfordva.gov](http://www.radfordva.gov).

**Stem Club**  
Join the Christiansburg Public Library for a virtual STEM club; 1- 2 p.m. Pick up the activity materials by Saturday, Jan. 9. Email [shodges@mfrl.org](mailto:shodges@mfrl.org) for information on the library's Go-To Meeting.

## Tuesday, Jan. 12:

**Radford City School Board meeting**  
Regular meeting at 6 p.m., at the School Administration Building. A copy of the agenda

can be seen at [www.rcps.org](http://www.rcps.org).

**Talking About Books**  
Join the Blacksburg Public Library for a discussion of "Harriet Tubman, Secret Agent" by Thomas Allen; 11 a.m. - noon. Call ahead to reserve a copy and learn more.

**Sons of Confederate Veterans meeting**  
Stuart Horse Artillery Camp 1784 will meet at 7 p.m. at Aly's Family Italian Restaurant on 3204 Riner Road. Jonathan McPeak will present the "History of the 24th Virginia Infantry Regiment." Members of the United Daughters of the Confederacy are also invited to attend. For further information, please call 320-4315 or 239-9864.

**Talking About Books**  
Join the Christiansburg Public Library virtually for a book talk with Monica Rodden about her first book, "Monsters Among Us." 7 - 8 p.m. Email [ssullivan@mfrl.org](mailto:ssullivan@mfrl.org)

for a link to the event.

## Wednesday, Jan. 13:

**Talking About Books**  
Christiansburg Library discussion of "Red at the Bone" by Jacqueline Woodson, virtually; 11 a.m. - noon.

## Thursday, Jan. 14:

**Virtual Knitting Group**  
Join the Blacksburg Library for a demonstration of easy knitting techniques in a Knitting 101 virtual program from 5-6 p.m. The perfect craft for a long winter, knitting is based on only two stitches. Knitting 101 will cover purl, knit, and casting on. Grab some needles and yarn and knit along. A troubleshooting discussion will follow. Call 540-552-8246 for more information.

## Thursday, Jan. 21:

**Discord Comic Book Club**  
Join the Radford Public Library for an all-ages voice chat

discussion of Comic Books via Discord. To be read and discussed this month is Neil Gaiman's "Eternals." Check it out on Hoopla at [Eternals](https://www.hoopladigital.com/title/12003687) <https://www.hoopladigital.com/title/12003687>. Send the library a Facebook message or email [duncan.hall@radfordva.gov](mailto:duncan.hall@radfordva.gov) to sign up. The library will then send an invitation to the RPL Discord server.

## Ongoing Throughout January:

**Keep the Lights Up for Healthcare Heroes**

Every local resident and business is being called on to keep their holiday lights up through January 31 to recognize those working in healthcare.

## StoryWalk

It will take place 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.'

## Through Thursday, Jan. 21:

### Girl Scout Cookie Sales

The Girl Scouts of the Virginia Skyline Council are taking orders for cookies that will be delivered in mid-January. Gift certificates can be purchased through Jan. 14, 2021, by emailing [info@gsvsc.org](mailto:info@gsvsc.org) or calling 540-777-5100. Girl Scout cookies are \$5 a box. To locate a Girl Scout to take an order, contact the girl scouts at [info@gsvsc.org](mailto:info@gsvsc.org) or 540-777-5100. When the cookies arrive in the region in mid-January, Girl Scouts will be delivering them in different ways: masked drop-offs to the customer's door; cookie booth drive-thru; online ordering with shipping via Digital Cookie; cookie delivery service (The details are being worked out work with a national food delivery service. They will be announced on Jan. 12.); and voice-activated sales via Echo home systems.

# Deadline nears for 2021 Community Foundation online scholarship applications

CHRISTIANSBURG -- The deadline for applying for the Community Foundation of the New River Valley's (CFNRV) 40-plus scholarship opportunities is 5 p.m. on Feb. 1. High school students, college students and adults returning to college in the New River Valley (NRV) can review those opportunities and apply at <https://cfnrv.org/scholarships/appllicants-information/>. Recipients will be announced in April.

Established in 2002, the foundation's scholarship program aims to support the educational aspirations of students so they can achieve their full potential, to nurture a skilled workforce in the region and to cultivate future community leaders.

The program has grown steadily over the past 18 years, awarding more than \$729,000 to 690 students from more than 40 endowed scholarship funds. Individuals, families and NRV businesses establish the funds, which the foundation invests for long-term growth. The foundation also manages the

application process. Each scholarship fund has its own unique criteria, meeting the unique interests of the donor and ensuring that there is an opportunity for students of all kinds to earn a scholarship.

The COVID-19 pandemic prevented donors, recipients and their families from gathering at the annual scholarship awards dinner, but many recipients and donors alike expressed their gratitude for scholarships in such an uncertain time. Tracey Linkous established the Living4Bri Scholarship in 2019 following the loss of her daughter, Brianna.

"We are so pleased to be growing our Living-4Bri Scholarship Memorial with the Community Foundation," Linkous said. "With the help of the fFoundation, we are able to offer opportunities to Christiansburg High School graduates pursuing a future in nursing. We have created a legacy for our daughter and are able to participate in the future education of those in our community."

The fund awarded its

first scholarship to Jessica Kniskern. "I am deeply honored to be chosen for the Living4Bri Scholarship Fund," Kniskern said. "I plan to pursue a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree from Radford University. It is my sincere hope that becoming a registered nurse will honor Bri's memory as we shared an interest in nursing."

In 2020, the Foundation celebrated the largest year of the program to date, awarding more than \$108,000 in scholarships to 81 students from across the New River Valley. The 2020 group of scholarship winners was one of the most diverse to date with 26% of the winners being first-generation college students. Recipients will attend a wide range of colleges with 85.2% staying in the state of Virginia and 12.34% attending out-of-state college. More than 50% of the students will be staying in the New River Valley with 38.3% attending Virginia Tech, 18.52% attending Radford University and 8.6% going to New River Community College.



