



Two gray partridges, the birds that would have been most familiar to the originators of the song, so it's the likeliest candidate to be a partridge in a pear tree. Unfortunately, gray partridges aren't associated with trees, pear or otherwise at all.

What bird is the partridge in a pear tree?

By Matthew L. Miller
"The Twelve Days of Christmas" is not only an enduring holiday tune, but also one that has given rise to endless analysis. The peculiar list of gifts just lends itself to questions, one of the most popular being: What would that all cost today? (It's \$41,205 this year, according to the Christmas Price Index, an economic analysis project that calculates the cost each year. Seriously.)
The song was first published in England in 1780, although it likely originated as a folk song much earlier than that. It may well have started as a memory game at parties. It underwent many revisions, and most early versions did not include the music. The version many of

us are familiar with is a 1909 arrangement.

But the most interesting version is the first. What is up with the partridge in a pear tree?

More specifically: What bird is that partridge? And, for fun, I'll look at which ones might be most likely to be found in a pear tree.

What exactly is a partridge? There are at least 46 birds with "partridge" in their accepted common name. They are mid-sized ground-dwelling, ground-nesting birds. All are members of the taxonomic order known as the Galliformes, which also includes pheasants, chickens, turkeys, quail, peafowl, guinea fowl and quail. This is a well-

See **Bird**, page 4

Ten unusual facts about Christmas

1. Over half of American pet owners will buy gifts for their furry friends this Christmas, spending an average of \$46.

2. There is a town in India called Santa Claus.

3. Based on St. Nick, Santa was once a pale, thin figure. The red robed, white bearded Santa of today was developed for a Coca-Cola campaign.

4. Two weeks before Christmas is the most popular time for couples to break up with Christmas Day the least popular.

5. Despite the tale of three wise men, the Bible never gives a number. Matthew's Gospel refers merely to "wise men."

6. Washington Irving created the image of Santa's sleigh. His popular stories spawned a Christmas revival in America.

7. The Puritan Pilgrims re-

nounced Christmas. From 1659 to 1682, it was actually a crime to celebrate.

8. Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer was created in 1939 as an advertisement for a department store.

9. The Bible doesn't mention a date for Jesus's birth. Many historians believe it was in the spring.

10. To visit every child on Christmas Eve, Santa would have to travel at 3000 times the speed of sound, visiting over 800 homes per second.

Written by Luke Ward, *The Fact Site*, Dec. 15, 2021

Luke Ward is the founder of *The Fact Site*. He's a professional blogger and researcher with over 11 years experience in fact-finding and web design. In his spare time he loves to travel and drink coffee.



Lights, gingerbread, eggnog: Some holiday sights and tastes have global roots

Electric lights, decorated trees, eggnog, custard, cookies, and more. In America, decorations and special foods take center stage for many winter holiday celebrations.

But these traditions did not all begin in the United States. Many of these holiday customs originated in Europe, while others have medieval roots, with influences from the Mediterranean, Asia, and the Arabian Peninsula.

Two Virginia Tech professors in the Department of Religion and Culture — Matthew Gabriele, chair and professor of medieval studies, and Danille Elise Christensen, assistant professor — recently explained how these popular holiday traditions have influenced American celebrations today.

Why do people decorate with lights during the holiday season?

Gabriele: It started with candles, primarily in the early modern period in Germany. Immigrant communities brought this practice to the U.S. in the 19th century, but it wasn't adopted by mainstream white Protestant America until near the end of the century, thanks in part to Queen Victoria of England. She and her German husband (Prince Albert) decorated a tree with candles, and that was sketched as an image that circulated across the Atlantic.

How did using Christmas trees and greenery as decorations become a holi-



This Hokie tree is on display at the Inn at Virginia Tech for the annual Fashions for Evergreens event. Photo courtesy of the Inn at Virginia Tech.

day custom?

Gabriele: Although evergreen trees were used in the polytheistic Roman feast of Saturnalia, the history of greenery around Christmas only really dates to the 15th or 16th century and to Germany.

Immigrants in the 18th and 19th century brought that tradition to the U.S., but it was rejected by white

Americans until Queen Victoria and her popularity in the U.S., especially among the upper classes, helped bring the tradition across the Atlantic.

Throughout this period, though, the trees would be decorated sometimes with candles, but more often simply with colorful treats, such as

See **Roots**, page 4



Alerted by their cats, the Wild family discovered a boomslang, one of Africa's deadliest snakes, lurking in the branches of their Christmas tree at their home in South Africa.

Venomous snake found lurking in family's Christmas tree

By Lianne Kolirin, CNN, Dec. 14, 2021

(CNN) There's usually a sense of excitement about what lies beneath the Christmas tree, but for one festive family the biggest surprise was lurking in the branches up above.

Rob and Marcela Wild wasted no time in calling in a professional after they discovered one of Africa's most venomous snakes hiding between the tinsel and baubles at their home in South Africa on Friday.

Having decorated the tree just hours earlier, they spotted their cats staring at its branches. Rob Wild, a British stock market trader who moved with his Costa Rican wife to South Africa 18 years ago, told CNN on Tuesday: "The cats were peering into the tree and my wife said

"there's probably a mouse in there somewhere."

