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Montgomery County receives \$27.6 million grant for fiber optic broadband service

Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam announced recently that Montgomery County has received a \$27.6 million Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) grant to assist with a \$50 million project to bring high speed fiber optic broadband service to thousands of citizens and businesses throughout the county.

The grant funding will allow for up to 8,822 new connections for unserved citizens and businesses throughout the county.

“Since we initially launched a broadband study in early 2019, our goal has been to find a way to help provide high-speed Internet to all citizens and businesses in Montgomery County,” said Montgomery County Administrator Craig Meadows. “We, as

a government entity, understand the only way to achieve this goal is to partner with private companies like GigaBeam and Appalachian Power Company.

“Together, we applied for and were awarded one of the largest VATI grants in the Southwest region of Virginia to date,” Meadows said. “This significant grant has created a path for citi-

zens and businesses throughout Montgomery County to have access to high speed Internet by the end of 2023.”

“GigaBeam Networks is excited to be part of this project that will provide fast, dependable, and affordable broadband to locations that never previously had it,” said GigaBeam Chief Executive Officer Michael

Clemons.

“This couldn’t have happened without the teamwork and partnership between Montgomery County, Appalachian Power Company, and GigaBeam Networks,” Clemons said. “GigaBeam has worked with Appalachian Power to be the first in the

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Virginia Tech Transportation Institute Senior Research Associate Jean Paul Talleo Vilela teaches a school-age child about advanced technologies in vehicles at a local community event. Institute researchers will have a significant role in this project. Photo by Cindy Martin.

Virginia Tech named finalist for up to \$100 million in federal challenge grant

Virginia Tech is competing for as much as \$100 million in federal funds to support economic development through a regional transportation and logistics cluster that will accelerate the adoption of electric and automated vehicles and revitalize the economy of Southern and Southwest Virginia.

A coalition led by the university was selected as one of 60 finalists for the \$1 billion Build Back Better Regional Challenge funded by the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration. The challenge, which received 529 applications from across the country, aims to accelerate the economic recovery from the pandemic. It is the largest economic development initiative from the Commerce Department in decades.

Virginia Tech has assembled a team of higher education partners, industry and community representatives, small-business development centers, and others to build upon the region’s existing strengths in vehicle manufacturing, vehicle testing and evaluation, and technology-based economic development.

“This award opens the door to transformative economic opportunities for Southwest and Southern Virginia in the transportation and logistics sector, and the coalition led by Virginia Tech offers a remarkable hub of resources to support the growth of this industry,” U.S. Sen. Tim Kaine said.

“This project has the potential to bring transformational change to Southwest and Southern Virginia and to shrink the economic divide between our rural and urban communities,” Virginia Tech President Tim Sands said. “It will tap into Virginia Tech’s world-recognized expertise and our ability to convene diverse partners to tackle some of humanity’s most pressing problems.”

The coalition involved in the project includes 50 public and private organizations from 21 counties across Southern and Southwest Virginia.

The region boasts one of the largest collections of truck manufacturing plants across the country, with companies including Torc Robotics, Mack, Volvo, and Morgan-Olsen. Daimler Truck acquired a majority stake in Torc, a leader in self-driving autonomous vehicle software, and automated truck systems.

The proposal was developed by Virginia Tech’s Center for Economic and Community Engagement, part of Outreach and International Affairs, and the Office of the Vice President for Strategic Alliances. Faculty and staff from across the university — including the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center, the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, the Mid-Atlantic Aviation Partnership, and the College of Engineering — will be instrumental in moving the project forward.



Making the RSVP tote bag delivery to the Kroontje Health Care Center on Thursday, Dec. 16, were (left to right) RSVP Coordinator Mandy Hayes, RSVP Volunteer Sarah Carter, Assistant County Administrator Brad St. Clair, Deputy County Administrator Angie Hill, Montgomery County Administrator Craig Meadows, Montgomery County Supervisor Sherri Blevins, RSVP Volunteer Rosemary Jones, RSVP Program Assistant Ava Stilwell, (foreground) Santa (Dennis Minnick), and Mrs. Claus (Cindy Minnick).

Montgomery, Radford RSVP volunteers deliver holiday tote bags to health care center

With the help of Santa and Mrs. Claus, the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of Montgomery County and Radford delivered 110 holiday tote bags on Thursday, Dec. 16, to residents of Kroontje Health Care Center. The totes were handed out individually to residents by Santa and his helpers.

Helping with the delivery were Dennis Minnick (Santa), Cindy Minnick (Mrs. Claus); Sherri Blevins, Montgomery County Board of Supervisors; Montgomery County Human Services Director Tonia Winn; AmeriCorps Seniors Director Atalaya Sergi; and AmeriCorps Mid-Atlantic Regional Administrator Adrienne

Nash Melendez.

The tote bags were filled by members of the community including Montgomery County employees, Calvary United Methodist Church, Holy Spirit Catholic Church Young At Heart Adults, the Retired Educators Association of Montgomery County, and volunteers of RSVP.

VT Research Center announces grant to expand lab space and facilities

Montgomery County, VA – The Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center (VTCRC) announced last Wednesday, Dec. 15, that GO Virginia has awarded the research park a grant to “fund the expansion of laboratory space and facilities aimed at supporting the region’s growing life science industry.”

The research center will develop a shared lab facility in Blacksburg with a coalition of stakeholders including Montgomery County, Carilion Clinic, and the City of Roanoke. These stakeholders will also design a larger facility in Roanoke.

The shared lab space facility at the research center in Blacksburg will be called COgro LABS. According to Brett Malone, President and CEO of the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center, who made the announcement at a press conference, the facility “is designed with 25 accessible lab spaces in a turnkey facility. The facility will help meet a need for flexible lab space from small- to early-stage companies, making starting and building a biotech company a little bit easier.

“Through collaborations, we aim

to fill the demand from biotechnology companies and provide full access needed to support research to commercialization aspirations,” Malone said. “Our sophisticated infrastructure makes us a research destination across industries and for everyone from startups to enterprise companies.”

In addition to this new lab space, the research center has established a new collaboration with Johnson & Johnson LLC to “provide early-stage innovators in the region with access to their virtual residency program that includes expert mentoring, programming and resources offered through Johnson & Johnson Innovation – JLABS.”

Up to five companies will be selected by JLABS and the research center to participate in the JLABS virtual residency program during the first year of the collaboration.

“Montgomery County is pleased to provide support to this partnership, which demonstrates our commitment to biotechnology growth in the New River and Roanoke Valleys,” said Montgomery County Administrator Craig Meadows. “We look forward to working with the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center and the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute to promote recognition for our region as a biotechnology hub.”



The Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center Wednesday announced the awarding of a grant to expand the laboratory space and facilities in support of the region’s growing life science industry.

Virginia’s unemployment rate lowest since start of pandemic

Virginia Governor Ralph Northam announced Friday that Virginia’s unemployment rate dropped to 3.4 percent in November, the lowest it has been since the start of the pandemic, 2.4 percentage points below the rate from one year ago and well below the national rate of 4.2 percent.

“The Commonwealth’s unemployment rate has decreased once again for the eighteenth

month in a row and to its lowest level since the COVID-19 pandemic began,” said Governor Northam. “Virginia continues to remain a place where both businesses and workers can thrive, and these numbers prove that.”

Total nonfarm payroll employment increased by 13,600 jobs in November. The labor force increased by 2,706 to 4,259,504, as the number of

unemployed residents decreased by 8,627 to 145,605. The number of employed residents rose by 11,333 to 4,113,899. In November 2021, Virginia saw over-the-year job gains of 2.1 percent.

“The continued increase in payroll employment and decrease in the unemployment rate are exciting indications of a strong job market in the commonwealth,” said Secretary of

Labor Megan Healy. “We’re proud of the resiliency of Virginia’s businesses and workers alike, and we will continue to work with our workforce development partners to provide support and resources for Virginians looking to enter the workforce.”