Collage of the 2020 Community Foundation scholarship winners

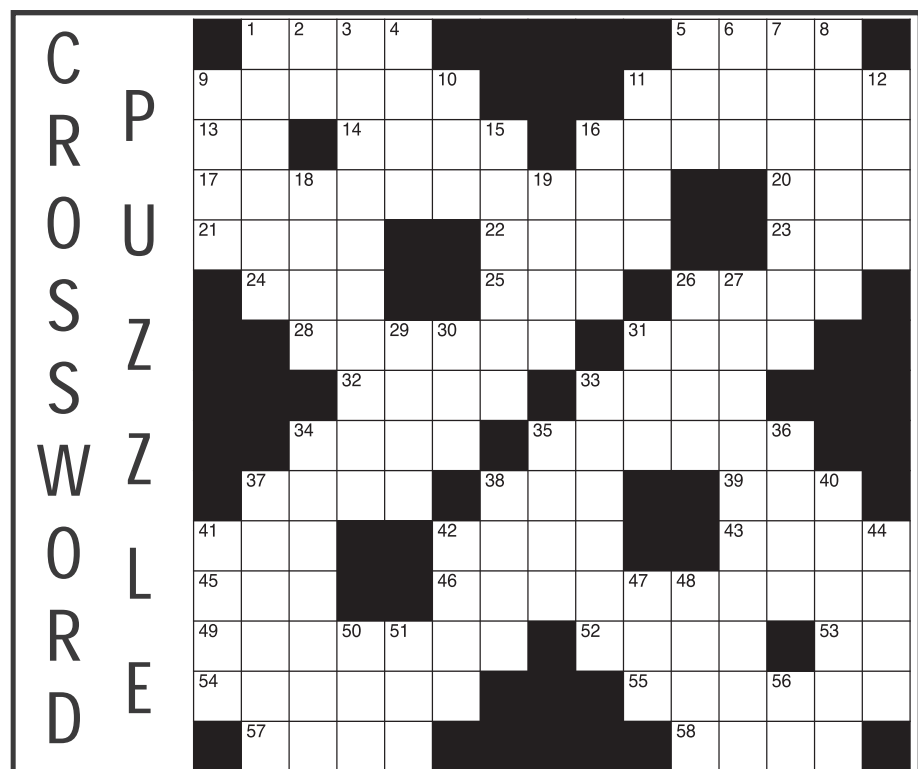
Laura Pynn, administration and programs manager at the foundation, said, "Overseeing this program is my favorite part of my role at the foundation. I'm proud of the diversity that our scholarships offer to students in our region. We have a scholarship fund available to anyone who has a dream of achieving a

degree in higher education. "With the coronavirus, we realize that many of our 2021 students will have unique senior years as the class of 2020 did. I am proud that we are offering these scholarships during the pandemic to deserving students who have worked hard to get to this point. I encourage all eligible NRV

students to apply now and hope to have the opportunity to meet the recipients this year."

More information about the scholarship application process and how to establish an endowed scholarship at the Community Foundation can be found at <https://cfnrv.org/scholarships/>.

Send community news and photos to [communitynews@ourvalley.org](mailto:communitynews@ourvalley.org)



- CLUES ACROSS
1. \_\_\_ Dhabi, Arabian capital
  2. Invests in little enterprises
  3. Stalk of a moss capsule
  4. Beach material
  5. Maneuver in a game
  6. A castrated male chicken
  7. Write bad checks
  8. Sewer inhabitants
  9. Farewell (Spanish)
  10. Player makes 3 goals in one game
  11. Greek rainbow goddess
  12. Tax collector
  13. Make unhappy
  14. Hygienic
  15. Double-reed instrument
  16. Beetle Bailey's dog
  17. Fee, \_\_\_, foe, fum
  18. One dish meal
  19. Goatlike antelope
  20. Consumed food
  21. Peels
  22. Emerald Isle
  23. Duties helpful to others
  24. Fragments of cloth
  25. Frozen water
  26. Spanish river
  27. Stated an inquiry
  28. Laid-back California county
  29. Fearless and daring
  30. Sounded after its source has stopped
  31. Blackboard rock
  32. A domed or vaulted recess
  33. Six (Spanish)
  34. French city
  35. Herringlike clupeid fish
  36. Oriental sauce
- CLUES DOWN
1. Requests
  2. Spoken in the Dali region of Yunnan
  3. Up to the time of
  4. Common ankle injury
  5. Tedium
  6. 9th Greek letter
  7. Abnormal closed body sac
  8. One who obtains pleasure from other's pain
  9. Long narrative heroic poem
  10. Possessed by force
  11. Autonomic nervous system
  12. Treats with contempt
  13. Bears
  20. Before
  21. Light ringing sound
  24. Blends of soul and calypso
  25. Fall off in intensity
  26. Gives medicine
  27. Gross receipts
  28. Square measures
  29. Ablaze
  30. Incapable of flexibility
  31. Bears, sheep or goats
  33. An open skin infection
  36. Effeminate
  37. Competed in a speed test
  39. Supplies with air
  44. Short stays
  45. Sown a lawn
  46. 60 min. units (abbr.)
  48. Second largest Oklahoma city
  49. Fence picket
  50. 2nd largest Algerian port city
  51. Camel or goat fabrics
  52. 19th Hebrew letter
  53. Frosts
  54. 17th state
  55. Inquisitorial
  56. Manuscripts (abbr.)

## Chafin

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after his late father, A.B. Chafin. He leaves behind his wife of 38 years, Lora Carr Chafin, his mother, Mary Miller Chafin, a sister, Justice Teresa M. Chafin, and three adult children, Sophia Chafin Vance, Audra Chafin Hobart and Augustus Benton Chafin III (Gus).

Chafin was a generational cattle farmer and a lawyer. He was also a long-time board member of the First Bank and Trust (which his father helped found) and as an "avid outdoorsman and the very doting grandfather" of granddaughter Abee Vance and grandson, Tipton Vance, according to his obituary.

Chafin first served in the Virginia House of Delegates in 2013 and was elected to the state senate in 2014.

"He had a distinguished legislative record and a very high rate of passed legislation," his obituary reads. "He advocated jobs in his district, particularly in the coalfields where the decline of coal has devastated local economies. He was a strong supporter of the Second Amendment, economic development and health care coverage for hundreds of thousands of low-income Virginians."

At Chafin's request, a formal burial service will not be held.

## Watson

from page 1

propose these new policies without heed for reason nor with unchecked idealism. These policies were carefully crafted with intention, under the guidance of experts on each of the respective topics, many of whom reside right here in Montgomery County.

"This is perhaps the most ambitious agenda ever set forth in Montgomery County," Watson said, "and I am excited to lead this movement that requires the utmost dedication from all of us, even as we navigate some of the most difficult times in our nation's history.

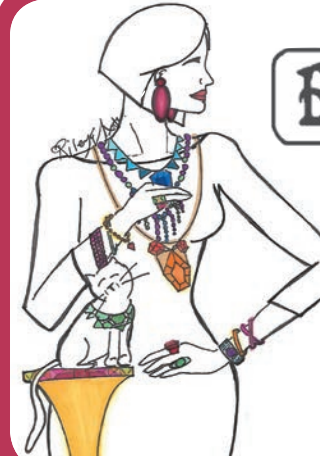
I am filled with optimism and am encouraged by the broad support I have seen for these fresh ideas.

"With the tireless efforts of many volunteers and the strenuous work born of passion and dedication, I am confident that the policies outlined herein will guide our county into the new decade and allow us to serve as a model of progressive success throughout our region and, indeed, our nation."

Watson provided the following contacts for more information about his team and his campaign:

Liam Watson, candidate (540) 425-2255; Gus Reynolds, campaign manager (540) 998-1999;

Flannery McNair, communications director (540) 808-9995; and Jack Packard, treasurer (540) 505-3624. His campaign website is <https://www.liamwatsonva.com>.



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## History professor's 'Connecting the Interstates' grant to explore effects of interstate highway system

On the road to connecting the United States, government officials displaced hundreds of thousands of Americans.

The interstate highway system launched in the 1950s as the most ambitious public works project in the world. Spanning 48,000 miles, the system aimed to connect cities and towns throughout the nation.

While the massive project succeeded in revamping transportation and commerce, its cost cut far deeper than the \$125 billion price tag.