They soon discovered a rather different animal staring back, however: a boomslang.

"I didn't know what it was at the time but then I Googled what snakes are in our area and it came up immediately as a boomslang. I thought 'holy Moses, this is the king of all poisonous snakes,'" the 55-year-old said.

The boomslang is known as a shy species, but it is one of the most venomous in Africa. The animal's venom causes hemorrhages and can be fatal to humans in small amounts.

Snake catcher Gerrie Heyns confirmed the animal's identity when he arrived at

See **Tree Snake**, page 6

Meet Krampus, the Christmas devil who punishes naughty children

Little, Becky. "Meet Krampus, the Christmas devil who punishes naughty children." HISTORY, <https://www.history.com/Christmas/meetkrampus-the-christmas-devil-who-punishes-naughty-children>. A&E Television Networks. Accessed Dec. 20, 2021. Originally published Dec. 5, 2018. Updated Dec. 18, 2010.

Every year in early December, children in Austria get ready for St. Nicholas to visit them. If they've been good, he'll reward them with presents and treats. But if they've been bad, they'll get a lot more than a lump of coal; they'll have to face Krampus.

Who's Krampus, you ask? He's the half-man, half-goat who comes around every year to chase naughty children and maybe even drag them to hell. European versions of St. Nicholas have long had scary counterparts like Belsnickle and Knecht Ruprecht who dole out punishment. Krampus is one such character who comes from folklore in Austria's Alpine region where he's been frightening children and amusing adults for hundreds of years.

Krampus and St. Nick's other bad boys have their origins in pagan celebrations of the winter solstice. Later, they became part of Christian traditions in which St. Nicholas visited children to reward them on December 5 or 6. Around that time, his menacing partner would also visit kids to punish them. In Alpine Austria and some parts of Germany, this day was known as Krampusnacht, or "Krampus night," when adults might dress up as Krampus to frighten children at their homes.

Children might have also seen Krampus running through the street during a Krampuslauf, literally, a "Krampus run." If Krampusnacht was a way to scare kids into behaving themselves, the Krampuslauf, which isn't tied to a specific day, was

a way for grown men to blow off steam while probably still scaring kids. Austrian men would get drunk and run through the streets dressed as the fearsome creature. Like Krampusnacht, the Krampuslauf tradition continues to the present day.

The introduction of mass visual media couldn't help but sweep the charismatic Krampus up in its wave. When the postcard industry experienced a boom in Germany and Austria in the 1890s, it opened the way for Krampuskarten.

These holiday cards weren't meant to make you feel warm and fuzzy. Ones marked "Gruss vom Krampus" ("Greetings from Krampus") showed Krampus stuffing a distressed child into his satchel or preparing to hit one with his bundle of birch sticks. Many of these postcards depicted Krampus going after children with his sticks, leading them away in chains, or

See **Krampus**, page 4



The Alpine legend of Krampus the Christmas devil is the original Bad Santa.

LAND TRANSFERS

Legacy Builders NRV Inc. to Darren Christian Jones, 0.586 ac. Lot 1, Blacksburg, \$620,000

Golden Triangle Development LLC to Sharon Elizabeth Babineau, lot 41, Reagans Pointe Subdv., Christiansburg, \$304,900

Karen A. Cox to Edward Clay Blevins II, lot 1, Blue Ridge Ct., Sec VI, Christiansburg

Karen A. Cox to Edward Clay Blevins II, Lot 1, Blue Ridge Ct., Sec VI, Christiansburg

Karen A. Cox to Edward Clay Blevins II, Lot 58 and part of lot 57, Christiansburg

Josiah F. Bogue to Thomas Bolvin, Lot 17, Ph 3, Oak Manor Townhouses, Blacksburg, \$255,000

Ashley M. Reeves to Bear Den Properties LLC, lot 6, Christiansburg, \$180,000

Three R. Holding LLC to Last Resort, Inc., Lot 15, Ph 1, Diamond Pointe, Christiansburg, \$600,000

June Sale Walker Trust to 9DG LLC, 2.6 ac., metes and bounds, Riner Magisterial District, Christiansburg, \$1,800,000

Charles E. Weber, Jr., to Andrew H. Newman, lot 17, Riverwood Estates, Ph 1, Riner Magisterial District, \$364,900

Kevin S. Graf to Kevin S. Graf, lot 143, Pheasant Run Townhomes, Ph IV

James M. Lawrence to Cermetrius L. Bohannon, lot 11, Ph III, Hamilton Place Townhouses, Chriwtiansburg

GLL LLC to Robert J. Dove, lot 36-A, testerman Estate, Riner Magisterial District

Chris Derick Neal Estate to Caroline P. Betsill, lot 9, Highland Park #2, Christiansburg, \$215,000

Ricky Wayne Ratcliff to Elliston Land Company, Mt. Pleasant Road, Shawsville, metes and bounds, see legal, Christiansburg, \$8,000

Peggy A. Sorenson to Alexander Michael Bush, lot 29 and western one-half of lot 30, Sec 1, Carma Heights Dubdv, Christiansburg, \$290,000