“Since this time last year, the unemployment rate is down significantly, and nonfarm payroll has increased by more than 52,000 jobs,” said Secretary

of Commerce and Trade Brian Ball. “These are just two of many positive signs for Virginia’s economy, which is on track to be even stronger than it was before the pandemic.”

In November, the private sector recorded an over-the-year gain of 73,100 jobs, while employment in the public sector gained 9,500 jobs. Compared

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Now through Dec. 22:

Public voting for Radford holiday display contest
The Radford Chamber of Commerce's second annual holiday display contest is underway, and public voting is through Dec. 22. Vote at www.radfordchamber.com.

Now through Jan. 3:

United Way Festival of Trees
Visit the Old Town Mall in Downtown Christiansburg to see the beautiful trees in person.

Holiday Trees & Gingerbread Houses on Display in Kent Square Lobby
Get in the spirit, take beautiful photos and enjoy the creativity of this display.

Wednesday, Dec. 22:

Movie Matinee
At the Blacksburg Library at 2 p.m. When the evil spirit Pitch launches an assault on the Earth, the Immortal Guardians team up to protect the innocence of children around the world. Rated PG. Meltfree snowball sensory craft will be provided.

Wednesday, Dec. 22 and Thursday, Dec. 23:

Christ Wesleyan Live Nativity
Christ Wesleyan Church, 525 Harkrader St. in Christiansburg, will present its third annual live nativity today, Dec. 22, and Dec. 23 from 6 to 8 p.m. both nights.

Thursday, Dec. 23:

Radford Public Library Holiday hours
Upcoming Holiday Closings: Dec.

23-26: CLOSED; Dec. 26-30: EARLY CLOSING at 5 p.m.
Dec. 31 and Jan. 1: CLOSED

Radford City Holiday closings and Sanitation Collection Schedule

City Offices will be closed on Thursday, Dec. 23, and Friday, Dec. 24, for the Christmas holiday. The sanitation collection schedule is as follows: Thursday, Dec. 23, collected on Wednesday, Dec. 22; Friday, Dec. 24, collected on Monday, Dec. 27; Friday, Dec. 31, collected on Monday, January 3, 2022. Please have garbage ready for collection by 7:30 a.m. Drop Center Hours: Thursday, Dec. 23-Saturday, Dec. 25: closed.

Wednesday, Dec. 29:

Teen Nerf Battle
At the Christiansburg Library; at 6 p.m. Join in an epic Nerf battle at the public library. Games to be played include Nerf versions of capture the flag and humans vs. zombies and more. Bring your own Nerf blaster (some available), and the library will supply the elite style darts. Free snacks will be provided at the event. Ages 11 to 17. Registration and waiver required.

Thursday, Dec. 30:

American Red Cross Blood Drive
At the Christiansburg Library at 11:30 a.m. Walk-ins are welcome or sign up at <https://www.redcrossblood.org/give.html/donation-time>.

Friday, Dec. 31:

Radford City Holiday Closing and Sanitation Schedule
Radford City offices will be closed on Friday, Dec. 31, 2021, for New Year's Eve. The sanitation collection schedule is as follows: Friday, Dec. 31, collected on

Monday, January 3, 2022. Drop Center will be closed Friday, Dec. 31, and Saturday, Jan. 1.

Thursday, Jan. 3

Floyd Moves It
At 11:00 a.m. at the Jessie Peterman Memorial Library. Get moving and get active with an American Heart Association walking workout. Space is limited to 15 participants. Wearing of a mask is requested.

Monday, Jan. 6:

American Legion meeting
American Legion Harvey-Howe-Carper Post 30 will meet at 7 p.m. at the VFW Post Home at 102 Watts St. in Radford. If Radford City Public Schools are closed on Thursday or Friday of this week due to weather, the meeting will be cancelled. For further information, call 250-2283 or 239-9864.

Tuesday, Jan. 11:

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 at 3204 Riner Rd. Members of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) are invited to attend. The guest speaker will be Scott Gardner of the Glencoe Museum, who will give a talk on Gen. Gabriel Wharton. If Montgomery County Public Schools are closed on Tuesday or Wednesday of this week due to weather, the meeting is cancelled. For further information, call 320-4315 or 239-9864.

Now through Jan. 21:

Apply now for NRV Master Gardener Program

The New River Valley Master Gardener Program is seeking applicants for the 2022 Master Gardener Training class. The classes will be held on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons from Feb. 15 through May 5 on the Virginia Tech Campus and at the Montgomery County Government Center.

Topics covered include basic botany, plant propagation, herbaceous plants, houseplants, vegetables, fruits, pruning, landscape design, floral design, lawn care, woody plants, entomology, plant pathology, abiotic stresses, soils, and pesticide use and safety. The cost for the course is \$185.00, and participants will do 50 hours of volunteer service. Contact Wendy Silverman at the Montgomery County Extension Office at 540-382-5790 for more information. Applications are due Jan. 21, 2022.

Now through February:

Adult winter reading program
At the Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library. The library challenges its patrons to read during January and February and keep track of their reading on the library's Beanstack site. Earn badges with each book read and activity completed. <https://mfri.beanstack.org/>.

Ongoing:

Free COVID-19 Test Kits
Now available at all branches of the Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library and the Radford Public Library, curbside only: free, rapid at-home COVID-19 antigen test kits. Tests are available at no cost, and no library card is needed. This pilot program is made possible by a partnership with the Virginia Department of Health. Users will need a Wi-Fi connection, a form of ID, and a mobile device or computer to complete the test.

The do's and don'ts of holiday decorating with plants

"Holiday wreaths are a traditional symbol of eternity, and they stand for hope, peace, and joy," said Johanna Perakes, Portsmouth Virginia Cooperative Extension master gardener and expert wreath maker.

"It's easy to make holiday wreaths and other decorations yourself using material from your garden and/or that of a friend," Perakes said. "You just have to make sure you condition any plant material in warm

water for 24 hours." Plant material can be "conditioned" by submerging in a tub of warm water that is about the temperature of a bathtub for 24 hours to harden the greenery so it doesn't dry out.

When conditioned properly, wreaths will last all season. Magnolia and boxwood wreaths dry well and can be kept from year to year in dried form.

Perakes offers these tips for new wreath-makers: Find your inspiration. For example, keep a folder with pictures of wreaths that you like. Use material from your garden and/or that of a friend. Purchased greenery can be very expensive. It will always take more greens than you think, so don't be stingy in cutting. Greenery should overlap by at least a third. Dried material en-

hances a wreath. Dry hydrangea, okra, wheat, and cotton make good additions.

Wreaths can be used both vertically, such as on doors, windows, and walls; and horizontally, such as on tables.

When adding greenery to your wreath form, work in a counterclockwise direction. Don't stick pieces in randomly.

Plant material can be attached to a store-bought wreath form made from wire, straw, or grapevines using a spool of 22-gauge paddle wire or fern pins for straw forms.

Many types of greenery can be used in holiday decorations. Perakes recommends magnolia and boxwood cedar and spruce.

In addition to traditional wreaths, greenery and other plant material can be used to decorate window sills, mantels,

and doorways.

Keep pets safe
When decorating with live plant material, always consider the safety of pets by making holiday plants, greenery, and Christmas tree water difficult to reach.

"We often see pet toxicosis around the holidays, both with plants and more food toxicosis from things like chocolate," said Marion Ehrich, professor emerita of pharmacology and toxicology at the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine at Virginia Tech.

"Most holiday plants cause irritation of the mouth area," Ehrich said. "Drinking Christmas tree water, especially pine Christmas trees, is not good for cats. Christmas tree water contains oils that can cause damage to organs if they drink too much. You might not no-

tice symptoms for days."

If your pet has been eating or chewing on decorative holiday plant material, you should know within an hour if they are suffering from mouth irritation. Pets may also experience GI symptoms within hours. If your cat or dog appears to be in pain, a veterinarian may be able to help by washing the mouth area to remove any irritating plant residues.

You can help your pets by making plant material difficult to reach and by making sure Christmas tree water is covered well by a tree skirt so your pets can't reach it.