Building the interstate highways meant steamrolling through neighborhoods, bulldozing homes, and shredding the fabric of communities. Estimates of displacement range from

330,000 housing units to 1 million residents, mostly in poor and minority neighborhoods.

Currently, no mapping systems exist to pinpoint every community affected by the displacement and environmental destruction.

LaDale Winling, an associate professor of history at Virginia Tech, is determined to change that. And to help him achieve that goal, the National Endowment for Humanities has provided him with a prestigious grant to kickstart a new project, "Connecting the Interstates."

"The goal is to develop a digital platform that helps us consider the consequences of building the interstate highway system," said Winling. "Connecting the Inter-

states" will illuminate the damaging effects of the highway system through an interactive map, Winling said. The tool can help community leaders, public officials, journalists, and historians along with the general public understand the system's impact on a deeper level.

"The story of the interstate highway system is often told triumphantly," said Winling. "It was an unprecedented stroke of genius politically and a civil engineering feat. But the negative impacts of the system are still felt in communities today. 'Connecting the Interstates' will allow communities to consider the historical costs of displacement and use this knowledge in future decision-making."

Securing the interstate

highway data will require extensive research and widespread collaboration among urban historians. Most of the blueprints, maps and other historical documents for the interstate highway system are scattered in state archives across the nation.

A Virginia Tech alumna, Carmen Bolt, will serve in a crucial research role in the project by collecting and organizing documents from all participants. Bolt will also conduct research trips to a National Archives facility.

"I'm thrilled to serve a role in this massive collaboration with scholars across the country," said Bolt, who earned her master's and bachelor's degrees in history and a minor in political science. The "Connecting the Interstates" team will use the

## Historic Montgomery



**Sugar Grove Baptist Church on Bow Hill Road was founded in the 1860s. (This image from the News Messenger Collection and many more are available from the Montgomery Museum of Art & History)**

planning period to determine the location of necessary documents and how to secure them. Researchers will need to digitize some of the analog artifacts.

Winling said he's grateful for the National Endowment for Humanities grant as it lays the foundation for the entire project. "If you

want to take on the whole interstate system, you need national support," he said.

Winling envisions "Connecting the Interstates" as ultimately an easily accessible tool for communities across the nation.

-Written by Andrew Adkins

## Governor announces new steps to accelerate COVID-19 vaccination efforts

RICHMOND— Virginia Governor Ralph Northam Wednesday announced new actions to support the Commonwealth's COVID-19 vaccine distribution program and accelerate the pace of vaccinations across Virginia.

Governor Northam has taken the following five steps to help providers increase the rate of vaccinations as quickly, safely, and equitably as possible:

- Vaccination goal. The governor set an initial goal of vaccinating 25,000 Virginians each day when supply allows.

- Use it or lose it' model. Medical facilities will be required to put the vaccine they receive into arms as soon as possible or risk having future vaccine allotments reduced.

- Dr. Danny T.K. Avula will lead vaccination efforts in Virginia. The governor appointed Dr. Avula, who serves as director of the Richmond City and Henrico County Health Departments, to coordinate work among state officials, local health departments, hospitals and private providers.

- Expanded priority groups. The governor announced that K-12 teachers and child care workers will be among the next priority groups to receive vaccinations after Group A and outlined the populations that will be included in Groups B and C.

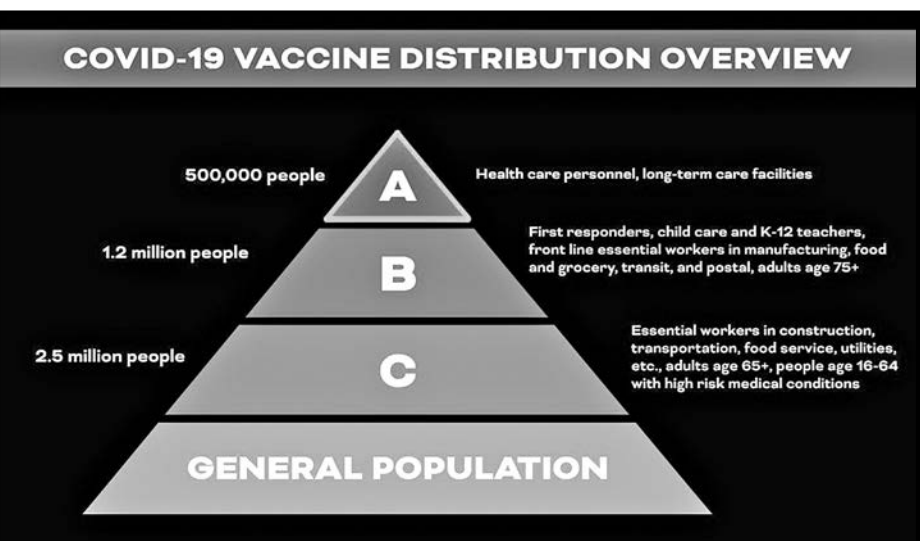
- Elevating the Virginia National Guard. As the commonwealth receives more doses, the Virginia National Guard will provide logistical support and help local health

departments with administering the vaccines.

"Getting Virginians vaccinated against COVID-19 is the best way to end this pandemic, rebuild our economy and move our Commonwealth forward," Northam said. "By setting clear goals and appointing Dr. Avula to spearhead our vaccination program, we will have a clear vision of how this effort—the largest public vaccination campaign in modern history—is progressing. I plan to get vaccinated when my turn comes, and I encourage Virginians to do the same."

The vaccination overview the governor released Wednesday established priorities for three groups ahead of the general population.

Group A (500,000 people) includes healthcare personnel and persons living in



long-term care facilities.

Group B (1.2 million people) includes frontline essential workers in specific industries, K-12 teachers and staff, childcare providers, adults age 75 and older and people living in correctional

facilities, homeless shelters and migrant labor camps.

Group C (2.5 million people) includes other essential workers, adults age 65 and older and people age 16-64 with certain medical conditions or disabilities that

increase their risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

The Virginia Department of Health is developing an online portal to help people understand how to register to receive a COVID-19 vaccination.

## Athletics

from page 1

county has recorded 5,398 cases, 115 hospitalizations and 43 since the pandemic began.

The New River Valley Public Health Task Force provided a COVID-19 update Wednesday. Health Department Director Dr. Noelle Bissell, said patience is a key word for everyone to remember. It's going to be a while before the area turns the corner with COVID, she said.

"Even with the vaccinations, we know the current preventive measures are still important," Bissell said. She also discussed how athletics are being affected. "We are following the Virginia High School guidelines, and I am very happy area superintendents have gotten together and come up with a unified plan."

The "MCPS Return to Play Criteria" was approved by Region VI superintendents from Allegheny, Covington, Craig, Botetourt, Roanoke County, Roanoke City, Salem, Montgomery, Floyd, Franklin, Patrick, Henry, Martinsville, Pittsylvania and Danville.

The discussion at the school board meeting did not come without controversy as several hundred student-athletes and their families gathered outside the meeting room. Participants held signs that read "Let us play" as board members and staff were greeted with similar chants.

The "Let Them Play" effort has gained momentum as a Facebook page has advocated for measures to change.

Currently, Montgomery County athletes are allowed to practice, but none have seen competition this school year. The timetable comes at a critical point for winter sports as fall sports are scheduled to begin practice in early February.