William E. Riehl to Williame E. Riehl, Jr., unit 26-3, Ph XIX, Sec. 2

James V. Sinclair, Jr., to J&P Housing LLC, 3842 Fox Hollow Road, Elliston, metes and bounds, see legal, Mt. Tabor Magisterial District, \$30,000

Mary Cole to Trent E. Shepherd, 99 1/2 ac., Alleghany Mtn, \$14,000

Nicholas J. Mayhall to Yalong Yang, lot 2B, Blacksburg, \$381,000

George W. Bowles to J&P Housing LLC, 2693 Paris Mtn. Road, Elliston, metes and bounds, see legal, Mt. Tabor Magisterial District, \$10,000

Richard Rose to Danjo LLC, 0.234 ac., lot 1, Riner Magisterial District, \$10,000

James Frank Simmons to SEF Properties LLC, 2.24 ac., Shawsville Magisterial District, Elliston, \$19,500

Kevin G. Stieper to Kaiwu Huang, lot 63, Blacksburg, \$312,000

Rene O. Fonseca to Rene O. Fonseca, two parcels, lot 2 and 1.322 ac., Riner Magisterial District

Gary Lee Jeffrey to Rebecca S. Ramsey, 1.109 ac., Riner Magisterial District

Richard Lee Beyma to Richard Lee Beyma, 0.313 ac., lot 7, Glade Meadows Subdv, Blacksburg \$10

William Lawrence Keeth to Jessica M. Beckett, 2.700 ac., Prices Fork Magisterial District, \$180,000

Guille R. Yearwood to Helan A. Lyman, 0.7446 ac., lot 1, Christiansburg, \$445,500

Lina J. Pfeiffer to Linda J. Pfeiffer Trust

Jane Knowles Sterling to Johnny C. Martin, Jr., two parcels, 19.6942 ac, tract 5 and 1 ac. Lot 3, Shawsville Magisterial District, \$110,000

Gregory W. Smith to Dallas Michael McKinney, lot 16, Oakwood Subdv. 1, Christiansburg, \$255,000

Team Hospitality LLC to Prem Hospitality LLC, 2.023 ac., lot 5A, Christiansburg, \$9,265,000

Melvin K. Richmond, Jr., to John M. Shelor, 1.385 ac., Shawsville Magisterial District, \$172,500

Bacon Enterprises LLC to Quick Service Realco LLC, 1.4248 ac., lot 18, Christiansburg, \$2,600,000

Alisha Grace Scott to Alisha G. Wood, lot 14, Ph VII, Kensington Subdv

Roy S. Quesenberry to Steven Bradley Quesenberry, lot 4, Preston Forest, Ph II, Mt. Tabor Magisterial District

Henry Nelson Flinchum to Malcolm W. Becketter, 3547 Pilot Road, Riner, metes and bounds, see legal, Elliotts Creek, Christiansburg Magisterial District, \$12,000

Donald R. Hodge to Malcolm W. Beckett, 1040 Ridgeway Dr., Christiansburg, lot 10, Shawsville Magisterial District, \$11,000

John S. Moody Jr., to Shah Development LLC, 2604 Glade Dr., Christiansburg, Christiansburg, \$94,000

Lou A. Hawley to Jason W. Bedillion, Christiansburg, \$1,000

John Muse to Ray L. Price, Bones Run Road, Christiansburg, Alleghany Magisterial District, \$7,000

Dale Alan Akers to Clay T. Akers, Sr.,

R Fralin Homes LLC to R Fralin Construction, Inc., lot 24, The Villas

on North Main, Ph II, \$72,000

Lucy M. Clark to Dwayne C. Delung, 1 ac., metes and bounds, Shawsville Magisterial District, \$8,000

Gregory D. Duncan to Francisco Garcia Hernandez, two parcels, 0,375 ac., lot 1, and 2.576 ac., lot 2, Christiansburg, \$190,000

Stateson Homes LLC to Manishankar Iyer, lot 70, Clifton, Ph I, Christiansburgh, \$403,930

Glenn P. Reynolds to John T. Hobbs, 0.685 ac., lot 14A, Blacksburg, \$975,000

CMH Homes Inc., to Raymond D. Dowe, 295 Perry St. Christiansburg, 1.67 ac., Shawsville Magisterial District, \$344,373

Stateson Homes LLC to Aria Behrouzi, lot 40, Clifton, Ph II, Christiansburg, \$577,385

Randall Lee Parker to Angela Leann Bauer, 1.0470 ac., metes and bounds, Mt. Tabor Magisterial District

Gary P. Patton executor to Jordan R. Patton Trust, lot 6, Walnut Grove, Christiansburg, \$175,000

R Fralin Construction Inc., to Claudia H. Clar, lot 24, The Villas on North Main, Ph II, Blacksburg, \$422,369

Kenny R. Owens to Seth B. Coburn, lot 14, Sec VIII, Windmill Hills, \$249,900

Janice T. Price to Bonnie Gilbert, 2.000 ac., Mt. Tabor Magisterial District

Andrew G. Burns to Lisa K. Burns, lot 23, The Glen Subdv., Blacksburg

Toni Christy Brown to Lynn and Michael Ryan Trust, 5.00 ac., lot 33, Mt. Tabor Magisterial District, \$299,000