"Pets are less likely to chew on these materials if they are difficult to reach," said Ehrich. "Make sure cats always have a supply of fresh water to help prevent them from going to the Christmas tree."



PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHANNA PERAKES.

Wreath made for Johanna Perakes's mother with magnolia, Japanese cedar, and winterberry. It took 25 clumps of magnolia and a wire to create. Made by Johanna Perakes, Portsmouth Extension Master Gardener.

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CLUES ACROSS

- Baseball stat
- Blaze
- Sea eagles
- Tails in Italian
- Monocot genus
- Mother or father
- The Jungian inner self
- Covered with gold
- Residual oil
- Signs up for school
- Furniture for daily meals
- Extinct flightless bird of New Zealand
- Lower limb
- Guy (slang)
- Get free of
- Snakelike fish
- Adult female bird
- Formal window coverings
- Break into small pieces
- "1836 siege" of U.S.
- Made violet-red
- Food chopper
- Removes writing
- Ethiopian monetary unit
- Wine bottle containers
- English prelate
- Wm. Ralph
- Small storage structure
- A jelly-like substance
- A brief comment
- Sultanate of NW Borneo
- Importune
- Forelimb
- Models of ethical behavior
- Harangues
- This (Spanish)
- Springfield Area Mobile Intensive Care
- Sang at Christmas door to door
- Partly or nearly blind
- Posterior pituitary gland hormone
- American Nurses Association (abbr.)
- The 7th Greek letter
- Strives to equal
- Toff
- Coleoptera insects
- The color of blood
- Slipped by
- Of she
- A short musical passage
- CNN's founder Turner
- Radioactivity unit
- Exculpation defense
- Walking back and forth
- Come forth from
- Oxalis
- A soft twilled fabric of silk
- The two large chest muscles

CLUES DOWN

Broadband Grant

from page 1

nation to solve the rural digital divide in Grayson County through this unique solution, and we look forward to continuing this proven method for Montgomery County."

While the federal goal to provide universal broadband is 2030, Virginia set one of the most ambitious state goals by committing to bringing high-speed Internet to citizens in 2024. With the VATI grant and the private-public collaboration in place, Montgomery County will accomplish the goal of bringing high-speed Internet to its citizens by the end of 2023.

"We are eager and excited to work with Montgomery County," said Appalachian Power's Vice President of External Affairs Brad Hall. "Our recent success in Grayson County demonstrates you can make high-speed Internet accessible in rural

areas, and we look forward to partnering and sharing our knowledge with this team."

The network being designed and built is capable of speeds up to 10 gigabytes per second, with 1 gigabyte per second being provided initially.

"Our county has so many great things to offer all citizens; however, the lack of adequate Internet service has been identified as a priority by everyone," said Montgomery County Board of Supervisors Chairman Steve Fijalkowski. "I'm happy to say we have heard the feedback from our citizens, and we are going to respond to this need in short order."

The full grant request included Montgomery, Bland, and Pulaski Counties and a public-private partnership with Gigabeam Networks, All Points Broadband, and

Appalachian Power Company. The total project estimate is \$135.7 million. It will bring fiber broadband to up to 19,966 unserved locations in Bland, Montgomery, and Pulaski counties.

Montgomery County is allocating \$6 million of American Rescue Plan Act funding. Appalachian Power and GigaBeam are allocating \$16.4 million, and of the total \$68.3 million VATI award, Montgomery County is receiving \$27.6 million, bringing the total funding for the proposed 8,822 connections in Montgomery County to \$50 million.

"This increases our ability to continue to attract both new and develop existing businesses and retain and attract new workforce in Montgomery County," said Montgomery County Economic Development Director Brian Hamilton.

Unemployment

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to a year ago, on a seasonally adjusted basis, nine of eleven major industry divisions experienced employment increases. The largest over-the-year job

gain occurred in leisure and hospitality, up 24,000 jobs (7.1 percent). The next largest over-the-year job gain occurred in professional and business ser-

vices, up 19,200 jobs (2.5 percent). Trade and transportation experienced the third largest over-the-year job gain of 12,400 jobs (1.9 percent).

Graduation day one of celebration for the Pedrotty family

The scars are there, forever reminders of the worst day of his life.

There is the trachea scar below his throat; an eye that sits a little off center; a right hand that responds slowly; and a small incision mark behind his ear.

Dominic Pedrotty carried these scars with him when he walked across the stage Friday morning at Virginia Tech's commencement ceremony to receive his undergraduate degree in mechanical engineering from the College of Engineering.

The scars serve as an unwanted reminder of a car accident three years ago that robbed him of a cherished sister, altered him physically and emotionally, left him to endure torturous hours of rehabilitation and the ones yet left to complete, and left him with occasional feelings of guilt.

That accident, though, couldn't rob his work ethic or abscond with his motivation to get his degree or even dent his witty disposition.

"I don't want all the pain and suffering I've endured to be in vain," he said, not referring to the accident, but rather taking a pointed jab at the grueling workload incurred by engineering students at Virginia Tech.

The accident will always be an indelible part of Pedrotty's life, but never something that defines

him, and Friday represented a day of redemption for him. Friday also was a day of celebration for the Pedrotty family.

After more than three long years filled with pain, guilt, and doubt, step one in Pedrotty's recovery process has reached its conclusion.

"We're not looking behind," said Tina Pedrotty, Dominic Pedrotty's mother. "We're looking ahead."

On May 31, 2018, Dominic Pedrotty, who had just completed his junior year at Virginia Tech, picked up his older sister, Madison Pedrotty, a graduate student at Duke University. The two headed for Knoxville, Tenn., where they planned to meet their father's, Steve Pedrotty's, parents and then head to Illinois to attend the funeral of a revered grandfather who had passed away.

Dominic Pedrotty had no history of health issues and felt no symptoms of anything wrong. But 10 minutes from Kingsport, Tennessee, he lost consciousness and veered in front of a tractor trailer. Unable to stop suddenly, the driver of the tractor trailer slammed into the Pedrotty's vehicle, killing Madison Pedrotty instantly.

When rescue personnel arrived, they found Dominic Pedrotty conscious and alert. Then he started vomiting; a sign of a significant head injury.

The doctors at Holston Valley Medical Center, a level-one trauma center, originally were puzzled because a CT scan showed no significant brain injury. Fortunately, an observant doctor noticed a tiny shadow near the cerebellum. A detailed look revealed the issue. Dominic Pedrotty had suffered an aneurysm.

An aneurysm is a weakness in the wall of a blood vessel that sometimes ruptures and leaks bloods into the brain, according to Bijraj Patel, an interventional radiologist at the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine. In Dominic Pedrotty's case, the blood vessel burst, creating a life-threatening situation.

"When an aneurysm bleeds, we typically use the one-third rule," Patel said. "One-third of people are fine; one-third have a debilitating stroke; and one-third don't even make it to the hospital. This patient's aneurysm [Dominic Pedrotty's] sounds to be in the posterior circulation, which results in higher risk of morbidity and mortality."

Pedrotty's team of doctors forced him to rest for a week before performing a 9.5-hour surgery to fix the leak. Then they put him in an induced coma for 12 days to give his body as much rest as possible following the surgery.

"That was pretty tough," he said. "Finding out about my sister, there's

nothing I could have done about it. That part is both ... I wouldn't say reassuring, but I don't feel as bad about that. But on the other hand, I was driving, so I do feel bad about that."

Steve and Tina Pedrotty spent every minute at the hospital. They mourned the loss of their daughter and kept constant vigil over their son.

The Pedrotty's found comfort wherever and whenever it made itself available. They took solace in knowing that Madison Pedrotty's passing had been swift, and they expressed gratitude that the accident took place near one of Tennessee's six level-one trauma centers, knowing that the quick treatment probably saved Dominic Pedrotty's life.

They also welcomed the various members of a local church who came every day, all of whom brought a combination of food, prayers, and support.

Interestingly, the name of the church was St. Dominic's.

