



Simpson named principal at Blacksburg High

Adam Simpson has been named the principal at Blacksburg High School, starting in July. Simpson has served as an assistant principal at Blacksburg

High School since July 2017. He oversees Bruin Academy, career and technical education, math, and Virginia Tiered Systems of Support at BHS.

"I am humbled and honored to have been selected as the next principal at BHS," Simpson said. "I am grateful for the opportunity to serve our

students, teachers, staff, and families as we work together to continue the tradition of excellence at Blacksburg High School."

Simpson received a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Virginia Tech, a master's degree in curriculum and instruction from Virginia Tech, and a master's degree in educational leadership from Radford University.

Guylene Wood-Setzer served as the interim principal at Blacksburg High School for the 2020-2021 school year and will start her new role as Director of Equity in July.



Dale Buckner to run for county board of supervisors

Dale Buckner, a long-time resident of Montgomery County, has announced plans to seek the Republican nomination for the District D seat on the county's board of supervisors.

Buckner said Thursday he would be a tireless worker for the interests of the people. He has lived in the Pilot community for the past 39 years and is a graduate of Christiansburg High School.

"I will actively listen to you and be a voice for everyone," Buckner said. "I will be a strong supporter of law enforcement and first responders and a non-wa-

vering supporter of the Second Amendment."

His platform also includes support for quality education opportunities for all students with a safe learning environment with school resource officers, high-speed Internet for all citizens in the county and better road maintenance and infrastructure while keeping taxes low.

"I will never participate in unnecessary spending of county money," he said.

The District D seat is currently held by Republican Todd King, who has announced he will seek re-election.

New bus allows Christiansburg Head Start to provide transportation to Shawsville, Elliston children

Tristan Mortensen
Contributing writer

New River Community Action (NRCA) has purchased and taken delivery of a new bus that will provide transportation for children in the Shawsville and Elliston areas, which will allow them to attend Head Start classes in Christiansburg for the upcoming 2021-2022 preschool year.

New River Community Action has for several years been unable to provide transportation for Shawsville and Elliston children.

"This bus will deliver materials for at-home learning, will be able to pick children up whose parents want them to have in-person instruction, and will deliver food from this center," said Sheryl Helm, the Director of Early Childhood and Family Services for NRCA.

Head Start is a federally funded pre-kindergarten program providing low-income children between the ages of 3 and 5 with various experiences to help them develop socially, cognitively, physically, and emotionally. The program is offered without charge to the families who meet the income eligibility requirements. The NRCA Head Start mission is to build on the unique strengths of children and families through positive engagement, health



New River Community Action Head Start teachers and staff show off the new bus that will provide transportation for children in the Shawsville and Elliston areas to the Christiansburg center.

education, and a quality pre-kindergarten experience.

The program takes place from August until May with full-day and part-day options available.

Children must be between 3 and 5, meet family income guidelines, and have a current physical with immunizations documentation. Parents may receive more information or may enroll their children by calling the Christiansburg Head Start Center at (540) 381-7559 or by e-mail mdefranco@nrca.org.

"We'll be able to provide comprehensive services which are not just

educational but include family and a mental health component. We will not only be able to serve the children, but serve the family," said Katie Collins, NRCA's Facilities and Transportation Coordinator.

"In the Shawsville and Elliston areas, which is where we are targeting with this bus, there is just a large gap in access to Head Start," Collins said. "The families live in our service area, but they can't make it to us."

The bus purchase was made possible with funding awarded through

See **New Bus**, page 3

Peggy Huber is a gardener, a community volunteer and a philosopher



Peggy Huber wields a shovel full of dirt to enrich the flowers that decorate the Radford Public Library. Like many other gardeners, Huber says the physical activity of her hobby keeps her healthy.



Peggy Huber sits on the edge of the Sundell Street roundabout where gardeners and town horticulturists have worked together to create a circular garden. The yellow crocuses that are in bloom right now are transplanted from her front yard.

Pat Brown
Contributing writer

Radford drivers may have spotted Peggy Huber last week shoveling dirt onto a bed of daffodils that was just starting to open up at the Radford Public Library.

Spring's early blossoms have brought her out of her West End home and into spaces around town that need a little sprucing up. At the Sundell Street roundabout, the crocuses she donated from her yard and planted months ago are coming up with vibrant yellow petals.

As spring continues, roundabout passers-by can follow the progress of the snow lilies she transplanted from her yard. Later in the growing season, drivers and walkers will be able to see daylilies, resurrection lilies and several types of irises she has shared.

"We've got such a beautiful walking system," Huber said of paths that meander through Radford's neighborhoods and parks. She wants to make them even prettier.

Huber has served on Radford's Beautification and Forestry Commission, but her volunteer gardening is separate from her committee work, and it dates back 35 years. Those were the years prior to Radford's hiring of professional horticulturists to enhance the town's beauty.

Several decades ago, she was among a small group of volun-

See **Peggy Huber**, page 2

LOVE works in Radford



According to the Radford Tourism & Cultural Arts Commission, a new attraction has been installed in downtown Radford: oversized L-O-V-E letters.

The display is at 1100 E. Main Street at the intersection of East Main and Virginia streets in what was formerly called the Farmers Market lot. The classic white acrylic letters feature the Radford logo inside the "O." According to the commission, the letters will be customized throughout the year to feature holidays and special events happening in Radford.

The bright white letters stand out against the ghost ad mural that is so well known and recognized in downtown Radford. A commission news release says the best picture can be taken by standing on the sidewalk to the east of the letters. A short wall in front of the letters allows for friends and family to easily be included in the photo.

The iconic Radford clock borders the photo to the right, and the mural in the background pays tribute to the many artistic offerings found in Radford from the Radford University College of Visual and

Performing Arts Series to the public art program that has been featured over the past several years and the local artisans and crafters that call Radford home.

The Virginia is for Lovers ad campaign is over 50 years old and is ranked as one of the most successful tourism campaigns of all time. The folks at Virginia Tourism have encouraged localities, businesses, and attractions to "share the love" and install their own LOVE works in their communities. As of now, there are over 200 works in the state, and many people plan trips around visiting the LOVE works and getting that perfect picture. For all of the works in the state, check out Virginia.org.

The Radford Info & Welcome Center is now open in its new location at 701A W. Main St. and has information about attractions and local places to eat, shop, and stay while in Radford. The welcome center has Radford logo souvenirs and merchandise. Its current operating hours are Tuesday through Thursday from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. The center can be reached at Info@VisitRadford.com for additional information.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Monday, March 22 through Friday, April 2

Noise alert: Steam ventilation
From March 22 – April 2, if the weather is unseasonably warm resulting in temperatures above normal, the university and surrounding community members may notice elevated noise levels in the proximity of the Virginia Tech power plant due to the steam venting process associated with the commissioning of the plant's new boiler.

This notice is provided as a precautionary measure to inform the surrounding community of the possible need to vent steam. There are no immediate plans to vent steam during this period. However, if temperatures are unseasonably warm, steam produced by the new boiler may need to be vented, resulting in elevated noise levels in the proximity of the power plant and in the surrounding area.

Possible intermittent noise will be limited to normal work hours (between 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.), Monday through Friday only. All efforts will be made to reduce noise levels as possible. The Division of Campus Planning, Infrastructure, and Facilities thanks the university community and local residents in advance for their patience and understanding. Questions related to the steam venting process (and during the process) may be directed to vtrepair@vt.edu or 540-231-4300.

Tuesday, March 23:

Radford City School Board meeting

The Radford City School Board will have a regular meeting at 6 p.m., at the School Administration Building. A copy of the agenda can be seen at www.rcps.org.

Wednesday, March

24, April 14, April 28, May 12, May 26

Hahn Horticulture Garden Virtual Road Trips

First stop on this virtual road trip is the Des Moines Botanical Garden in Des Moines, Iowa. Since travel restrictions are still in place, five gardens and arboretums are being brought here via Zoom.

The schedule for the Zoom road trips is as follows: March 24 at 2 p.m.: the Des Moines Botanical Garden with Sydney Algreen-Hunter; April 14 at 2 p.m.: the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center with Tanya Zastrow; April 28 at 3:30 p.m.: the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden with Brian Trader (VT Alumnus); May 12 at 2 p.m.: the Wisconsin Arboretum with David Stevens (VT Alumnus); May 26 at 2 p.m.: Lotusland with Paul Mills and Rebecca Anderson. Register online for these talks and a zoom link will be provided:

https://virginiatech.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cumxRA4Mec96guy.

Tuesday, March 30:

Neighborhood meeting for Conditional Use Permit for Kent Square

The Town of Blacksburg has received a request from Aaron Harris of Pointe West Management (applicant) on behalf of Kent Square LLC and Pointe West Management Co. (owners), to combine previously approved conditional use permits (CUP 11-0002; CUP 11-0007; CUP 16-0002 and CUP 18-0002) at Kent Square at 202 and 250 South Main St. (Tax Parcels 256-A 115 and 257-C A 1) to increase the maximum allowed ground-floor medical and general office square footage in the Downtown Commercial zoning district. A neighborhood meeting to con-

sider the request will be held on Tuesday, March 30, 2021, at 4:30 p.m., in the Roger E. Hedgepeth Chambers.

Thursday, April 1:

One Good Mama Bone Book Club

Bren McClain, author of "One Good Mama Bone," will be visiting library patrons virtually in April. In preparation for her author talk, a virtual book discussion will be held on April 1 at 6:30 p.m. The meeting ID is 810 1631 3691; the passcode is 570599.

Ongoing:

Head Start Enrolling

New River Community Action is now accepting applications for three- and four year olds for Head Start for the 2021-22 school year. Head Start offers a no-charge preschool for income eligible families. Families may apply by calling the local Head Start center, applying online at newrivercommunityaction.org or by picking up an application form in person at the local center. Applications are accepted year-round.

The phone numbers for the three local Head Start centers are Christiansburg 540-381-7559, Radford 540-731-4107 and Blacksburg 540-552-0490. Anyone applying in person should bring proof of the child's birth and proof of the family's income such as a 1040, a W-2, pay stubs, child support income, money received from grants, and unemployment income.

