



COVID-19 vaccinations available now at CVS Pharmacy

On Friday, Feb. 12, CVS Pharmacy began administering COVID-19 vaccinations.

That came after CVS began on Tuesday, Feb. 9, to register Virginians age 65 and older who are within the Phase 1b eligibility guidelines for vaccinations as part of the Federal Retail Pharmacy Program for COVID-19 Vaccination.

Eligible individuals can register at <https://www.cvs.com/immunizations/covid-19-vaccine>.

The Virginia Department of Health has worked closely with CVS to ensure that the CVS system follows Virginia's priority guidelines and to provide an advance opportunity for eligible individuals already registered on

VDH waiting lists. Because of technological limitations with their national appointment system, however, CVS is unable to reserve appointments for pre-registered individuals. Virginia will continue to work towards a solution in partnership with other participating states and the federal government.

The federal program will supplement existing vaccination programs by providing 26,000 more vaccines to Virginians. CVS is the first of Virginia's pharmacy partners in the federal pharmacy partnership to move forward with vaccinations. More pharmacies and more locations are expected to start vaccinating patients in the future.

The Federal Retail Pharmacy Pro-

gram for COVID-19 Vaccination is a public-private partnership between pharmacy companies and the federal government. Pharmacy companies receive vaccines directly from the federal government through the partnership program. Initially, the federal government asked states to limit distribution to one pharmacy chain partner. CVS Health is the initial pharmacy partner for the program in Virginia.

The appointment for the second vaccination will be made when the first vaccination appointment is scheduled. Those without online access can contact CVS Customer Service at (800) 746-7287. Walk-in vaccinations without an appointment will not be provided.



Businessman Larry Linkous is challenging Democrat Christ Hurst for the House seat in Virginia's 12th district.

Blacksburg businessman Larry Linkous enters race for Virginia House District 12 seat

Larry Linkous, a Blacksburg native and longtime businessman, is throwing his hat into the ring for the 12th District Virginia General Assembly House seat currently held by Democrat Chris Hurst. Linkous is running as a Republican.

Hurst has held the seat the past three years after defeating Republican Joseph Yost in the 2018 election cycle. His current term ends on January 12, 2022.

The 12th district represents the city of Radford, Giles County, and portions of Montgomery County and Pulaski County.

Linkous decided to run after being approached by a number of people over the past few months. "I am displeased with the current political climate here and want to change it," he said.

Linkous made his announcement Thursday in the parking lot of the Hilton Garden in Blacksburg. Supporters gathered with masks and sat in the cars, tooting their horns after the candidate made a few remarks.

Linkous is no stranger to the region, having served as the past chairman of the Montgomery County Board of Supervisors, the New River Community College Board and the Montgomery County Economic Development Authority. He ran unsuccessfully for the House seat in the early 90's.

He is an auctioneer by trade and has served as the past chairman of the Virginia Auctioneers Regulatory Board and president of the Virginia Auctioneers Association. He was named the 2000 Virginia Auctioneer of the Year and remains active in the state group.

Linkous was also one of the first auctioneers certified in the commonwealth with license number three. In 1989, he was named the businessperson of the year by the Greater Blacksburg Chamber of Commerce.

In 2001, he was named the chamber's Distinguished Citizen of the Year. He has been active in the

See Linkous, page 3

Civil War-era love letter remains a mystery

On July 12, 1863, a young Virginia Cross picked up a pen and ink, several sheets of precious paper, and wrote to her sweetheart, a discharged Civil War soldier. She used a small blade to cut an intricate and delicate white heart to enclose with her words.

"Dear Sir, I received your letter and was glad to hear that you were well and it found me enjoying the same feeling also and was very glad to hear that you had got your discharge from service," wrote Cross. "I would be very glad to see you as soon as you can make it convenient to come down."

The letter continued with coyness and humor as Cross described a sweetheart she picked out for him. "I want you to come and see her and see if she will soot you," wrote Cross. "I have picked one out as near like myself as

I could find her so you will come and look at her and see if you like her."

She then ended the letter with words of love: "Remember well and bear in mind that a faithful friend is hard to find and when you find one that is write just and true never slight the old for the new. My pen is bad my ink is pale my love for you will never fail."

More than 150 years after Cross put pen to paper, Kira Dietz, Virginia Tech University Libraries assistant director of Special Collections and University Archives, said the flowing cursive handwriting, lack of punctuation and irregular spelling are common for letters of that time. The enclosed romance-inspired artwork, called Scherenschnitte or "scissor cuts," is not.