Dominic Pedrotty spent five weeks in Kingsport before gaining entry to Shepherd Center, a private hospital in Atlanta that specializes in medical treatment, research, and rehabilitation for people with traumat-

ic brain injuries.

Physical therapists at Shepherd Center put Pedrotty on an aggressive rehabilitation plan. He needed to get his muscles stronger and retrain them for balance and coordination, and he needed to relearn certain movements. These would help him learn how to perform daily tasks such as eating, showering, and dressing himself.

His days consisted of getting up between 7:30-8 a.m., showering, eating, and then doing an assortment of exercises until 4 in the afternoon.

By Jimmy Robertson



Three years ago, Dominic Pedrotty suffered a brain aneurysm that led to a car accident and the death of his sister. Now, after years of dealing with rehabilitation, physical limitations, memory loss, and stress from a difficult academic workload, he is earning a degree in mechanical engineering.

CARES partners with local shelters to mutually benefit dogs and veterinary students

In August, the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine began fostering dogs from local animal shelters through its new Canine Awareness and Responsibility Experience for Students program — better known as CARES.

Dogs in the program will receive top-notch medical care and the so-

cialization they would not receive in a shelter. Students learn how to conduct examinations, administer monthly preventatives, and perform basic medical procedures through their first-year Professional Foundations course and Normal Animal Clinical Skills labs.

Through CARES, the college will foster dogs

during the fall semester. In the spring, the college will use student- and faculty-owned dogs for teaching labs.

In the lab classes, multiple faculty and veterinary technicians guide first- and second-year students through basic procedures like physical examinations, vaccinations, and catheter placement. Students

practice techniques on a model before progressing to a live animal.

"A lot of other veterinary programs use shelter animals to help train their veterinary students, but they frequently just go out to the shelters for the day to learn techniques on the dogs, and they don't have dogs housed in their facilities," said Jennifer Hodgson, associate dean of professional programs and professor of microbiology. "Our students have had really positive things to say about their daily interactions with the dogs we house. She described the program as "a win-win" situation.

Fostering frees up valuable resources and space in shelters while CARES dogs live in top-notch facilities that have been given the seal of approval by Virginia

Tech's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee and the American Association of Lab Animal Care.

"The dogs are so grateful. They've got food, they've got these wonderful people walking them. They've got clean runs and air conditioning. It's pretty sweet. They think this is a country club," said Mel Kegley, manager of multi-discipline laboratories.

The dogs were selected by Kegley and instructor Virginia Edwards and a canine behaviorist, who spent countless hours assessing dogs for the program. The 28 dogs that made the cut were determined to be friendly, not dog aggressive or selective, and not food or toy aggressive. They also passed a screening for heart problems.

Kegley and Edwards

arrived back at the college with a variety of dog breeds, ages, and personalities. This year's CARES dogs range from four months to five years old, from twenty pounds to eighty pounds, and from terriers to shepherd mixes. Kegley noted that the variety represents what veterinary students might see in clinical practice.

Some of the dogs had underlying health issues like skin problems or Lyme disease, and they immediately received treatment upon arrival at the college. By the time they leave the program, all CARES dogs will be fully vaccinated, spayed or neutered, and will have received other preventative treatment like flea/tick and heartworm preventatives donated by Boehringer-Ingelheim.



Foster dogs in the CARES program receive top-of-the-line care.

Virginia Department of Transportation road watch Dec. 22

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

HOLIDAY TRAVEL ALERT: VDOT will suspend most highway work zones and lift most lane closures on interstates and other major roads in Virginia for the Christmas holiday from noon Thursday, Dec. 23, until noon Monday, Dec. 27, and the New Year's holiday from noon Thursday, Dec. 30, until noon Monday, Jan. 3.

While lane closures will be lifted in most locations, motorists may en-

counter semi-permanent work zones that remain in place during this time.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

I-81 NORTHBOUND AT EXIT 105 NEW RIVER BRIDGE REPLACEMENT IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY – Lane and shoulder closures may be in place near exit 105. Lane closure may be in effect during the week from 8 p.m. to 7 a.m. Shoulder closures may be in effect at any time during the week. Slow rolls may be performed on I-81 in the north and southbound lanes from mile marker 104 to 106 from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. Speed limit is reduced to 60 miles per hour in the work zone. Shoulder closures will remain in place though the duration of the project. Project completion is estimated by late 2022.

LANE CLOSURES: Right lane closures may be in place on I-81

northbound between mile markers 104-105 during nighttime hours, 7 p.m. to 5 a.m. the following morning.

SLOW ROLLS: Slow rolls may be utilized periodically on both the northbound and southbound lanes from mile marker 98-109 for structural steel deliveries and setting beams.

I-81 BRIDGE REPLACEMENT AT EXIT 114 IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY – The bridge replacement of the two Interstate 81 bridges over Route 8, northbound and southbound, is underway. Drivers can expect alternating lane and shoulder closures, northbound and southbound, from mile marker

114 to 115. Exit 114 ramp shoulder closures will be ongoing from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Speed limit is reduced to 60 mph in the work zone. Route 8 will have alternating northbound and southbound shoulder and lane closures, day or night, as

needed between the I-81 on and off ramps. A temporary traffic signal will direct traffic on Route 8 throughout the duration of the project. Access to all properties will be maintained during construction. Estimated completion is late 2021.

IT'S GAME TIME AT THE SUPERBOWL!
 Let's Celebrate the New Year!
December 31st

Early Bird Special \$10 per person
 10am - 12pm
 Limited to the FIRST 150 people per session

\$15 per person
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OPINION

Buddy King: My bowl game column

I am a frustrated sports writer. My first ambition was to become the next Dan Jenkins, an iconic Sports Illustrated writer who covered college football and professional golf for SI for a quarter century. Dan also wrote about a dozen raunchy and irreverent sports novels, the best known of which is *Semi-Tough*, published while I was in college. Most recently he wrote his autobiography, *Life its Ownself*. His books are must reading for sports fans of my generation.

Dan died a couple of years ago, but his legacy lives on through his daughter, Sally Jenkins, an accomplished sportswriter in her own right for the *Washington Post*.

Dan lived the life I would have liked to have had, covering America's great sporting events with humor and passion and enjoying life to the fullest while laughing at it. So every now and then I like to do a sports piece in his honor. Given the time of the year, this is my "bowl game column." So I am going to do a list of the most memorable (to me) bowl games of my lifetime (or before).

The 1947 Sun Bowl. Several years before I was born. Historic because it was Virginia Tech's first-ever bowl. The Gobblers, as they were then known, were coming

off an amazing regular season with a record of 3-3-3. Amazing for its symmetry, not its excellence. The Blacksburg boys were the third pick to oppose an 8-2 Cincinnati Bearcat team. The first two, Hardin-Simmons and Texas Tech, turned down the chance to spend New Year's 1947 in freezing, blustery El Paso. Legend has it that one of the Sun Bowl committee members was a Tech alum who got the Hokies the bid after the prior rejections. Each team received the whopping sum of \$9,438 per Wikipedia, and the game was played on a frozen turf with three inches of snow on top.

The fact that VPI lost 18-6 is totally irrelevant. This first-ever bowl appearance for VPI became mythical since the Hokies did not get another bowl bid for 20 years. People in our area talked about the time Tech went to the Sun Bowl much as the Spaniards must have talked about the time Columbus discovered America.

The 1966 and 1968 Liberty Bowls. These bowls have to be considered together as they represent the high-water marks of Jerry Claiborne's very successful career at Virginia Tech. Jerry's teams were packed with over-achieving, reckless defenders like Frankie Loria (a Clarksburg

kid, two-time All-American, and the subject of a prior column), Frank "his own self" Beamer, George Foussekis, Clarence Culpepper, Dan Thacker, and Mike Widger.