All month of March

Grab-and-Go Crafts

All month of March, at the Meadowbrook Public Library. Call the Meadowbrook Library to request Take and Make Craft Kits,

available for grab-and-go with curbside pickup. They are free but supplies are limited. Spring and Easter crafts will be available for pickup from March 22 through March 28.

StoryWalk

All month of March at the Christiansburg Library. Exercise your brain and body as you read and walk the trail. Begin at the library at the College Street entrance of Downtown Park. This month's book is "The Big Red Barn."

Teen/Adult Craft-Felt Smartphone Cover

All month of March at the Meadowbrook Public Library. Request a teen/adult craft to receive supplies to make your own felt phone cover. Supplies are limited.

Through March 31:

Keep Virginia Beautiful Annual "Shiver" Fundraising Event

Keep Virginia Beautiful (KVB) has opened registration for Shiver in Virginia, a reimagined version of its annual Shiver in the River festival that has been KVB's largest annual fundraiser since 2015. Shiver in Virginia runs until March 31. Participants engage in activities including litter cleanups, recycling, trail cleaning, graffiti removal and other good deeds.

For a donation of \$20.21, participants will receive a free Virginia State Parks parking pass with no expiration date. Participants will also have access to the KVB Mission Challenge website, where they can map the collective progress on the 2,021 mile path across the state. With each act reported, participants will be entered into drawings for additional prizes.

Virginia Tech Parking Survey

Virginia Tech has released a 2021 parking survey. All those who utilize parking and transportation in and around the Virginia Tech Blacksburg campus are invited to participate, including visitors and Blacksburg residents. The survey will close March 31, 2021, at 5 p.m.

All responses will remain anonymous and will be analyzed at the aggregate level. The survey should take fewer than 15 minutes to complete. To take the survey, visit <https://vtnews.vt.edu/notices/adm-evergreens/Transpoparkingsurvey.html>.

Through Thursday, April 15:

"ART GAWK: Selections from the Radford University Permanent Collection"

The exhibition is a selection of 111 works that range widely in media, artistic styles, and historical periods. The hours of the exhibition are Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. and Saturday from noon until 4 p.m. at the Art Museum at the Covington Center.

Through Saturday, April 24:

'Unbearable Beauty' Exhibit at Moss Arts Center

The exhibit is open each Wednesday from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. and on Saturdays from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. through Saturday, April 24. The exhibit is a demonstration of the devastation human activity has wreaked on the environment. The exhibit is free and open to the public.

Peggy Huber

from page 1

teers who solicited local businesses to donate money for flowers and then set about planting them in public space.

These days she seeks permission from the city horticulturist before adding or subtracting flora.

Right now, she's the only volunteer she is aware of, and she's excited about a new idea.

Huber wants to solicit town folks and businesses to contribute to a pansy

planting. She selected pansies because yellow pansies with black on the petals share the school colors of the Radford Bobcats. She wants athletes and their families -- among others -- to buy "Bobcat pansies" that can be added to flower beds because the plants are resistant to freezing even when they are under a blanket of snow.

"If someone tells you that you are a pansy, take

it as a compliment," she said.

Peggy Huber can get philosophical about gardening.

"I think I was born with dirt in my blood," she said recently. "I am programmed to enjoy growing flowers and edibles." She said she feels connected to the spirits of her grandparents and parents when she is gardening. "My mom's most lasting memories as she

slid into deep dementia were working in the garden and caring for young children," Huber said.

And she is certain gardening, as is often claimed, contributes to her good physical and mental health. In her seventh decade, she can dig and plant with the best of them.


"I should help you," a man said when he exited the library and saw Huber working in the library flower beds recently. "I dug the holes and he put in the bulbs," she said.

A dozen years ago, when Huber was logging some of her 30 years of teaching, a teenager asked to help her garden on the school grounds before and after school. She helped them grow butternut squash, and they cooked and ate their handiwork with a touch of butter and brown sugar. "They felt a sense of accomplishment and camaraderie," she said.

Twice Huber planted scads of daffodils at two different schools only to watch as a change in landscaping plans eradicated the spring blooms. She joked that she still has not been able to recreate the beautiful scene from the movie "Dr. Zhivago" when a field of snow melts and is replaced by a beautiful field of daffodils.

Husband Tom helps her maintain a vegetable garden in their backyard where "every year the flowers take more of the space," Peggy Huber said. The couple has two sons, a daughter and seven grandchildren.

"Gardening," Huber said, "is what I thought I could contribute."



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THE NRV MPO SEEKS PUBLIC INPUT FOR THE MPO TITLE VI PLAN UPDATE

The New River Valley MPO is in the process of updating its Title VI and Limited English Proficiency Plan. The plan, along with the opportunity to submit input, is available online at the MPO website: <http://www.montva.com/mpo>



Written comments will be received until April 13, 2021 at 5:00 pm.

Oral comments can be given at the MPO Policy Board meeting on May 6, 2021 at 2:00 pm at the Montgomery County Government Center.

The NRV MPO fully complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes and regulations in all programs and activities.

The NRV MPO will strive to provide reasonable accommodations and services for persons who require special assistance to participate in this public involvement opportunity. For more information, or to obtain a Discrimination Complaint Form, or to request special assistance email: brughjd@montgomerycountyva.gov or call (540) 394-2145, TTY/TTD 711.

Send community news and photos
to communitynews@ourvalley.org

Relay for Life green walk



Members of the Montgomery County Relay for Life committee took a special green walk this week to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. The event brought attention to the group's planned relay, which is slated for August 13 at the Christiansburg Middle School parking lot.

OBITUARY

Shelburne, Patricia Ann Coates



Patricia Ann Coates Shelburne passed away peacefully on March 15, 2021, at Carilion New River Valley Medical Center with her family by her side.

Pat was born on Dec. 31, 1946 to Edgar Thomas and Mattie Ryan Coates. She grew up in Halifax County, Va., then relocated to Radford where she made a life with her dearly loved husband, Rudolph Shelburne, for 40 years.

Pat was preceded in death by her mother and father as well as brothers Wayne and Freddie Coates.

In addition to Rudy, others left to cherish the many wonderful memories that were made during her very full lifetime are her beloved children, Rory Lee (Brenda) Owen of Graham, N.C., Lynn (John) Weinstein of Chesapeake, Va., Crystal (Patrick) Wilson of Burlington, N.C., and Roy Owen Jr. of Alexandria, Va.

She is also survived by grandchildren Adrienne (Jesse) Orlowski of Madison, Neb., Danielle (Ben) Jung of Portsmouth, Va., Jake Palladini of Radford, Va., and Kayla Wilson of Burlington, N.C.; three great-grandchildren, Alex and Adalynn Carnes of Madison, Neb., and Hana Jung of Portsmouth, Va.; her treasured baby sister, Janice (Ken) Perkins of Roxboro, N.C.; her special niece, Angie Perkins Hupp; and a cherished furry companion, Lil Bit, who now has the job of keeping Rudy company.

Pat will be remembered for her fun-loving spirit, her propensity for speaking her mind and the tenacity that she exhibited when facing any challenge. She was surrounded by love not only by her family but also by an incredible group of lifelong friends that are too numerous to mention all by name, but, oh, the memories they

have of their adventures with her. She made an impact on everyone that she met.

Pat and Rudy were very blessed to be part of an amazing church family at the Radford Church of Christ. Their outpouring of love and support has been a testament to the impact that Pat has had on so many.

The family would like to extend a special thank-you to one of Pat's friends of 50-plus years, Trish Irby. Trish has been with Pat and Rudy through thick and thin over the last year going to doctors' visits and hospital stays and helping with day-to-day care.

The family would also like to thank the staff at Carilion New River Medical Center Surgical Ward. The attention and care provided to Pat and the family during her last days was so appreciated and made such a difference during this heartbreaking experience.

In accordance with Pat's wishes, she will be donated to the Virginia Anatomical Society to provide a new generation of medical professionals the opportunity to learn how multiple illnesses affect the body and assist in research for the possibilities of cures in the future. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made in Pat's honor to St. Jude's Children's Hospital.

A memorial service will be held for Pat at the Radford Church of Christ on Saturday, March 27, 2021. Family visitation will be from noon to 1 p.m. with the memorial service beginning at 1 p.m. Pat loved the color, so red masks will be provided at the door.

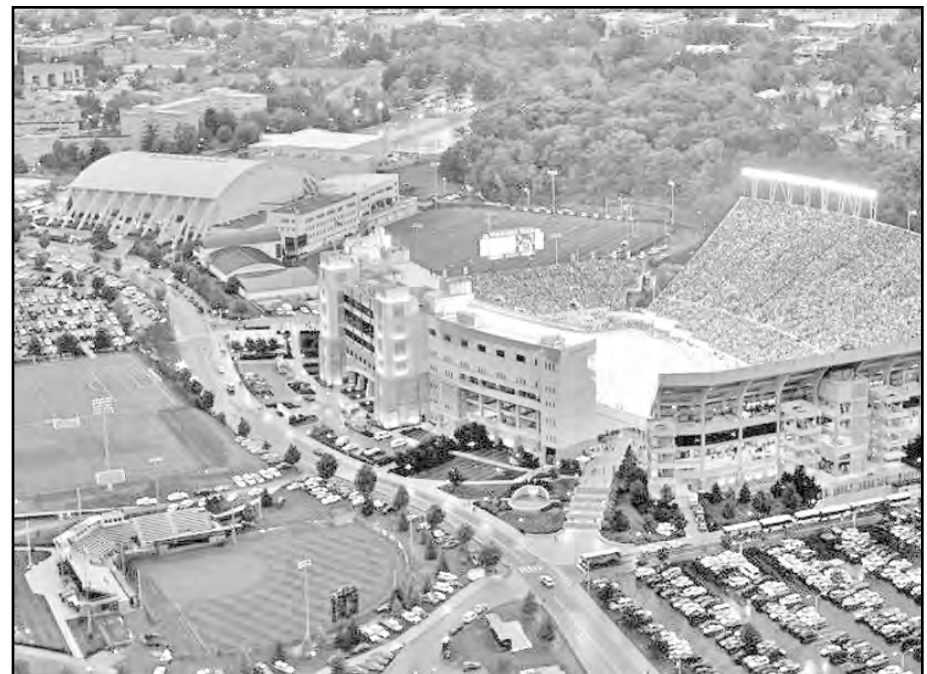
The Shelburne family is in the care of Mullins Funeral Home & Crematory in Radford. www.mullinsfuneralhome.com.

