



Dan McKinney named new Radford Chamber executive director

RADFORD - The Radford Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors has named Dan McKinney, who has served on the chamber's board for nearly 10 years, to lead the chamber as its new executive director.

Chamber Board President Abram Williams made the announcement that McKinney has accepted the position of executive director and has already begun work at his new role.

"Many of you may already know Dan as he has served on the Radford Chamber Board for nearly 10 years, including both the treasurer and president roles," the chamber's announcement read. "Dan brings a wealth of experience with him, and he is ex-

cited to begin leading the chamber."

McKinney replaces Ciara Harris as executive director. Harris recently became executive director of the Friends of Claytor Lake, a conservation group that spearheads lake debris clean-up; creates fish habitat structures; and conducts mussel salvage efforts, water quality monitoring, and lake events. She had been executive director of the chamber for two years.

McKinney has a background in business management and marketing, as well as sales and customer service experience. He is a Radford University graduate with a business administration degree.



Dan McKinney



A pipeline protester identified as Max used this vehicle Tuesday morning to block access to a construction site near Pembroke. He was extracted and arrested shortly before noon.

Mountain Valley Pipeline protester blockades access to work site

Just before 6 a.m. Tuesday morning, May 18, a Mountain Valley Pipeline protester identified as Max locked himself inside a broken-down vehicle outside Pembroke, blocking access to a pipeline construction site.

At 11:30 a.m., Max was extracted and arrested. According to the arresting officer, Max was charged with four misdemeanors and three traffic violations, and his bail was set at \$2,500.

The vehicle's doors were welded shut, the windows were covered with rebar, and the side was painted with the words, "Who Killed The World?" Nearby, over a dozen people gathered in support of the action.

The vehicle blockade was directly adjacent to the Mountain Valley Pipeline easement and prevented workers and pipe trucks from accessing both the pipeline easement and the equipment yard at the site, effectively halting pipeline work in the area. Mountain Valley Pipeline security, workers, and law enforcement were present at the site by 6 a.m. At 9:30 a.m., law enforcement personnel began cutting into the vehicle blockade.

Max said, "Often, when people who fight extraction talk about the world ahead, we talk about it in terms of the coming apocalypse caused by catastrophic climate change. There is no doubt that unchallenged extraction and consumption are pushing our ecosystems to the brink. Corporations, MVP included, and the so-called leaders that enable and protect them are the answer to that question painted on this blockade, 'Who killed the world?'"

Montgomery County resident Crystal Mello, who was present at the

public rally Tuesday in support of Max's blockade, said, "There have been many 'proper' channels taken, and many protests against the Mountain Valley Pipeline. All have gone unheard. It's come to the point where it takes measures like this to grab the media's attention and get people to listen. Meanwhile, MVP still can't work on Cove Hollow Road, a site they had to abandon, and I'm currently looking at a hill they have to blast. These are the things that should have caught people's attention long ago. I stand in support of the protest today."

The Mountain Valley Pipeline is a 42-inch diameter, 300-plus mile, fracked gas pipeline that runs from northern West Virginia to southern Virginia with a 70-mile extension into North Carolina. The pipeline project is 3.5 years behind schedule, is several billion dollars over budget, and is still missing key permits from numerous agencies. Within the last week, Equitrans Midstream Corporation delayed the projected start date yet again to the summer of 2022 and boosted its estimated cost to \$6.2 billion after an original cost estimate for the project of \$3.5 billion. The missing permits include the authority to cross streams, waterways, and the national forest.

Pipeline protestors Acre and Wren are still being held in jail after being sentenced on misdemeanor charges for their roles in the Yellow Finch tree sits, which blockaded the path of the Mountain Valley Pipeline for 932 days. Reportedly, Acre is scheduled to be released within the next three months while Wren will be released in just under a month.

Tech lacrosse player faces off against cancer



"It really could all change in the blink of an eye because it did for me, and you never know when things could take a hard left," Mary Griffin said after learning of a cancerous tumor in her pancreas last fall. Photos by Dave Knachel for Virginia Tech Athletics.



In February, Virginia Tech lacrosse coach John Sung coordinated one of his team's full-speed, full-contact drills during a preseason practice, a drill that resembled an intrasquad scrimmage.

His players rotated the ball, and it eventually found its way into the webbing at the end of Mary Griffin's lacrosse stick. She caught it and readied to make a move, but Sung im-

mmediately blew his whistle to stop play.

"Wait, who is that?" he said. "It's me, Coach," Griffin said. "Mary Griffin!" Sung yelled. "Welcome back!"

At that moment, the members of the Virginia Tech lacrosse team started yelling, cheering, and high-fiving their teammates.

Such is the response when one takes on a formidable foe like cancer

and comes away victorious.

"I wanted to make sure the kids all knew she was back," Sung said. "It was fun to watch the kids acknowledge just how far she's come."

"It's a moment that I'll never forget because there was a point in time before the surgery and even after when we didn't know what the pro-

See **Tech Lacrosse**, page 7

Bug Bounty Program pays off for cybersecurity at Virginia Tech

Not all hackers are up to no good.

In fact, one of the most effective ways to prevent a security breach is to test cybersecurity defenses in much the same way a hacker would, by looking for vulnerabilities in your infrastructure. The main difference, of course, is that instead of exploiting vulnerabilities, you repair them.

In the cybersecurity world, this technique is called "red teaming." It's also the idea behind the new Virginia Tech Bug Bounty Program, which gives students and employees the opportunity to play hacker and earn cash rewards for identifying any vulnerabilities, or "bugs," in specific university-owned domains.

Launched in March

2021, the Bug Bounty program is helping the IT Security Office (ITSO) expand the university's cybersecurity efforts while engaging the Virginia Tech community.

"Cybersecurity at Virginia Tech has historically focused on defense capabilities [a.k.a. 'blue teaming'], such as monitoring outbound traffic and encrypting sensitive data," said Brad Tilley, director of security architecture for the ITSO. "Red teaming plays offense to the blue team's defense, taking a more active approach to cybersecurity by seeking out and flagging potential vulnerabilities before bad actors have a chance to exploit them."

Used in tandem, blue teaming and red teaming offer the best chance of

maintaining secure systems and minimizing damage from external and internal threats.

However, scouring code for vulnerabilities can be a time-consuming process, even for the most skilled security analysts, and the ITSO red team staff is relatively small. "We realized that in order to grow our offensive capabilities given our resource constraints, we needed to look outside our own office," Tilley said.

And what better place to look than right outside their office window?

"Virginia Tech has a huge and largely untapped pool of talented students who have a natural curiosity and the requisite training to make great bug hunters," Tilley said. By formalizing the bug-hunting process under the guidance of the ITSO, the Bug Bounty Program offers an appropriate way for these students, as well as qualified Virginia Tech employees, to explore and improve their own red teaming skills while also providing a critical service to the university. "The incentive of a cash reward encourages participation," added Tilley.

"Plus," as program participant Daniel Schoenbach said, "Hacking is fun!" Schoenbach, a junior computer science and mathematics major, signed up after hearing about the program through the Cybersecurity Club.

"The license to experi-

ment was what originally drew me to the program, even more than the offer of a reward," he said. "I enjoy the challenge of using programs in ways their designers never intended — and the thrill of doing something I'm not supposed to be able to do. But unlike a criminal hacker, my goal is to improve security. After all, I use these systems, too."

Only actively enrolled students and current faculty and staff can participate in the program, and interested persons must first register with the ITSO on the Bug Bounty Program website.

As long as they play by the rules, participants are protected by safe harbor provisions that recognize that, while what they are doing is technically hacking, they are doing so with the purpose of identifying bugs and not taking advantage of any vulnerabilities.

The Bug Bounty Program has already proved successful for improving the university's cybersecurity, said Tilley. To date, participants have helped the ITSO identify and correct at least four critical bugs and a handful of lesser vulnerabilities.

"As more students and employees become aware of the program, we expect more bugs to be found," Tilley said. Without the program, these bugs might otherwise go undetected and unrepaired."



Daniel Schoenbach, a computer science and mathematics major, is among the first Bug Bounty participants to identify and report a vulnerability to the IT Security Office. Photo by Justin Rocha for Virginia Tech.

News Brief: Shawsville collision kills motorcyclist

66-year-old Alan J. Wells of Roanoke was killed Wednesday, May 19, when the motorcycle he was driving collided with a 2000 Ford Explorer in the 4400 block of Roanoke Road near the intersection with Riffe Street in Shawsville.

Wells was pronounced dead at the scene. The driver of the Ford ap-

peared unharmed at the scene. The crash reconstruction team from the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office responded to the call because of the fatality involved.

According to the sheriff's office, the investigation is ongoing and a decision as to whether charges will be filed will be decided at the conclusion of the investigation.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, May 23:

Free COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic
At the Meadowbrook Library from noon until 5 p.m. Virginia's Department of Health and Emergency Management will offer free COVID-19 vaccinations at their mobile clinic in the library parking lot. No appointments are needed.

Monday, May 24:

Radford City Council meeting
The Radford City Council will hold its regularly scheduled meeting at 7 p.m. at 10 Robertson St., Radford. The agenda is available at www.radfordva.gov.

Radford Chamber of Commerce Golf Tournament: Birdies, Bogeys, and Business
At the Pete Dye River Course at VT with Captain's Choice shotgun at 1 p.m. Registration and lunch starts at 11:30 p.m. The awarding of prizes via social media is at 6:00 p.m. Contests include Hole in One and Closest to the Pin with a \$200 prize. The team registration fee is \$350 per team. Email radfordchamber@govt.com to be emailed a registration form.

Talking About Books: Fiction Virtual
At the Blacksburg Library from 11 a.m. until noon. To be discussed is "On Earth We are Briefly Gorgeous" by Ocean Vuong. Call ahead to reserve a copy and get the link for virtual participation.

Beans to Plastic
At the Montgomery Floyd Regional Library online at 1 p.m. Check out the STEM video

on how to turn beans into plastic.

Tuesday, May 25:

MFRL at the Christiansburg Rec Center
At the Christiansburg Rec Center from 2:30 until 4:30 p.m. Miss the library? Want to save a trip? Books will be available for checkout, along with library cards and information about the library you can get while you work out.

Science Fiction and Fantasy Book Club: virtual
At the Blacksburg Library from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. To be discussed is "Babel 17" by Samuel R. Delany. Call ahead to get a copy of this month's book and to get the link.