"We purchased the letter from a

Pennsylvania bookseller and gallery owner," said Dietz. "This is a classic letter for scholars interested in the homefront, relationships and history of language during the Civil War. What makes this letter unique is the enclosed folk art. She folded the heart in half and used the blade to carve out the pattern so the design can be consistent."

Special Collections and University Archives has one other letter carved in this way, but the carving was done inside the letter with the Civil War soldier author writing around the cuts. The Virginia Cross heart was an enclosure. Researchers can infer special meaning for using a separate piece of paper to make this gift.

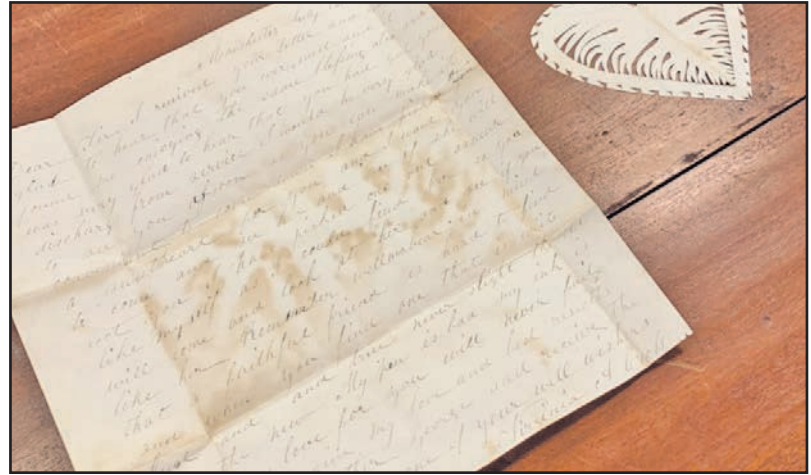
"In 1863, during wartime, people were conservative about paper use," said Deitz. "She used this extra piece of paper to create the art and it survived, still in one piece. It's a heart detached at the bottom; it's intricate work."

Was her family well-to-do and able to afford the extra expense or was her love that strong for her sweetheart? We may never know.

"We don't know if she wrote to a Union or Confederate soldier," said Dietz. "The header says Manchester, but there are Manchesters in the North and South."

Dietz has looked for Virginia Cross in the 1860 census and in marriage records around that time. She said finding anything about unmarried women can be tricky.

See Love Letter, page 2



In 1863, Virginia Cross penned a letter to her sweetheart and enclosed an intricate piece of folk art. The letter and art are now housed in the Virginia Tech University Libraries' Special Collections and University Archives.

Survey: Americans to spend less this Valentine's Day; candy remains the favorite purchase

According to a Valentine's Day spending survey conducted by the personal finance website WalletHub, Americans have lowered their expectations for Valentine's Day 2021. With many Americans facing budget constraints because of COVID-19, the survey revealed that 98 million Americans expect their significant other to spend less on Valentine's Day this year than they did last year.

The survey uncovered just how dire those financial restraints might be, showing that 59 percent of those surveyed expect their valentine to spend \$50 or less this Valentine's Day. Twenty-eight percent of the survey respondents don't expect their valentine to spend anything at all on them. Another 31 percent expect their significant other to spend only between \$1 and \$49. Thirty-four percent of those answering the

survey questions said they expect to have between \$50 and \$100 spent on them for Valentine's Day. Only seven percent said they expected their loved one to spend more than \$100 on them.

Candy remains the Valentine's Day gift of choice for 54 percent of the population surveyed. Other gifts are greeting cards 44%, flowers 36%, an evening out 24%, a gift card 21%, clothing 20% and jewelry 18%.

But COVID-19 has indeed forced some changes in Americans' love life. Seventy-two percent of the people surveyed said they've spent less money on dating since COVID-19 started.

It turns out men may be more romantic than the distaff side. Twenty-one percent of the men questioned said they think a Valentine's Day gift is worth going into credit card debt

See Survey, page 2



Tips for celebrating Valentine's Day and dating online during a pandemic



COVID-19 has reshaped our lives and the many ways in which we navigate and experience human relationships.

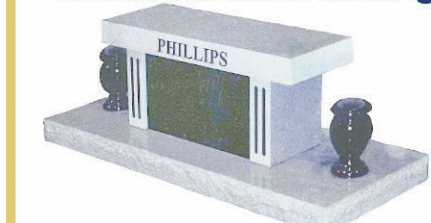
While alternate means of communications such as FaceTime and Zoom are not as authentic as face-to-face interaction, Virginia Tech's Heidi

Williams says virtual platforms can provide space to develop meaningful relationships during a pandemic.