Historic Montgomery



Camp Comfort was located near the intersection of Radford Road and College Street in Christiansburg. It opened in 1928 and was one of the first motor courts to be built in the county. It offered an Esso Service Station, a café, and small motorist cabins. All the buildings featured rustic-style exposed bark siding. The sign on the café reads: "Cabins - Meals, Camp Comfort Tourist Camp Ground." (This image and many more are available from the Montgomery Museum of Art & History.)

VT is planning to hold multiple in-person commencement ceremonies at Lane Stadium



Virginia Tech is planning to hold multiple in-person commencement ceremonies in Lane Stadium to celebrate graduating Hokies while also adhering to public health guidelines.

While details are not yet final, they will be in the coming weeks.

New state guidelines released Wednesday and feedback from the Class of 2021 are informing the format of in-person celebrations. Multiple commencement events will be held before the end of the semester to allow individual graduates to be recognized in front of a limited number of guests.

More than 8,000 Hokies are graduating this spring. Because of that, hosting multiple in-person events, as well as an online ceremony, is necessary to accommodate public health protocols while also making the ex-

perience special for graduates and their families.

This will not be a traditional commencement ceremony. Graduates and guests will not be permitted to gather in large numbers outside the stadium. Tailgating and congregating will not be allowed, and public health measures will still be in place.

Preliminary guidance from the state for safely holding in-person commencement events puts caps on indoor and outdoor ceremonies.

Because this announcement was anticipated, planning for in-person commencement celebrations is already underway. The university's commencement delivery team sought feedback from the Class

of 2021 through a recent survey, which more than 1,200 students completed.

Registration for commencement events will be required, and a limited number of guests will be permitted as public health conditions allow.

As so many students look to the future and celebrations ahead, the commencement delivery team is also considering how to recognize the Class of 2020 as restrictions on gatherings continue to ease. The class will receive a survey seeking input on how to best recognize them.

Commencement updates will continue to be shared via email, online, and through Virginia Tech social media channels.

Electric cooperatives sponsoring youth essay contest

The Virginia, Maryland and Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives is sponsoring a "Powerful Careers" essay contest for school children of electric cooperative members and the 1.3 million readers of Cooperative Living magazine.

Essays are being accepted through September 1 through an online submission form at vmdaec.com/powerfulcareers. No mail-ins will be accepted.

Grades 7-9 should submit essays of 500 to 750 words. Grades 10-12 should submit essays of 800-1,000 words. First prize in each age category is a \$100 gift

card. Second prize is a \$50 gift card. Third prize is a \$25 gift card. The first-place entries will be printed in the November-December 2021 issue of Cooperative Living.

Essays should focus on a career opportunity in the energy field. Possibilities include lineworkers, dispatchers, graphic designers, business specialists, IT professionals and CEOs. Submissions should explain what the job is, why it matters and how it relates to the energy business. The 15 member systems of the VMD Association of Electric Cooperatives are a great resource.

"The diversity of job roles

is one of the strengths of the electric cooperative network," said Steven Johnson, editor of Cooperative Living. "Through this contest, we hope students will take a close look at the value of careers in the energy field."

New Bus

from page 1

the CARES Act, the federal stimulus package passed last March in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. NRCA opened a competitive grant process that attracted four bidders and awarded the bid to the Sonny Merryman company. Merryman has delivered the bus to the Christiansburg office and provided an orientation for all the Head Start staff.

"I'm excited because Christiansburg Head Start did lose transportation a few years ago because our budget could not afford a new bus," Collins said. "With the CARES Act funds, we are able to put a bus back where we would not normally have been able to do so."

The bus is a 23-passenger 2020 Chevy/Thomas school bus with features that provide the children with a safe and fun ride. Each seat is equipped with lap belts and 5-point child passenger restraints. Additional features include a backup camera system, a child reminder system, an LED light package, and heated/remote mirrors. A Head Start bus monitor is always on board in addition to the driver to assist the children.

NRCA is now hiring qualified drivers with a CDL on a part-time basis and offers competitive wages and a great working environment. Interested applicants can visit newrivercommunityaction.org/nrca-jobs for more information.



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THE NRV MPO SEEKS PUBLIC INPUT FOR TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

The New River Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is developing its 2021-22 Unified Planning Work Program. The UPWP provides an annual schedule of activities, lists planning tasks and studies, and identifies funding sources. A draft plan is available for review at the offices of the Towns of Blacksburg and Christiansburg, the City of Radford, and the Montgomery and Pulaski County offices. It is also available on the MPO website: www.montgomerycountyva.gov/mpo



Deadline for written comments: 5:00 PM April 13, 2021

Oral comments will also be taken at the MPO Policy Board meeting at 2:00 PM on May 6, 2021 at the Montgomery County Government Center if it is held.

Comments can also address transit projects for which Federal operating and capital assistance will be sought under 49 USC Section 5303, as well as other transportation modes.

The NRV MPO ensures nondiscrimination and equal employment in all programs and activities in accordance with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need more information or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, contact Dan Brugh at: brughjd@montgomerycountyva.gov or 540-394-2145, TTY/TTD 711.

OPINION

Virginia lands 14,100 new jobs in January, unemployment down to 5.3 percent

According to figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Virginia's unemployment rate dropped 0.3 percent to 5.3 percent in January, which is 2.8 percentage points above the rate from a year ago.

Accounting for the rate drop, the bureau reported, is the increase in total nonfarm payroll employment by 14,100 jobs. Virginia's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate continues to be below the national rate, which was 6.3 percent in January and fell to 6.2 percent in

February.

"While the COVID-19 pandemic continues to put incredible strain on our economy, we are hopeful that the unemployment rate will continue to fall as more people get the vaccine and return to work," said Virginia Governor Ralph Northam. "We are turning the corner, and our commonwealth is moving forward."

In January, Virginia was ranked 23rd in the nation for the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate, along with Kentucky,

Ohio, and South Carolina.

"We can see the light at the end of the tunnel as the vaccines are being distributed and we work to safely reopen key sectors of our economy," said Secretary of Commerce and Trade Brian Ball. "The commonwealth has fared well economically in comparison to many other states, and we are fortunate to have a strong pipeline of economic development projects that are injecting much needed capital investment and new jobs into our communities."

In January, the labor force decreased by 1,452, essentially unchanged, to 4,253,627, as the number of unemployed residents decreased by 8,920. The number of employed residents rose by 7,468 to 4,026,343. The private sector recorded an over-the-year loss of 160,800 jobs, while employment in the public sector lost 33,100 jobs.

Compared to a year ago, on a seasonally adjusted basis, 10 out of 11 major industry divisions experienced employment decreases with one industry un-

changed. The largest over-the-year job loss occurred in leisure and hospitality, down 81,600 jobs, or 19.4 percent. Construction was unchanged over-the-year at 207,500 jobs.

Over-the-year employment growth in Virginia had been positive for six consecutive years in February 2020 but dramatically changed course with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In January 2021, Virginia's over-the-year job loss of 4.7 percent was less than the 6.3 percent decline nationwide

WalletHub: Virginia is nation's fifth most innovative state

The personal finance website WalletHub has released the results of its survey to determine the most innovative states and found that Virginia is the nation's fifth most innovative state. As WalletHub put it, innovation is a principal driver of U.S. economic growth. In 2021, the U.S. will spend nearly \$600 billion on research and development — more than any other country in the world and more than 25% of the world's total — helping the nation rank third on the Global Innovation Index.

and technology outputs are America's particular strengths, the website says. Some of the biggest innovations the U.S. has produced recently are the COVID-19 vaccines, and the government spent \$12 billion in 2020 on their development and distribution through Operation Warp Speed. To rank the states, WalletHub compared the 50 states and the District of Columbia across 22 key indicators of innovation-friendliness. Those key indicators were sub-divided into two key dimensions: "Human Capital" and "Innovation Environment."

In the dimension of human capital, the key indicators WalletHub used to determine the states' rankings were 1) the share of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) professionals 2) the share of science and engineering graduates. This metric measured the percentage of science- and engineering-degree holders aged 25 and older per total degree holders in the same age group 3) the projected STEM-job demand by 2028 per total jobs. 4) scientific-knowledge output. This metric measured the number of peer-reviewed articles published

per \$1 Million of academic science and engineering research and development. 5) eighth-grade math and science performance. 6) AP exam participation. This metric measured the percentage of public high-school students in the graduating class who completed one or more Advanced-Placement exams at any point in high school.

Among selected metrics, Virginia finished fourth in the share of STEM pros, first in the projected STEM-job demand by 2028, 14th in eighth-grade math and science performance, and

eighth in the share of science and engineering graduates aged 25+.

In the dimension of innovation environment, the key indicators WalletHub used included the share of technology companies per total establishments; research and development spending per capita, a metric in which Virginia placed 30th; research and development intensity; invention patents per capita; tech gross state product as a percent of the total state product; entrepreneurial activity; the number of startups "accelerated" per total number of start-ups; tax-friendliness; venture-

capital funding per capita; the average annual federal small-business funding; open roads and skies friendly laws; the average Internet speed; the share of households with Internet access and the adoption of K-12 computer science standards

WalletHub declared it chose this final metric because it considers that most innovation in the future will be tech-enabled.

The states and the district ranked ahead of Virginia in WalletHub's State Innovation Index are Massachusetts, the District of Columbia, Washington, and Maryland.

News Messenger

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

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Where rent is getting cheaper, Virginia is No. 7

The average cost of a one-bedroom apartment is dropping faster in Virginia than almost anywhere else, and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is one big reason why, according to a report released this week by QuoteWizard, one of the nation's leading online insurance marketplaces.

The report found that the cost of rent in Virginia has gone down 4.3 percent over the last two years,

which ranks the commonwealth seventh in the nation for rental cost decreases.