Wednesday, May 26:

Christiansburg Drive-Thru Job Fair
The Town of Christiansburg will be having its first-ever drive-thru job fair on Wednesday, May 26, from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m. and from 4 p.m. until 6 p.m. Persons who wish to take part may come by, drop off their resume, and receive information about full-time and part-time positions available at the town.

Warm Hearth Village pickleball court ribbon cutting
Sponsored by the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce from 11 a.m. until noon at Warm Hearth Village, 2387 Warm Hearth Drive, Blacksburg.

Hahn Horticulture Garden Virtual Road Trip
At 2 p.m. from Lotusland

with Paul Mills and Rebecca Anderson. Register online and a zoom link will be provided: https://virginiatech.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cumxRA-4Mec96guy.

Monday, May 31:

Radford Memorial Day Service
Hosted by VFW Post 776 and the Harvey-Howe-Carper Post 30 of the American Legion at 11 a.m. at the Bisset Park gazebo, Radford.

Thursday, June 3:

Chamber of Commerce Eggs & Issues Zoom breakfast
From 8:00 a.m. until 9:00 a.m. Register at <http://bit.ly/June2021Eggs>. Once attendees register and pay, they will receive the zoom link 48 hours prior to the program. Space is limited and reservations are required. Register and pay online or contact programs@montgomerycc.org. The deadline to register is June 2, 2021 by 4 p.m.

The speakers will be Mark Husband, the Director of Career and Technical Education for Montgomery County Public Schools, and Mark Rowh, the Vice President for Workforce Development and External Relations. The program will begin promptly at 8:00 a.m., but registrants are encouraged to join early from 7:30 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. for networking.

The amission fee is \$10 for chamber members and \$20 for non-members.

Montgomery Chamber of Commerce bocce ball tournament
From 2:00 p.m. until 8:00

p.m. at Montgomery County Moose Lodge 1470, 115 Farmview Road, Christiansburg. Register a team at <http://bit.ly/mccbocce2021>, but only a limited number of slots remain open.

American Legion meeting
American Legion Harvey-Howe-Carper Post 30 will meet at 7 p.m. at the VFW Post on 102 Watts St. in Radford. For further information, call 250-2283 or 239-9864.

Tuesday, June 8:

The Sons of Confederate Veterans meeting
The Sons of Confederate Veterans, Stuart Horse Artillery Camp 1784 will meet at 7 p.m. at Aly's Family Italian Restaurant, 3204 Riner Road. Members of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) are invited to attend. William Reed will give a talk on the 12th Virginia Infantry. For further information, call 320-4315 or 239-9864.

Saturday, June 12:

Department of Wildlife Resources Boating Safety Class at Claytor Lake
At the State Park Water's Edge Building, 6620 Ben H. Bolen Drive, Dublin, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Materials and instruction are free of charge. Bring a pencil, a highlighter and lunch. Students may bring food and drink for themselves during the class. Children 12 and under must be accompanied by an adult. Pre-registration is required.

By registering for this class, the student agrees to observe

all pandemic protocols for this indoor class including social distancing and mask. Before entering the class, the student will be asked a short health-related symptom survey and will be asked to affirm that the student will abide by classroom rules.

RSVP at <https://www.register-ed.com/events/view/167760>. For more information, contact Mendy Harman at 540-494-3569, mendy.harman@dwr.virginia.gov.

Ongoing:

All May

StoryWalk
All the month of May at the Christiansburg Library. Exercise your brain and body as you read and walk the trail. The walk begins at the library College Street entrance of Downtown Park. This month's book is "If You Give a Pig a Pancake."

Grab-and-Go Crafts
All day at the Meadowbrook Public Library. Drop by the library for Take-and-Make Craft Kits. They're available for grab-and-go at the library or with curbside pickup. The kits are free but supplies are limited.

Saturdays through October:

Radford Farmers Market
The Radford Farmers Market will be held each Saturday through October 30, from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. in the New River Valley Community Services parking lot (the Old Wade's parking lot) on West Main Street.

New River Health District schedules mobile vaccination clinics

The Virginia Department of Health's New River Health District, in coordination with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) and other supporting partners, has announced the dates and locations of its first week of mobile vaccination clinics.

These mobile clinics will offer free COVID-19 vaccines to those age 18 and up in a series of smaller and more local clinics, primarily in rural and underserved areas where vaccine access can be challenging. They are designed to reach unvaccinated Virginians at times and places that are

closer and more convenient.

"We're committed to providing convenient opportunities to get vaccinated across the region, not just in the more populated areas," said Noelle Bissell, M.D., director of the New River Health District. "These mobile vaccination clinics will help us achieve that."

"For some people, getting time off work, childcare, or transportation may be a hurdle to getting vaccinated," said Dr. Bissell. "By going to them with mobile vaccine clinics, we're reducing those obstacles and making sure everyone can get access to the vaccine."

These vendor-operated, mobile vaccination clinics will move from place to place to support local health department efforts in the New River Health District and across the state.

These mobile clinics will offer the one-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine, thus eliminating the need for a mobile clinic to have to return to a particular area for second-dose shots. For more information about the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, please talk to your healthcare provider or visit www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/191/2021/05/JJInformation.pdf.

"The Johnson & Johnson vaccine has been very thoroughly tested and proven safe," explained Dr. Bissell, "and it offers robust immunity against COVID-19. It's really incredible that with just one quick shot, you get a potentially lifesaving vaccine that is going to allow you to go back to so many activities safely, whether it's school or work or seeing friends and family. With the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, you can get one shot and you'll be protected against COVID-19, which has disrupted so much of our lives for over a year."

The schedule for mobile vaccination clinics

in the New River Health District is as follows:

- Sunday, May 23, Noon to 5 p.m. Meadowbrook Public Library, 267 Alleghany Springs Road, Shawsville
- Monday, May 24, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. YMCA Thrift Shop, 1000 North Main St., Blacksburg
- Wednesday, May 26, 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. Auburn United Methodist Church, 3940 Five Points Road, Riner
- Friday, May 28, 2 to 7 p.m. Floyd County Volunteer Fire Department #2, 187 Firehouse Road, NW, Willis
- Saturday, May 29, 8

- a.m. to 1 p.m. Floyd County Farmers Market, 203 South Locust St., Floyd
- Wednesday, June 2, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Pulaski Department of Social Services, 53 Commerce St., Pulaski,
- Thursday, June 3, 3 to 7 p.m. Dublin Baptist Church, 100 Hawkins St., Dublin
- Sunday, June 6, 1 to 4 p.m. Timberlake Building, 120 North Main St., Pearisburg
- Monday, June 7, 5 to 9 p.m. Narrows Volunteer Fire Department, 133 Center St., Narrows

NRCC names Montgomery residents outstanding students



Ashley Mills



Corinna Hill



Emma Lambertson



Laura Splinter



Liubov Levina

New River Community College has recognized students from Montgomery County as Outstanding Students in a Curriculum/Subject Area.

Students from Montgomery County who were honored were Corinna Kitchen Hill,

nursing; Rachel Leigh Jarvis, human services; Emma Marie Lambertson, early childhood development; Liubov Yurievna Levina, general studies; Stephen Christopher McNabb, welding technology; Ashley Ann Mills, paralegal administrative support; Matthew Ryan

Noller, accounting; Noah Paul Provenzano, engineering-computer science specialization; Hugh Benjamin Scarpa-Friedman, music; Laura Eduarda Splinter, English; and Rebecca Whitman, paralegal administrative support.

Students received a congrat-

ulatory letter from the college president as well as a plaque honoring their awards. Students are also being individually recognized on NRCC's social media outlets.

The awards were determined by the faculty in the various programs at the col-

lege. All students receiving the Outstanding Student in a Curriculum award have completed requirements for an associate degree, certificate, diploma or career studies certificate and are eligible to graduate from the college this spring or summer.



Matthew Noller



Noah Provenzano



Rachel Jarvis



Rebecca Whitman



Stephen McNabb

Virginia Tech researchers test Spot the robot dog on campus construction sites

Virginia Tech researchers are unleashing Spot, an autonomous robot dog, on university construction sites to investigate the applications of using robots to monitor construction progress.

Faculty and students from Myers-Lawson School of Construction are partnering with the Division of Campus Planning, Infrastructure, and Facilities and industry sponsor Procon Consulting to deploy Spot, developed by Boston Dynamics, to conduct this innovative research.

The ongoing experimental investigation is exploring whether construction progress monitoring – a traditionally human-dependent, labor-intensive, and error-prone process – can be improved by leveraging autonomous

robotic technology to lead the systematic collection of data in construction environments.

Six months into the yearlong study, the team recently published its initial findings, which include operating procedures required to launch legged robots in dynamic construction settings and early opportunities and limitations in using robots in this capacity.

Three construction sites on the Blacksburg campus are serving as the study's backdrop: the Creativity and Innovation District Living-Learning Community, Holden Hall, and the Student Athlete Performance Center.

Within the job sites, construction management students and researchers navigate Spot via remote control. They capture

hundreds of 360-degree photographs of construction progress using the camera and HoloBuilder construction monitoring app mounted atop the robot dog.

For the students engaged in the study, every interaction with Spot has brought a new opportunity to put classroom knowledge into practice.

"We've learned quite a bit about Spot and its autonomous capabilities, particularly what it can and can't do right now," said Srijeet Halder, a Ph.D. student studying automation and robotics in construction. "It will be very interesting to see how the technology evolves in response to human intervention and the operational foundation we are building today through our research," Halder said.



Virginia Tech researchers, students, and industry leaders, pictured inside the Creativity and Innovation District residence hall job site, are testing out Spot, a robotic dog, to monitor construction progress on the Virginia Tech Blacksburg campus. Photo by Sarah Myers for Virginia Tech.

"Future applications for autonomous robots on construction sites could include everything from remote inspections, geo-locating utilities to support maintenance efforts, safely identifying gas leaks, and much more." The research project is expected to conclude in the fall of 2021.

Local college students earn academic honors, degree

Three Christiansburg students named to dean's list

Three Christiansburg students have been named to the winter 2021 dean's list, which runs from January to May, at Southern New Hampshire University.

Full-time students who have earned a minimum grade-point average of 3.500 to 3.699 are named to the dean's list. Full-time status is achieved by earning 12 credits; undergraduate day students must earn 12 credits in fall or spring semester, and online students must earn 12 credits.

Named to the dean's list were Catherine Imhoff, Evan Walker,

and Rachel Perkins.

Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) is a private, nonprofit institution with an 88-year history of educating traditional-aged students and working adults. Now serving more than 150,000 learners worldwide, SNHU offers approximately 200 accredited undergraduate, graduate and certificate programs, available online and on its 300-acre campus in Manchester, N.H. Recognized as the "Most Innovative" regional university by U.S. News & World Report and one of the fastest-growing universities in the country, SNHU is committed to expanding access to high quality, affordable pathways that meet the needs of each learner.

Blacksburg student named to President's List

Caroline Jones of Blacksburg has been named to the President's Honor Roll at the University of North Georgia (UNG) for achieving a 4.0 grade point average during spring 2021.

Students enrolled in 12 or more credit hours in bachelor's degree programs who achieved a 4.0 grade point average were named to the President's Honor Roll for the spring. Students enrolled in associate degree or dual enrollment programs who met the same level of achievement were named to the President's List by UNG President Dr. Bonita C. Jacobs.

Positioned in the fastest-growing region of the state, the University of North Georgia comprises five campuses united by a single mission focused on academic excellence and academic and co-curricular programs that develop students into leaders for a diverse and global society. The University of North Georgia is a University System of Georgia leadership institution and is The Military College of Georgia. With more than 20,000 students, the University of North Georgia is one of the state's largest public universities. The university offers more than 100 programs of study ranging from certificate and associate degrees to professional doctoral programs.

Christiansburg student earns Master of Arts degree

Elizabeth Joslin of Christiansburg has completed her Master of Arts degree in clinical mental health counseling at the University of the Cumberlands this spring.

University of the Cumberlands is one of the largest and most affordable private universities in Kentucky. Located in Williamsburg, Kentucky, Cumberlands is an institution of regional distinction offering quality undergraduate, graduate, doctoral, and online degree programs.

Camp Invention's summer program coming to Montgomery County Public Schools

Christiansburg, Va. – Camp Invention, a nationally recognized nonprofit summer enrichment program, is coming to Montgomery County Public Schools the week of June 7 through June 10, 2021.

At this local camp, families can choose Camp Invention's in-person or at-home option. And to address any uncertainty that families face when planning for the upcoming summer camp season, Camp Invention now offers the Peace of Mind Promise: Parents can switch their experience format up to six weeks before their camp start date.

For its in-person option, Camp Invention will continue to adjust its programs to comply with best practice safety measures to ensure the health of the campers, teachers, families, and communities. These precautions may include daily health screenings for all children and program team members; the use of masks; social distancing within classrooms; providing individualized materials to limit sharing; increased sanitation practices and scheduled hygiene checks within the building; and smaller student groups with staggered lunch schedules. Programs will follow all state and re-

gional COVID-19 guidelines.

A hybrid program featuring both offline activities and optional online sessions, Camp Invention at home enables hands-on exploration by delivering an Innovator's Toolkit, packed full of fun materials, directly to each participant. With four themed activities, step-by-step guides and an Innovator Workshop, the program brings imagination, creative problem solving, and fun to children's living rooms. During the at-home format, local certified instructors take the campers through the day's activities, with the children choosing to attend the four daily online collaborative sessions or move at their own pace.

Each year, the program features a new curriculum inspired by some of our nation's most world-changing inventors — the National Inventors Hall of Fame (NIHF) inductees. This year's Recharge curriculum encourages children to be confident in their ideas and explore their innovativeness through hands-on activities including

Open Mic: Campers amplify their creative voice, reverse engineer a wireless microphone, and then develop and promote

their own extraordinary invention.

Duck Chuck: Through hands-on experiments with trajectory and velocity, children build their own device to launch rubber ducks around the world.

Road Rally: Imaginations accelerate as children design nature-inspired vehicles that can zoom across land and add prototype elements for moving through air and water.

SolarBot: Campers build and take care of their very own solar-powered robotic cricket, creating protective gear, a customized habitat, and a fun cricket playground.

Whether parents choose the in-person or at-home format, they can be assured that the 2021 Camp Invention program provides a top-notch STEM learning experience for their young innovator.

A National Inventors Hall of Fame program in partnership with the United States Patent and Trademark Office, Camp Invention challenges children in grades K-6 to tap into their natural curiosity and use their creativity to solve problems. Through hands-on activities, Camp Invention promotes STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) learn-

ing; builds confidence, leadership, perseverance, and resourcefulness; and encourages entrepreneurship, all in a fun and engaging environment.

For additional information or to register, visit invent.org/camp.

About Camp Invention:

Camp Invention is the

only nationally recognized summer program focused on creativity, innovation, real-world problem solving, and the spirit of invention. Through hands-on programming, Camp Invention encourages children entering kindergarten through sixth grade to explore science, technology, engineering,

and mathematics curriculum inspired by some of the world's greatest inventors. Since 1990, its education programs have served more than 1.7 million children and 190,000 teachers and leadership interns. Program sponsors include the United States Patent and Trademark Office.

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OPINION

The worst price a criminal can pay

I'm kind of a lukewarm, even conflicted, proponent of the death penalty, and, yes, I'm aware I'm living in a state whose government recently abolished it.

But lately, I've kind of moved into the camp that thinks state execution is not the worst price a criminal can pay for his crime.

I'm a Christian also, and though some may find it strange, I don't find a paradox in the two statements at all. What I am dismayed by is those who couch the pro and con death penalty argument in religious terms.

It's not a religious issue. It's a societal one. As a Christian, my duty to the Lord I serve is to a man's immortal soul, to do my little part to save it as I was commanded to, even that of a man sentenced to die for a heinous crime.

But the death penalty and even a life sentence are earned for acts that have for a moment at least snapped the tensile fabric of our society. Society exists at all because of an unwritten, silent contract to which we all

agree and are bound. The alternative is anarchy and chaos. To commit certain crimes is to endanger the society.

John Locke called it a social contract, whereby men are naturally free and equal as part of the justification for understanding legitimate political government as the result of a social contract where people in the state of nature conditionally transfer some of their rights to the government in order to better ensure the stable, comfortable enjoyment of their lives, liberty, and property.

But, you know, as I've aged, I'm not really sure that execution isn't the easy way out.

I've mentioned before on these pages that I spend some time these days rummaging through old articles and such. After all, I've got a lot of years under my belt. And I recently ran across an article about the murder of an attorney that took place in a small middle Georgia town while my wife and I were living there. The man charged with the crime pled guilty to

the murder. Thus, he escaped Georgia's electric chair. Instead, he was sentenced to spend the rest of his life behind bars. He was only 19 at the time, so a life sentence for him could be a long, long time. Probably still is. Unless some of his fellow cons did him in or he somehow landed parole, he's still in prison I would think. Still alive and, I hope, still regretting what he did that threw his life away.

That old article set me to thinking, which is always a dangerous thing. And I've decided that in pleading guilty, that criminal got the raw end of the deal. He has wound up paying an awful price for his crime. I sat down and made a list of some of the things he has never had the chance to do again and never will. And I'm telling you, it's a heartbreaking list. I feel nothing but remorse for that young man, especially as I look back over the blessed life I've led.

So since that fateful day when he took another man's life, unless he somehow has managed to get parole, he has never and will

never get the chance to

Drive a car, listen to the radio, and sing along.

Go to a high school football game.

Sit around a table with his buddies, sip coffee, and discuss that game.

Help his children put up a Christmas tree or get to see a Christmas parade.

Enjoy fireworks on the Fourth of July.

Sit at the edge of a lake or on a lake with a cane pole and watch the sun rise or set.

Snuggle up to his woman in front of the fireplace. Or kiss any woman.

Go hunting.

Enjoy the deliciousness of being alone because he wants to be.

Sit around a campfire and swap tall tales with his friends.

Hear people say how proud they are of him.

Swim in the ocean.

Own a home.

Get to eat what he wants instead of what someone else prepares for him.

Go on a picnic.

Be regarded with respect or admiration.

See a dream come true.

Pick out his own clothes or decide how long he wants to wear his hair.

Grill hamburgers or hot dogs with friends on a warm spring evening.

Go to church -- if he ever did -- with his girl, his wife, or his family.

In effect, this man, whom it is impossible when I think about it, not to regard with pity, has more than likely never since that day and never will again do any of the things that make life worthwhile, beautiful, special -- and worth the living.

Honestly, death doesn't seem like the lesser of the two evils.

The author is a man of a certain age who has led an incredibly beautiful life to the extent that, along with Frank Sinatra, he can sing, "Regrets: I've had a few, but then again, too few to mention."

Submit letters to the editor to editor@ourvalley.org

Governor Northam directs Virginia Employment Commission to speed up processing of unemployment claims

Virginia Governor Ralph Northam Wednesday directed the Virginia Employment Commission to invest \$20 million to dramatically expand the agency's ability to process complicated unemployment insurance claims.

The governor's Executive Directive 16 requires the agency to add 300 new adjudication staffers, make immediate technology upgrades, and complete a full modernization of the commonwealth's unemployment insurance system by Oct. 1, 2021.

While Virginia ranks sixth in the nation for the timely payment of benefits to eligible applicants, the governor's action will speed up the resolution of cases flagged as potentially fraudulent or ineligible. These cases represent approximately four percent of all claims.

"I'm directing the Virginia Employment Commission to invest \$20 million to significantly speed up its adjudication process and immediately implement long overdue technology upgrades," the governor said. "This action will address many of the issues that

have caused delays and will ensure that we continue to deliver relief to Virginians who need it."

Virginia's unemployment system has remained one of the lowest-funded systems in the country for generations. In fact, Virginia ranks 51st out of 53 states and territories for the amount of federal funding it receives relative to what Virginia businesses pay in taxes. The problem was hidden by years of low unemployment and a consistently strong economy, but the pandemic has highlighted this reality.

Despite being underfunded, the commonwealth's unemployment insurance (UI) system has successfully distributed \$12.9 billion in benefits to more than 1.3 million eligible Virginians since the pandemic started.

If an individual's initial claim is flagged for potential ineligibility or fraud, federal law requires the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) to adjudicate the claim before proceeding with payment. Most individuals that are placed in the adjudication process are ultimately found ineligible for benefits.

Executive Directive 16 directs the VEC to take four

immediate actions to adjudicate claims faster:

Set a clear goal for resolving unemployment insurance claims. Governor Northam has directed VEC to increase the number of adjudications being processed per week from 5,700 to 10,000 by June 30 and to 20,000 by July 31, 2021.

Continue investment in customer contact centers. Since the onset of the pandemic, VEC has quadrupled its customer service capacity to provide information and support to Virginians with questions about their claims.