"Many people find their romantic or sexual interests online," says Williams, an assistant

See Celebrating, page 3

Cremation Memorialization helps the family move forward from grief to remembrance



Granite Bench for Cremation Urns



Permanent Home for Cremation Urns



Memorial Gardens of the New River Valley
2551 North Main Street
Blacksburg, VA 24060
(540) 552-7800

www.memorialgardensnr.com
cturner@memorialgardensnr.com

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

COVID-19 shots at Blue Ridge Church

Since December, I have been watching individuals on television stand in line to be tested or to receive their COVID shots. On one station a reporter stated that people had been standing in lines for hours to get tested or to receive a shot.

After I received information concerning when I should go to Blue Ridge Church in Christiansburg, when I got to the church, there was a small line that was moving quickly. I was in and out in 45 minutes. I was so pleased that it went so quickly and easily.

Last Wednesday, I went for the second shot. I could not believe it. No line. Walked in, filled out some papers, got the shot, waited for any reaction and left. I could have done the whole procedure during half-time of the super bowl.

What a great job, so well organized. Maybe it was done so quickly and so much faster than the big cities because there were fewer people. (I have heard they are giving 1400 shots a day at Blue Ridge Church.)

But I think it was because the people were better organized and were ready to help end

this terrible situation that the country has been facing for the last year. It is hard to beat the citizens in our town.

As I was leaving the church, I told a lady who had just received her shot that the workers deserved an "A." She said, forget it, they should receive a triple "A."

Another thing I noticed as people were leaving: They were walking a little taller and had smiles on their faces like a burden had been taken from them.

I felt the same way. As a member of the Christiansburg Town Council, I have not had much to be happy about during the last several months. Getting the two shots certainly made my life better.

With the way everyone is working together, we are going to win this battle and become a stronger, better community.

*Steve Huppert
Christiansburg
Town Council*

Note: These are my comments and do not represent the opinions of the Christiansburg staff or members of the Christiansburg Town Council.

OPINION

Water, water everywhere, including on my brain

I mentioned in an earlier column that as I've gotten older, I seem to have fallen victim to a propensity for lapses into what I have labeled time loops: memories from long ago that just show up of their own accord as momentary flashbacks. They're there and then they're gone: snippets of my past I haven't thought of in decades.

Some of those recently have had to do with water and me.

John Denver, whom critics dubbed "a song's best friend," once sang of "the serenity of a clear blue mountain lake." Even for me with my balance-challenged self so that the only time I tried water skiing I dang near did myself some grievous bodily harm, water has always been like a magnet. It wasn't a mountain lake that day I climbed aboard the skis, and I sure didn't find any serenity as I struggled to shore with my body battered by those selfsame unruly skis. But I just couldn't resist the siren call of the water.

Growing up, the highlight of the year was my family's summertime vacations to the beaches of Panama City, Fla. My wife and I have been beach folks, too, taking off for long weekends whenever we can, usually to Mexico Beach, Fla., which tragically was pretty much obliterated in 2018 by Hurricane Michael.

Sadly, beach trips came to an end when we left Georgia and moved to Virginia. The nature of our jobs makes trips to the Virginia coastline impossible. Too far away.

We aren't the only ones, of course, for whom the nearest body of water holds an attraction too compelling to ignore. There's just something primal and primeval about the whole relationship and the need we as humans have to immerse ourselves in and seek solace from the water.

We dive right in even knowing that the deep -- briny or other-

wise -- is the repository of some of the most dangerous and nightmarish creatures on the planet. A special little joy is the Irukandji or box jellyfish that inhabits the northern waters of Australia. I ran across this delightful little monster on a recent TV show about Australia's deadliest critters. And there's a whole bunch of them.

The box jellyfish is apparently an innocuous little creature. It's a tiny thing, about a cubic centimeter. It is thus the smallest jellyfish in the world, but its size doesn't seem to make it self-conscious at all. It is also one of the world's deadliest jellyfish. Its stings can cause fatal brain hemorrhages and have been characterized as "100 times as potent as that of a cobra and 1,000 times stronger than a tarantula's."

And there they are in that water right off the coast. Thank goodness, I'm about as close to Australia as I ever plan to get.

And don't forget giant squids like that in Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea and Bruce, fictitious but emblematic of a real monster, the great white shark.