According to QuoteWizard's report the average monthly cost of a one-bedroom apartment in Virginia is now \$1,183. It was \$1,236 in 2019. The report also said that renters are trading cities for the suburbs.

The report's top 10 states where rents are decreasing with the average monthly cost and the percent

of the decrease are (1) Massachusetts, \$1,51.50, down 11.34% (2) North Dakota, \$660, down 9.09% (3) New York, \$1,303, down 7.81% (4) Washington, \$1,148.50, down 7.78% (5) Illinois, \$862.50, down 6.17% (6) California, \$1441.50, down 4.96% (7) Virginia, \$1,182.50, down 4.3% (8) Minnesota, \$874.50, down 4.02% (9) New Jersey, \$1,283.50, down 1.75% (10) Texas, \$934.50, down 1.74%.

WalletHub survey: 145 million Americans can't afford another year like 2020

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's finances, around 145 million Americans say they cannot afford another year like 2020, according to a coronavirus money survey released Thursday by the personal financial website WalletHub.

According to the report, money problems have now surpassed CO-

VID-19 as being the top stressor in America, a 15% change since last year. Americans' top stressors, says the survey are money problems, 30%; the coronavirus, 28%; their job, 14%; relationships, 12%; climate change, 9%; and terrorism/mass shootings, 7%.

Moreover, WalletHub's survey says 29 million more Americans than did so last year plan to apply for a new credit card this year due to the coronavirus. According to the money survey, 71 million Americans anticipate having trouble paying their credit card bills because of the coronavirus.

The survey revealed that 79% of Americans

think credit card companies should forgive late payments in light of issues related to the pandemic. On a positive note, 61% of Americans report they are saving more money during the coronavirus rather than spending more.

And the genders have their differences in the way they spend their money during COVID. WalletHub reports that women are 16% more likely than men to say they spend more money due to the coronavirus, but 63% of the women surveyed said they are more likely to spend less money on travel while 66% of the men surveyed said they are more likely to spend less money on entertainment events.

The survey reported that 110 million Americans have cancelled or are planning to cancel travel plans because of the coronavirus. Some credit card companies, but far from all, are trying to help. The survey says 20% of credit card companies now offer an average of \$4.4 thousand in trip cancellation insurance. There is a catch. The insurance applies only if individuals are quarantined by a physician. Being self-quarantined does not count.

Finally, the survey indicates that more Americans are eating at home these days as Americans say they are now spending some 25% more on groceries now as compared to a year ago.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
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54		55			56				57	58	59
60				61					62		
63					64			65			
66					67				68		

CLUES ACROSS

- Pea stems
- Type of music
- Leader
- Distant
- 5,280 feet
- Beloved Yankee great
- A female domestic
- Free from alcoholism
- Ribosomal ribonucleic acid
- Entertains with song
- Wooden shoe
- Female horses
- Group of males
- Sodium
- Revolutions per minute
- Neither
- Woody climbing plant
- Dismounted
- Orbits the earth
- Female parents
- Separates acids
- Origins
- Stuffing and mounting animal skins
- Rupture
- Fathers
- Large primate
- Shape-memory alloy
- Halfback
- "Family Guy" daughter
- Irish mountain chain
- Paired
- Drinks
- Death notice
- Skirts
- Fertility god
- Where a curve intersects itself
- Red Sea port
- Mozambique seaport
- Leaver
- The human foot
- Crash

CLUES DOWN

- Excessively theatrical actors
- Wings
- French river
- Internet device
- Where Tony Bennett left his heart
- Flowering shrub that bears gooseberries
- Brews
- For each
- Dictatorships
- Slavic person in Saxony
- Nobel laureate Shmuel
- Lasso
- Tones down
- Lunar period
- Leavened Indian bread
- Military elite
- One thousandth of an inch
- L.A. footballer
- Land plan
- A satellite of Saturn
- "Cat Ballou" actor
- Obscure aspect of Sun God and a group of asteroids
- Indicates the fare
- ___ and feather
- Round Dutch cheese
- Begat
- Relaxing place
- "Hit" an of Alaska
- Belgian city
- Organ of hearing and balance
- Isolated Southeast Asian people
- "Power Rangers" villain
- Yellow-fever mosquitoes
- Heavy cavalry sword
- Laundry detergent
- A way to wait
- Mother and wife of Uranus
- Justly obtain
- Stony waste matter
- Helps you find places
- Oil company

Veterans Administration opens COVID-19 vaccinations to vets of all ages

SALEM, VIRGINIA — The Salem Veterans Administration Health Care System has opened scheduling of COVID-19 vaccines to veterans of all ages effective immediately.

The two-shot series Moderna vaccination will be given at the Salem Veterans Administration Medical Center, and the single-dose Janssen vaccination will be available at community-based outpatient clinics in Tazewell, Lynchburg, Danville, Wytheville, and Staunton.

"The Salem VA Health

Care System is excited to be able to open vaccination appointments for all of our enrolled Veteran population," said Dr. Jeffrey Thompson, Chief of Pharmacy at the Salem VA Medical Center. "Individuals are encouraged to reach out to their primary care teams or call our vaccination hotline between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Friday to schedule their appointments."

Thompson also said that veterans who received the first of a two-dose vaccination at a community hospital must

get their second dose at the same location. He encouraged veterans who have been fully vaccinated at community hospitals to bring their vaccination card with them to their next VA appointment so their medical records can be updated.

To schedule a COVID-19 vaccination appointment, veterans should call 540-982-2463 and choose option 2.

Veterans can get the latest information and sign up to receive updates on VA's COVID-19 vaccine webpage.

Virginia's frontline farmers are eligible for COVID-19 vaccine

The commonwealth's food and agriculture workers and veterinarians are now eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine under the Virginia Department of Health COVID-19 Vaccine Phase 1b. Every health district in Virginia has moved into Phase 1b, which means these workers are eligible regardless of their home county.

"Our nation's food supply depends on farmers' and frontline agricultural workers' ability to work safely," said Ben Rowe, national affairs coordinator for Virginia Farm Bureau Federation. "The work of planting, cultivating, harvesting, packaging and processing crops and livestock cannot be conducted remotely or accomplished without contact. Despite swift implementation of best practices and state and federal guidance in the fields and processing facilities, the agricultural workforce remains at heightened risk of infection, as do the frontline critical-risk workers."

"We have all seen the significant toll that disruption of the agricultural food supply chain places on communities and families," Rowe said. "It's important for them to get vaccinated as soon as possible. We appreciate that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Commonwealth of Virginia recognized the role of the agricultural workforce in public health and food security and prioritized them for vaccine allocation in Phase 1b."

A mass vaccination clinic targeting farmworkers in the Blue Ridge Health District was held in late February. Currently, the Northern Neck Soil and Water Conservation District has partnered with Virginia Cooperative Extension agents to disseminate an online survey to gauge interest in holding vaccine clinics for farmers, nursery workers, aquaculturists and agribusiness workers.

In Appomattox County, extension agents helped or-

ganize vaccination clinics on March 3 and March 10 for area farmers.

The county's extension agents, Bonnie Tillotson and Bruce Jones, said they had 100 doses available for the first clinic, but after they contacted hundreds of farmers, only 60 signed up. "Then word of mouth took over, and our phones were ringing off the hook," Tillotson said. There was a waiting list for the second clinic.

"A lot of farmers are older, so they're already in the high-risk bracket, and they need to stay healthy to get out in their fields and feed their livestock and keep our food supply going," Tillotson said.

"Our farm is family-operated, so if someone gets ill from COVID, there's no one to fill in," said Lee McCleny, who operates a beef cattle farm in Pamplin with her husband, Kenneth. The couple received their first vaccine at the March 10 clinic in Appomattox.

On the Eastern Shore

where some of the state's largest poultry processing facilities are located, the Delmarva Chicken Association is encouraging its members to get vaccinated.

"Farmers have stayed steady throughout this pandemic as market disruptions, quarantines and labor shortages complicated their day-to-day work producing food for Americans and the world," said Holly Porter, DCA's executive director. "Now that vaccine availability is reaching Virginia's farmers and their employees as frontline essential workers in Phase 1b, the promise of getting back to normal is very close, and that's a relief."

Rowe also said he's optimistic about the increased availability of the vaccine, especially in rural areas.

"Rural areas, home to the largest percentage of Virginia's farmers and farm workers, have borne a greater burden from the virus, in part because they tend to have older populations with a high prevalence of underly-

ing medical conditions, and they may lack nearby medical care or facilities," Rowe said. "We are glad to see rural health districts work-

ing to provide greater access to vaccination clinics within close proximity to agricultural operations and their related processing facilities."



Virginia's farmers can't work remotely. They must stay in the field harvesting their crops and outdoors feeding their livestock. They are now eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine in every health district in the state.

Fore! A unique partnership exists between Virginia Tech and a Richmond golf course

A satisfying thwack and a small, white ball vanishes into the horizon. The ball slowly drops into a hole after a seemingly gravity-defying moment. These are the moments that golfers live for, and the moments that golf superintendents and their crews work tirelessly to create.

At Independence Golf Club in Richmond, a unique partnership exists between Virginia Tech's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences researchers and industry professionals that helps make these memorable moments on the putting green. The unique agreement allows research to be conducted on an active golf course with true feedback on playing surface quality, a rarity in the field.

A few years ago, researchers from Virginia Tech were approached by Giff Breed, owner of Independence Golf Club that houses an 18-hole championship course and a 9-hole par 3 course, about using warm-season grasses at the course instead of the northern grasses typically used in the region, making work much easier for course superintendents in the hottest months.

"Not a whole lot was known about how these were going to respond in this part of the country," said David McCall, an assistant professor in the School of Plant and Environmental Sciences and member of the research team. "Warm-season grasses in varied climates were new to everyone, and Giff was curious about how it would respond. It naturally evolved into trying out as many different grasses as we possibly could."

The research started with 10 varieties of grass under consideration for putting greens and tees but has since narrowed significantly with ultradwarf bermuda grasses as the primary turfgrass studied because of how varieties naturally rose to the top. The bulk of the research takes place on the par-3 course. The researchers work closely with Golf Course Superintendent Dan Taylor, the Certified Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, and Breed.