Modernize the benefits system. Historic claim volume during the pandemic had previously delayed VEC's progress in modernizing its 41-year-old benefits system. The agency has resumed the project, executing a contract for \$5 million in state funding for technology upgrades. Oct. 1, 2021 has been set as the target date for completing the final phase of the system.

Collaborate with the Virginia congressional delegation to resolve federal funding disparity. States receive unemployment support from the federal government. The amount is based on how much Virgin-

ia businesses pay in federal unemployment insurance taxes. For Virginia, that ratio is among the lowest of all states, and an increase typically requires businesses to pay more in taxes. This formula has underfunded Virginia's unemployment insurance system for years with respect to upgrading technology and maintaining staffing levels.

Virginia has made a wide range of additional assistance available to those whose employment has been impacted by COVID-19. Low-income Virginians should refer to the Virginia Department of Social Services CommonHelp for guidance on applying for food, cash, childcare, and other assistance.

Support is also available through the Virginia Career Works Referral Portal for those interested in workforce training, going back to school, or getting a job. This includes \$36 million in funding through Governor Northam's 'Get Skilled, Get a Job, Give Back' (G3) Program, which makes tuition-free community college available to low- and middle-income students who pursue jobs in high-demand fields.

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CROSSWORD

CLUES ACROSS

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| 1. 007 Connery | 42. References | author's initials |
| 5. Presides over meetings (abbr.) | 43. Extremely high frequency | 6. Daily time units (abbr.) |
| 9. Trefoil | 44. Actress Farrow | 7. Cagiva ___: motorcycle |
| 10. Father of Paris | 46. Not good | 8. Drug agent (slang) |
| 12. Asian nut for chewing | 47. State of annoyance | 9. Study of poetic meter |
| 13. Machine gun from the air | 48. S. China seaport | 11. Ceremonial staffs |
| 16. The communion table | 51. Bengal quince | 12. Russian pancake served with caviar |
| 17. His razor | 52. Provide the means | 14. Supervises flying |
| 18. Father | 54. A large and imposing house | 15. Large Australian flightless bird |
| 19. Doctor of philosophy | 55. Excessively fat | 16. As fast as can be done (abbr.) |
| 22. Cologne | 57. Spars | 19. Before |
| 23. Black tropical Am. cuckoo | 58. Former wives | 20. Hall of Fame (abbr.) |
| 24. Diversifies | 59. Repeat | 21. Constitution Hall org. |
| 28. Razor author 14th C | CLUES DOWN | |
| 31. Maple sugar fluid | 1. Podetiums | 24. Atomic #35 |
| 32. A corp.'s first stock offer to the public | 2. Frankenberg river | 25. Ducktail hairstyle |
| 34. The premier bike race | 3. Feel ill | 26. Independent ruler |
| | 4. 12th state | 27. Oval water scorpion |
| | 5. "Anything Goes" | 29. Modern London Gallery |
| | | 30. On top |
| | | 33. Identicalness |
| | | 35. 2002 Olympic state |
| | | 36. Tease or ridicule |
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| | | 39. Ol' Blue Eye's initials |
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| | | 49. A French abbot |
| | | 50. Gorse genus |
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Virginia DMV warning: Vehicular heatstroke dangers increase as temperatures rise

In 2020, 24 children in the United States died as a result of being left in an unattended hot vehicle, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

As temperatures begin to climb, the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) urges parents and caregivers to never leave children unattended in a vehicle -- even for a minute -- no matter the temperature.

When the outside temperature is 80 degrees, a car can heat up to 100 degrees in just 10 minutes. Parking in the shade and rolling down the car's windows have little effect on inside temperature, and as time goes by the temperature rises. Children have died from heatstroke in cars when outside temperatures were as low as 60 degrees.

"As the weather is warming up in the commonwealth and we are traveling more frequently, we need to establish habits that will help keep our children and pets safe when we get out of our vehicles," said DMV Commissioner Richard D. Holcomb, the Governor's Highway Safety Representative. "All hot car deaths are preventable and we -- as parents, caregivers, and bystanders -- have a responsibility to keep those more vulnerable to heatstroke safe."

Both children and pets are especially prone to being harmed by heatstroke. Children heat up three-to-five times faster than adults, according to kidsandcars.org. Pets cannot sweat like humans; they can only cool down through panting, according to the Humane Society of the United States. High

temperatures can cause irreparable organ damage and even death in pets.

A good rule of thumb is to always "look before you lock," NHTSA says. Drivers are encouraged to check the back seats of their vehicle before locking it and walking away. A helpful reminder may be to keep a stuffed animal or pet's toy in the back seat when it's empty and move it to the front seat as a visual reminder when a child or pet is in the back seat.

Additionally, caregivers should be mindful of the dangers of heat when traveling with the elderly. As people age, it becomes more difficult to regulate temperature and the ability to sweat decreases, making the elderly more at risk of heatstroke than younger adults, according to the National Institutes of Health.

OBITUARIES

Heslep, Brenda Ann

Our sweet mother, Brenda Ann Heslep, 54, passed away at her home on Friday, May 14, 2021. She attended high school in Lake Placid, Fla., and made a home the best way she knew how for her children and at some times for other's children. She loved her animals and made many friends through her puppies and thrifting.



She now joins those who preceded her in death: brother Curtis Heslep; mother Shirley Womack; father Charlie "Chang" Heslep; aunt Charlsie Smith; cousins Kevin, Raymond "Porky," Jennifer, Tina, and Gary; grandparents Atlee and Ruby Frazier and William and Helene Heslep; and many, many others that she cherished deeply.

Surviving her loss is her devoted fiancée of 15 years, Billy Vernich; her sister,

Sherry Heslep; her brother, Tony Heslep; daughters Wendy and her husband, Brad Gibson, and Kristina and husband, John Dignan; her beloved son, Brandon Seagraves; and her cherished grandchildren, Zachary, Landan, Bailey, Jacob, Lilly, Magdalena, Mason, and ViviAnn; her aunts Carolyn and her husband, Russell Alls, Frances and

her husband, Glen Perdue, Linda and her husband, Lonnie Vaden, Lucy Cox, and Betty Heslep; her uncle, Jake Frazier and his wife, Madeline; nieces Georgina, Annie, and Cassie; many cousins, and so many very special friends.

A service was held Friday, May 21, 2021, at North Fork Baptist Church Cemetery in Ellett. Special thanks to McCoy Funeral Home for their care during this difficult time.

Hungate, Charlotte Blount

Charlotte Blount Hungate, 81, of McCoy, died Monday, May 17, 2021, at her home. She was born in Christiansburg on September 22, 1939.



She was preceded in death by her husband, Norman Elwood Hungate Sr.; a son, James Willard Hungate; a sister, Barbara Wheeling; and a brother, Butch Blount.

She is survived by her daughter, Vanessa Hungate; her sons, Norman (Woody) Hungate, Jr., and Anthony Hungate and Rhonda; grandchildren Dallas Tater Hungate and girlfriend, Jessica

Sadler, and Michael and Hannah Alls; great-grandchild Serinity Grace Alls; brother-in-law and sisters-in-law, Jimmy and Frances Alls, Betty McMahan, Margaret Tiny Duncan, Mary Smith, and Peggy Hungate.

The family would like to express special thanks to Carilion Hospice and Dr. David Hudgins. Funeral services were conducted Thursday, May 20, 2021, at 2 p.m. in the Walton Pentecostal Holiness Church with the Pastor Lee Sarver officiating. Interment followed in the Richard McCoy Cemetery.

Staton, Ila Jean

Ila Jean Staton, 89, passed away at her home in Radford on Sunday, May 16, 2021. She was retired from Hubble.



She was preceded in death by her husbands, Clarence Vaught and Charles Staton; her parents, Earl and Bertie Brogan; her grandsons, Chad Trent and Tristan Boothe; a brother, Earl Brogan; and her sisters, Madeline Lambert and Evangeline Tankersley.

Survivors include her sons, Clarence Vaught and Roger (Marianne) Vaught; daughters Mary Jean (Dennis) Donald, and Anette Vaught; eight grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren; six great-great

grandchildren; a brother, Rabon Brogan; and many other relatives and friends.

The family would like to thank Intrepid Hospice for all their loving kindness and care of Ila.

The family will receive friends from 12 until 1 p.m. today, Saturday, May 22, 2021, at the Mullins Funeral Home in Radford. Funeral services will begin at 1 p.m. with Pastor Mary Donald officiating. Interment will follow in Hickman Cemetery in Pulaski County.

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

Neal, Chris Derick

Chris Derick Neal, 56, passed away at his home in Christiansburg on Thursday, May 13, 2021.



He was preceded in death by his mother and stepfather, the Rev. Great Weldon and Dr. William Weldon; his father, Charles Neal; a twin sister, Gretchen Deneen Neal; and a brother, David Wayne Neal.

Left to cherish his memory are sisters Carolyn Neal-Price of Reston and Lolita Hanes Dawson of Christians-

burg; and numerous nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

The family received friends on Wednesday, May 19, 2021, at the Mullins Funeral Home in Radford, followed by funeral services with Pastor Vivian Simmons officiating. Interment will follow at a later time in Rosewood Memorial Gardens in Rural Retreat.

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

Richards, Therman Lee

Therman Lee Richards, 90, of Blacksburg, slipped away into the arms of Jesus on Saturday, May 15, 2021, at his home surrounded by his family.



He was born in Floyd County on June 24, 1930, to the late Mauyer and Ricie Vaden Altizer Richards. He was preceded in death by his daughter, Karen Lee Masson; and a brother, Mauyer Denton Richards.

He was a longtime, faithful member of Blacksburg Baptist Church. T retired as a Lt. Colonel from the U.S. Army; he began his military career as a U.S. Marine. He later joined the Maryland National Guard where he was commissioned.

Upon retirement, he earned his masters degree from Florida Institute of Technology and later entered Atlanta

Law School and completed his Juris Doctorate. He also studied theology at Columbia Theological Seminary.

He is survived by his wife of 46 years, Mette Richards, who enjoyed every adventure that he took her on; children Patricia Shumard (Al), David F. Richards, and Mary Joyce Smith (Roland); grandchildren Alicia Moser

(Wade), Michael Masson, Sandra Legge, and Corey Masson (Leslie).

A funeral service was held on Thursday, May 20, 2021, at Blacksburg Baptist Church with Dr. Tommy McDearis and the Rev. Todd Millsaps officiating. Interment was at Arlington National Cemetery. Arrangements by McCoy Funeral Home, Blacksburg.