Billy Lee Dickerson to Shelby Jean Quesenberry, 0.806 ac., parcel A, Riner Magisterial District

Thomas A. Poole to Mary Ann Weimer Lentz, two parcels, lot 22, Knob Hill Subdv. Unit 2, and 5,478 sq. ft., parcel A, metes and bounds, Blacksburg

Robert S. Hammond to Arnold J. Ehrlich Jr., 107 Broce Dr., Blacksburg, lot 13, Snidow Heights, Blacksburg, \$255,000

Doris S. Caldwell to Doris S. Caldwell Trust, lot 7B, Slate Creek Commons, Christiansburg

Michael D. Tuck to Arnold J. Ehrlich Jr., 415 Giles Rd., Blacksburg, 0.273 ac., metes and bounds, Blacksburg, \$334,000

Kenneth R. Gauss to Danjo LLC, Western 1/2 tract 22 ac., Prices Fork Magisterial District, \$16,000

Melissa J. Blau to Samuel E. Lesko, 0.335 ac., lot 103, Fincastle Dr.,

Blacksburg, \$420,000

Timothy W. Conner to JBC Properties LLC, 0.1514 ac., to become a total of 2.6644 ac., Christiansburg

Shah Development LLC to Proven Investments LLC, 0.7749 ac. Lot, Christiansburg, \$195,000

Donna A. Cwayna to Donna A. Cwayna, two parcels, lot 36 and part of lot 34, Oakwood Subdv., #1

Ricardo Bello Marcelino to Javier Juarez Morales, 1.55 ac., parcel 2, Shawsville Magisterial District, \$30,000

Rebecca Shaver to Nicole Kastelanic, parcel 1 containing 13.086 ac., Mt. Tabor Magisterial District, \$518,500

Polly C. Whitaker to Rebecca Williams Shaver, lot 4, Woodlyn Subdv, Christiansburg, \$240,000

Hazem E. Soliman to Zachary McPeake, 0.231 ac., lot 1, Christiansburg, \$142,500

Bonnie Turner Grubb to Catawba Road Venture LLC, 3.909 ac., Mt. Tabor Magisterial District, \$147,900

Cynthia Jean Kazyak to Susan Mullins Sanders, Blacksburg, \$167,600

Sofia Midkiff to Cascades Property Management, 15.476 ac., Blacksburg

Kenneth R. Day to Tommy F. Clapp, 0.696 ac., lot 18, Sec V, Rollings Hills, Riner Magisterial District, \$157,500

Carrington Mortgage Services LLC

Linda K. Peoples to Barry N. Akers, 1920 Wetherburn Rd., Christiansburg, 4.565 ac., lot 1, Ridgeway Farm Estates, Riner Magisterial District

Jerry Andrew James to Betty Elaine Dalton, 1 ac. Lot 1, Riner Magisterial District, \$30,000

Penny L. Morris to Eric Kuchan, condo unit R, Bldg 503, Sundance Ridge Condos, Blacksburg, \$135,000

Shah Development LLC to Christine Wood Perry, 0.071 ac., lot 47, Midway Estates, Shawsville Magisterial District, \$249,900

Phyllis T. Albritton to Andrew L. Waldren, 1003 Highland Circle, Blacksburg, lot 14, Highland Park 2, \$280,000

Howd T. Albert Jr., to Howd T. Albert Jr., 3.7238 ac., lot A

Daren R. Lawson to Frances A. Miller, two parcels, 0.900 ac., and 0.072 ac., Shawsville Magisterial District, \$85,100

Christine B. Cadwallader to Christine B. Cadwallader Trust, lot 77 Highland Park, Blacksburg

E. Allen Bame to E Allen Bame Trust, condo unit 53, Ph VI-B, Woods Edge at Warm Hearth, Prices Fork Magisterial District

Elain S. Dobyns to Ruth H. Horst, 0.524 ac., Christiansburg, \$259,000

Roadrunner: Meet the real bird behind the cartoon

Roadrunners don't say "meep meep!"

They don't have blue feathers and orange feet. And they don't outsmart frenetic, bug-eyed coyotes by tricking them into running off cliffs.

None of this should be surprising because Looney Tunes aren't exactly known for their accurate depictions

of animal species. But the true story of this uncommon bird is more remarkable than anything a Warner Bros animator could dream up.

Greater roadrunners can survive in the desert, run faster than a human, and beat rattlesnakes to death against rocks. Seldom seen and under-appreciated,

they're a bird worth getting to know.

They might look like a scrawny chicken, but roadrunners (all one word) are members of the cuckoo family.

There are just two species: The greater roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*) which ranges from the southwestern and south-

central United States down through Mexico, and the lesser roadrunner (*Geococcyx velox*), found in Mexico and Central America.

In the United States, roadrunners aren't common. Most people see them by chance along the road, as they make a mad dash across the asphalt or hunt reptiles basking in the sun. Roadrunners can't fly well for long distances, so they limit their flight to short glides or bursts when startled.