Ultradwarf bermudagrass is a warm-season turfgrass, bred to be managed at very low mowing heights, that grows best in the heat of the summer when golf rounds in Virginia are at their peak. While ultradwarf bermudagrass can be managed to provide excellent golf putting greens in warmer climates, it is a challenge to keep alive through cold winters. Creeping bentgrass, which was previously used

at the course, flourishes in northern climates under moderate temperatures but is difficult to maintain in the heat and humidity typical of Richmond summers.

While creeping bentgrass remains the norm for most putting greens in Virginia, Independence is demonstrating how well-managed bermuda grass putting greens can play firm and fast during some of the heaviest play periods, desirable traits amongst golfers.



At Independence Golf Club in Richmond, a unique partnership exists that allows Virginia Tech researchers to conduct research on a live golf course. Pictured above is research on the impact of mowing height on grasses.

The Virginia Tech researchers have used a variety of methods to keep ultradwarf bermuda grass alive in the winter, which include regular installation and removal of blankets and plant growth regulators, chemicals that slow plant growth.

In Richmond's climate, the combination was successful until a frigid winter in 2018 when the team lost some of the ultradwarf bermuda grass on both its research course as well as the championship course.

The use of warm-season grasses could also benefit smaller golf courses with limited budgets that typically use native soil greens without internal drainage. Ultradwarf bermuda grass, despite a less-than-stellar perception, could be easier

for these golf courses to maintain during the stresses of summer, providing high-quality putting greens while not requiring nearly as much water and other inputs as bentgrass greens during warm months.

The work of Virginia

Tech researchers impacts how golfers can approach their game in the region. When a golfer takes a putt and watches it drop into the hole, it won't just look like a championship moment. It will be on a championship-caliber surface.

LIVE & ONLINE AUCTION

Saturday, March 27th at 10 AM
478 Acre Farm being sold in 6 Tracts
426 Dry Branch Road, Pembroke VA 24136



Incredible farm or recreational property in Pembroke VA! 478.75 +/- acres offered in 6 tracts. Located within 30 minutes of Blacksburg VA and the New River Valley. It is close to Mountain Lake Lodge, Cascades Falls Trailhead, Jefferson National Forest and George Washington National Forest. The property is being offered in 6 tracts with the opportunity for combinations.

Tract # 1

67.906 +/- Acres - Mostly wooded land with beautiful building sites, views, and road frontage. Close to public water & sewer.

Tract # 2

28.288 +/- Acres - Open fields with views, fencing and a spring fed water trough.

Tract # 3

190.467 +/- Acres - Older 2 Story farmhouse, pastureland, fencing, creek, spring fed troughs, 2 ponds and farm buildings including a 9 stall Horse Barn.

Tract # 4

55.668 +/- Acres - Open and wooded land with long range views. Spring and Ram Hydraulic Pump are located on this property along with a spring reservoir and trough.

Tract # 5

121.418 +/- Acres - Open and wooded land with fencing & views. Has an APCO Easement, Powerline and a Mountain Valley Pipeline Easement going through back portion of property. Auctioneer and Seller do not know if or when construction will begin or how long it will last. There is a mountain spring, spring reservoir, frost free spigot and water trough located on property.

Tract # 6

15 +/- Acres - Open land with excellent building spots. This property would be great to build a home on or creating your own hobby farm.

Preview Dates: Saturday March 13th @ 10 AM and Saturday March 20th @ 10 AM

Terms and Conditions -10% Buyers Premium, 10k EMD per Tract, 45 day close, Subject to Seller confirmation. 6 Tracts will be offered individually and in combination. Refer to Bidder Pack for complete Terms and Conditions. It is very important that interested bidders fully and completely read and review all documents and maps in Bidder Pack. The Bidder Pack has maps and documents that explain Spring and Water Rights, and the layout of Springs, Waterlines, etc. Live Auction begins at 10 AM Saturday March 27th 2021 and will be simulcast with online bidding. Download Maps, Auction Terms, Contracts & Disclosures for complete information.

Contact - Broker & Auctioneer, Matt Gallimore
at 540-239-2585 or email gallimore.matt@gmail.com

102 S. Locust Street,
 Floyd, VA 24091
 (540) 745-2005
 VaAuctionPro.com
 Lic# 2907004059



Blue Ridge Land & Auction Co., Inc

THE NRV MPO SEEKS PUBLIC INPUT FOR TIP AMENDMENT

The New River Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is amending its 2021-24 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The amendment is to modify funding for Blacksburg Transit and Radford Transit. It is available for review at the offices of the Towns of Blacksburg and Christiansburg, the City of Radford, and the Montgomery and Pulaski County offices. It is also available on the MPO website: www.montgomerycountyva.gov/mpo



Written comments for this amendment will be received until 5:00 PM, April 13, 2021.

The public can also speak at the May 6, 2021 MPO Policy Board meeting at 2:00 PM at the Montgomery County Government Center.

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

The NRV MPO ensures nondiscrimination and equal employment in all programs and activities in accordance with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need more information or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, contact Dan Brugh at: brughjd@montgomerycountyva.gov or 540-394-2145, TTY/TTD 711.

Long before humans did it, animals in nature practiced social distancing when one of their own was sick

Forager ants do it, vampire bats do it, guppies do it, and mandrills do it. Long before humans learned about and started “social distancing due to COVID-19,” animals in nature intuitively practiced social distancing when one of their own became sick.

In a new review published in Science, Dana Hawley, a professor of biological sciences in the Virginia Tech College of Science and colleagues from the University of Texas at Austin, University of Bristol, University of Texas at San Antonio, and University of Connecticut have highlighted just a few of the many non-human species that practice social distancing as well as lessons learned from their methods to stop the spread of bacterial, viral, and parasitic infections.

“Looking at non-human animals can tell us something about what we have to do as a society to make it such that individuals can behave in ways when they are sick that protect both themselves and society as a whole,” said Hawley.

“Staying home and limiting interactions with others is an intuitive behavioral response when we feel sick and one that we see across

many types of animals in nature,” Hawley said. “But humans often suppress this instinct, at great potential cost to ourselves and our communities, because of pressures to continue working or attending classes even while sick.”

We all have had that experience of feeling sick. We may feel lethargic and just can't seem to muster the energy to get out of bed or hang out with friends. Although we may not know it, we are practicing a form of social distancing. Since we are not actively trying to avoid people and just rolling with the punches of general malaise, Hawley and co-authors refer to this as “passive social distancing.” Of course, this has been observed in non-human species as well.

Vampire bats, who feed solely on the blood of other animals, have been well studied because they are highly social, compared to their fruit- and insect-eating bat relatives. Since blood is not nutritional and difficult to find most days, the bats form strong social bonds by sharing food and grooming or licking and cleaning each other's fur.

To learn more about their “sickness behavior,” or how their behav-

ior changes in response to infection, researchers injected the bats with a small piece of cell membrane from a gram-negative bacteria known as lipopolysaccharide. The harmless substance triggers an immune response and their sickness behaviors, such as decreased activity and decreased grooming without actually exposing them to a pathogen.

“Passive social distancing in vampire bats is a ‘byproduct’ of sickness behavior,” said Sebastian Stockmaier, who led the review while a Ph.D. student at the University of Texas at Austin where he is still affiliated. “For instance, sick vampire bats might be more lethargic so that they can divert energy to a costly immune response. We have seen that this lethargy reduces contact with others and that sick vampire bats groom each other less.”

Mandrills also exhibit grooming behaviors in order to maintain their social bonds as well as their hygiene. However, these highly social primates are strategic about their social distancing behaviors. Because their grooming behaviors are important to keep their standing in society, they avoid contagious group mates, while occasionally increasing their

risk of infection by continuing to groom their infected close relatives.

On the other hand, many types of ants practice a form of active social distancing. Over the course of evolution, some ant species have adapted to abandon their tight knit-groups when they are feeling sick. In these cases, the infected individual's self-sacrifice is seen as an act of public good to protect the rest of the colony and carry forth the genes that will keep the closely related colony thriving in the future.

But there are other cases where the healthy animals go out of their way to exclude sick members from the group or by avoiding contact with them altogether.

Bees are another group of social insects whose main goal is to do everything for the greater good of the hive and their queen. So when infected bees are detected within the hive, healthy bees have no choice but to exclude the infected bees — by aggressively kicking them out of the hive.

In other species, the healthy individuals are the ones to leave the group to protect themselves from disease, but often at great cost. To reduce their risk of catching or

transmitting a virus, healthy Caribbean spiny lobsters abandon their den when they detect an infected group member in it. Not only does this result in the loss of protection within the group and their den, but they are also exposing themselves to deadly predators in the open ocean. But for them, it is worth this risk to avoid a highly lethal virus.

“COVID-19 has really highlighted the many ways that we use behavior to deal with disease,” said Hawley. “I think that we have all unconsciously used these types of behaviors throughout our lives and it is only just now coming into focus how important that these behaviors are in protecting ourselves from getting sick.”

As new mutants of the SARS-Cov-2 virus arise, humans will have to continue to wear masks to protect themselves and others and social distance. Unlike animals in nature, humans have developed technology like Zoom to create social connections and bridges while they are physically distancing themselves from others.

— Written by Kendall Daniels

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

Montgomery County

WORSHIP DIRECTORY

Avoiding the Mistakes

Read Judges 7:1 through 8:35

Does the following scenario point to any common details in people's lives?

Do people often pray hard and study Scripture in order to seek God's provision when struggling financially? Do these same people attend church weekly and ask other believers to pray for their needs. As their accounts increase to a comfortable amount, do they begin getting an early start on their workdays to put in more hours at the office. Do they cut back on prayer and Bible study.

Gideon made the gold into an ephod, which he placed in Ophrah, his town. All Israel

prostituted themselves by worshipping it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his family (Judges 8:27).

Gideon, as a young and inexperienced warrior, was called by God to engage a vast invading army. Gideon's life had been tough, and his circumstances forced him to draw close to God. But, with the enemy's defeat and the rich spoils of the battle, Gideon misused his blessing.