Wheeling, Barbara Blount

Barbara Blount Wheeling, 82, of Christiansburg, made her journey to be with her Lord, surrounded by her family, who so loved her. She was preceded in death by her husband, Buford Wheeling; her mother, Margaret Blount; an aunt, Mary Blount; a brother, John "Butch" Blount; and a grandson, Joseph Paul "JP" Fisher.



Left to cherish her memory are her daughters, Linda Kinzer, Brenda Fisher, Gail Custer (Darrell), and Vicki Akers (Lindsey); a son, Stephen Wheeling (Amanda); grandchildren Jonathan Custer (Ashley), Jamie

Hazzard (Correy), Shane Akers, and Allison Akers (Adam); numerous great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild; a family friend (fifth daughter), Jackie Cox; and a special furry child, Sophie (the light of her life).

The family would like to extend a special thanks to Amedisys Palliative Care for their kind and loving care. To celebrate

Barbara's life, a graveside service was held on Tuesday, May 18, 2021, at Dudley Cemetery in Fagg, Va., with the Rev. Lee Sarver officiating. Arrangements by McCoy Funeral Home, Blacksburg.

Simmers, Juliana Maureen Oliver

Juliana "Julia" Maureen Oliver Simmers, of Fairlawn, passed away at age 69 on Tuesday, May 18, 2021.



She was a devoted and loving mother, grandmother, friend, and neighbor. She was preceded in death by her husband of 49 years, Garnett Edwin "Eddie" Simmers Sr.; her father and mother, Marshall Watkins and Joyce Agnew Oliver; her brother, Lonnie Oliver; and her grandson, Garrett Simmers.

She is survived by her sons and daughters-in-law, Garnett "Eddie" Simmers Jr. and Mendy, Kelly Simmers and Rachel, and Daryn Simmers and Ashley; four grandchildren, Carter Simmers, Kailee Simmers, Lillian "Lilli" Simmers, and Grant Simmers; a brother, B. Steven "Steve" Oliver; and a sister Connie Oliver Ridout.

She grew up on a farm and at an early age learned to love outdoor work alongside her family, something she carried with her into adulthood. It brought her great joy to take care of people, animals, and plants. She spent many hours in the barn, garden, and kitchen, and knew how to make something out of everything harvested.

Julia was a selfless and loving mother and grandmother, and she actively worked with children as a babysitter, a daycare

worker, a Sunday school and Bible school teacher, a sports mom/coach's wife, and a 4-H leader. She had a knack for getting any child to behave and participate and somehow managed to make hard work fun. She was amazingly creative in inventing activities that would occupy children for hours. Kids instantly liked and trusted her, and she encouraged them to

do difficult things that helped them not only to gain skills, but also to grow their self-confidence. She had a gift for making each child feel unique, valued, and capable.

Julia was a committed member of Morgan's Chapel United Methodist Church and more recently, Fairlawn Baptist Church. Outside of the home, she worked at the Radford Child Care Center and after earning her associate's degree at night, Blake and Moody, CPAs.

Funeral services were conducted Friday, May 21, 2021, at 11 a.m. at the Fairlawn Baptist Church. Entombment will follow in Highland Memory Gardens. The family received friends from 10-11 a.m. prior to the service at the church.

Instead of flowers, the family asks that you make a donation to the Alzheimer's Association. Arrangements by McCoy Funeral Home, Blacksburg.

Sutherland, Lois Johnston

Lois Johnston Sutherland, 85, passed away Monday, May 17, 2021.



A member of Central United Methodist Church and retired from Federal Mogul, she was preceded in death by her parents, William Roscoe and Annie Marsell Akers Johnston, and a brother, Charles Russell Johnston.

Lois Sutherland assisted with the founding of the Radford Humane Society where she served for over 30 years, including as president. She actively participated in key fundraising events for the organization.

For over 50 years she was a member of Central United Methodist Church and served in various capacities, including leading youth groups, the nursery, and as a Sunday school teacher.

Survivors include her husband of 60 years, Harold "Mousie" G. Sutherland;

daughter and son-in-law, Jennifer and Matt Newbill of Roanoke; two granddaughters, Bethany and Callie Newbill; a sister, Audrey Jennelle of Radford; a sister-in-law, Yvonne Johnston, and many other relatives and friends.

The family received friends on Thursday, May 20, 2021, at Central United Methodist Church of Radford, followed by funeral services with Pastor Don Smith officiating. Interment followed in West View Cemetery in Radford.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that contributions be made to Radford Humane Society, PO Box 581, Radford, VA 24143.

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

Olinger, Mildred Clear

Mildred Clear Olinger, 96, went to be with her Lord on Tuesday, May 18, 2021, at her home in Radford.



She was a member of Fairlawn Baptist Church and a former bookkeeper.

Mildred was preceded in death by her husband, Walter James Olinger; her parents, Harve and Annie Clear; and four brothers and two sisters.

Survivors include her daughters and son-in-law, Barbara Jesberg, and Rosemary and Charles Haynes, all of Radford; grandchildren Eric White, Gina Brown, Jodi Strange, and Justin Haynes; six great-grandchildren, Alexis Thacker, Dustin White, Kara and Kelsie Strange,

and Morgan and Meredith Brown; great-great-grandchild Beck Thacker; and many other family members and friends.

The family will receive friends from noon until 1 p.m. on Monday, May 24, 2021, at the Fairlawn Baptist Church. Funeral services will begin at 1 p.m. with the Rev. Greg Harrell, the Rev. Danny Collins, and the Rev. Joe

Strange officiating. Interment will follow in Highland Memory Gardens in Dublin.

The Olinger family is in the care of Mullins Funeral Home & Crematory in Radford. Online condolences may be expressed at www.mullinsfuneralhome.com.

Send community

news and photos to

communitynews@ourvalley.org

VT Class of 2021: Doctoral student Zichao Yang mines the mysterious world of bitcoin

Like PCR testing and TikTok dances, “bitcoin” is a term most of us have heard of by now, but it still feels more like the punchline to a joke we don’t fully understand.

So, what is bitcoin? Bitcoin is a type of currency that’s not backed by a government credit, but instead by crypto-technology and blockchains. It is invisible. There are no physical bitcoins. It exists only in code locked inside computers scattered around the world, and it can’t be used to directly buy much of anything.

When it debuted in 2009, a bitcoin was valued at a fraction of a penny. Today one is worth \$42,000.

Why? For that, we’ll have to return to the original question: What is bitcoin?

Like a cyber-mystic on the mountaintop, Virginia Tech Department of Economics doctoral student Zichao Yang is emerging as a leading guide in cryptocurrencies with a recently published paper, co-authored with Kwok “Byron” Ping Tsang, in the Journal of International Financial Markets,

Institutions & Money. Yang focused his dissertation on bitcoin and will graduate this May.

Tsang is an associate professor of economics in the Virginia Tech College of Science. “I started working with Zichao on cryptocurrencies as I found myself completely lost whenever hearing about them in the media,” said Tsang, “I simply want to know what’s going on and what’s behind all those jargons. Combining my experience in economics research and Zichao’s programming skills, we gradually have a better sense of how the markets work.”

In basic terms, bitcoin is a digital currency that can be exchanged by anyone anywhere in the world via the Internet. Transactions are tracked on a blockchain, a seemingly unhackable computer code recorded by programmers or “miners.” Only 21 million bitcoin will ever be created.

Bitcoin’s creators “wanted to make a global currency, a digital currency to replace the current system backed by government credit,” Yang said. “They wanted

to replace it with currency backed up by technology to take back power from governments and give power to the public.”

Whoever “they” are is a mystery and part of the appeal for Yang. He has long been more interested in technology communities rather than economic theories. The fact that the bitcoin cryptocurrency emerged out of, in essence, a secret society attributed to the fictitious “Satoshi Nakamoto” fascinated him the moment he heard about it.

But what is certain is that what began as an experiment within a subset of the computer science community has emerged as a major investment opportunity with more companies increasingly trying to figure out how to accept it as payment for goods.

Bitcoin’s rush began in late 2017. One plausible explanation, according to Yang, is that Chinese citizens who were restricted from converting a lot of yuan into foreign currencies began buying up bitcoin that they could then convert into something like U.S.

dollars. Media began to take notice of bitcoin’s rise, which led to more publicity and more investors looking to cash in.

“Now we have a second wave with the bitcoin price just going crazy in the past few months,” Yang said. “Institutional investors are now gaining confidence in this investment, which also drives up the price.”

Even small investors can now get in on the action by using online tools such as Cash App, PayPal, and Robinhood to acquire bitcoin.

Yang’s latest research into bitcoin is actually the transaction fees that miners receive (in bitcoin, of course) for recording or confirming an exchange in the blockchain. Think when a credit card transaction occurs where a store pays a fixed percentage of a sale to VISA or Mastercard.

“In bitcoin, it’s different,” Yang said. “The purchaser pays the transaction fee depending on “how many mines are on the network at that moment and how many transactions need to be pro-



Zichao Yang, graduating with a Ph.D. in economics, focused his dissertation on cryptocurrency Bitcoin. Photo by Steven Mackay.

cessed. The higher the demand, the higher the fee. Speed can be at a premium given the wild swings in the bitcoin market.”

Despite his fascination, Yang said he’s actually not optimistic about bitcoin’s future.

“Bitcoin doesn’t have unlimited supply, and then you’ll have deflation and money becomes more and more valuable,” he said.

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.sttfc.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

Montgomery County WORSHIP DIRECTORY

Watch Out For Pride

Read 2 Chronicles 24:1 through 26:23

After Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall. He was unfaithful to the Lord his God, and entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense (2 Chronicles 26:16).

Uzziah became king in Judah at sixteen years of age. During his reign, he fortified towers, dug wells, increased agriculture, invented weapons, and raised an impressive army. However, after forty blessed and prosperous years as king, he made a monumental mistake in judgment. He let pride settle in.

He entered into the sanctuary to offer incense on the golden altar, a ministry rite belong-

ing to the consecrated temple priests, not him. When the high priest, along with a band of eighty priests, withstood him, Uzziah became furious. While screaming back at the priests, leprosy broke out on Uzziah’s forehead. Sadly, he remained a leper, living in an isolated home until the day he died.

Pride can slip into a believer’s life almost unnoticed. The consequences are never good. If pride ever raises its ugly head, deal with it immediately. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you.