I was a junior-high age football player during this time and tried to model myself after these stalwarts. Unfortunately, the Hokies' offense during this period was as uninspiring against quality teams as the defense was noteworthy for its fanatical effort. So Tech lost the 1966 Liberty Bowl to Miami 14-7 (The first Hokie game ever televised I believe. I remember watching from my parents' den.) and the 1968 game 34-17 to Ole Miss (I vividly remember Tech running a trick play on the second play of the game with quarterback Al Kincaid acting like he was tying his shoe and snapping the ball to Radford High's own Kenny Edwards, who went about 60 yards for a touchdown. This was perhaps the only completion of Kincaid's career. This piece of trickery was referred to as the "swinging gate" in those days. It apparently perturbed the Rebels mightily, as the game went downhill from there, although the Hokies had a 17-0 lead until an ill-fated outside kick failed. This loss almost ruined my Christmas season, particularly since my Cousin Bobby was at Ole Miss and did not share my love for the Gobblers.)

The 1984 Peach Bowl. My Wahoos' first ever bowl game, an event that most thought 10 years earlier was less likely to occur than man walking on the moon. In fact, it came 15 years after Neil Armstrong's walk. The Hoos dominated Purdue with three tremendous

running backs — Howard Petty, Barry Word and Antonio Rice — and the "Magic Man," Don Majkowski, at quarterback. One of the early highlights of George Welsh's remarkable coaching career at Virginia. I remember watching the game in West Virginia with one of my law-firm colleagues, a fellow Hoo. We were a good six beers in during the early part of the third quarter when my friend's priest stopped by for a visit. Thankfully, the Father realized the significance of the moment and seemed not to mind being ignored.

The 1995 Peach Bowl. I was in attendance and the Hoos beat Georgia 34-27 on a last-minute kickoff return for a touchdown by 150-pound Petey Allen. This was the UVA team that handed Florida State its first-ever ACC loss. My greatest memory, though, of the event was running into Christiansburg High's and Emory & Henry's all-time great Mike Griffith at the UVA party. His son Travis was a first-year defensive end for the Wahoos.

Mike had been my position coach my senior year at Christiansburg High in 1970, and I reminded him that during a preseason scrimmage that year, after I had made several consecutive tackles as a 160-pound outside linebacker, he had pounded me on the helmet and yelled "if King weighed 195, he could play anywhere in the country." That night in Atlanta I reminded him of the story and said "Coach, I made it. I weigh 195. 25 years too late."

The 1961 and 1962 Rose Bowls. I was in the second and third grades, and the University of Min-

nesota made its only Rose Bowl appearances. My love of sports was just taking off, and games from sunny Pasadena broadcast back to the frigid and snowy mountains of Virginia were special. But what makes these two games particularly special was that the Golden Gophers were led by an African-American quarterback named Sandy Stephens. This was unheard of during this era when the SEC and ACC had no black players.

Sandy led the Gophers to the 1960 national championship before the 1961 Rose Bowl and returned to Pasadena for the "granddaddy of them all" the following season. I was fascinated with Sandy, beginning a lifetime of rooting interest in the Gophers and a secret desire to someday write Sandy's biography. This desire was further fueled when I learned that Sandy was a product of Uniontown, Penn., near Clarksburg where I have made my home for the last 40 some years. This ambition has now been tempered by the realization that the day for this project has probably passed as Sandy died in 2000 and the chance of interviews of his contemporaries is long gone.

The 1966 Rose Bowl. UCLA beat my Michigan State team that had Bubba Smith and George Webster (two members of the defensive team picked by Sports Illustrated for its first century of college football all-time team). Charles "Mad Dog" Thornhill, probably the greatest player ever at Lucy Addison High in Roanoke, an all black school during the era of segregation, was also on this team. This bowl game is particularly memorable because I recall it as the first Rose Bowl and Tournament of Roses parade after

my family had a color television. The game enhanced my lifelong love affair with the sun-drenched beauty of Pasadena at its 2 o'clock kickoff on New Year's Day.

The 1950 Tangerine Bowl. Two of the most important men in my life, and two of the best, my Dad and James E. "Buddy" Earp, would come back from their graves and confront me if I omitted this game. Like the VPI Sun Bowl, it was played several years before I was born, but took on mythical proportions in my life. My father alma mater, Emory & Henry, took on the Saint Vincent Bearcats in Orlando and lost 7-6. Both teams were undefeated, and Buddy Earp, who a few years later became the head football coach at Christiansburg High and eventually principal of the school, was the captain and starting center for the Wasps.

This E & H team became a rallying point for the college for many years, and its members established a scholarship fund at Emory under the name the "Tangerine Bowl Team." Coach Earp became one of my Dad's dearest friends, a second father to my Cousin Joe, and one of old Christiansburg's finest. I grew up hearing many stories about this bowl team and its accomplishments, so it has to be on my list.

If you were looking for stories of the 2015 Rose Bowl or the 2018 Sugar Bowl, I'm sorry to disappoint. Like I said at the outset, these are MY memories.

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

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

The News Messenger (USPS 016-490) is published twice a week for \$44 a year in Montgomery County, \$53 elsewhere in Virginia, and \$54 out of state by Virginia Media Inc., P.O. Box 429, Lewisburg, WV 24901. Periodical postage paid at Christiansburg, VA. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to NEWS MESSENGER 1633 W. Main St., Salem, VA 24153.

Virginia gas prices fell another 1.8 cents per gallon last week

According to GasBuddy price reports released Monday, Dec. 20, Virginia gas prices fell 1.8 cents per gallon in the past week, averaging \$3.17/g. Gas prices in Virginia are 10.9 cents per gallon lower than a month ago and stand \$1.08/g higher than a year ago.

According to GasBuddy, the cheapest station in Virginia was priced at \$2.72/g Monday while the most expensive was \$3.89/g, a difference of \$1.17/g.

The national average price of gasoline fell 2.9 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$3.30/g Monday. The national average is down 11.1 cents per gallon from a month ago but still stands \$1.09/g higher than a year ago.

"For yet another week, average gasoline prices continue to fall as omicron cases surge, leading oil demand, and thus oil prices, to stall. The decline in gas prices will likely continue until new COVID cases slow down," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis for GasBuddy. "With gas prices very likely to continue declining this week in most states, we may see Christmas gas prices fall just under their all-time high on the holiday, which was \$3.26 in 2013. Beyond Christmas, with omicron cases likely to continue climbing, I do believe we'll see a more noticeable hit on gasoline demand once the holidays are over," De Haan said. "There's a rising likelihood that we won't see gas

prices rising for the rest of the year - with one caveat - gas prices in the Great Lakes states have plummeted by 30 to 50 cents in some areas, and stations in those areas may raise prices slightly should oil prices slow their decline. Aside from those areas, declines at the pump are likely to continue as we close out 2021."

GasBuddy is the authoritative voice for gas prices and the only source for station-level data spanning nearly two decades. GasBuddy's survey updates 288 times every day from the most diverse list of sources covering nearly 150,000 stations nationwide, the most comprehensive and up-to-date in the country. GasBuddy data are accessible at <http://prices.GasBuddy.com>.

Richmond lands on WalletHub's list of America's neediest cities

With the giving season reminding us to be selfless and 38 million people in the U.S. lacking access to adequate food, the personal-finance website WalletHub followed up on its report on the Most Charitable States for 2022 with an in-depth look at 2021's Neediest Cities, and Richmond, Va., made the list at No. 18.

To determine its rankings, WalletHub compared more than 180 U.S. cities across 28 key metrics to determine where Americans are most economically disadvantaged.

According to the website, in 2020, 11.4% of the U.S. population lived in poverty. In the absence of more affordable housing or accommodations provided by relatives or friends, many people took to the streets or shelters. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, more than 580,000 people — many of them children — were homeless at one point in January 2020.

The neediest cities in America that ranked

ahead of Richmond, as determined by WalletHub's report, released Monday, Dec. 20, are 1) Detroit 2) Brownsville, Texas 3) Cleveland 4) Fresno, Calif. 5) Gulfport, Miss. 6) Los Angeles 7) Newark 8) Baltimore 9) New Orleans 10) St. Louis 11) Laredo, Texas 12) Shreveport 13) Miami 14) Memphis 15) Jackson, Miss. 16) Birmingham 17) Philadelphia.