While Looney Tunes' cartoon roadrunner might have been able to outrun the coyote every time, real-life roadrunners aren't so lucky. Coyotes can outpace roadrunners substantially, clocking up to 43 miles per hour, compared to the roadrunner's 20 miles per hour. Coyotes will prey on roadrunners, and so will raccoons and raptors.

Roadrunners are important figures in both Mexican and Native American culture where the species is revered for "their courage, strength, speed, and endurance," according to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Cornell also notes that the bird's X-shaped footprints with two toes pointing in each direction "are used as sacred symbols by Pueblo tribes to ward off evil. The X-shape disguises the direction the bird is heading and is thought to prevent evil spirits from following."

Roadrunners feast on a diet of lizards, snakes, small mammals, amphibians, and insects, including venomous scorpions.

No snake is off limits, including rattlesnakes. Greater roadrunners are one of the few animals known to attack rattlesnakes, which they often do in pairs. One bird distracts the snake, bending

down with its head towards the ground, tail held vertically, and wings outstretched to either side. Meanwhile, the other bird sneaks up from behind and pins the snake's head down. The birds then kill the snake by either pecking its head repeatedly or bashing it against a rock.

Gruesome, yet impressive.

Roadrunners sometimes catch and kill a snake that's too long for them to swallow all at once. Their solution, according to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, is to prance about with the snake's tail hanging out of their mouth, slowly gulping down a few inches at a time as the rest of the snake digests inside of them.

Both species of roadrunner live in harsh desert habitats and have several adaptations to help them survive with little water. They obtain most of their water from their diet. Like some seabird species, roadrunners have a special gland in front of their eye through which they excrete excess salt. (Think of it like urinating, but with considerably less wasted water.)

Roadrunners will bark, much like a coyote, and males make a mechanical

putting and whirring sound when courting a female. Birds of all ages and sexes clap their bills together.

Pairs form life-long bonds and reconnect each year with a courtship ritual.

So the next time you're driving in roadrunner country, keep your eyes peeled, because you never know when a roadrunner might sprint across your path. It almost certainly won't be followed by Wile E. Coyote, but it will be an exciting bird sighting.

By Justine E. Hausheer

Justine E. Hausheer is an award-winning science writer for The Nature Conservancy, covering the innovative research conducted by the Conservancy's scientists in the Asia Pacific region. She has a degree from Princeton University and a master's in Science, Health, and Environmental Reporting from New York University. Justine's favorite stories take her into pristine forests, desolate deserts, or far-flung islands to report on field research as it's happening. When not writing, you can find her traipsing after birds, attempting to fish, and exploring the wild places around her home in Brisbane, Australia.



A roadrunner perched on top of a mesquite with a female spiny lizard in its bill. © Jorge Castro Urbiola/TNC Photo Contest 2021.

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Keep holiday staples fresh with proper storage

If you're planning to buy potatoes or winter squash in advance of the holidays, proper storage will ensure your produce stays fresh until you're ready to start cooking with it.

Some produce, like leafy greens, has a short shelf life of just a few days. Other vegetables, like onions, potatoes, sweet potatoes and winter squash, are convenient to purchase now for use later. A good rule of thumb is to store them in a cool, well-ventilated, dark place like a pantry or closet.

"No sunlight or anything like that on them," advised John Marker, owner of Marker-Miller Orchards in Winchester and a member of the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation Specialty Crops Advisory Committee.

Marker grows and sells several types of winter squash, including acorn, buttercup, butternut, delicata and kabocha. He said while most of his customers use the squash within a couple of weeks, "they can keep longer than that. They'll keep a good part of the winter if they're in the right conditions."

He said winter squashes prefer cooler temperatures, and noted that it's easy to tell when they take a turn for the worse—they'll develop spots and start to get soft.

"Go through them, and anything that's showing a sign that it's starting to deteriorate, go ahead and use it," he advised.

While most vegetables prefer drier environments, sweet potatoes should be kept slightly more humid to prevent them from drying out, said Mike Cullipher, who grows them and other produce at Cullipher Farms in Virginia Beach.

"If stored properly, they can last six or eight months," said Cullipher, who also is a member of the VFBB specialty crops committee.

As with winter squash, sweet potatoes develop soft spots when they start to go bad. A sweet potato that's too dry also will have wrinkly skin, Cullipher explained.

With all potatoes, avoiding light is paramount, or they'll start to sprout. In addition, white potatoes will produce chlorophyll, which results in green patches on the potato—called greening—when exposed to light.

It's also important to keep your produce separate, particularly onions and potatoes. When stored together, they will ripen faster, causing sprouting and spoilage.

Another good reason to keep potatoes separate is "they'll absorb the smell of the onions," Cullipher said.



When buying holiday staples such as sweet potatoes or winter squash, proper storage is necessary to keep them fresh until they're ready to be cooked.

PETS OF THE WEEK



Let's play. Young kitty Stuffing enjoys batting around toys and having some fun. She is a sweet, friendly gal who is ready to find her forever home. Stop by the Animal Care and Adoption Center to see if you are a purrfect match.



Tommy and Lulu are a bonded pair. In fact, they are siblings from the same litter. They will need to go to the same home together. Both cats are a little shy at first but once comfortable, they enjoy a good chin scratch and affection from their favorite humans.