Thought for Today: Humility is our best defense against pride.

Quicklook: 2 Chronicles 26:16–23

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

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

LUTHERAN

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

MULTI-CULTURAL

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

the world in the authority of the believer! 540-382-2908.

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

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

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

UNITED METHODIST Asbury United Methodist Church, 500 Stuart Street, Christiansburg. 540-382-0743. Rev. Ryan Schaeffer. Sunday School, 10:15 a.m., Sunday Worship,

11:30 a.m., Wednesday Bible Study 7pm, alternating month’s with Schaeffer Memorial Baptist Church, Senior Bible Study Thursday, 10:30 a.m. All are welcome.

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

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

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

WESLEYAN

Christ Wesleyan Church, 525 Harkrader Street, Christiansburg. Public Worship service at 11:00 AM. Sunday School for adults - 10:00 AM. Pastor: Gale Janofski 574-306-7682. Website: christ-wesleyanchurch.org

Virginia Tech researchers identify a missing piece of the Lyme disease puzzle

Epidemic. Pandemic. These terms have become second nature to us, popping up in everyday conversation, and for good reason — COVID-19 is the latest pandemic to pose a threat to humanity. But in recent months, far less attention has been paid to another widely spread problem that has been proliferating since the late 1970s: Lyme disease.

Lyme disease is the most reported vector-borne disease in the country. Over the past 20 years, the United States has experienced a dramatic increase in both the number of reported cases and the geographic distribution of the disease. In Virginia, the disease is transmitted by blacklegged ticks, which are infected with the Lyme disease-causing bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi*.

Virginia Tech Assistant Professor Brandon Jutras and his lab have continued to tackle the Lyme disease epidemic over the past year, and they have recently identified another missing piece of the Lyme disease puzzle.

“This discovery fur-

thers our understanding of how *Borrelia burgdorferi* causes inflammation and disease,” said Mari Davis, who is the lead author on the paper, a former master’s graduate of the Jutras lab in the Department of Biochemistry in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. “It is a testament to how unique that this bacterium is and how we need to keep working to understand more about what is going on behind the scenes in order to develop future diagnostics and treatments.”

Their findings were recently published in PLOS Pathogens, a peer-reviewed open-access medical journal.

Almost all bacteria, including the Lyme disease-causing bacterium, make a mesh-like bag to protect the inside of their cells. This bag is known as peptidoglycan. In 2019, Jutras identified peptidoglycan, a lingering cell wall component of the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi*, as a likely culprit of the inflammation and Lyme arthritis, the most common late-stage symptom of Lyme disease.

Jutras’ previous research has shown that peptidoglycan in *Borrelia burgdorferi* lingers in the bodies of Lyme arthritis patients after the bacteria has entered the body. Weeks to months after the initial infection, the peptidoglycan remains, inciting inflammation and pain.

In this newest development, the lab discovered a protein associated with the peptidoglycan of *Borrelia burgdorferi* that plays an amplifying role in causing inflammation in Lyme arthritis patients by acting as a molecular beacon that antagonizes the patients’ immune system.

The team identified the protein to be NapA. NapA, which stands for Neutrophil Attracting Protein A, is a remarkable immunomodulatory molecule that is able to recruit immune cells, called neutrophils, toward the inflammatory peptidoglycan.

“NapA is another piece to an ever-evolving puzzle; it seems to play a basic role in everyday bacterial life by helping the overall protective properties of peptidoglycan, but it moonlights as a devious protein

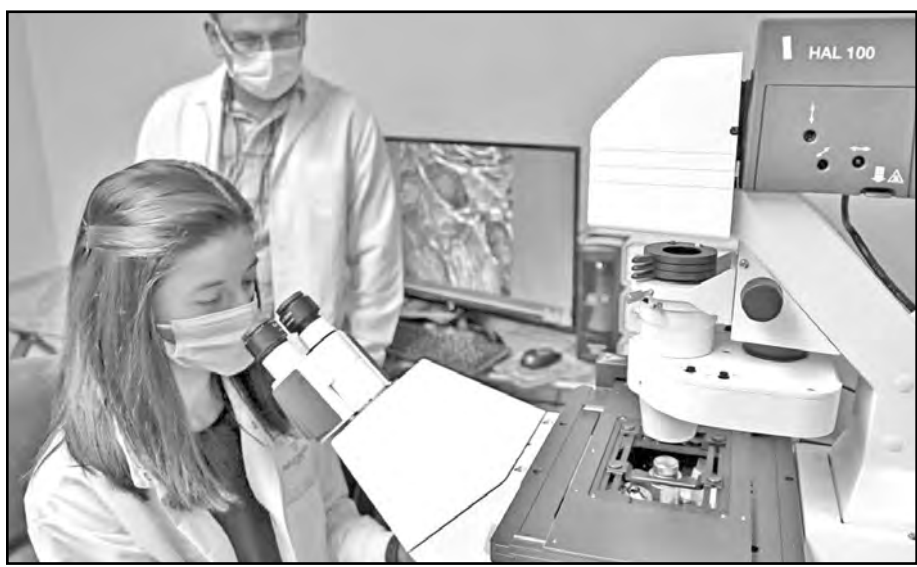


PHOTO COURTESY OF ALEX CROOKSHANKS FOR VIRGINIA TECH

The Jutras lab, led by Brandon Jutras (background), employs many different tools to study Lyme disease. Here, Mari Davis (front) is using high-resolution fluorescent microscopy to discover new biological features of the disease-causing bacterium, *Borrelia burgdorferi*.

capable of tricking our immune system,” said Jutras. “We believe NapA’s devious side has two modes: Early in infection, when bacteria are dying and releasing NapA and peptidoglycan, it acts as a decoy to attract immune cells, which allows the viable bacteria to escape and cause disease. In later stages of disease, it may act to attract immune cells to

peptidoglycan, a molecule capable of causing inflammation and arthritis,” Jutras said.

With this new piece to the puzzle in hand, Jutras plans to add to the lab’s current efforts to improve the diagnostic testing and treatment of Lyme disease.

“From a prevention and diagnostic perspective, it’s possible that the combination of peptidoglycan and

NapA could be a novel target for diagnostics,” Jutras said. “It could, in theory, be a possible avenue of vaccine development as well. These are big picture possibilities that we are actively pursuing. One thing that we know for sure is that this finding furthers our understanding of how peptidoglycan can drive Lyme arthritis patient symptomology.”

Tech Lacrosse from page 1

cess was going to look like, how my recovery was going to look, and what the steps were going to be,” Griffin said. “So, to be in that position to be back on the field put in perspective how lucky I am and how blessed I am. Things could have been a lot worse, and I’m just really thankful for how things turned out.”

Griffin, a Sykesville, Maryland, native who just wrapped up her sophomore season and aspires one day to be the next sports broadcaster out of Virginia Tech’s sports media and analytics program, spent most of 2020 taking her lumps off the field: her dog died, a tree in the front yard of her family’s home fell during a thunderstorm and totaled her brother’s car, and

both of her parents lost their jobs, becoming tertiary victims of the COVID-19 pandemic.

But the lump that terrified her the most sat inside of her pancreas and in a portion of her spleen.

In September, Griffin felt sharp pains in her side while performing conditioning drills during an offseason workout. The pain intensified with each sprint and ultimately resulted in Anne Bryan, the team’s trainer, pulling Griffin out of the drill. Sensing something more serious was taking place, Bryan later consulted with Mark Rogers, the chief medical officer in the athletics department, and they decided to schedule an abdominal scan for Griffin.

The scan revealed the lump —

one coincidentally the size of a lacrosse ball. On Sept. 25, Griffin underwent a biopsy to determine if the tumor was cancerous, and a few days later, she received the news that no one wants to get.

Griffin returned to the practice field in mid-January, starting out slowly with stick drills and ultimately working her way into contact drills. Two days before the Hokies’ season opener against Liberty, her team of doctors cleared her for competition.

Sung put Griffin in the game, which served as a salute to her recovery efforts. Three months after surgery to remove the tumor — the minimum recovery needed — she helped her team to a 13-5 victory over the Flames.

Griffin wound up playing just three games this season after playing in seven during the pandemic-shortened 2020 season. Missing most of this past fall put her behind physically, but she was thankful simply for being back on the field and being with her teammates. She welcomes the additional work needed to get into peak physical condition.

“Am I still the player I was last year? Probably not,” she said. “That just means I need to do extra stuff. I see it every single day that I am getting back to where I was. My feet are getting a little faster, or I’ll have a knockdown. I am getting back to that part.

“I’m almost there. There is more work to be done, but I do

see myself getting back to the speed that I was at.”

Her coach sees it, too. The Hokies struggled this pandemic-plagued season, going 5-11 overall, but an upset of Virginia in the regular-season finale and the return of players like Griffin has Sung optimistic.

“Mary Griffin will be a starter at Virginia Tech,” Sung said. “There’s no question about that. She had a couple of seniors in front of her, and we were teaching her a new position, but I think using her the way we want, she’ll definitely be able to be a big contributor for us moving forward.”

— Written by Jimmy Robertson

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Request for Proposals City of Radford East Main Street Sidewalk Improvements UPC 117992
(State Project # EN20-126-225, P101, R201, M501) May 17, 2021

The City of Radford is seeking expressions of interest from consulting engineering firms who wish to be considered to provide professional engineering services for: The City of Radford East Main Street Sidewalk Improvements, Transportation Alternatives Project. The project is funded through a Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) grant. This project shall be developed utilizing VDOT policies and FHWA guidelines. In addition, the project design shall meet or exceed current American Association of State Highway and Transportation Official (AASHTO) standards. The estimated cost of the proposed project is approximately \$477,000. Design and construction of the project is anticipated to take approximately 3 1/2 - years.

The objective of this project is to improve the safety of pedestrian access along US Route 11 creating a safe walking passage for Radford University students and staff while providing safer access to existing businesses. Moving pedestrians away from empty lot paths, the new sidewalk follows US Route 11 (East Main Street)

between Jefferson Street and University Drive. This project will construct approximately 900 linear feet of new sidewalk and remove a midblock crosswalk currently used by Radford University students in the City of Radford.

Services may include, but not be limited to: planning, design, developing construction documents, environmental review, submittal of applications to VDOT, surveying, bidding, construction management (including pay requests and VDOT reimbursement submittals) and other professional services as required to complete the project.