A league, by the way, in case you're interested, is a very inexact unit of nautical measurement. Apparently it varies in different countries and at different time periods. In English-speaking countries, a league has usually been about three miles. Since Jules Verne was French, it seems unlikely he was talking about 60,000 miles.

But nasty creatures -- with or without gills -- don't seem to keep us from diving right in and invading their territory. The truth is that when we're in the water, since we don't have gills, we're somewhere we really don't belong no matter how much we might like it.

To this day, the most achingly beautiful scene I have ever been privileged to see was the Bay of

Naples at sunset, the water so blue and clear it didn't look real, Mt. Vesuvius in the background across the bay. One of those flashbacks I hope comes again.

When I think of bodies of water, particularly those that lend themselves to fishing, I can't help but think of my father and grandfather, dedicated anglers both. I have often thought I let my dad down in the sense that I didn't inherit his love of fishing. Maybe I compensated for it by marrying a fisherwoman. She can bait a hook and work a cane pole with the best of them.

Part of my failure to fish may well come from one of the ironies of my life. Despite my affinity for the water, I don't eat anything that comes from it. I don't like seafood and it's not just fish. If it had to be hauled from the water, I don't want it on my plate or my palate. Picky, picky, picky. But I do like olives, if that's any consolation.

Still caught in my time loop and thinking of fishing, I pause a minute or two to recall Grumpier Old Men in which Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau reel in Catfish Hunter, a beautifully named monster catfish they have been trying to catch for 20 years or so. They admire him for a moment, savor their accomplishment and the challenge he gave them, and then they toss him back into the lake to swim away.

I like that scene. A sort of tribute from two old men who have loved the water and what it has offered them all their lives. Kind of like me.

The author is a man of a certain age who -- in a time loop flashback -- recalls the time a few decades back when the wife and he took a train ride from New Orleans to Atlanta. As they crossed Lake Pontchartrain, in what must surely be a recurring ritual, the fishermen close to the tracks as a group -- in separate boats, of course -- mooned the passing train.

News Messenger

Established 1869

(540) 389-9355

P.O. Box 1125 • Salem, VA 24153

USPS 016-490 Online: www.ourvalley.org

Michael Showell, *Publisher*

Ed McMinn, *Editor*

editor@ourvalley.org

Heather Bell, *Community News Editor*

communitynews@ourvalley.org

Lynn Hurst, *General Manager*

lhurst@ourvalley.org

Randy Thompson, *Advertising Consultant*

advertise@ourvalley.org

Give us your view:

editor@ourvalley.org

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.

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.

WalletHub: Three Virginia sites rank among 20 best places in which to get married; average wedding costs \$38,000+

With Valentine's Day on Sunday and COVID-19 vaccinations paving the way for safer weddings in the coming months, the personal finance website WalletHub has released its report on 2021's Best Places to Get Married and included three commonwealth locations -- Newport News (12), Virginia Beach (15) and Rich-

mond (18) -- among its top 20.

According to the survey, the top five best places to get married in are 1) Orlando, Fla. 2) Fayetteville, N.C. 3) Austin, Texas 4) Portland, Ore. and 5) Charleston W.Va. Couples will want to avoid what WalletHub determined to be the five worst places in which to marry: 182) Providence, R.I. 181) Jersey City, N.J. 180) Newark, N.J. 179) Yonkers, N.Y. and 178) Bridgeport, Conn.

The website noted that the restrictions on large gatherings will eventually be loosened once a significant portion of the U.S. is able to get vaccinated this year. Therefore, engaged couples may want to begin their wedding planning now so that they will have less of a rush when things return to

normal. In the aftermath of COVID-19, the website points out, cost is likely to be an even bigger concern than it usually is for many couples as millions of Americans have been financially impacted by the pandemic and may need to cut back their spending.

WalletHub reports that weddings in the U.S. traditionally have an enormous price tag with the average couple shelling out over \$38,000 for their big day. There are so many things to purchase and organize that many couples hire professional event planners to do the heavy lifting.

Between sending invitations, securing reservations, planning a menu and observing over final touches on the cake, it's no wonder weddings are arranged

months, even years, in advance. Tying the knot is a huge commitment, and the wedding industry is worth around \$73.3 billion in revenue per year.

To assist with the planning process, WalletHub compared more than 180 U.S. cities to find the cheapest and most convenient wedding destinations that also promise a memorable day. They examined each city across 20 key indicators of wedding-friendliness. Included among those indicators were the average wedding cost, the number of chapels and churches per capita, the number of wedding planners per capita, the number of bridal shops per capita, the number of flower shops per capita and the number of venues and event spaces per capita.