Class of 2021: Ryan Kros looks ahead to careers in the Army and residential construction

Ryan Kros came to Virginia Tech on a path predetermined by two family traditions: tennis and military service in the United States Army.

He enrolled in the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets and joined his older brother, Jason, on the Hokie men's tennis team.

He was one of about four Division I athletes in a corps of 1,200 cadets. "College athletics is a once-in-lifetime experience," Kros said.

He put in the work from Army fitness training in the morning to his daily tennis practice and workouts and figured out a routine that gave him time for everything he needed to do.

Kros also achieved a balance between his responsibilities in the Corps of Cadets and Army ROTC with his studies in the Myers-Lawson School of Construction in the College of Architecture and Urban Studies.

"I learned to help my team succeed through leadership, organization, and communication," he said.

He not only succeeded, he thrived. He will graduate in December with a degree in building construction and a commission as an infantry officer in the U.S. Army.

"There are few cadets, nationally, that have accomplished what he has accomplished," says Lt. Col. Curtis Armstrong,

the executive officer of Virginia Tech's Army ROTC. "He is a true scholar-athlete-leader who will be an amazing officer of character in our Army."

Here is the proof: Kros is ranked the No. 10 Army ROTC cadet in the nation. The Order of Merit list is based on leadership attributes, academic scores, and fitness assessments.

This summer, he graduated from Army ROTC Advanced Camp, earning the coveted Reconnaissance Commando badge and the highest potential overall rating of "outstanding."

He ended his college tennis career as the 2020-21 ACC Male Scholar-Athlete of the Year, an Academic All-American, and the Virginia Tech Strength and Conditioning Athlete of the Year. He was also elected to the Student Athlete Advisory Council.

He served as a building construction ambassador and engaged prospective students during open-house sessions and campus tours.

Kros credits his role as project manager for a capstone project in construction with pulling "everything I learned over the past four and a half years together." The team develops a bid for a project that includes design, cost estimates, schedul-

ing, and logistics. Each team presents a bid to an industry board at the end of the semester.

If all that wasn't enough, last spring he met his goal of joining Army ROTC's Ranger Company, a group focused on training for competitive Army schools and selections. He put in extra work to prepare for Ranger Company's intensive fitness assessment while traveling every week to compete with men's tennis and preparing for the ACC tennis tournament and the NCAA National Championships.

Kros didn't quite expect to be traveling to tournaments during the COVID-19 pandemic. Again, he dug deep and figured out a routine that

worked.

"There are no regrets for anything I've done, even though it's been very tough at times," he says. "I wouldn't have done anything differently even if I could go back and change things."

Early in 2022, Kros will travel to Fort Benning, Ga., for the Army's Basic Officer Leaders Course and then on to Ranger School.

Kros is focused on his future now, saying that he "would like to have a long and successful Army career before transitioning into residential construction, specifically renovation and custom new construction."

Written by
Shay Barnhart and
Michael Capocelli



Ryan Kros, at center, holds out the homecoming game ball for a student to touch for luck during Ranger Company's annual event in which they run the game ball for 100 miles around campus.

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OBITUARIES

Reagan, Ann Akers

Ann Akers Reagan passed away Dec. 16 following a lengthy battle with pancreatic cancer.

She was born to Belva and Guy Akers on Sept. 10, 1945, in Radford. She graduated from Radford High School in 1963 and from Radford University in 1967.

She is survived by her husband, Bob, of 55 years, two daughters: Amy (Matt Eskridge) and Emily (Andrew LeVasseur); four grandchildren (Winston Eskridge, Ann Phillips Eskridge, Molly LeVasseur, and Drew LeVasseur); a brother, Bill Akers, of Blacksburg; two sisters-in-law, Rita Reagan of Knoxville and Sarah Reagan of Marianna, Fla.; three nephews, a niece, and several cousins.

Ann taught school in Winston-Salem before becoming Director of Messiah Moravian pre-school. She then began a very successful 25-year career in real estate at Crowder Realty. Upon retirement in 2007, she and Bob traveled extensively prior to her cancer diagnosis in 2019.

Ann had a positive outlook on everything, and she had an amazing knack for making



friends. She had a true zest for life and brought joy to everyone around her. The residents at River Landing became her second family after she and Bob moved there in 2016.

Foremost in her life was her family, and her grandchildren were the apple of her eye. They fondly referred to her as "Annie," and she loved baking chocolate cakes and making deviled eggs for them.

Ann was a member of First Presbyterian Church in Winston-Salem. The family wishes to thank Dr. Rocha Lima, Irene, Julie, and all the nurses at the Wake Forest Baptist Cancer Center that provided such wonderful care and support during her treatment.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that memorials be sent to Parenting Path, 500 W. Northwest Blvd., Winston-Salem, N.C. 27105, or St. Jude's Children Hospital, 262 Danny Thomas Place, Memphis, Tenn. 38105, or the charity of your choice.

Online condolences may be made at www.salemfh.com. Due to COVID restrictions, a private family service will be held.

Linkous, Freeda

Freeda Linkous, 83, of Blacksburg, went to Heaven on Dec. 16, 2021.