The full RFP may be obtained from the City of Radford Website www.radfordva.gov or on the eVA website <https://www.eva.virginia.gov>

Submit four copies of the proposal along with a searchable PDF file to the City Manager’s office, at 10 Robertson Street, Radford, Virginia 24141 attention Jay Eanes. The proposal must be received at the City office no later than 4:00 PM on Jun 7, 2021.

The City is an equal opportunity employer. Minority and/or female owned business firms are encouraged to apply.

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NOTICE OF ELECTION

NEW RIVER COMMUNITY ACTION, INC. (NRCA)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS TARGET AREA REPRESENTATIVE ELECTION DATE, TIME, AND LOCATION OF ELECTION: New River Community Action (Beans and Rice building), 1608 West Main Street, Radford. June 3, 2021, 2:00 - 3:00 PM.

PURPOSE OF THE ELECTION: To elect target area representative to sit on the Board of Directors of NRCA. The elected representative will serve on the Local Advisory Board and the Board of Directors. NRCA has as its purpose to alleviate poverty in the New River Valley by such programs as Head Start, Children’s Health Improvement Partnership, Homeless and Housing Programs, VA CARES, Emergency Assistance, and outreach services for other human service agencies.

PERSONS ELIGIBLE TO VOTE: All persons residing in City of Radford who are eighteen (18) years of age or older and whose family income falls within the Poverty Income Guidelines to determine eligibility for being served shall be eligible to vote. Persons not meeting these criteria can neither nominate nor vote at this election.

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LEGAL NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

The Christiansburg Planning Commission will hold a Public Hearing on Tuesday, June 1, 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:

A. An amendment of proffers for conditional zoned property for The Reserve at Round Meadows by Shah Development LLC (applicant/property owner). The change of proffers would allow an increase of five (5) additional lots for a total of no more than 56 single-family detached dwellings. The development is adjacent to Round Meadow Drive on Tax Map Nos. 494 – ((A)) – 62 and 63, Tax Map 495 – ((A)) – 64, and Tax Map 494 – ((A)) – 55E1 – 55E3.

B. Conditional Use Permit request by Shah Development LLC (applicant/property owner) for a revision to The Reserve at Round Meadows subdivision previously approved 51 single family detached dwelling Planned Housing Development to add five (5) additional single-family dwellings on property located adjacent to Round Meadow Drive on Tax Map Nos. 494 – ((A)) – 62 and 63, Tax Map 495 – ((A)) – 64, and Tax Map 494 – ((A)) – 55E1 – 55E3.

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, Zoning Administrator, at (540) 382-6120 ext. 1130 or by email at awarren@christiansburg.org with any questions or if you require reasonable accommodations.

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MONTGOMERY SPORTS

15 Blue Demons to continue athletic careers in college

Marty Gordon
NRVsports@ourvalley.org

Christiansburg High School held a signing ceremony Wednesday to honor 15 student-athletes who will continue their careers at various colleges this fall.

Caleb Henley will play football at Emory & Henry College, Brady Barrett will join the football team at Hamline University in St. Paul, Minn., Seth Walker will play golf at Ferrum College, Nick McCumsey will run cross country at Radford University, Allison Sarver will run cross country for Roanoke College, Evan Spaulding will take part in both cross country and track at Milligan University in Elizabethton, Tenn., Matt Simmons signed to play basketball at Shenandoah University, Connor Brizendine will suit up for the baseball team at Barton College in Wilson, N.C., Clay Clatterbaugh will be a Highlander for the Radford baseball team, MJ Hunter will play baseball at Concord University in Athens, W.Va., Ian Perkins and Tripp Compton will be baseball teammates at Southwest Virginia Community College, Reagan Harris has signed to play baseball at VMI, Jamie Adams will join the soccer team at Ferrum, and Julia Johnson will hit the soccer field at Roanoke College.

Caleb Henry played football for four years at CHS. He is a four-year varsity letterman and is also a member of the National Honor Society. At Emory and Henry, Caleb plans to study physical therapy.

Brady Barrett played football for four years at Christiansburg. He is also a member of the National Honor Society. At Hamline University, he plans to study pre-med.

Seth Walker will join the golf team at Ferrum College.

Nick McCumsey ran cross country for four years at CHS. He was an all-region runner in 2020. He earned honorable mention prizes at the Radford University High School art show and the Montgomery Museum Art Show. He was also on the President's list at New River Community College in the fall of 2020. At Radford University, McCumsey plans to study art education.

Allison Sarver has run cross country for the last four years at CHS. She received all-region indoor and outdoor track honors and received the cross country Heart and Sole awards. Sarver is a member of the National Honor Society and the BETA Club. At Roanoke College, she plans to study art education and psychology.

Evan Spaulding plans to attend Milligan University to run cross country and outdoor track. He has run cross country and outdoor track for four years at CHS. He is a member of the 3A state runner-up cross-country team and the National

Honor Society. At Milligan University, he plans to study engineering.

Matt Simmons plans to attend Shenandoah University to play basketball. He played high school basketball for three years; his senior year was at Christiansburg. He was a regional all-star selection for the New River Valley Fellowship of Christian Athletes, a regional all-star for the Basketball Coaches Association of New York, a Hoops Showcase and Summer Basketball team selection, and is a 2-time Section championship winner and a league championship winner. Simmons is a member of the National Honor Society and the High Honor Roll and was on the Dean's List at New River Community College for the fall semester of 2020. At Shenandoah, Matt plans to study exercise science.

Connor Brizendine played baseball for four years at CHS. He was a 2019 second-team all-region pitcher and an honorable mention All River Ridge District Pitcher. At Barton, Connor plans to study exercise science.

Clay Clatterbaugh played baseball the last four years at CHS. He is a four-year letterman in both baseball and basketball. At Radford University, he plans to study criminal justice.

MJ Hunter played baseball for four years at CHS. He is a three-sport letterman at CHS and has been an all-district and all-region selection in multiple sports. At Concord, MJ plans to study criminal justice.

Ian Perkins played baseball for four years for the Blue Demons. At Southwest Virginia Community College, he plans to study physical therapy and sports medicine.

Tripp Compton also played baseball for four years at CHS. He is a two-year baseball letterman. At Southwest Virginia Community College, Tripp plans to study criminal justice.

Reagan Harris played baseball for four years at Christiansburg, lettering all four seasons. He will receive both his high school diploma and his associate's degree simultaneously. At VMI, Reagan plans to study civil engineering.

Jamie Adams played soccer for the Blue Demons for four seasons. She was named co-offensive player of the year and was named to the Second Team All-District and First team All-Region soccer teams. At Ferrum, she plans to study health and physical education.

Julia Johnson played soccer for four years at CHS. She has been named co-offensive player of the year, offensive player of the year and First Team All-District and was named a Co-Captain her senior year. She is a three-year soccer letter winner. Johnson is a member of the National Honor Society and the BETA Club. At Roanoke, Julia plans to study business administration.

Area high schools announce fall football schedules

Marty Gordon
NRVsports@ourvalley.org

County high school football teams recently completed a shortened spring schedule thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic, and now they have to make a quick turnaround to prepare for the fall season.

Earlier this week, the Montgomery County Public Schools and Radford High School released their projected schedules for the fall.

For the first time in years, Blacksburg and Christiansburg will not face each other in the final week of the season. Instead they will play on October 8.

Radford will play George Wythe, Gate City, Galax, Ft. Chiswell, and Christiansburg out-of-district this coming fall.

Blacksburg will face Giles, Lord Botetourt, Amherst, and Graham as non-River Ridge opponents.

Christiansburg's non-district opponents will be Floyd, Abingdon, William Byrd and Radford.

Eastern Montgomery will travel to Holston, then host Ru-

ral Retreat and North Cross in back-to-back weeks while facing Auburn in the annual cross-county rival contest.

Besides Eastern Montgomery, Auburn will face Giles, Craig, Narrows, and Floyd.

Radford High School schedule:

Friday, Aug. 27, George Wythe; Saturday, Sept. 4, at Gate City; Friday, Sept. 10, at Ft. Chiswell; Friday, Sept. 17, Galax; Friday, Sept. 24, at Christiansburg; Friday, Oct. 1, Alleghany; Friday, Oct. 8, Carroll County; Friday, Oct. 22, Floyd; Friday, Oct. 29 at Glenvar; Friday, Nov. 5, at James River.

Blacksburg High School schedule:

Friday, Aug. 27, at Giles; Thursday, Sept. 2, Lord Botetourt; Friday, Sept. 10, Amherst; Friday, Sept. 24, Salem; Friday, Oct. 1, at Patrick Henry; Friday, Oct. 8, at Christiansburg; Friday, Oct. 15, Pulaski; Friday, Oct. 22, Hidden Valley; Friday, Oct. 29, at Graham; Friday, Nov. 5, Cave Spring.

Christiansburg High School schedule:

Friday, Aug. 27, at Floyd; Friday, Sept. 3, at Abingdon; Friday, Sept. 17, William Byrd; Friday, Sept. 24, Radford; Friday, Oct. 1, at Salem; Friday, Oct. 8, Blacksburg; Friday, Oct. 15, at Hidden Valley; Friday, Oct. 22, Patrick Henry; Friday, Oct. 29, Cave Spring; Friday, Nov. 5, at Pulaski.

Eastern Montgomery High School schedule:

Friday, Aug. 27, at Holston; Friday, Sept. 3, Rural Retreat; Friday, Sept. 10, North Cross; Friday, Sept. 17, at Auburn; Friday, Sept. 24, Bland; Friday, Oct. 8, at Craig; Friday, Oct. 15, Bath County; Friday, Oct. 22, Narrows; Friday, Oct. 29, at Covington; Friday, Nov. 5, Parry McCluer.

Auburn High School schedule:

Friday, Aug. 27, Narrows; Friday, Sept. 3, at Craig; Friday, Sept. 10, Floyd; Friday, Sept. 17, Eastern Montgomery; Friday, Oct. 1, at Ft. Chiswell; Friday, Oct. 8, Grayson County; Friday, Oct. 15, at Bland; Friday, Oct. 22, at Galax; Friday, Nov. 5, George Wythe.

Hokies 1986 Peach Bowl team honored in new digs

Virginia Tech Athletics has unveiled a refurbished plaza area outside of Tech's football strength and conditioning facility that honors the 1986 Peach Bowl squad, the team that claimed the first bowl win in school history.

In addition to the permanent recognition of the 1986 Peach Bowl team, the renovated football weight room was also made possible thanks to the generosity of former Hokie tight end Steve Johnson and now bears his name. Johnson caught a team-high six passes in that memorable 1986 bowl victory. Signage recognizing the 1986 Peach Bowl champions and Johnson has been added to the main entrance of the facility.