To determine the cities with the neediest populations, WalletHub compared 182 cities — including the 150 most populated U.S. cities, plus at least two of the most populated cities in each state — across two key dimensions: "Economic Well-Being" and "Health & Safety."

The website then evaluated those dimensions using 28 relevant metrics.

The metrics employed in the Economic Well-Being were the child poverty rate, the adult poverty rate, the unemployment rate, the underemployment rate, the homelessness rate, the presence of

homeless criminalization laws, the change in family homelessness (2020 vs. 2019), the consumer bankruptcy rate, the foreclosure rate, the share of delinquent debtors, the median credit score, the high school dropout rate, the undereducated rate, the share of children eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, an "economic security" ranking (based on the economic security scoreboard produced by the Wider Opportunities for Women nonprofit organization), and economic mobility.

The metrics employed by WalletHub in the Health and Safety dimension to determine its rankings were the uninsured rate, the food insecurity rate, the share of homes with inadequate plumbing, the share of homes with inadequate kitchens, the share of severely overcrowded homes, the share of offline homes, the share of adults who needed to see a doctor but couldn't, the share of depressed adults, the suicide rate, and the crime rate.

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Legals - City of Salem

Notice is hereby given to all interested persons that the Council of the City of Salem, at its regular meeting on Monday, January 10, 2022, at 6:30 p.m., in the Community Room of the Salem Civic Center, 1001 Roanoke Boulevard, in the City of Salem, Virginia, will hold a public hearing, pursuant to Sections 15.2-2204 and 15.2-2285 of the Code of Virginia, as amended, to consider approval of the following requests relative to the CODE OF THE CITY OF SALEM, VIRGINIA:

Hold public hearing to consider the request of Sia Asset Management, LLC, applicant, and Helm Building Enterprises, LTD, property owner, for a Use Not Provided For Permit to allow crypto mining at 1401 Southside Drive, Tax Map # 165-4-2.1.

Copies of the proposed plans, ordinances or amendments may be examined in the Office of Community Development, 21 South Bruffey Street, Salem, Virginia.

At said hearing, parties in interest and citizens shall have an opportunity to be heard relative to the said requests.

Legals - City of Salem

THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SALEM, VIRGINIA BY H. Robert Light Clerk of Council

ORDER OF PUBLICATION

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA VA. CODE §§ 1-211.1; 8.01-316, -317, 20-104
Case No. CL21000359-00
City Of Salem Circuit Court 2 East Calhoun Street, Salem, VA 24153
DANA LYNN FRANCISCO MEADOR v. PAUL CLINTON MEADOR
The object of this suit is to: FOR ENTRY OF DIVORCE It is ORDERED that PAUL CLINTON appear at the above-named court and protect his/her interests on or before JANUARY 20, 2022.
November 19, 2021
Stacy L. Owen

Legals - Montgomery County

LEGAL NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, pursuant to Section 15.2-3107 of the Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, that on January 11, 2022, at 7:00 P.M. in the Christiansburg Town Hall, 3rd Floor Council Chambers, 100 East Main Street, Christiansburg, Virginia, the Town Council of Christiansburg, Virginia ("the Town") shall hold a public hearing on the Town's intent to approve a proposed Boundary Line Adjustment Agreement between the Town of Christiansburg and County of Montgomery and will thereafter consider for passage a resolution approving the Agreement. The Agreement is authorized by Section 15.2-3106 et seq. of the Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, and provides that the boundary line between the Town of Christiansburg and the unincorporated area of the County of Montgomery will be adjusted as follows:

Moving 68.866 acres from the unincorporated area of the County of Montgomery into the incorporated Town of Christiansburg. The proposed boundary adjustment area is commonly known as Falling Branch Corporate Park Phase II, Parcel 2, Tax Map Number 94-A-8 (formerly the Cox property) and is located on the southern boundary of the Town of Christiansburg, west of the intersection of Technology Drive SE and Parkway Drive SE, shown more particularly on the plat entitled "Plat Showing Boundary Line Adjustment Between The Town of Christiansburg and County of Montgomery for Portion of Falling Branch Corporate Park Tax Parcel 94-A-8"; dated June 7, 2019. As part of the Boundary Line Adjustment Agreement, the Town has agreed to provide the County Three Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$300,000) to assist the County in the cost of extending Town water and sewer to the first developed pad on the 68.866 acres. Once a contract is signed by the County for this project, the Town agrees to provide the County the money within sixty (60) days of receiving a written request for the funding from the County Administrator.

A true copy of the proposed Boundary Line Adjustment Agreement is on file and may be viewed in the office of the Clerk of Town Council, Christiansburg Town Hall, 100 East Main Street, Christiansburg, Virginia 24073. A copy of the Agreement will also be available at the public hearing. The public is invited to attend the public hearing and comment on the Agreement.



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Legals - Town of Vinton

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LEGAL NOTICE TOWN OF VINTON, VIRGINIA NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Please be advised that the Vinton Town Council will hold a public hearing at its meeting on Tuesday, January 4, 2022, at 6:00 p.m. or as soon thereafter as the matter may be heard, in the Council Chambers of the Vinton Municipal Building, located at 311 South Pollard Street, Vinton, Virginia, concerning the proposed amendment to the Town of Vinton's FY 2021-2022 budget to appropriate funding for eligible expenditures on multi-year grants, paving, capital projects, and other expenditures in the amount of \$2,750,167.73.

Any additional information on this public meeting is available in the Town Manager's Office, located in the Vinton Municipal Building, (540) 983-0607. Persons requiring special assistance to attend and participate at this public meeting should contact the Town Manager's office at (540) 983-0607.

Susan N. Johnson
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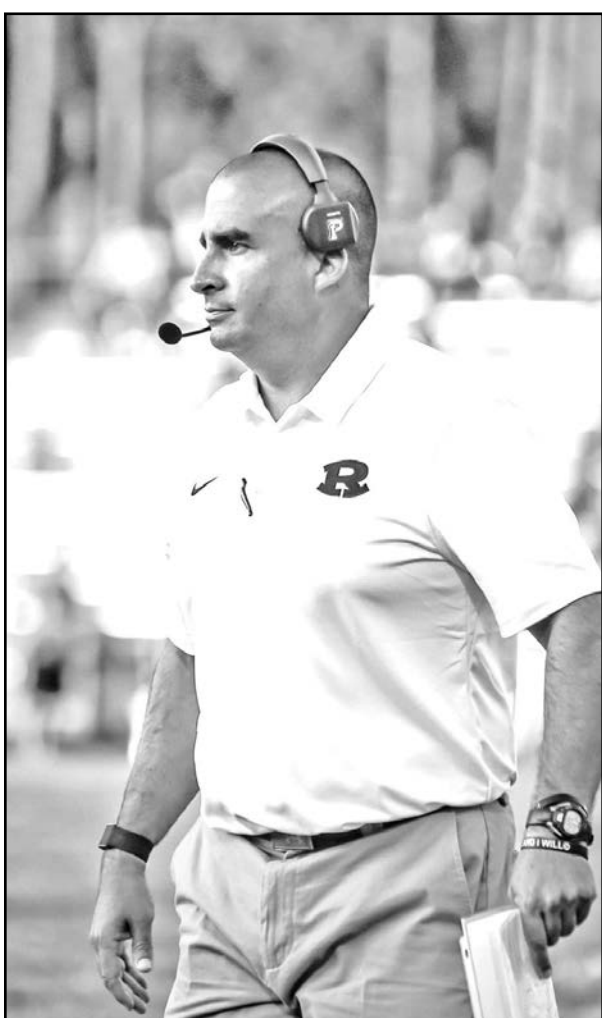
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MONTGOMERY SPORTS

Christiansburg dominates all-county, all-city football team



Marty Gordon
NRV@sports@ourvalley.org

Christiansburg racked up nine wins in the regular season and another in the opening round of the Region 3D playoffs enroute to one of the best seasons in school history. As a result of that success, the school dominated the 2021 News Messenger/News Journal all-county/all-city team announced Saturday.