CROSSWORD ANSWERS

	A	R	A	B	I	C		C	A	L	K	
	A	B	A	L	O	N	E		A	R	I	A
	A	L	B	S		A	N		F	A	C	E
R	E	T	I	R	E		S	H	E	K	E	L
M	C	Z	E	D		S	T	O	A	S		
S	C	H	A	V		E	A	R	P			
M	A	R	I		S	C	H		P	C		
M	I	A		M	U	R		Y	A	P		
	N	T		I	R	S		N	L	R	B	
				I	D	L	E		E	M	C	E
				S	O	R	E	S		A	W	N
C	A	B	A	N	A		E	Y	E	C	U	P
S	L	A	B		M	A	D		R	E	S	H
C	A	L	I		A	C	A	C	I	A	S	
H	Y	M	N		S	E	N	D	E	R		

COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTORY



**CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING
REALLY WORKS!
CALL (540) 382-6171**

Find us on: **facebook**

Want to keep up with local news, sports and events?
SUBSCRIBE TODAY
Call (540) 382-6171

To advertise in this space,
call Randy Thompson
at 540-230-1129
advertising@mainstreetnewspapers.com

OBITUARY

Trail, Thomas Emmett "Tom"

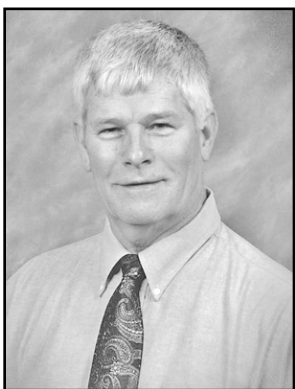
Thomas "Tom" Emmett Trail, 78, passed away Monday, Feb. 8, 2021, at his home in Radford.

Born and raised in Radford, he was a Bobcat football star and always attended home games.

He was retired from Lynchburg Foundry where he worked most of his life with stints as an independent contractor and a pattern maker.

After retirement, Tom enjoyed camping with friends and family, going to bluegrass festivals, exploring Radford history, and weekly coffee and conversation with the McDonald's crew. Most of all, he enjoyed the simple things in life: sitting outside feeding the birds; listening to live bluegrass music; sharing stories and jokes with old friends; helping others with construction projects; Bobcat football games; going on drives all around the New River Valley; reading the Bible; serving his church, Carter Street Methodist; and spending time with loved ones.

He was devoted to his grandchildren, Jordan and Madison, whom he helped



raise and who loved playing with and talking to their Pawpaw. His beloved wife, Mary, was his partner in all he did and was always by his side.

Tom was preceded in death by his parents, James and Jeannie Trail; brothers James, Jr., and Dan Trail; and sisters Eleanor Myers, Nancy Viers, Isabel Simpkins, Jeanette Dickerson,

Frances Harris and Judy Sarver. Survivors include his wife of 58 years, Mary Jane Trail; a son and daughter-in-law, Thomas Jr. and Amy Trail; a daughter, Melissa Naff; grandchildren Jordan and Madison; a brother and sister-in-law, Bob and Lorraine Trail; a sister-in-law, Hattie Ethel Altizer Trail; special friends Kathy and Lauren Young; and many other relatives and friends.

Services will be held at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that contributions be made to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

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

Even During This Pandemic, Everyone Deserves a Burial Service So Their Family and Friends Can Say One Last "Goodbye"

We Offer Graveside Services with Social Distancing, at no additional cost.

- Services can be broadcast to attendees' car radios.
- At the completion of the service, the family will receive visitors via drive-through visitation as the attendees leave the service.
- Families have been very appreciative of these services.
- Arrangements can be made on very short notice.



Memorial Gardens
OF THE NEW RIVER VALLEY



After You Have Acquired a Cremation Urn from the Funeral Home, the Process is Not Yet Complete Until the Urn is Permanently Placed.

Because folks just don't know what to do, Nearly One-Third of All Homes Still Have Ashes of a Loved One.

Let us help you choose among our beautiful Columbarium, Urn Bench, or Ground Space options.



Memorial Gardens of the New River Valley

2551 North Main Street, Blacksburg, VA 24060 • (540) 552-7800

www.memorialgardensnr.com • cturner@memorialgardensnr.com

Send community news and photos to
communitynews@ourvalley.org

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. Eucharist Sundays at 11am and Wednesday's at 12pm.