These improvements mark the latest in the series of renovations that are rapidly transforming the Merryman Center and the overall footprint of Tech Athletics on the Virginia Tech campus.

A former Tech football player who played from 1983-87, Johnson currently serves as president and owner of Bristol-based Johnson Commercial Development, one of the largest commercial developers in the Southeast. Johnson Commercial Development has completed one of the largest commercial projects in the country, The Pinnacle, a one million-

square-foot upscale retail development in Bristol, Tenn.

Johnson has long been appreciated for his continued philanthropic giving to Tech Athletics. In 2017, Tech unveiled a completely reimagined team meeting room that was funded by Johnson's generosity. In 2013, he made a gift of \$1,000,025 toward the construction costs of the award-winning Beamer-Lawson Indoor Practice Facility.

Athletics department officials named the football team's practice fields in Johnson's honor following his commitment to the indoor practice facility project. The Steve Johnson Practice Fields sit adjacent to the Beamer-Lawson Indoor Practice Facility.

The final \$25 of Johnson's pledge to the Beamer-Lawson facility was used to cover the cost of the football that he tossed into the stands after scoring a fourth-quarter touchdown in the Hokies' 25-24 win over NC State in the '86 Peach Bowl. The winning points came on a Chris Kinzer field goal as time expired.

That bowl victory marked a turning point in the trajectory of Tech's football program, and that 1986 squad will be forever commemorated in Blacksburg.

Johnson is a member of the

Ut Prosim Society, a select group of Virginia Tech's most generous supporters.

"While in college, play and learn," Johnson said. "After college, apply and earn. Once you are settled, be grateful and return. It's that simple to me."

The Huntsville, Ala., native caught four passes for 83 yards and a touchdown as a freshman. As a sophomore, he hauled in nine passes for 109 yards and a score. He burst onto the scene as a junior in 1986 when he caught 33 passes for 391 yards and three touchdowns. In 1987, he hauled in a team-leading 38 passes for 475 yards and three touchdowns. He still ranks third in school history among tight ends in terms of career receptions (84), receiving yards (1,058), and touchdowns (eight).

The New England Patriots drafted Johnson in the sixth round of the 1988 NFL Draft and he spent two seasons with the Patriots. He played in 14 games during the 1988 season, starting three and catching one pass. He signed with the Dallas Cowboys as a free agent in 1990 but injured his knee in a preseason game and retired from football shortly thereafter.

At that point, he started his path toward building his successful business career.



The renovated weight room and the Peach Bowl recognition were made possible by Tech alumnus and former Hokie tight end Steve Johnson.

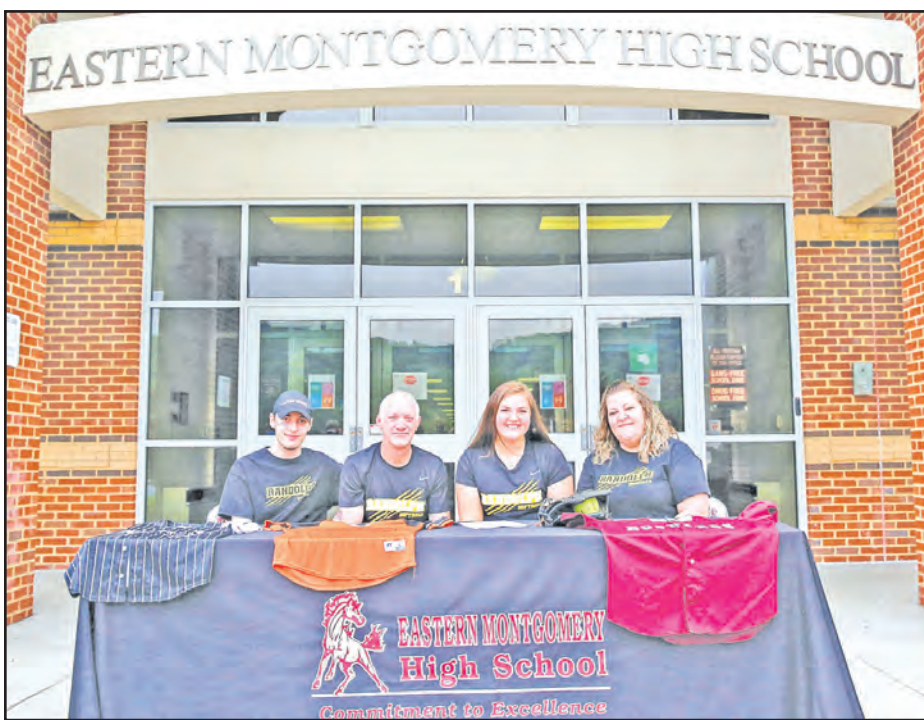


PHOTOS COURTESY OF VT ATHLETICS
Virginia Tech's 1986 Peach Bowl squad is being honored on the plaza outside of the weight room on campus.

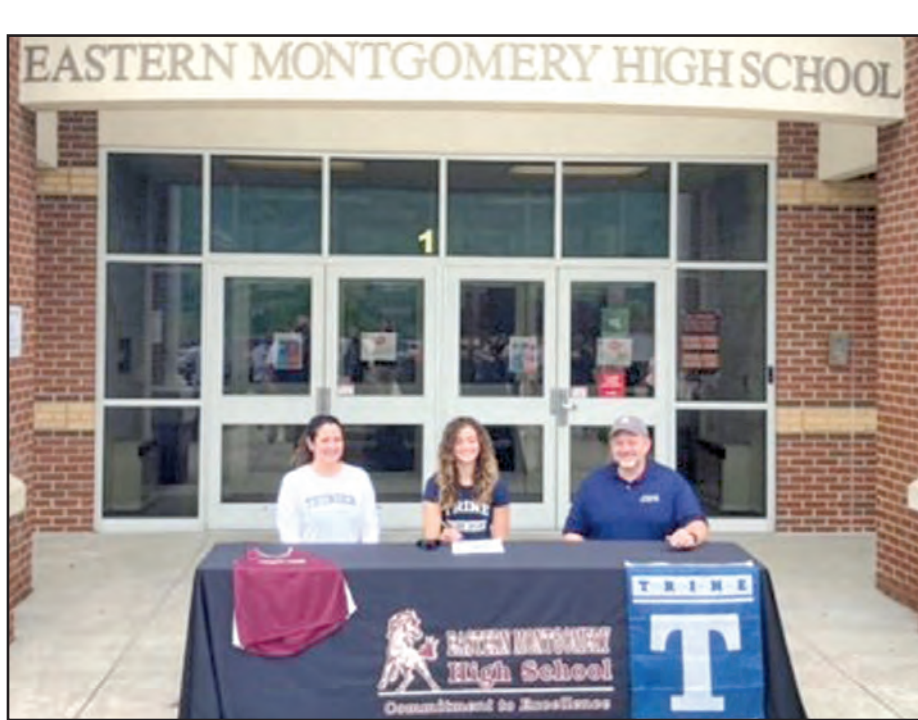
Send community news and photos
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East Mont's Erica Shrewsbury headed to college for softball

Sarah Weatherspoon to run college cross country



Eastern Montgomery's Erica Shrewsbury (third from left) is headed to Randolph-Macon to play softball. Also pictured at Tuesday's signing in front of the school were (from left) her brother, Cameron Shrewsbury; her father, Tim Enzor; and her mother, Leanna Enzor.



Eastern Montgomery's Sarah Weatherspoon (center) is headed to Trine University to run cross country after signing a letter of intent. Also pictured at this week's signing were her mother, Carey Weatherspoon, and her father, John Weatherspoon.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF EASTERN MONTGOMERY HIGH SCHOOL

Highlanders earn Big South's Christenberry Award

The Big South Conference has announced that three Radford University athletes, cross-country's Annsley Eckert, softball's Sydney Fisher, and baseball's Anthony Galati, have been awarded the conference's prestigious George A. Christenberry Award for Academic Excellence.

The trio was awarded the honor after maintaining perfect 4.00 GPAs through their college careers.

The award is given to the male and female student-athlete who attain the highest GPA during their undergraduate collegiate careers. It is the fifth consecutive year at least eight student-athletes in the Big South have been honored.

Big South member institutions nominate one male and one female undergraduate student-athlete for the annual award. The honor is named for George A. Christenberry, the former President of Augusta College (now Augusta University) and one of the founders of the Big South Conference. A member of the Big South Hall of Fame, Christenberry served as the league's first president from 1983-86.

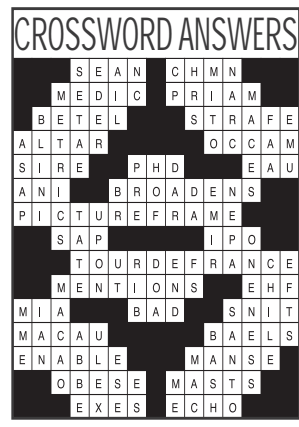
From Lynchburg, Eckert was this season's Women's Cross Country Scholar-Athlete of the Year and is a two-time Women's Cross Country All-Academic Team member. She has been a consistent competitor for the Highlanders her full four years and holds the third-fastest time in the 4k, the ninth-fastest time in the 5k, and the fifth-fastest time in the 6k in program history. Eckert set personal records in the 800m and 1500m races at this year's Big South Outdoor Track and Field Championships.

From Appling, Ga., Fisher was the Big South's Softball Scholar-Athlete of the Year for the 2021 season. In addition to earning First-Team All-Conference honors, Fisher is a Senior CLASS Award Top 10 Finalist. She has done research in soil sample analysis and aquatic insect identification and presented some of her research at Radford University's Winter Creative Activities and Research Days (CARD). Fisher will be presenting her new research later in the year.

From Sparks, Nev., Galati, a junior outfielder, has been a strong contributor to the Highlander offense this season with a .244/.364/.348 slash line to go with five stolen bases and 22 RBIs.



Radford University athletes (from top) Annsley Eckert, Sydney Fisher, and Anthony Galati have been awarded the Big South's Christenberry Award for academic excellence.



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+ Load Up and Drive Away: 18 Foot Utility Trailer (included)

Total Package Price \$24,950**

**Price is Cash Price with all discounts taken. Financing available, see dealer for details.

For complete warranty, safety and product information, consult your local Kubota dealer and the product operator's manual. Power (HP/KW) and other specifications are based on various standards or recommended practices.



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