Knott pointed out that using the Virginia Department of Health Pandemic Metrics Dashboard, schools must be in the moderate category and be trending down or lower level for athletics competition to be held. The only exception under the plan is that the local health department could say there are extenuating circumstances in that

locality that minimizes the impact on the activity.

"Right now, those numbers are not at a level where we can play," Knott said.

Under the plan, he said, the school system looks at the numbers weekly and determines whether or not athletic competition can begin. Knott said the school system is asking athletic directors at each school to adjust on the fly. So far, as many as two dozen contests have been cancelled or postponed.

During a public address time at Tuesday's school board meeting, parents and some student-athletes pleaded with leaders to reconsider the policy.

Kate Henley, whose son plays basketball and football at Christiansburg High School, said the student-athletes have suffered from not playing. "It's great that they can go to practice and they can go to weightlifting, but if they can't compete, then what's the purpose?"

She also said that athletics have a positive effect on her child and others by keeping their grades up and possibly providing an avenue to college because of their "outstanding play."

"Every time they turn around it's another setback, it's another pushback," Henley said. "These kids are getting devastated because a lot of them are seniors, not only in Christiansburg, but also the other schools in the county, and they really want to play."

One teacher did step up to the speaker's lectern and asked the board to consider "remote learning" for the children in Montgomery County. Currently, grades K-6 are attending school under one format or another. He expressed concern the county is putting staff at risk as much as the students themselves.

Knott told the board that over 60 teachers and staff were out Tuesday because of COVID protocols. The exact number of positive cases within the staff is not known, but he admitted the virus is taking its toll.

The continued struggle with COVID-19 is being felt across the commonwealth. Other states, including Tennessee, have begun play, and some counties in deep southwest Virginia have also started sports competition.

A similar request to "Let

Them Play" was heard Monday night during a Roanoke County meeting. School board members there agreed to proceed with a "varsity-only" schedule.

If and when high school sports competition does begin in Montgomery County, basketball players will be required to wear masks during competition, making Montgomery one of only two localities to require them.

The MCPS superintendent told the board Tuesday that all schools that remain on county sports schedules have agreed to wear masks when they play here or away because of the requirement.

Under the current plan, the school system is requiring all competition participants to be screened including temperature checks before entering the school facility. Also, county schools will not allow spectators to attend athletic or academic competition.

Between indoor jayvee and varsity competitions and middle school games,

the gyms will be cleared and sanitized.

One proposal that was brought up during Tuesday's meeting was that if the delay continues, then Montgomery County schools could go to a "county only" schedule for the rest of the winter sports season.

"We hope very soon that our metrics will get us to a

point where we can play," Knott concluded.

"But for now, we cannot."

The earliest Montgomery County athletes could see the court, mat or pool is January 18.

School sports calendars are already littered with cancellations and postponements.



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## OPINION

## Evans King: On appliances (sort of)

I did something a couple of weeks ago that was typical of my efforts at home repair and “fixing things.”

This column is a tad embarrassing to write because my grandfather Charlie King made his living with his hands. In addition to helping raise eight kids on a small farm, he was at various times a mechanic, a coal miner and a handyman. And my Dad was skilled enough that he was his own general contractor for the home that he and my mother lived in for almost 50 years, and he made things like dog houses and put up fences and basketball goals. I apparently got none of those genes.

I do have on my resume that I worked several summers for Poff Construction during my college years. And it is true.

But unlike my great friend Greg, who worked with me in those long ago summers, I was the essence of “unskilled labor” on job sites. I mainly toted things such as bricks, blocks, lumber, carpeting and appliances. I was strong enough and energetic enough and paid attention enough (usually) that I was pretty good at getting things from one place to another, but I wasn’t much good at doing anything with them

after I got them there.

Which brings me to my most recent failure. I was doing laundry, moving the clothes from the washer to the dryer when I noticed that one of those softener sheets that folks toss in dryers had been sucked into the lint screen. I couldn’t quite get my fingers on it and having been warned that they can foul up the venting process, I decided to use a pair of scissors to reach into the opening and grab the darn thing and pull it out. Here is where my skill at taking a mildly irritating situation and turning it into a total disaster came into play. The scissors slipped from my hand and ended up somewhere in the bowels of the Samsung.

Not satisfied with this on-base error, I decided to “boot the ball again,” so I turned on the machine to see if the scissors were in any place that mattered. Apparently they were. The noise that came from the machine at that point can only be referred to as horrific. Metal on metal. The offshoot was 10 days or so without a dryer, an unthinkable hardship.

As I thought about it, this situation did at least present a great opportunity to write about appliances. Every self-respecting

humorist (or wannabe) around my age has to write about appliances at some point.

One of my writer heroes, Bill Bryson, in his wonderful book *The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid* (strongly recommend), wrote about the 1950’s and early 1960’s that never again in America would people take pride in acquiring and owning household appliances. If you rule out computer-age technology as “appliances,” he was certainly correct.

And that pride of ownership of things that performed simple tasks and eliminated manual labor sure struck a chord with my memories of being raised on Cherry Lane.

I thought back and realized that not until I was well out of the house and finished with college did my parents even own a clothes dryer. Like most or all of the neighbors, we had a clothes line in the backyard (hazards during night time games of kick the can). We also had a clothes line in the basement for those several months of the year that items would freeze on the outside line even harder than air drying normally made them (pre-Downy and pre-Bounce days). I still remember that our bath towels typically had the delicate texture

of cardboard.

So I decided I shouldn’t agonize over a week or two with no dryer. My parents raised me without ever having one. I then started tracking and remembered that we didn’t have a dishwasher (except for my father) or a garbage disposal (unthinkable in my life now) either or even a shower. These items existed in some fashion in the America of my youth I guess, but they were considered “luxuries,” and my depression-era father did not believe in “luxuries.”

We also did not have a television set until I was 7 years old, going to my grandmother’s house across town for “special events,” partially because televisions were “luxuries” and partially because we did not get good reception of the two stations out of Roanoke or the one from Bluefield in our one-story house where a rooftop antenna was not very effective.

We also did not have a “frost-free” refrigerator, the invention of which no doubt was a cause of celebration for the housewives of America in the early ‘60’s and a sure sign that we would beat the Russians to the moon. I still remember my folks unplugging our little refrigerator and put-

ting newspaper all over the linoleum floor in the kitchen to soak up the water that eventually would seep out as the ice build-up in the freezer compartment melted. This task was an overnight process and was repeated several times a year. I remember my Dad taking great pride when sometimes he could break some big chunks of frost out of the freezer and toss them in the sink, delaying the defrosting process for a few weeks. Preventive maintenance.

This all leads me to one more great recollection of my parents and the apparatuses around our house. We didn’t have a clothes washer, it was a “washing machine”; we didn’t have a lawn mower, we had a “mowing machine.” I am sure that if my father had lived to the day of ubiquitous desktops and laptops and iPads, they would not have been computers. They would have been “email machines.”