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.

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 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!

ECKANKAR

Eckankar, the Path of Spiritual Freedom, is located at 1420 3rd St. SW, Roanoke, VA 24016. However, due to COVID-19, the Light & Sound Services and other ECK programs are

currently available online through Zoom. Visit www.eck-va.org for program listings, www.meetup.com/Roanoke-Spiritual-Experiences-Group, or call 540-353-5365 and leave a message. We will return your call. Also visit www.eckankar.org for more information about how the teachings of Eckankar lead you to spiritual freedom.

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 luthermemorial-blacksburg@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.centralmethodist-church.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

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

Montgomery County WORSHIP DIRECTORY

Over the Top

Read Numbers 16:1 through 17:13

Gordon trudged into the house after a long day of work on his birthday, a year older and feeling every minute of it. He expected a quiet birthday dinner with his family, so he was stunned when he saw balloons and cake and friends shouting, "Surprise!" He was more than surprised. He was amazed at how much his family and friends clearly loved him.

God vowed to make the staff of his chosen priest miraculously sprout, but He couldn't resist going above and beyond.

The next day Moses entered the tent and saw that Aaron's staff, which represented

the tribe of Levi, had not only sprouted but had budded, blossomed and produced almonds (Numbers 17:8).

God has a way of amazing His people by meeting their needs in over-the-top ways. There's no better example than Jesus. Sure, God had promised a Messiah, but His own Son? It was stunning, unexpected, and it demonstrated that God was willing to go farther than we could ever imagine to save us.

Prayer Suggestion: Thank You, God, for the miraculous, amazing, over-the-top way You saved me.

Quicklook: Numbers 17:1-12

If your church is not listed and if you are interested, call Randy Thompson at 540-389-9355 or email at advertise@ourvalley.org

MONTGOMERY SPORTS



Big South changes 2021 basketball tournaments format

Marty Gordon
NRVsports@ourvalley.org

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to play havoc with sports schedules, the latest of which is an announcement from the Big South Conference that its 2021 Hercules Tires Basketball Championships will not be played at a neutral location but rather at the higher seed locations. That change affects Radford University.

The men's and women's tournaments had been scheduled to be played at Bojangles Coliseum in Charlotte.

The decision to adjust the format was made by the Big South's Council of Athletics Directors and is due to the current COVID-19 pandemic environment. Conference Commissioner Kyle Kallander said Wednesday he felt that for the health and safety of the student-athletes and participants, minimizing the number of teams and possible exposures in one location is smart.

"It also provides a reward to those teams with higher seeds for regular season success," he said.

This is the second time the conference has moved the neutral-site plan back another year. Initially, the 2019-2020 tournament would have been the first in Charlotte. Now, it could be no earlier than 2021-2022.

The men's and women's No. 1 seeds were originally scheduled to host the quarterfinal and semifinal rounds with higher seeds hosting first-round games. The highest remaining seed will still host the championship final.

The dates for the tournaments will be determined later and announced when they are finalized and will follow Big South Conference health and safety protocols and guidelines.

The new 2021 Hercules Tires Men's Basketball Championship Format:

First Round (at No. 6, 7, 8 seeds) – date TBD

Quarterfinal Round (at No. 1, 2, 3, 4 seeds) – date TBD

Semifinal Round (at higher seed) – date TBD

Championship Final (at highest remaining seed) – Sunday, March 7 (noon – ESPN)

2021 Hercules Tires Women's Basketball Championship Format:

First Round (at No. 6, 7, 8 seeds) – date TBD

Quarterfinal Round (at No. 1, 2, 3, 4 seeds) – date TBD

Semifinal Round (at higher seed) – date TBD

Championship Final (at highest remaining seed) – Sunday, March 14

Positive test results forcing teams to "pause" their seasons has affected the Big South just like every other conference. Kallander said, however, that proactive scheduling policies put in place prior to the season allowed the Big South Conference to

be flexible in ensuring the maximum number of games would be played.

"The Big South has led the country in the average number of games played by institution. That says a lot about the effort and cooperation by the Big South membership," he said.

COVID protocols have limited the contact of teams with possible positive COVID-19 cases as schedules have been adjusted several times. But Kallander admitted the threat of teams not being able to participate in post-season play due to COVID is still very real.

"We are currently exploring appropriate procedures in the event the Big South is faced with that challenge," he said.