Christiansburg quarterback Casey Graham was named the offensive player of year and overall player of the year while linebacker Curtis Altizer is the defensive player of year.

For the season, Graham completed 106 passes on 169 attempts with 1,850 yards, which set a new school record. He also had 18 touchdowns.

Altizer dominated from his linebacker position with 111 tackles, 65 of them solo.

Christiansburg's Alex Wilkens shared coach-of-the-year honors with Radford's Michael Crist, who compiled an 8-4 record in his first year at the helm of the Bobcats.

Graham was joined on the first team by running backs Stephen Myrthil and Kenyon Johnson-Buchannon. Myrthil finished with 122 carries for 845 yards with 14 touchdowns. Johnson-Buchannon rushed 116 times for 715 yards.

Other all-county/all-city running backs were Tyrell Dobson of Radford

and Seth Burleson of Eastern Montgomery. Dobson rushed 82 times for 611 yards.

Christiansburg's Aiden Conley received offensive lineman of the year honors. The junior was joined on the line by teammates Jonathan Dixon and Eli Brubaker, Eastern Montgomery's Xavier Brown, and Radford's Andrew Moore and Charlie Davis. The team's tight end was Tyrique Taylor of Christiansburg.

The receivers were: Christiansburg's Jayron Thompson and Travis Altizer along with Eastern Montgomery's Ben Via and Radford's Darius Wesley-Brubeck.

Thompson finished with 24 catches for 440 yards while Altizer had 24 receptions for 532 yards. Wesley-Brubeck had 30 catches for 501 yards, and Via caught 28 passes for 393 yards with four touchdowns.

The offensive specialist was Radford's Marcell Baylor, who split time this season at quarterback, receiver, and running back. He had a hand in 29 touchdowns and 2,095 combined yards for the team.

The team's kick returner was Jayron Thompson of Christiansburg while the kicker was Lilly Underwood of Eastern Montgomery.

On the defensive side of the ball, Altizer was joined at the linebacker position by Parker Epperley of Blacksburg, Seth Burleson of Eastern Montgom-

ery, Auburn's Matthew Wheeler, and Tyrell Dobson of Radford. Wheeler and his Auburn teammates played only four games, but he managed to tally 51 tackles.

Christiansburg's Tyrique Taylor is this year's defensive lineman of the year. He was joined in the trenches by Conley, Blacksburg's Brayden Demasi and Bryce Ferguson, Eastern Montgomery's Brandon Kingery, and Radford's Dawson Martin.

The secondary features a solid group with Christiansburg's Tanner Evans and Jaxson Clarke and Radford's Marcell Baylor and Landon Clark. Auburn's Jackson Brockman made the team as a defensive back but also played linebacker and defensive end this year in a shortened four-game season that affected the team because of the lack of numbers as the season proceeded. Brockman finished with 40 tackles and three sacks.

The defensive specialist of the year is Blacksburg's Epperley, who only played in four games but still racked up 20 solo tackles.

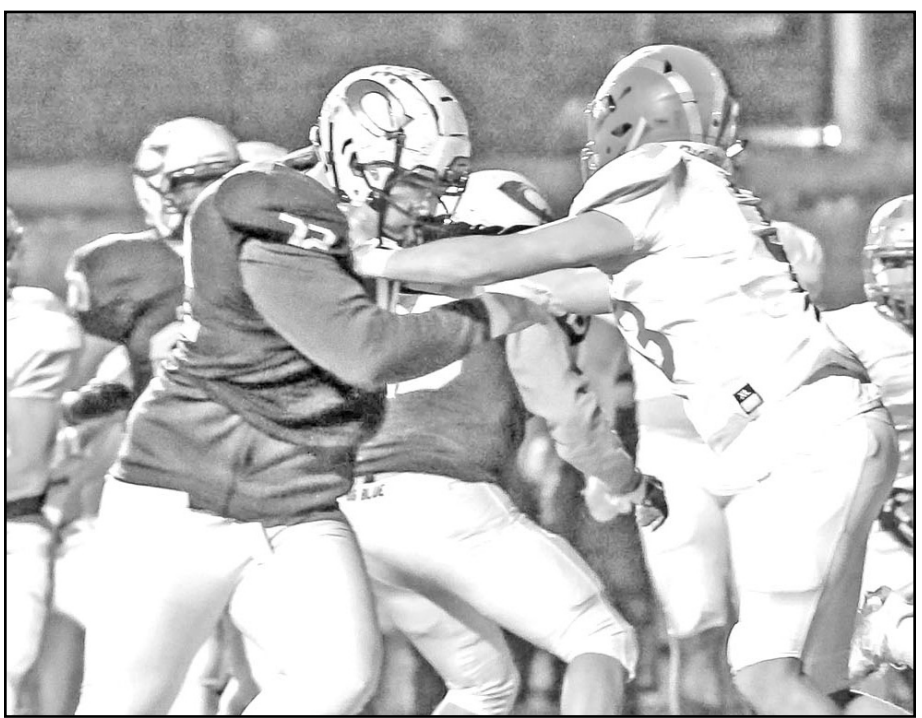
The team's punter is Drew Lloyd of Christiansburg while teammate Tanner Evans was the punt returner.

The all-county/all-city player to watch is Landon Clark, who took over Radford's quarterback position in the final three games and the playoffs. He completed 53 of 78 passes for 889 yards.

Radford's Michael Crist is a co-coach of the year for the All-County/All-City football team.



Curtis Altizer led Christiansburg to a 10-2 record on the defensive side of the ball and is this year's defensive player of the year.



Christiansburg's Aiden Conley is the 2021 News Messenger/News Journal All-County/All-City offensive lineman of the year.

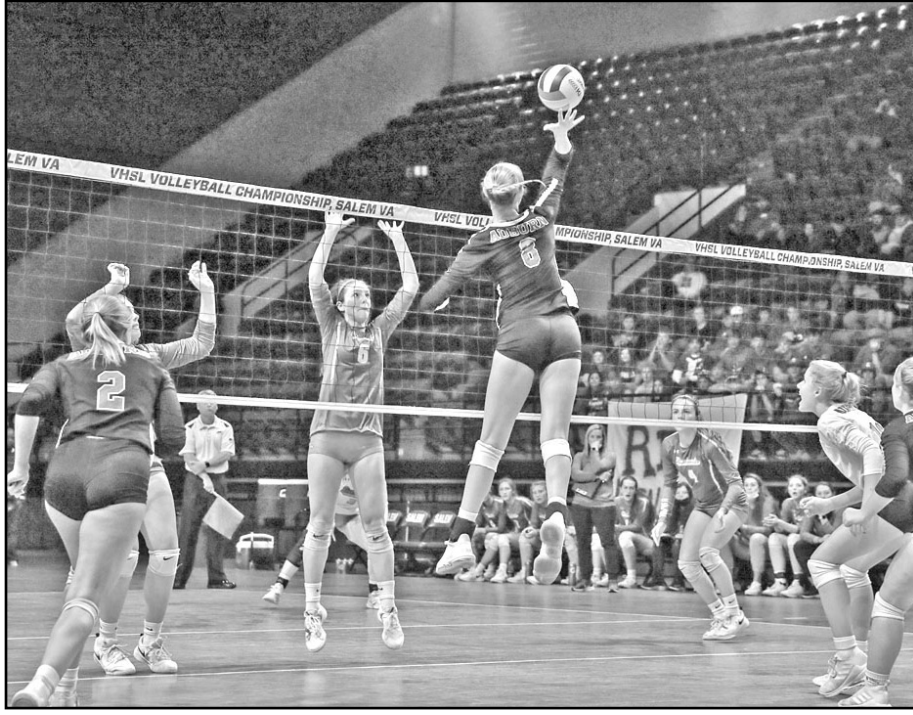


Marcell Baylor played quarterback, running back, and receiver for this year's Radford squad and is the offensive specialist of the year.



Lilly Underwood is the 2021 All-County/All-City kicker after her second year for Eastern Montgomery High School.