Prayer Suggestion: When you enjoy a season of success, pray even harder that God will keep you in a deep relationship with himself.

Quicklook: Judges 8:22-27

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

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

OBITUARIES

Bowen, Trent Calvin

Trent Calvin Bowen (Papa), 90, of Blacksburg, stepped into the Lord's presence without fanfare early on March 16, 2021. Having reached 90, Trent was in good health until recent years, but he never stopped trying to "get better." He was preceded in death by his parents, John and Luella, and five brothers and five sisters.



University ('52) with honors, and then he attended law school, receiving his law degree at Duke University in 1955. He was an attorney with State Farm Insurance for 35 years, finishing his career in Charlottesville, in 1992.

Trent was a kind, gentle, mild-mannered man with a dry sense of humor that he used every single day of his life. He loved family, friends, strangers and God and was famous for his "projects" throughout his life. One of Trent's favorite quotes was "A penny saved is a penny earned."

Trent enjoyed teaching his children and grandchildren all sorts of skills, from mowing grass to painting to wood working. He was well versed in the art of living frugally, but he was also well-known for his generosity. Trent cared about those who struggled, and he was ready to help if his help was needed, working for years with Habitat for Humanity. Trent loved God and lived with the end in mind. He lived well and he wanted to end well, and he succeeded.

A celebration of Trent's life will be held today, Saturday March 20, 2021, at 11 a.m. at Blacksburg Baptist Church. The family will receive friends following the service, observing social distancing and masking guidelines.

In keeping with his generous nature, Trent donated his body to medical science. In lieu of flowers, memorial tributes in his honor can be sent to Blacksburg Baptist Church or The Warm Hearth Foundation.

Trent married the love of his life, Laurie, in 1952, shortly after meeting her on a blind date. He is survived by Laurie and his three children: Beth Howell (Wayne), Trish Snow (Sam), and Rodney Bowen (Adair). He is also survived by nine adored grandchildren and five treasured great-grandchildren.

Trent was born on a family farm in Shoals, N.C., on a cold December morning in 1930. On the morning he was born, his father brought the family cow into the house so his mother could milk her during labor. The youngest of 11 children and valedictorian of a high school class of 13, Trent was the only one of the family to attend college.

He played basketball for Wake Forest along the way and remained active and athletic much of his life. He especially enjoyed golf and snow skiing and incorporated both into his love of travel whenever possible. He and Laurie traveled cross country multiple times, first in a 1968 Volkswagen and later in their motorhomes. Their motorhome adventures included trips to Alaska, Australia, New Zealand, and Europe.

Trent graduated from Wake Forest

Talbutt, Lou Ella Culler

Lou Ella Culler Talbutt, 81, of Blacksburg, died on Saturday, March 13, 2021.

She was born on Nov. 6, 1939, in Patrick County, Va., the only child of loving parents, the late Eugene and Vergie Rakes Culler. She was preceded in death by her loving husband of 47 years, Palmer C. Talbutt, Jr., and is survived by a devoted son, Scott C. Talbutt, of Christiansburg, Palmer and Scott were the center of her life while she enjoyed an interesting and varied career in the field of education.

Lou Ella received her undergraduate degree from Longwood College in Farmville, Va., a master's degree from Ohio University, in Athens, Ohio, and an Ed. D. from Virginia Tech.

She had a diverse career in public schools and universities in Virginia. Her career began as a secondary English and drama teacher in Norfolk (now Chesapeake) County, and then Roanoke City, and Roanoke County where she enjoyed directing plays. At Radford College (now Radford University), she served as Director of Housing and then Associate Dean of Students.

She was the first Director of Information for the state Occupational and Career Information System, Virginia VIEW (Vital Information for Education and Work), at Virginia Tech. Her major area of research and publication dealt with "Legal and Ethical Issues in counseling." She wrote, published and edited



journals, wrote a book with two others, and served on the National Ethical Committee for the American Association for Counseling and Development.

During the last phase of her career, she served as Supervisor of Guidance and Community Services for the Roanoke City School system and ended her career there as Executive for Student Services.

After retirement, she did dramatic presentations, spoke at retirement events for friends, and presented a number of programs on the "First Ladies" and other literary and historical figures. She was a member of The Torch Club of Montgomery County and the Virginia Tech Faculty Women's club.

At Warm Hearth she was the first President of the Woods Edge Condominium Association. She enjoyed serving at Blacksburg United Methodist Church and was on various boards for the Roanoke District participating as President of the Roanoke District, United Methodist Women. For eight years she was on the Board of Trustees for Ferrum College.

A memorial service will be held at a later date due to COVID-19. In lieu of flowers, contributions can be made to Blacksburg United Methodist Church, P.O. Box 931, Blacksburg, Va. 24063 or Warm Hearth Foundation, 2603 Warm Hearth Drive, Blacksburg, Va. 24060. Arrangements by McCoy Funeral Home.

Herzog, Janice Townsend

Janice Townsend Herzog, 76, of Radford, passed away peacefully Saturday, March 13, 2021.

She was a longtime Radford resident and member of Grove United Methodist Church.

Born and raised in New Jersey, she graduated in 1966 from Albright College in Reading, Penn., and retired from the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine in 2008. She was a proud Hokie staff member, parent and supporter.

Janice was preceded in death by her parents, Dr. Leslie and Eleanor Townsend; and a sister, Judy Kendall.

Survivors include her beloved husband of 53 years, Frank Herzog of Radford;



adored daughters Carrie (Chris) Frye and Amy (Billy) Beard; grandchildren Will and Jake Frye, all of Charlotte, N.C.; brothers James Townsend of Seattle, Wash. and John Townsend of Morris, Conn.; and many other relatives and dear friends.

A private family beachside service will be held at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to the Glencoe Museum in Radford or the Neuroendocrine Cancer Tumor Research Foundation at netrf.org.

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

Bland, Allen Brainered

Allen Brainered Bland, 68, of Christiansburg, died, Monday, March 15, 2021.

He was born on March 28, 1952, to the late Harvey Lee and Virginia Epperly Bland.

He was also preceded in death by his wife, Brenda Collins Bland; brothers Fred Bland and Edward Bland; and sisters Linda Barker and Barbara Spradlin.

Allen was a hard-working man who provided for his family and loved his children and grandchildren deeply.

He is survived by his daughters, Tina East and Trish Bland; grandchildren Ethan Slusser and Breanna East; bro-



ther Phillip Bland; special niece Elicia Bland; aunt Louise McGuire; and cousin Fran Cecil.

Special thanks to the Medical Care Unit at Carilion New River Valley Medical Center, especially Christin Smith, for their care and compassion during Mr. Bland's illness.

A graveside service was held on Wednesday, March 17, 2021, at 2 p.m. at Den Hill Cemetery with the Rev. Buford Linkous officiating.

In lieu of flowers, the family greatly appreciates donations to help offset medical expenses. Arrangements by McCoy Funeral Home, Blacksburg.

Stewart, Edwin Mark

Edwin Mark Stewart, 65, passed away Monday, March 15, 2021 at his home in Radford.

He was preceded in death by his parents, George and Mary Ann Stewart.

Survivors include his wife of 43 years, Kathy Stewart; sons Nathan (Lauren) Stewart of Kenosha, Wis., Nicholas (Katie) Stewart of Rockledge, Fla., and Nolan (Brittany) Stewart of Blacksburg; grandchildren Olivia, Noah, Avery, Henry, Reid and Brynn; sisters Karen Stewart and Teresa Wright, both of Huntington Beach, Calif.; and many other



relatives and friends.

The family received friends on Wednesday, March 17, 2021, at the Compassion Church in Radford followed by a celebration of Mark's life with Dr. Hal Adams officiating.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that contribution be made to the Duke Cancer Center at https://www.gifts.duke.edu/dci?technique_code=CCCWBDNN.

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

Send community news and photos to communitynews@ourvalley.org

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<p>Auctions</p> <p>PUBLIC NOTICE</p> <p>The contents of the listed unit will be sold at Public Auction March 26, 2021 at 11am at 1st Security Self Storage 5 Midway Plaza Dr. Christiansburg, VA. D12</p> <p>1st Security reserves the right to refuse any bid. TERMS: CASH OR CREDIT CARD AT SALE.</p>	<p>For Sale - Misc</p> <p>FOR SALE</p> <p>Unprinted end rolls of newsprint. Great for packing & shipping, moving & storage and for art projects. Various sizes available. Stop by the Salem Times-Register 1633 West Main St. or call (540)389-9355 for details.</p>	<p>Legals - Montgomery County</p> <p>LEGAL NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING</p> <p>The Christiansburg Planning Commission will hold a Public Hearing on Monday, March 29, 2021 at 7:00 PM in the Council Chambers of the Christiansburg Town Hall, 100 E. Main Street, Christiansburg, Virginia 24073. The purpose of the public hearing is to receive public comments concerning:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Conditional Use Permit request by Sareh Ostadhosseinkhayyat (applicant) for a Family Day Home serving up to 12 children at property owned by Helen Sedigh and Mohammadreza Ostadhosseinkhayyat located at 1265 Flint Drive S.E., (tax map no. 529-21-9) in the R-1, Single Family Residential zoning district. The property is designated as Residential on the Future Land Use Map of the 2013 Christiansburg Comprehensive Plan. 	<p>Legals - Montgomery County</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. A rezoning request by Gay and Neel, Inc. (applicant) for an approximately 43.4 acre property owned by the Montgomery County School Board located at 100 Independence Boulevard, N.W. (tax map no. 466-2-11, 11A) and 1180 North Franklin Street (tax map no. 466-A-14) in the I-2, General Industrial and B-3, General Business Zoning Districts. The property is currently split-zoned and the applicant is requesting to designate uniform zoning and proffers over the entirety of the property. The two areas included are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rezone an approximately 25.6 acre portion of the property located at 100 Independence Boulevard, N.W. (tax map no. 466-2-11, 11A) from A, Agriculture zoning district to B-3, General Business with proffers. 2. Rezone an approximately 17.8 acre portion of the property located at 100 Independence Boulevard, N.W. (tax map no. 466-2- 	<p>Legals - Montgomery County</p> <p>11, 11A) and 1180 North Franklin Street (tax map no. 466-A-14) from B-3, General Business to B-3, General Business with proffers.</p> <p>The rezoned area includes approximately .954 acres ("CHS" bus loop parcel) (tax map no. 466-2-11A) recently approved to be vacated and conveyed to the Montgomery County School Board by the Town of Christiansburg. The property is designated as Business/Commercial on the Future Land Use Map of the 2013 Christiansburg Comprehensive Plan.</p>	<p>Legals - Montgomery County</p> <p>Town Hall will be open and available to receive public comment in-person at the time of this Public Hearing. Additionally, the meeting will be streamed live on the Town of Christiansburg's YouTube channel at www.christiansburg.org/youtube and will remain on the Town's YouTube page once the meeting concludes. For information on contactless methods for submitting public comment, please visit www.christiansburg.org/publichearings. Copies of the applications are available for review at the following link: www.christiansburg.org/publichearings. A copy of the applications, the Town's Zoning Map, Zoning Ordinance, and Future Land Use Map may be viewed in the Planning Department Office, 100 E. Main Street, Christiansburg, VA 24073 during normal office hours of 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Contact Andrew Warren, Assistant Town Manager,</p>	<p>Legals - Montgomery County</p> <p>by phone at (540) 382-6120 ext. 1130 or by email at awarren@christiansburg.org with any questions or if you require reasonable accommodations.</p>
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MONTGOMERY SPORTS