The Big South is one of only three conferences nationwide that approved special scheduling in the midst of the restrictions. The league schedule was adjusted to limit travel and help ensure the health and safety of student-athletes, coaches and staff. In most cases, teams played doubleheaders on back-to-back days.

The conference also approved a plan that would allow teams to play with seven players in the first game of the doubleheader and only six players on the second day. So far, that has not come into play.

During the season, both Radford University's men's and women's basketball teams have had to shut down day-to-day operations because of the COVID-19 protocol.

Other college programs are also being affected by COVID-19. Emory & Henry College has announced that its wrestling program would shut down effective immediately due to health and safety concerns stemming from COVID-19.

"The student-athletes on the team have made the difficult decision to conclude their current season due to safety concerns," said Pete Hansen, head coach of the men's and women's wrestling teams. "I support their decision as we continue to focus on the safety of our student-athletes during this unprecedented time."

The Wasps competed in two meets during their inaugural season, before pausing wrestling-related activities in the middle of January due to COVID-19 positive cases and precautionary contact tracing measures among individuals.

Emory & Henry officials have said the school will maintain the current schedule of competition in other sports and will continue to observe thorough health and safety protocols based on guidance from local, state and national medical experts, which includes testing for all student-athletes prior to competitions.

Shutdown brings New York basketball player to NRV



PHOTO BY KYMN DAVIDSON-HAMLEY

Matt Simmons (left) became a starter for the Christiansburg High School basketball team after moving here in September.

Marty Gordon
NRVsports@ourvalley.org

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected high school student-athletes in many different ways. Seasons have been shut down or changed. Teams have faced tighter restrictions, and some players have opted out of this past year's athletic programs.

One high school basketball player wanted to play so badly he took a rather radical action. Matt Sim-

mons, from New Paltz, N.Y., packed up his gym bag and traveled 538 miles to the New River Valley and Christiansburg High School.

Simmons said he felt the change in address might be the only way he could receive attention from recruiters and have a chance at playing basketball in college.

"My sister goes to Virginia Tech and has a home here in Christiansburg, so it was a no-brainer. My

mom and I moved here," he said.

The 6-0 guard had played at his school in New York, but when it looked like this year's winter season wouldn't happen, he felt the move would be his only chance. He enrolled at Christiansburg High School and almost immediately was hit by the school system's going virtual. Fall sports were shut down, and winter sports were left hanging on the edge.

Simmons spoke at a Montgomery County School Board meeting in November and asked the group to consider allowing athletes to play. "Let them play" became the rallying cry, and it brought a special meaning for him.

"That was the reason I moved here, and then there was a chance we would not play. I was concerned and felt I needed to speak out," he said.

The school board agreed to let athletes play other county teams while

eliminating junior varsity and middle school winter sports altogether, and the aspiring basketball player had hope.

COVID has affected few students as much as it has Simmons. "But in my case, it's because I left my friends, left my school and left my family to move here."

But the move has certainly worked out well for him. He had a 4.0 GPA his first semester and moved into the Blue Demons' starting lineup. He spends most of his day at the Christiansburg Recreation Center shooting basketball, then practicing or playing and doing his schoolwork.

"I have had the best school year I have ever had. My new teammates have accepted me, and I love the area," Simmons said.

He hopes the move and the change in environment will lead to a path to playing college basketball and majoring in exercise science.

RU limits attendance for spring sports

Radford University Athletics announced Tuesday afternoon that because of the COVID-19 pandemic attendance for the events of the 2021 spring season will be restricted to a limited number of family members of the student-athletes and the coaches.

Affected by the restrictions are baseball, softball, women's lacrosse, men's and women's soccer, men's and women's tennis and volleyball.

According to the athletics department, the restrictions were put in place in accordance with the guidelines regarding in-person gatherings

of the Commonwealth of Virginia, local health officials and Radford University itself.

Radford Athletics has been working closely with the university, the Big South Conference and the Virginia Department of Health to provide a safe environment for all competitions this season. The health and safety of the student-athletes, coaching staff, community and fans is the top priority. The university will continue to monitor the situation as the spring sports season moves forward with hopes of allowing current RU students to attend the events later in

the semester.

Fans can watch select Highlander games from home on the ESPN+ platform. Information about whether or not events are streamed are available on the respective schedule pages. Fans can always keep up with events via live stats, which can also be found on the schedule pages.

Radford Athletics is currently offering a fan cutouts program for the spring seasons. To purchase a fan cutout or to get more information, visit radfordathletics.com/fancutouts.