*Evans “Buddy” King is a proud native of Christiansburg, CHS Class of 1971. He resides in Clarksburg, W.Va., where he has practiced law with the firm of Steptoe & Johnson, PLLC, since 1980. He can be reached at evans.king@steptoe-johnson.com.*

Submit letters to the editor  
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## News Messenger

Established 1869

(540) 389-9355

P.O. Box 1125 • Salem, VA 24153

USPS 016-490 Online: [www.ourvalley.org](http://www.ourvalley.org)

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The News Messenger (USPS 016-490) is published twice a week for \$41 a year in Montgomery County, \$50 elsewhere in Virginia, and \$54 out of state by Virginia Media Inc., P.O. Box 429, Lewisburg, WV 24901. Periodical postage paid at Christiansburg, VA. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to NEWS MESSENGER 1633 W. Main St., Salem, VA 24153.

## Home Country by Slim Randles

A new year. A new start. Who said I can’t finish this book?

Dud Campbell walked the frozen sidewalk and blew steamy breath out through his parka hood.

All I need, really, are a few ideas.

Dud’s been working on his novel, “Murder in the Soggy Bottoms,” for several years now, and it has taken on different blends of seasoning, largely depending on what things were happening here in our little valley.

For example, the bizarre romantic connection between Dewey and Emily led to a rewrite of the part where the book flashed back many years to when the duchess and the truck driver first met.

And when the truck driver’s son met the duchess’s daughter, 20-some years later, it was the courtship of Randy Jones and Katie Burchell that

he patterned that after.

What is still left to solve, however, is what happens when the truck driver and the duchess discover that their children are sweet on each other because the kids happen to be half brother and sister.

And then, the guys at the coffee shop wanted to know why the truck driver, an American truck driver, was there driving below the duchess’ castle in Europe. At first he was just calling it a special assignment, but the guys wanted to know what the special assignment was, did he have to change his name for it, was he armed and did theme music play when he shifted gears.

Dud had already killed off a few characters early on in the book, so he believed he was under no obligation to bump off any more, but then

the book is called “Murder in the Soggy Bottoms,” (which his friends think sounds like wet diapers) and the soggy bottoms are back in the good ol’ U.S. of A. and how was he going to get the duchess and her daughter across the foaming tide?

And as he walked and thought, Dud asked himself if really good writers like Balzac and Max Evans had to struggle like this. He nodded and smiled to himself.

Sometimes I’ll bet they just wanted to sit down, open a beer and watch football.

Hey, not a bad idea. Art does exact its price.

*In memory of my mentor, pard and good friend, Max Evans. He used to “fist fight for fun.” Thankfully, not with me.*

## WalletHub: Virginia Beach, Chesapeake among best cities for jobs

The personal finance website WalletHub closed 2020 using 32 metrics ranging from job opportunities to employment growth to monthly average starting salary in a survey of 182 cities across the country aimed at determining how they ranked as the best or worst places in which to find a job, and the survey concluded that Virginia Beach ranked number three and Chesapeake, Va., ranked number seven.

The website noted that the jobs market took a huge hit in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. At one point, the unemployment rate reached a staggering 14.7%, but it has been steadily recovering. Accord-

ing to the most recent jobs report from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the national unemployment rate is 6.7%, which still leaves plenty of Americans looking for jobs.

College graduates from the class of 2021 shouldn’t expect to see a boost in hiring compared to the class of 2020, but they also won’t experience much of a decrease either, according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers. NACE characterizes the outlook for college students as “more positive than expected,” given the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic.

With finding work depending

largely on location, the survey listed the top ten cities for jobs in 2021 as 1) South Burlington, Vt. 2) Columbia, Md. 3) Virginia Beach 4) Salt Lake City, Utah 5) Boise, Idaho 6) Scottsdale, Ariz. 7) Chesapeake, Va. 8) Seattle, Wash. 9) Colorado Springs, Colo. and 10) Plano, Texas.

The 10 worst cities for jobs in 2021, according to the WalletHub survey are 173) New Haven, Conn. 174) Cleveland, Ohio 175) Gulfport, Miss. 176) Bridgeport, Conn. 177) Las Cruces, NM 178) North Las Vegas, Nev. 179) Brownsville, Texas 180) Detroit, Mich. 181) Shreveport, La. and 182) Hialeah, Fla.

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# OBITUARIES more on page 6

## Hosner, David Allen

David Allen Hosner died peacefully on Jan. 4, 2021, after a long, courageous battle with Crohn's Disease, followed by an insurmountable fight with gastric cancer.

David lovingly entered the heavenly gates with his wife, Patsy; his stepmother, Tenna; his friend, Silvia Jones, and pastor Kelly Shushock by his side.

Born on March 3, 1955 in Carbondale, Ill., David was a true friend to all. He graduated from Blacksburg High School and Ferrum College and attended Virginia Tech, majoring in Forestry. As a young man, David learned the electrical trade, wiring many homes in Blacksburg, including his own. He was employed by Virginia Tech for 41 years working in various positions in the Facilities De-

partment. David was a life-time member of the Blacksburg Fire Department, serving for 48 years. He was also a member of the Blacksburg Rescue Service, serving for 12 years.

David greatly admired his father, John Hosner. In fact, John's military service in World War II led to a fascination with all things military, especially World War II stories. During his youth, David and his father John spent many hours fishing, hunting, and working together outdoors. In John's later years, David was often his father's sidekick helping him to break (John's wife) Tenna's "rules."

David loved his roots, spending almost every summer at his mother Irene's family farm in Ewing, Ill., with his late grandfather Rolla Neal, late uncle Bill

Neal, cousin Charles Neal and most of the Neal relatives. He would often go to Missouri to visit the Hosner side of the family.

In 1990, he married Patsy and spent the next 31 years with his partner in life, mowing grass, riding horses, traveling and just spending time together. They were true soulmates.

David was proud of his many accomplishments, especially his son, Jason, who now lives in Berlin, Germany. Although they were not always together as Jason grew up, David always supported Jason in his many endeavors.

David enjoyed riding his quarter horse, Penny, who Patsy often referred to as his "mistress." He also tinkered with a 1972 Super Beetle that he re-

built in the mid-1990s swearing that it would be up and running any day and this time you would not smell like exhaust if you rode with him.

In addition to Patsy, David is survived by his son, Jason, and his husband Frédéric; his mother, Irene Hosner from Gilbert, Ariz.; stepmother Tenna Hosner from Blacksburg; sister, Angela Serody from Houston, Texas; a niece, Sara Serody from Houston; a nephew, Dylan Serody from New Orleans, La.; many cousins and friends including Charles and Barbara Neal of Ewing, Ill.; and beloved animals Elvis (shih tzu) and Penny (quarter horse). He is predeceased by his father, John F. Hosner. David loved and cherished them all.

The family wishes to thank the Blacksburg Volunteer Fire

Department for their faithful friendship and support; the Blacksburg Volunteer Rescue Squad and Paris Mountain Stables (Rick and Elizabeth Hyde) for providing David with a final visit with his dear Penny Rose; Good Samaritan Hospice (especially Gwen Spangler); Dr. Jerome Goldschmidt and Dr. Tony Ringold and their staffs; the Kennedy Avenue neighbors; and Pastor Kelly Shushock for coming out of retirement to help us through David's final journey on earth.

In lieu of flowers, please consider making a donation to the Blacksburg Volunteer Fire Department or the Blacksburg Volunteer Rescue Squad. Due to COVID restrictions, a celebration of life will be held in September 2021.