She was preceded in death by her parents, McKinley and Kate Linkous; her sisters, O'Dell Garigliano and Janet Simpkins; and her brothers, Robert Linkous and Donald Linkous.

She was a longtime member of the Blacksburg First Church of God. Freeda retired from the VA Tech Bookstore after more than 45 years of service.

She loved spending her evenings sitting on the porch with her sisters, Linda and Janet, after they had all retired. She filled everyone's lives with love, laughter, and funny faces for many years. Freeda lived her 83 years as a woman of God and loved her family. Through her battle with dementia, we all enjoyed caring for her and shared many laughs, endless love and now many tears.

She is survived by her sisters, Linda



Elliott and Peggy Jo Sawyer; her nieces and nephews, Rodonna Elliott, Betty Elliott, Sammy Elliott, Benny Simpkins, Jimmy Elliott, Brenda Richardson, Judy and Lou Ferguson, Teresa Wetzel, Roger Dean Linkous, Kathy and Pat Hoover, Harold and Kim Sawyer, Tim and Betty Sawyer, and Roger and Jessie Simpkins; special caregivers Katie Elliott, Brittany Bain, Hope Roop, Amanda Bain, and Emma Whitlock; special friends Linda Pittard, Barbara Hamblin, Claudia Oliver, Rosemary Jones, Celia Hardwick, the Baby Whales, and Alice Noblin.

There are many other loved ones who have gone on before her.

Services were provided by McCoy Funeral Home on Thursday, Dec. 23, 2021, in the McCoy Funeral Home Chapel. Interment followed at Roselawn Memorial Gardens, Christiansburg.

ANGLICAN CATHOLIC

St. Peter the Apostle Anglican Church, 230 W. First St., Christiansburg, VA. Fr Peter Geromel OHI Th.M., Vicar, Fr. Alex Darby, "Associate", 540-382-0432/540-270-9166. Sundays: 8:00 am & 10:00 am Holy Eucharist followed by Christian Education and refreshments. Holy Communion most Thursdays at 12Noon, other Holy Days as announced. Traditional services use the 1928 Book of Common Prayer and 1940 Hymnal. Handicapped accessible. All are welcome. Come worship with us! Website: www.stpetersacc.org. Follow us on Facebook

St. Philip's Anglican Church, 306 Progress Street, NE, Blacksburg, Virginia 24060, (540) 552-1771, www.stphilipsblacksburg.org. Reverend Fr. Wade Miller, Priest. Eucharist Sundays at 11am and Wednesday's at 12pm.

St. Thomas Anglican Church - located at 4910 Hubert Rd, NW Roanoke, Va. Traditional Liturgical Lenten Services, Sunday at 10:30 am. Call (540) 589-1299 or visit www.sttofc.org for midweek masses and events. (In Roanoke, go E on Hershberger, L on Hubert to 4910).

BAPTIST

First Baptist Church on 3rd Ave., 215 Third Ave. at the corner with Downey St. We are committed to personal spiritual growth and to providing leadership in community ministry. We celebrate the dignity and worth of all persons, created in the image of God. Sunday Bible Study Groups - 9:45, Sunday Worship - 11:00. Website: www.fbcradford.org, 540-639-4419. Worship is broadcast live on JOY radio, 93.1 FM and 890 AM.

Trinity Community Church, 1505 N. Franklin Street, C'burg. John Altizer, Lead Pastor, Brian Cockram, Associate Pastor, 382-8121. Worship at 10:45 a.m., Outreach Ministries - 6:00p.m. Wednesday, Growth Groups - 5:00p.m. Sunday, Youth and Children's Ministry - 5:00p.m. Sunday, www.trinitycburg.org

CHURCH OF CHRIST

Blacksburg Church of Christ, 315 Eakin St., 552-1331. Sun. Bible Classes 9:30 a.m., Sun. Worship 10:30 a.m. & 6 p.m., Wed. Bible classes, 7 p.m., Outreach Minister Curt Seright, Community Minister Tom Gilliam, Dean Meadows, Campus Minister.

Faith Christian Church of Christ, 305 3rd Street, Christiansburg, David Rhudy, Minister, 382-4628, Sunday School 10 am; Worship 11 am; Evening Worship 6:30 pm; Wednesday night Bible Study for Women and Men 6:30 pm. We welcome you to any and all of our services.

CHURCH OF GOD

New Hope Church of God, 1404 Mud Pike Rd., C'Burg. Rev. T. Michael Bond, pastor, 731-3178. Sun. School 10 a.m., Worship 10:50 a.m., 6 p.m. Thurs., 7:00 p.m.

West Radford Church of God, 1824 West Main Street, Radford, VA 24141, Sunday School— 10:00A.M. Morning Worship— 11:00A.M., Children's Church 11:00A.M. Sunday Evening — 6:00P.M., Wednesday Night — 7:00P.M., Pastor Danny Newman, Church Office — 540-639-6562 or 804- 921-0828.

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

Christiansburg Church of the Brethren, 310 South Franklin Street. Pastor: Paul J. Stover Jr. 540-797-5015. Sunday School 10 a.m.; Morning Worship 11 a.m.; Bible Study 10:30 a.m. Tuesdays. Website: www.christiansburgcob.org. A loving family, fueled by the Holy Spirit, grounded in God's Word, and delivering Jesus forgiveness and love to all people. Come as you are... you are welcomed!