SPORTS BRIEF

Cormany, Kanipe on coach's all-state team

Two Radford High School boys' basketball players have been honored by the Virginia High School Coaches Association. Cam Cormany has been named to the Class 2 boys' basketball all-state team while teammate Alex Kanipe was named to the second team.

Union defeated Radford en route to the state finals, and the Class 2 player of the year came from there. Bradley Bunch was named player of the year, while Union Coach Zach Moore was named coach of the year.

In Class 1, Auburn's Ethan Millirons was named first team.

Hokies sweep RU in softball

Playing their first game at Tech Softball Park since April 30, 2019, Virginia Tech won two run-rule games Wednesday over Radford, 11-1 and 9-1. Both games ended after five innings.

The No. 18/16 Hokies (11-3, 7-3 ACC) once again had their offense firing on all cylinders, hitting eight home runs in the two games. Sophomore Kelsey Bennett, fresh off her record-setting three-homer performance Sunday, hit a home run in both games Wednesday, and Kayleigh Addington hit her first career home run in the first game.

Tech also got great pitching from freshmen Ivy Rosenberry (3-2) and Mackenzie Osborne (1-0), who threw complete games and allowed just one earned run. It was the first start of Osborne's career after appearing in three games in relief.

GAME 1
Tech struck early with a two-run triple from Jayme Bailey in the first inning that scored Kelsey Brown and Darby Trull. Bennett then put the ball in play, which allowed Bailey to score from third and gave the Hokies a 3-0 lead after one.

The Hokies put up three more runs in the second with RBI doubles from Brown and Trull. Then in the third inning, Cana Davis and Alexa Milius hit back-to-back home runs to put Tech up 8-0 after three innings. The long ball worked for the Hokies again in the fourth inning as Bennett and Addington went yard to go up 11-0.

Meanwhile, Rosenberry

kept the Highlanders off the board until they broke through with a run in the fifth inning. The freshman closed out her third win of the season by allowing just five hits and the one run.

GAME 2
Again, the Hokies got on the board in the first inning off a Bailey RBI single and a Bennett RBI double to take a 3-0 lead. The Highlanders got a run back in the top of the second with a solo home run, the only run they scored off Osborne.

Tech answered in the bottom half of the second with an RBI single from Trull to right field, which scored pinch runner Rebecca Ludwig. The Hokies then broke the game open in the third with back-to-back-to-back home runs by Bailey, Bennett and Morgan Overaitis.

Grace Chavez walked the game off in the bottom of the fifth inning with a bomb to left field that ended the game at 9-1.

GAME NOTES
Bennett hit her sixth and seventh home runs of the season Wednesday, tying her total from last season in 25 games.

Bailey and Bennett both had a team-high five RBIs in the two games. The duo is leading the team in RBIs with 20 and 17 respectively. They are the only Hokies with double-digit RBIs.

The Hokies hit four home runs in both games Wednesday and have hit 16 homers in their last three games.

Addington got her first career hit with a solo home run to left field.

Radford wins again



Radford's Darius Wesley-Brubeck scores on a long run after stripping the ball away from a Giles running back one minute into Monday's 48-6 win.



Bobcat senior wide receiver Xavier Cobbs hauls in a touchdown pass in the second quarter. Cobb caught two passes for 38 yards. Radford is now 3-0 on the season.



Radford senior quarterback Zane Rupe scores a rushing touchdown in the first quarter for the Bobcats' second touchdown. Rupe finished with 70 yards on eight carries with two touchdowns.

Former major league scout named River Turtles manager

Major League Baseball veteran Clark Crist from Phoenix, Ariz. has been named the manager of the Pulaski River Turtles.

Crist most recently served as a National Junior College Cross Checker for the Arizona Diamondbacks, overseeing all junior college prospects nationwide for the club from 2015 to 2020.

"I am very excited to be a part of the inaugural season of the new Appalachian League," Crist said. "It is an honor to be allowed to work with these young, talented college players, and I am thankful to Major League Baseball and USA Baseball for giving me this opportunity. My goal is to provide these athletes an understanding of the game while enhancing their abilities. I am also looking forward to working with the Pulaski ownership and front office

and meeting the wonderful, supportive fans of the River Turtles."

A native of Tucson, Ariz., Crist played collegiate baseball at the University of Arizona where he was the starting shortstop for the 1980 team that put together 19 late-inning comebacks en route to the national championship.

Crist was drafted by the Seattle Mariners in the 14th

round of the 1980 June amateur draft and spent four seasons in minor league baseball, eventually serving as a player-coach for the Mariners' Double A affiliate, the Chattanooga Lookouts, from 1982-1985.

Crist's tenure in Major League Baseball includes scouting roles for the Houston Astros (1985-1992), the Boston Red Sox (1992-1994), the Cleveland Indi-

ans (1994-2006), the New York Mets (1995-1997), the St. Louis Cardinals (1997-2006) and the Cincinnati Reds (2006-2015).

He oversaw the signing of many notable names during his career as a scout, including all-stars Kenny Lofton and Albert Pujols, Covelli "Coco" Crisp, Mike Leake, Tommy Pham, Chris Duncan and Amir Garrett.



Learning not to control everything is key to VT's Korbin Myers's ACC championship

If Virginia Tech wrestler and ACC champion Korbin Myers has learned anything during the past year, it's the benefit of accepting that he can't control everything.

"I've kind of realized that sometimes in life, it just is what it is," said Myers, who is the reigning ACC wrestling champion in the 133-lb. weight class, a title he won last month. "That's the biggest thing I've learned from this year. You can only control what you can control, and the more you worry about factors outside of your control, the worse off you're going to be."

Such a mindset helped Myers to face the challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and also the challenges involved in recovering from a neck injury that sidelined him last year before the season was cut short as a pandemic precaution. In overcoming both trials, the Virginia Tech graduate student not only won his first ACC title, but went 8-0 in the regular season, rose to a No. 4 national ranking, and was named the ACC's Most Outstanding Wrestler at the conference tournament.

"When I think of the most challenging thing about

wrestling, the first thing that comes to mind is the mental side of it," said Myers, who is set to earn a master's degree from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences with a concentration in leadership studies this summer. "It's something I've really focused on this year, and this is the best I've ever wrestled. Coming off that [neck] injury, most people don't have their best year, so I just think understanding the mental side of it is huge and has given me an edge."

Slated as a No. 3 seed, Myers was one of eight members of the third-ranked Hokies wrestling team competing in the NCAA National Championships in St. Louis on Thursday, March 18.

"There's a significant difference in where he's at right now compared to where he was in the past in terms of his competitive mindset," said Tony Robie, VT's head wrestling coach. "He's gotten better as a wrestler, there's no question, but I think he's always been a good wrestler. I think the biggest change and the biggest difference with him is he's really approaching things with a different mentality. He's worked really hard to put himself in a position

where he has extreme confidence."

Myers's collegiate wrestling career began in Blacksburg, but not as a Hokie. Following an excellent high school wrestling career at Boiling Springs High School in Pennsylvania, Myers joined the Fighting Scots at Edinboro University. His first match was in Cassell Coliseum where he defeated the Hokies' Dominic Latona at 133 pounds.

"It's funny, my first dual match was actually here," Myers said. "I remember how nervous I was, and I ended up wrestling Dom Latona, Sam's [Latona] older brother, and now Dom and I are basically best friends."

Sam Latona won the 125-pound title at the ACC Championships last month and is a No.-2 seed in the NCAA National Championship bracket.

Following two very successful seasons with Edinboro, a coaching change led Myers to consider transferring to Virginia Tech.

"Long story short, I came down to Tech and absolutely love it," Myers said. "I remember walking out of Coach Robie's office, about to get in the car, and my dad

telling me, 'Korbin, I'm not letting you not go to school here. It's too good to pass up.' And ever since then, I haven't had one complaint about anything here."

Likewise, Hokie fans likely haven't had much to complain about from Myers' first days at Virginia Tech.

He went 20-10 during the 2018-19 season, placed third at the ACC Championships, and went 2-2 at the 2019 NCAA National Championships.

Robie, who also wrestled at Edinboro University, said he'd been familiar with the wrestler since Myers' high school days and kept up with his college career thanks to a friendship with then-Edinboro head wrestling coach Tim Flynn. He believes the combination of tremendous athletic ability, commitment, and passion had helped put Myers in a position to have a special season.

Myers credited much of his success this season to the relationships he's developed with the coaches and his teammates and the overall atmosphere of camaraderie that can at times go unnoticed in the sport.