Auburn's Martin named Class 1 volleyball player of the year



Allison Martin with the final hit and point to end the third game against Riverheads to give Auburn the state championship this past month.

The Virginia High School League announced last week its 2021 Class 1 all-state girls volleyball team, and Auburn senior Allyson Martin was named the Class 1 girls Player of the Year.

Martin has been part of three straight volleyball titles at Auburn and picked up another state championship as a member of the school's tennis team.

"Everything clicked against Riverheads (in the championship game). We played our best," she said.

Auburn has won 74 straight volleyball games that culminated this past month with a third-

straight state title.

Earlier this year, Martin tallied her kill no. 1,000 from her outside hitter position. She credits her coach, Sherry Millirons, for pushing her to be a better player.

"The team was very loose this season, and that helped both on and off the court," Martin said.

In addition to the state honor, Martin was named the Mt. Empire District and Region C player of the year.

Martin was joined on the all-state first team by teammates, Madeline Lavergne, Anna McGuire, Avery Zuckerwar, and Stacy Lewis.

Only Martin and Mc-

Guire are seniors, leaving the school with another loaded roster.

Martin plans to play volleyball at the next level and has verbally committed to attend Bluefield State where she will seek a nursing degree.

CROSSWORD ANSWERS

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The annual Marty awards



From the Sidelines

Marty Gordon

The movie and the entertainment world have the Emmys and Oscars while ESPN has the EPGY's.

Well for the past nine years, I have been handing out the Marty awards for outstanding effort in the world of sports both on the national and local level.

This year as many as 20 Marty awards are being given to the deserving athlete/athletes, coaches, teams and/or sporting events that occurred over this past year.

The first Marty goes to Christiansburg High School's football staff for the outstanding effort this past year in leading the Blue Demons to the state playoffs and 10 wins. Congrats to Coach Alex Wilkens.

Another Marty is presented to the Christiansburg offensive

line for such an outstanding year in blocking for the Blue Demon running backs. They could not have gotten over 2,000 yards combined without the guys up front.

The Auburn volleyball team and its coach Sherry Millions deserve an award for producing a win streak of 70-plus games spread over two years. In addition, congrats for winning your third straight state title.

Nationally, a Marty is given to the ownership of the Jacksonville Jaguars for taking the right step in firing Coach Urban Meyer. The former college coach and television analyst was out of his league and was not the right man for the job. It happened, but along the way Meyer became an embarrassment not only to the NFL team but the sport in general.

The NCAA deserves a Marty for finally figuring out a way to make sure student-athletes are paid while in college for their name and likeness. Too many

colleges were making millions of dollars on these men and women. While the details need to be examined and tightened up, it is a good start.

A Marty is given to the World Boxing Association as it tries to create some excitement in the sport once again with the three bouts between the world's top two heavyweights, Tyson Fury and Deontay Wilder.

Gymnast Simone Biles deserves a Marty for stepping away from the Olympics shortly after they started because of her mental health. More attention needs to be given to this matter.

The University of Cincinnati deserves a Marty for finally crashing the Power Five's college football championship.

Radford University got it right and should be honored for the hiring of former Radford High School standout Darris Nichols to be its new men's basketball coach.

Javonte Green deserves a Marty after making the roster

and starting for the National Basketball Association's Chicago Bulls. His jersey was retired last month at Radford University.

A Marty is given to the Virginia Tech rugby team for bringing another national club championship back to Blacksburg. This comes after the VT club baseball team did the same in the spring. The baseball team receives another Marty award for its effort.

The Atlanta Braves earn a Marty for giving baseball fans something to cheer about by winning the World Series in the same year of Brave-great Hank Aaron's death.

Virginia Tech Interim coach J.C. Price deserves a Marty for taking over the football program after the firing of Justin Fuente.

Tom Brady and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers deserve a Marty for bringing home the Lombardi trophy this past year in the NFL.

A Marty is presented to the universities of Texas and Oklahoma for changing the landscape of college football by joining the Southeastern

Conference.

David Seabaugh receives a Marty for taking the coaching job at Auburn and moving all the way from Mississippi to fight the battle of the lack of numbers in fielding a team this year. He managed to jumpstart the program and play four games with what was mostly a junior varsity squad.

A Marty is given to Chuck Munsey who retired from the Christiansburg Recreation Center after a long career of providing service to young athletes in our community. He then took the job as golf coach at Christiansburg High School.

Blacksburg native James Conrad receives an award for winning the Pro World Championships in disc golf. His 247-foot birdie over the summer was the shot heard around the world as he was featured on Sports Center.

The final Marty goes to fans and local athletes who battled the chaos associated with COVID-19 and finally, well maybe, getting back to a sense of normalcy. Fans in the stands are important.

VT's Emily Gray taken in women's soccer league draft

Making program history Saturday, Virginia Tech midfielder Emily Gray became the highest National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) draft selection to hail from Blacksburg as the Hokies' co-captain was taken at No. 3 overall by the North Carolina Courage during the first round of

the 2022 draft.

Upon hearing her name come off the board, Gray joins Tech legends Jazmine Reeves (2014) and Mandy McGlynn (2020) as the program's third all-time NWSL draft selection.

"There are not enough words to describe today," Gray said. "I was just

watching the TV screen, and once I heard my name called, I was shocked. I am really excited and grateful for the opportunity."

"This is so exciting for Emily and her family," said Tech women's soccer head coach Chugger Adair. "I think this is a wonderful day for the program. It shows the type of environment we strive for here at Virginia Tech: continuing to push our student-athletes to the next level and to be the best they can be."

With several NWSL clubs expressing interest in selecting her during the week's lead-up to draft day, Gray shot into the top 10 on many mock draft boards. After Stanford's Naomi Girma (2021 Pac-

12 Defender of the Year) and Florida State's Jaelin Howell (2021 ACC Midfielder of the Year) had respectively been taken at No. 1 and No. 2 overall, North Carolina made its move to scoop up the Tech attacker before the rest of the league could bid its first-round turns.

Playing their home matches at WakeMed Soccer Park in Cary, N.C. – frequent site of the ACC Women's Soccer Championship – the Courage offer Gray a familiar geographic location from where her professional career can take root.

"East coast is definitely closer to home and probably where I would love to be the most," said Gray. "North Carolina is not too far away. Tech

has played at that stadium before. I hope my current teammates can come watch me play with my future teammates."

On a tactical level, Adair is confident the Courage are proper suitors for the Hokies' No. 2 all-time leading point-eater.

"We think going to North Carolina and the system that they play will be a wonderful fit for her," said Adair.

Having started each of her 69 career appearances at Tech, Gray anchored a four-year stretch of Hokies history that yielded three NCAA tournament berths (2018, 2019, 2021), a trip to the 2018 Sweet Sixteen and mid-season top-20 national rankings during the 2019 and 2021 campaigns.

Along the way, she scored 27 career goals with the Hokies (ranking in a tie for the fourth most all-time) while tallying 24 career assists (ranking second all-time).

Among her collegiate accolades, she is a two-time All-ACC honoree, a three-time United Soccer Coaches All-Atlantic Region selection, and also earned 2021 United Soccer Coaches Scholar All-American Third Team distinction. She graduated from Virginia Tech on Friday with her bachelor's degree in sports media and analytics with a 3.96 GPA through the spring 2021 semester.

"I think Emily has grown on and off the pitch here," said Adair. "On behalf of the program, the staff and the players, we are proud of her, are extremely excited, and are so pleased that she represents Virginia Tech so well."

For Gray, the next stage in her soccer career comes with the deepest appreciation for all who have helped her reach this point.

"I would like to thank my family, who was with me today," said Gray. "I would also like to thank my closest friends, all my teammates, freshman through senior year. I am grateful for the coaching staff for giving me this opportunity to play at Tech."

"Additionally, I would like to thank the support staff, those in academic support services, student athlete development, the video team, athletic communications, and especially those in sports medicine. They know me all too well in there. Everyone has been so supportive of my dreams, and I am really excited to move on to this next chapter."

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