### ANGLICAN CATHOLIC

**St. Peter the Apostle Anglican Church**, 230 W. First St., Christiansburg, VA. Fr Peter Geromel OHI Th.M., Vicar, Fr. Alex Darby, "Associate", 540-382-0432/540-270-9166. Sundays: 8:00 am & 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

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Read Genesis 40:1 through 41:57

Joseph spent two years in a dungeon after interpreting the dreams of Pharaoh's cupbearer. Joseph had asked this man to mention him to the king upon being reinstated, but, as each day dragged on, no communication came from the Pharaoh. When Pharaoh had a dream and told it to all his wise men, no one could interpret it. The cupbearer finally remembered Joseph and told Pharaoh about him.

So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was quickly brought from the dungeon. When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh (Genesis 41:14).

Joseph was going to be taken into the presence of the nation's highest ruler. His first order of business was to make himself presentable. His prison clothing and his haggard appearance were hardly appropriate to stand before royalty. Joseph prepared to see the king, honoring the authority and majesty of Pharaoh.

We have the privilege of an audience at any time with our King, Jesus Christ. May we never forget His majesty or approach Him with less than honor and adoration.

Thought for Today: Consider the majesty of God.

Quicklook: Genesis 41:1-14

**If your church is not listed and if you are interested, call Randy Thompson at 540-389-9355 or email at [advertise@ourvalley.org](mailto:advertise@ourvalley.org)**

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](mailto: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 Memorial 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. Mooncup "Paul" Song (540) 382-2410. Sunday Worship 10 a.m., Sunday School 9 a.m. Live streaming Sunday Service - www.twitch.tv/stpaulumc

**Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church**, 350 Stafford Drive, Christiansburg, VA 24073, Sunday School 10am, Sunday Worship Service 11am.

### 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: christwesleyanchurch.org

Send community news and photos to [communitynews@ourvalley.org](mailto:communitynews@ourvalley.org)

# OBITUARIES continued from page 5

## Darden, Helen Bryant Day

Helen Bryant Day Darden passed away peacefully at her home in Radford on Tuesday, Jan. 5, 2021.

Helen was born in Akron, Ohio, and was raised in Independence, Va. She was preceded in death in September 2020 by her loving husband of 72 years, Kenneth Anthony "Tony" Darden; her parents, Wheeler Lee and Mary Bryant Day; a daughter, Bette Bryant Darden; a sister, Mary Lee Day; and sister-in-law, Shirley Darden.

Helen is survived by her sons, Kem and Day; granddaughters Katie Day (Derek) and Mary Lee (Nick); great-grand kids, Wyatt, Bryant, Elijah and Boyer; brother-in-law and nephew Graham, Sr. and Graham, Jr. (Cheryll) Darden; and many other relatives and friends.

Helen was a member of Grace Episco-



pal Church and Chapter H. P.E.O. She graduated from Radford College and the Women's Division of Virginia Polytechnic Institute with a degree of Bachelor of Science in Education. She loved teaching for 31 years, then playing bridge and canasta, lots of traveling and being with family and friends.

The family will receive friends in a drive-thru visitation from noon until 1 p.m. on Sunday, Jan. 10, 2021 at the West View Cemetery in Radford. Graveside services celebrating her life will follow at 1 p.m.

In lieu of flowers, please make contributions to Grace Episcopal Church, 210 4th St., Radford, VA 24141.

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

## Bowman, Brenda Hutchins

Brenda Hutchins Bowman, 71, of Christiansburg, passed away Tuesday, Jan. 5, 2021.

She was previously employed in the deli at Walmart and with Wheatland Hills as the Activities Director. She was preceded in death by her parents, William and Iva Judith Hutchins, and her sister, Von Musser.

Survivors include her sons, William Viers (Melissa), Christopher Viers (Dana) and Kei Claytor; a daughter, Danetta Claytor; a sister,



Judy Simpkins (Brady); grandchildren Chris, Sara, Jayme and Shalynn; special niece and nephews Mikey Gallimore, Stepanie Lester and Randy Turpin; and numerous other relatives and friends.

Memorial services will be held at 6 p.m. on Monday, Jan. 11, 2021, at the Fairlawn Church of God with Pastor Marcus Harrison officiating.

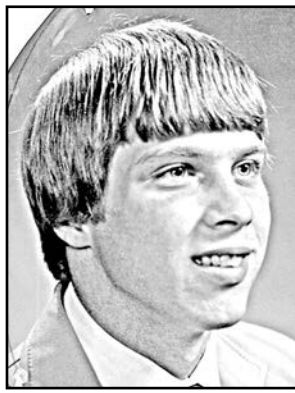
The Bowman family is in the care of Mullins Funeral Home & Crematory in Radford. www.mullinsfuneralhome.com

## Deeds, Jr., Gene Richard

Gene Richard "Richie" Deeds, Jr., 55, of Fairlawn passed away on Wednesday, Jan. 6, 2021.

He was preceded in death by his father, Gene Richard Deeds, Sr.

Survivors include his mother, Janet Montgomery Deeds; brother and sister-in-law, Devin and Robbin Deeds; sisters and brother-in-law, Debi Hatten, and Aimee and Barry Flora; and a host of nieces, nephews, extended family



and friends.

Graveside services will be held at 11 a.m. today Sat., Jan. 9, 2021, at Highland Memory Gardens in Dublin with the Rev. Ginny Tompkins officiating.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to the Pulaski County Rescue Squad.

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

## Church, Bonnie Hunter

On the morning of Jan. 1, 2021, Bonnie Hunter Church, 79, of Blacksburg, started the new year in the arms of Jesus, after a long illness.

She was preceded in death by her son, Philip Kent Church; her parents, Murry and Erma Hunter; and brothers Guy "Sox" Hunter and Beverly Hunter. Bonnie leaves behind her husband of 61 years, Charles; a daughter and son-in-law Jennifer and Wesley Jarels; and grandsons John Wesley and Jesse Lee Jarels, who were her pride and joy.

Her van tag read Nana 911 - "Nana to the rescue!" Nana's van took us on many fun adventures to the beach, to Tennessee and many other places. Also, Bonnie leaves behind her cherished furry feline companions, Lexi and Champi.

She was a stay-at-home mom and wonderful homemaker. Bonnie married at 17 and became a mother a year later. She

decided to fulfill her dream of earning a degree when her daughter started college. She earned her BS degree from ODU at age 56.

Bonnie was a prayer warrior and loved her church and church family. She played the piano and organ in different churches since she was 13. Her oldest grandson, John Wesley, said it perfectly: "You were the strongest woman I knew."

The family is thankful for the support of many friends and important people, her caregiver and friend, Dee Woolwine, Dr. Freeman and staff, Dr. Myers, and Dr. Goldschmidt, Hannah and all the wonderful people at Blue Ridge Cancer Care. There will be a memorial at a later date.

In lieu of flowers please donate to Faith Christian Church 305 3rd St., Christiansburg, Va. 24073. Arrangements by McCoy Funeral Home.

## Manns, III, James Garfield

James Garfield "Peach Fuzz" Manns III has received his new body. His old one was taken due to complications of COVID-19 on Jan. 1, 2021, at Lewis-Gale Montgomery Hospital.