--RU Athletics

Blacksburg High boys, girls win Region 4D indoor track titles

Marty Gordon
NRVsports@ourvalley.org

Blacksburg High School won the championship of both the boys and the girls Region 4D indoor track competitions this week in Amherst.

The BHS girls dominated their region opponents, rolling up 214 points. Finishing a distant second was Amherst with 105 points. Pulaski was third with 82 points.

The boys' competition was closer

with the Bruins easing past Pulaski 182-173. Amherst was third with 67 points.

For the girls, Blacksburg's Sophia Krouscas won the 300-meter dash while teammate Mari Garza was tops in the 500-meters. Other first-place winners for BHS were Audrey Link in the 1,000 meters, Annika Griggs in the 1,600-meters, Mia Jones in the 3,200-meter, and Katja Kehlenbeck in the high jump.

The Bruins dominated the relays,

winning the 4X400, the 4X200 and the 4X800.

On the boys' side of the track, Ben Hager won the 55 meters, Vance Ruiz claimed the 500 meters, Ben Schmitt won the 1,000 meters, Connor Rutherford finished first in the 1,600-meters and Lance Dinkel led the pack in the 3,200-meter run.

The Blacksburg boys also took gold in the 4X400 and 4X800 relay events.

Hokies announce baseball schedule

Virginia Tech baseball has released its 2021 schedule of 51 games, which will begin on Friday, Feb. 19, with a three-game series at home against Kent State at English Field at Atlantic Union Bank Park.

The Hokies then host Radford on Feb. 23 before traveling to Miami (Fla.) for their first ACC weekend on Feb. 26.

Tech will host an eight-game stint in Blacksburg against ACC opponents North Carolina (March 5-7) and Florida State (March 12-14), and non-conference opponent Virginia Commonwealth (March 9-10).

The Hokies will be at home for these ACC weekends: Boston Col-

lege (April 1-3), Georgia Tech (April 16-18), UVA (April 30-May 2) and Notre Dame (May 20-22).

The Hokies will play a home-and-home series against East Tennessee State (A: April 6; H: April 27) and Liberty (A: April 13; H: May 12).

Other non-conference opponents are VMI (April 20), Georgetown (May 4) and Toledo (May 8-9).

Tech goes on the road against ACC opponents Clemson (March 19-21), Pitt (March 26-28), Wake Forest (April 9-11), NC State (April 23-25) and Duke (May 14-16).

Tech is set to return 26 letter winners from last year's squad and will

welcome 20 newcomers under head coach John Szeft, who enters his fourth season.

Virginia Tech's 2021 baseball schedule:

Feb. 19-21, Kent State, Home

Feb. 23, Radford, Home

Feb. 26-28, Miami at Coral Gables, Fla.

March 5-7, North Carolina, Home

March 9-10, Virginia Commonwealth, Home

March 12-14, FSU, Home

March 19-21, Clemson at Clemson, S.C.

Pitt (March 26-28) at Pittsburgh

April 1-3, Boston College, Home

April 6, East Tennessee State, at Johnson City, Tenn.

April 9-11, Wake Forest at Winston-Salem, N.C.

April 13, Liberty at Lynchburg, Va.

April 16-18, Georgia Tech, Home

April 20, VMI, Home

April 23-25, N.C. State at Raleigh, N.C.

April 27, East Tennessee State, Home

April 30-May 2, Virginia, Home

May 4, Georgetown, Home

May 8-9, Toledo, Home

May 12, Liberty, Home

May 14-16, Duke at Durham, N.C.

May 20-22, Notre Dame, Home

May 25-30, ACC Championships, Charlotte, N.C.

Send community news and photos to communitynews@ourvalley.org



Ashley
HOMESTORE
this is home.

presidents
day **SALE**



up to
30%
off

or
0%
interest
for 5 years

shop now →

**BLACKSBURG:
1540 S MAIN STREET**

**Monday-Saturday: 10:00am - 7:00pm
Sunday: 12:00pm - 5:00pm**

**Roanoke | Lynchburg | Harrisonburg | Staunton
Waynesboro | Bluefield | Blacksburg | Wytheville**

Previous purchases excluded. Discounts applied to regular MSRP price. Cannot be combined with any other offer. Offers are nontransferable and do not apply to sales tax, shipping, mattresses, homestore specials, clearance, manager specials, floor model, Protection Plus plans, warranty and service charges. See store for details. Finance is subject to credit approval. See store for details on all financing offers. Valid through 2/22/21.