"On the mat, people might see me as kind of dom-



Virginia Tech's Korbin Myers (left) won his first ACC title last month with a 3-1 decision over top seed Micky Phillippi of Pittsburgh.

inating, but that's not always the case in practice. I get beat in practice all the time and always have close matches with my teammates," Myers said. "It's a huge part of the sport. You have to have guys who push you in the practice room or you're not going to be any better when the lights are on."

"Basically what it means is your teammates are your greatest asset when you're trying to achieve a goal. You have to be one and work as a collective unit," Myers said. "Fortunately, my coaches have recruited a stellar group of guys. I've never been on a team where I felt this close and connected to the guys on it."

As he approached his next challenge – fighting his way to a national champion-

ship – Myers reflected on his journey and what's he's learned along the way.

"It's funny. When I hurt my neck, I'm not going to say I was broken, but I was getting burned out from the sport. It just beats you up after a while," he said. "I was so depressed, like I'm not going to be able to wrestle any more. And here I was able to have not one, but two successful surgeries, and two months later, I was back on the mat wrestling. Me getting hurt, I think it was the best thing for me."

"I started my career out wrestling at Tech and my last match is going to be as a Hokie. It's just so cool how everything worked out," Myers said.

— Written by Travis Williams

VT women pull of remarkable comeback to grab seventh seed in NCAA Tournament

BLACKSBURG – In January, Virginia Tech held a 14-point lead over the second-ranked team in the nation in their own building early in the fourth quarter before NC State was able to put together a 30-14 run in the final eight-plus minutes of the game to earn an 89-87 victory.

The loss left the Hokies at 7-7 overall and 2-7 in conference games, their season apparently in ruins.

But now with the regular season and a remarkable turnaround behind them, they are on their way to San Antonio, Texas, to take on Marquette as the number-seven seed at noon Sunday in the River Walk Regional.

“When I look back at January 24, and we lost a two-point game to NC State in a heart-breaking fashion, and you would’ve fast forwarded and said in March we’re going to be sitting pretty and have a great opportunity to be in the NCAA Tournament, I would’ve signed up for that seven days in the week,” Head Coach Kenny Brooks said in his office as he reflected on the journey that the 2020-21 season has been for his women’s team.

“To actually think about that month and a half that we went through and how much we grew up when we very well could’ve folded and we didn’t,” Brooks said. Instead, “We continued to grow, and I think that is going to bode well for our attitude and our mentality for the future.”

Following that contest in Raleigh, the Hokies and Wolfpack matched up again four days later in Cassell Coliseum. Tech once again held a lead and State needed a desperation heave by reserve center Camille Hobby to send the game to overtime. In the moments following the basket, according to Brooks, the team faced a choice. He told the huddle prior to the start of the extra session that “If anyone thinks we’re not going to win, leave, get out.” The response was overwhelming.

Tech scored an NCAA record 26 points in the extra five minutes, including 18 from All-Conference guard Aisha Sheppard, who finished with 28 in the game. The Hokies walked off 83-71 winners and celebrated the program’s first ever win over an AP top-five ranked team.

That game kick-started this team’s season with a six-game winning streak that made the Hokies one of the hottest teams in the nation at the end of the season.

“They were willing to do anything to make sure we had a season,” Brooks said about his team and the players’ struggles to find normality amid the coronavirus epidemic and the havoc it wreaked with the season. “They don’t have a normal life, this isn’t what you envision when you think about college. They go from the gym, straight back to their apartments, and see the same four walls. It can take a toll on you – from a physical standpoint, but also a mental standpoint. But they’ve continued to truck on and get up with a smile on their face,” Brooks said. “They’ve done everything they’ve had to do to get to this point where they can go compete for a national championship. That goes to show

you a disciplined team that’s willing to sacrifice, and I think that’s why they’re in the position they’re in.”

The 2020-21 season was a special one for the Hokies on the floor as well, suiting up a dynamic duo in center Elizabeth Kitley and Sheppard. “Both of those young ladies are very near and dear to my heart,” Brooks said. “They are special to me, but also special to this program.”

The pair finished second and third in scoring in the conference and were both recognized as First Team All-ACC players, the first time that two Hokies have earned the honor in the same season since joining the league in 2004.

“Aisha Sheppard was really the first kid that I signed,” Brooks said thinking back to his first days in Blacksburg. “I shared a vision with her and she took a blind leap of faith in understanding what my vision was, not only for her, but for this program, and she jumped on board.”

Sheppard scored 20 or more points in nine contests this season, second-most behind ACC Player of the Year Dana Evans, and like Evans, she scored in double figures in every regular season contest prior to playing the conference tournament in Greensboro.

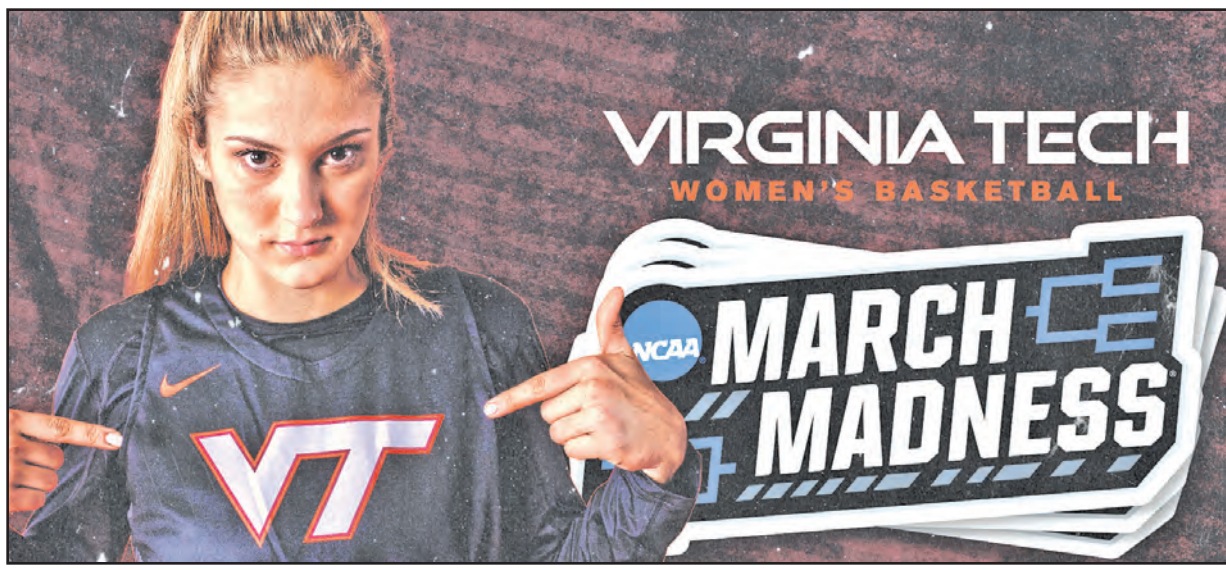
Sheppard averaged 18.3 points per game and hit 85 3-pointers, breaking her own school record for the most in a single season. Her career total of 304 ranks first in Virginia Tech history and is eighth all-time for an ACC player. Her 1,423 points is the eighth-most by a Hokie.

“Elizabeth Kitley has come in here and proven she’s one of the best players in the country – especially at her position,” Brooks said of his 6-5 sophomore center. “She’s going to propel your program, but she does it in a fashion that’s a coach’s dream. She’s a tremendous player, has a great work ethic and attitude and is a phenomenal student-athlete.”

Kitley is a finalist for the Lisa Leslie Award, given annually to the top center in the women’s game at the collegiate level. Late in the season, she was the only player in America to average 18 points, 11 rebounds, 2 blocks and 2 assists. Although she finished just south of that incredible stat line, the Summerfield, N.C., native did tally an ACC-high 13 double-doubles.

She ranked in the top five of the league in numerous categories including points, rebounds, blocks, free throws made and field goal percentage. Kitley was the only athlete in the league to register two games of 30 points this season, and she also recorded a 21-rebound game against Wake Forest, tying a program record.

“I think before it’s all said and done Sheppard will probably graduate from Virginia Tech as the most decorated women’s basketball player ever and she’ll hold that mantle for two years and then Liz will probably graduate as the most decorated women’s basketball player in Virginia Tech history,” Brooks predicted. “We’re very fortunate that we get to witness both of them at the same time, but as great of basketball players as they are, and great



Sophomore center Elizabeth Kitley, the 2020 Freshman of the Year, and a finalist in 2021 for the Lisa Leslie Award, which is presented annually to the best center in women's college basketball, leads the Hokies to Texas for their first-round game Sunday against Marquette.

ambassadors that they are for our program, they are even better people.”

Speaking of the NCAA Tournament, Brooks said. “For anyone who hasn’t experienced the NCAA Tournament, it’s a treat. Being able to go being at the highest level, just the buzz surrounding it, the professionalism that goes into

the tournament, it’s a feeling that you’ll never forget.”

“I’m hoping we will be able to do something to the point where we can bring a little bit of San Antonio back with us memory-wise. But just the fact of being able to go, the accomplishment of being able to go, the hard work and the legacy that is a part of going to

the NCAA Tournament will always follow these young ladies. That in itself is going to be something that we are always going to be proud of,” the head Hokie said.

“I’m proud of them for being able to accomplish something like that. I just hope we are able to experience a little bit of it other than sitting at the hotel.”

CROSSWORD ANSWERS

H	A	L	M	S	R	A	P	T	S	A	R
A	L	O	O	F	M	I	L	E	Y	O	G
M	A	I	D	S	O	B	E	R	R	N	A
S	E	R	E	N	A	D	E	S	S	A	B
M	A	R	E	S	M	E	N	N	A		
R	P	M	N	O	R	L	I	A	N	A	
A	L	I	T	S	A	T	E	L	L	I	T
M	A	M	A	S	T	A	E	S	E	E	S
T	A	X	I	D	E	R	M	Y	S	N	A
S	I	R	E	S	A	P	E	S	M	A	
H	B	M	E	G	A	R	R	A	S		
M	A	T	E	D	B	E	V	E	R	A	G
O	B	I	T	M	I	D	I	S	B	A	A
N	O	D	E	A	D	E	N	B	E	I	R
G	O	E	R	P	E	S		P	R	A	N

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