James was born on Feb. 15, 1952, to the late James G. "Jimbo" Manns and Eliza Lewis Charlton. He was also preceded in death by his grandparents, James G. and Hattie Manns, Sr. and Ray and Regina Lewis.

He was a graduate of Dublin High School in 1971 and received an honorable discharge from the United States Army after a brief enlistment. He retired from RAAP (currently known as BAE Systems) with 30 years of service.

Before his illness, he was an avid gardener who continued to raise and breed rabbits. Upon his retirement, he became a daily fixture at the BP Express Stop in Pulaski. He especially enjoyed his morning coffee and chat time to keep up on events. It became his second home and family. Thank you to Mary and her crew for all the kindness and friendship he

was shown. "Peach" truly enjoyed the time he spent with you all.

James is survived by his wife of 47 years, Juanita Crosby Manns of Pulaski; a daughter, Stacie Nelson of Radford; brothers Chester Ray (Judy) Manns and Peter Dominic Manns, both of New River; sisters Gerri Ann (James) Anderson of Queens, N.Y., Jodie (Charles) Neal of Mitchellville, Md., Tricia Manns of Pulaski and Dana (Raymond) Dowe of Christiansburg; a brother-in-law, John C. Crosby of Charlotte, N.C.; and a sister-in-law, Robin Crosby (Pam) Brown of Fayetteville, N.C.

James was fondly considered to be "Big Brother" to Natalie Manns Taylor and Ava Manns Pope of Greensboro, N.C. He is also survived by numerous uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces, cousins and friends.

With the current restrictions due to the coronavirus, a memorial service will be announced at a later date.

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

## McCoy, Larry Mitchell

Larry Mitchell McCoy, 76, of McCoy died Tuesday, Jan. 5, 2021, at Roanoke Memorial Hospital.

He was born in Montgomery County on Oct. 18, 1944, to the late Aubrey Carl "Pumpkin" and Beatrice Moses McCoy. He was preceded in death by an infant brother, Barry McCoy; stepmother, Lourine McCoy; and a brother, Charlie "Buster" Carroll.

He is survived by his daughters and son-



in-law, Bridget Linkous and Sonia and Wesley Willis; seven grandchildren, Chelsea, Jessie, Michael, Mariah, Savanna, Bryson, Luna; a sister, Anita Zwolinski; brothers and sisters-in law, Andy and Patsy McCoy and Todd and Connie McCoy; and several nieces and nephews.

Per Larry's request there will be no services.

Arrangements by McCoy Funeral Home, Blacksburg.

## Duncan, Bobbie Lee

Bobbie Lee Duncan, 83, of Johnson City, Tenn., died, Monday, Jan. 4, 2021.

He was born in Cambria, Va., on Sept. 2, 1937, to the late Albert L. and Cora Britt Duncan. He was preceded in death by his brother, Albert L. Duncan, Jr.

He was a veteran in the United States Air Force, serving in the Vietnam War where he received the Bronze Star. He retired from the Air Force after 22 years with the rank of Sr. Master Sergeant. He was a lifelong VFW member. The

discipline and patriotism he learned in the Air Force never left him, as friends and family will attest. After his retirement he was a corrections officer with the Dept. of Corrections in Orange Co., Fla.

He is survived by his wife, Jane Agee Duncan; children Susan R. Keen (Bruce) and Sandra Linkous and husband, Greg; grandchildren Andy Rutledge and wife, Sabrina, Rachel Rutledge (Brittan Young), Brandon Linkous and fiancé, Jessica Kidd, Tessa Wright and hus-

band, Matt, Ian Linkous, Ashley Graham and husband Chris Graham; great-grandchildren Colton Rutledge, Ella Wright, Kaden Wright; brothers Charles Douglas Duncan, Lucy and Laney Graham; numerous nieces and nephews and beloved four-legged family member, Taz.

A private graveside service will be held at the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery, Dublin, Va. with TAPS being played by his nephew SSC Ron Duncan, United States Army. Arrangements by McCoy Funeral Home, Blacksburg.

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# MONTGOMERY SPORTS

## Athletic competition at county, Radford schools still shut down amid battle with COVID

**Marty Gordon**  
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Student-athletes in Montgomery County schools and at Radford High School are still waiting for a chance to play as local public schools battle COVID-19 by cancelling and postponing winter sporting events.

Danny Knott, director of human resources and athletics in the county, calls it a struggle every day. “We want to get our student-athletes playing. We just can’t right now,” he told school board members earlier this week.

It’s a battle many parents want changed. The “Let Them Play” movement was seen Tuesday night in the parking lot of the county administration building. Inside, the school board listened to Knott with open minds. Outside, youngsters stood in one accord with signs and chants asking the board to consider an exception to the current policy.

For now, the group and the school system are following a standard set late last year decreeing that if the positive number of COVID cases remains in the “high” category, sports

will not be played.

The problem for county student-athletes is that those numbers continue to show an upward swing and are in the “high number” category in terms of COVID-19 positive cases being reported in the county.

Montgomery County’s public schools are following “Return to Play Criteria” approved late last year. In addition, they are using the “Virginia High School Phase III Guidelines” as the COVID cases have not been trending down over the past two weeks.

“We continue to look at those numbers and monitor them as we move forward,” Knott said. For now, Montgomery County remains in the high-risk category. Once the metrics trend downward for a 14-day period, high school athletic competition can begin.

As of Wednesday morning, Virginia health officials have reported 377,300 coronavirus cases and 5,226 virus-related deaths since the pandemic began. This includes 5,387 new confirmed and probable diagnoses — marking the highest single-day spike in new cases since the start of the pandemic

— and 35 new confirmed and probable fatalities across the commonwealth. Montgomery County has been averaging 30-40 new cases on a daily basis. The county has recorded a total of 5,398 cases, 115 hospitalizations and 43 deaths since the pandemic’s beginnings.

The “MCPS Return to Play Criteria” was approved by Region VI superintendents from Allegheny, Covington, Craig, Botetourt, Roanoke County, Roanoke City, Salem, Montgomery, Floyd, Franklin, Patrick, Henry, Martinsville, Pittsylvania and Danville. Botetourt recently pulled out of the plan and has begun some competition.

Montgomery County’s activity calendar for the high schools is littered with the cancellation and postponement of athletic events.

Knott said in most cases, county athletic directors are adjusting on a daily and weekly basis. According to Knott, the AD’s are typically told on Friday if they can begin play in the next week. Recently, however, the school system has pushed the scheduling out for two weeks because of the coronavirus metrics

currently in place.

The Virginia High School League, which governs the state’s public schools, is still sticking to a shortened winter season, which would conclude in mid-February. By then, a shortened “fall” season would commence and would last for approximately nine weeks before the true spring sports seasons would begin.

The “Let Them Play” movement includes a new Facebook page that has been flooded with comments and videos from parents and athletes.

Some of those individuals addressed the school board during the public address session Tuesday. Christiansburg senior wrestler Kyle Keister is one of those who remains in limbo this winter.

“With wrestling, you really need to get as much time on the mat as you can because that’s where most of your technique is going to come from,” Keister said. “For people like me who have been wrestling only a couple of years, I get most of my practice time on the mat and I need it.”

Keister said that in many cases like his, athletics gives the students



FILE PHOTO  
**Area student-athletes are waiting to get back into competition as Montgomery County leaders have athletics on hold until COVID numbers come down.**

a chance to gain a scholarship to further their education. For now, he is not being given the opportunity to impress college recruiters who might be watching from afar.

Kate Henley, whose son Caleb plays basketball and football at Christiansburg High School, expressed similar sentiment. Athletics, she said, in some cases

gives the student-athletes extra motivation to get better grades and impress college coaches.

Across the river in Radford, the boys’ basketball program shut down its day-to-day activities and contests after at least five players reported some type of COVID-19 contact. Hopes are that competition can resume next Monday.



PHOTO COURTESY OF RUSTY WALLACE RACING EXPERIENCE

**The Rusty Wallace Racing Experience has found a new home at Motor Mile Speedway in Radford. Starting in April, the public can have first-hand experiences in Late-Model cars and dragsters.**

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Have you ever wondered what it would be like behind the wheel of a race car? Now, you have the chance at Motor Mile Speedway near Radford.

Late last year, Motor Mile Speedway entered into a landmark agreement with The Rusty Wallace Racing Experience. Under the agreement, which includes a multi-year lease, RWRE will assume control of venue operations with Motor Mile Speedway and Dragway becoming the home track of the Rusty Wallace Racing Experience and

its companion companies. This includes the acclaimed Pure Speed Drag Racing Experience.

Mark Ebert, president and CEO of Rusty Wallace Racing Experience (RWRE), said The Experience can’t wait to combine the amazing facility at Motor Mile with a full slate of racing on the oval and dragstrip plus the interactive opportunities for the fans to get behind the wheel of a NASCAR style Late Model rear engine dragster or into one of the company’s racing go-karts.

RWRE is the largest racing school in the country, offering NASCAR-

## Rusty Wallace Racing Experience to race at Radford’s Motor Mile Speedway

style driving experiences at over 80 tracks in the United States and Canada. Founded in 2005, the North Carolina-based company boasts a diverse collection of driving schools.

“Our NASCAR style driving experience will be offered in a NASCAR style Late Model with the Rusty Wallace Racing Experience. Our dragster experience will be offered on the dragstrip with our Pure Speed Drag Racing Experience,” Ebert said.

Motor Mile Speedway celebrated its 31st anniversary as a NASCAR-sanctioned short track in 2020.

Ebert describes the racing experience at Motor Mile as amazing, giving race fans the chance to experience racing first-hand.

“Our Late Models run the same chassis, brakes and tires that they see our top teams running on Saturday night,” Eb-

ert said. “It’s the chance to really see what it really feels like to turn laps at Motor Mile. On the Pure Speed side, it’s the magic of driving a real rear-engine dragster. There’s something special about a dragster, and behind the wheel of one of these awesome machines is where we will be putting drivers.”

The management group is adding a new cart track along the hillside of turn 4 of the oval track.

“We are repurposing part of the dragstrip parking lot for part of the karting track, and then we contracted with Norwood Development to build a new portion of additional kart track,” Ebert said. “It is cut into the hillside behind turn 4 of the oval track including one long banked corner that’s cut into the hillside and is just awesome.”

The karting track will have multiple lanes to allow for some great side-

by-side racing and passing. The facility will have three different variations in size ranging from 1/8th mile to just shy of 1/2 mile.

“We will generally use the largest configuration but will use the smaller configurations depending upon other activities at the racetrack and the need for parking,” Ebert said.

Plans call for the expansion of the track’s concessions with new open-air seating overlooking the race track for the cost of a regular dinner.

“We will be working very hard to make both the dragstrip and the speedway interactive on race night with an active midway, show cars, food trucks and more, and the idea of adding karting to everything else provides more fun for the whole family,” Ebert said.

The racing experiences and karting track are scheduled to open the first week in April.

Ride-alongs start at \$59, and driving experiences start at \$99 for dragsters and circle track. Karting will start at \$15 per race with multiple race packages available taking the price down to just \$9 per race.

Additionally, the karting track will be open for “date night” starting on Thursdays and Fridays in April. Customers can buy a kart race along with dinner and a soft drink for just \$48 for two.

Participants in the driving programs must be at least 18 years old. In the ride-along programs, riders must be at least 14 and must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.

For more information or to reserve a racing experience, go to [www.motormile Speedway.com](http://www.motormile Speedway.com). To find out more information on other locations and availability go to [www.racewithrusty.com](http://www.racewithrusty.com).

## Louisville outlasts Hokies 73-71 in a second-half heartbreaker

**Marty Gordon**  
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LOUISVILLE, Ky. — The No.19 Virginia Tech men’s basketball team fell in a second-half heartbreaker to No. 25 Louisville 73-71 inside the KFC Yum! Center Wednesday evening.

Louisville (8-1, 3-0 ACC) extended its streak to 17 straight wins against the Hokies (8-2, 2-1 ACC). Mike Young fell to 0-2 versus the Cards and 1-3 against head coach Chris Mack.

Jalen Cone led the Hokies with 23 points, a career-high beating his previous of 18 against Longwood. Cone contributed six of the Hokies’ 10 treys. Nahiem Alleyne had 15 points for Tech, and Keve Aluma contributed 11 points. Justyn Mutts scored 10 points and grabbed eight rebounds.

The Hokies shot 80% (16 of 20) from the free-throw line and 42.6% overall.

Defensively, Alleyne led the Hokies with seven steals. Tech capitalized on Louisville’s 12 turnovers by scoring 13 points.

The Cardinals outshot Tech by hitting 47.3% of their shots from the floor. Louisville’s Carlik Jones and David Johnson both picked up 17 points and Jae’Lyn Withers scored 16.

### THE GAME

The Hokies came out strong by jumping out to an 11-0 lead. The run began with a jumper from Aluma and ended with two threes from Mutts. The Cards responded with a nine-point run, and after that the teams went back and forth for the remainder of the half, which ended with the Cardinals in the lead 36-31.

Louisville started the second half with a 7-0 run to go up 43-31 and went on to up their margin to 14 points, their biggest lead of the game. The Hokies chipped away at the Cards with several small runs through the half. Cone scored 12 points in the climb back into the game.

With six seconds left, Aluma made two free throws to cut the Cardinals’ lead to one. After a Hokie foul, Louisville’s Johnson made a free throw to maintain the lead, and the Cardinals held on to hand the Hokies their first ACC loss of the season.

### GAME NOTES

- The Hokies’ bench outscored Louisville 30-17.
- Tech outscored Louisville in points off turnovers 13-12.
- Louisville was able to outscore the Hokies in



**Sophomore guard Jalen Cole scored a career-high 23 points to lead the VT effort.**

points in the paint (20-30), fastbreak points (2-8) and second-chance points (5-15).

- The Hokies were able to secure more 3-point

field goals (9-6), but the Cardinals outnumbered the Hokies (23-26) from inside the arc.

### UP NEXT

The Hokies will host

Notre Dame (3-6, 0-3) at 6 p.m. today, Jan. 9, at Carilion Clinic Court at Cassell Coliseum with coverage available through the ACC Network.





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