ECKANKAR

Eckankar, the Path of Spiritual Freedom, is located at 1420 3rd St. SW, Roanoke, VA 24016. However, due to COVID-19, the Light & Sound Services and other ECK programs are currently available online through Zoom. Visit www.eck-va.org for program listings, www.meetup.com/Roanoke-Spiritual-Experiences-Group, or call 540-353-5365 and leave a message. We will return your call. Also visit www.eckankar.org for more information about how the teachings of Eckankar lead you to spiritual freedom.

EPISCOPAL

Grace Episcopal Church, 210 4th Street, Radford, 639-3494. A friendly, mission-oriented spiritual community sharing the Word of God. ALL ARE WELCOME. In person and live-streamed services 10:30AM Sundays. Holy Eucharist twice a month. Morning Prayer twice a month. Fellowship and refreshments follow services. Find us on Facebook: Grace Episcopal Church and www.graceradford.org.

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.

Compassion Church, 1820 Second Street, Radford, 639-6287, Our music is passionate, our worship is real, and Pastor Chandler Jones brings relevant messages for everyone at any place on their journey, Sunday Worship Experience at 9:30 AM & 11:00 AM, Wednesday Family Night at 7 PM, Children Ministry provided for all services. Our vision is to see all Saved. Freed. Restored. Fulfilled. 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. Dr. Patricia Jones. Sunday School, 9:45 a.m., Sunday Worship, 11:00 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. Mike Derflinger (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: christwesleyanchurch.org

Montgomery County WORSHIP DIRECTORY

ONLY ONE WAY

"I am the way, the truth and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through Me." John 14:6

In our culture, almost anything goes. The overwhelming idea is: whatever works for you. It's okay to believe in God, but it's not acceptable to suggest there is only one way to know Him.

The problem is that if you believe in Christ, you must also believe His words. He did not say, "I am a way." He said, "I am THE way." Think about it. If anything would work, why suffer? If anything else could save us, why would God send His son?

Read Isaiah 43:10-11. First, understand that God does want us to know Him. It's why He sent His son in the first place. Second, recognize that there is only one Savior and put your trust in Him. Perhaps you have long since accepted that only Christ can save you, but have you really accepted that only He can save somebody else? Knowing how much others need Christ motivates us to tell them about Him. After all, "how, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?" (Romans 10:14) Tell someone about the Savior today!

Worship: Today, thank God for sending the Savior. Pray for those who do not know Him, those who live and work right around you as well as those in foreign lands. Read Romans 10:14-15. Pray that God will send His people to preach good news and ask Him to give you opportunities today to share His love with someone.

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

The Omicron variant: questions and answers

As we celebrate the season with friends and family this year, we are once again seeing this tenacious virus, COVID-19, making new headlines. Last week, the first detected case of the Omicron variant in Virginia was found in the northwestern part of the state. This news was not unexpected as the variant has also been identified in over 25 other states.

new variant.

In 2020, the primary circulating strain of SARS-CoV-2 was the Alpha variant. In 2021, the Delta variant emerged as the predominant strain in the United States, including in Virginia. The Delta strain is more contagious than the Alpha strain, which is one of the reasons so many people continue to get COVID-19. And, as many of you know, as we headed into the holiday season, we learned of the Omicron variant, which is even more contagious than the Delta variant.

Q: Is Omicron a more dangerous variant?

A: Because this is a very new variant with a lot of different mutations, there is still a lot

that we need to learn. We need to learn more about its transmissibility, severity, and ability to evade immune responses (including response to vaccines). We need to be patient as more information emerges about this new variant. Just because we have a new variant doesn't mean we have a crisis in our midst, but it does mean that we cannot let our guard down against this ever-changing virus.

Q: What kind of protection do the vaccines provide against the variants?

A: The good news is that the COVID-19 vaccines available in the U.S. are safe and are effective at decreasing the risk of infection as well as severe disease (hospitalizations/

death) associated with the Alpha and Delta variants. Initial information shows that for the Omicron strain, the vaccines also decrease the risk of severe disease in people who are fully vaccinated, particularly in individuals who have received their booster shots. We strongly encourage everyone over the age of 16 to get a booster shot if it has been at least six months since their second dose of Pfizer/Moderna, or for people over the age of 18, at least two months since their dose of J&J.

Q: Is there anything a person can do to avoid getting sick with Omicron?

A: After almost two years of learning to live with this virus, we have really good evidence

that community mitigation strategies such as masking and social distancing work against all variants.

The Virginia Department of Health is actively tracking and investigating the Omicron variant and will continue to update the public as information unfolds. Until we learn more about this new variant, we can take steps that we know will work: Getting vaccinated and boosted and wearing a mask in public indoor settings remain the best ways to protect against Omicron. Please be safe and stay healthy as we usher in a New Year.

By Cynthia Morrow, MD, MPH

VT science graduate students trade traditional communication for blank canvas

On a recent Friday night in Roanoke, 24 Virginia Tech graduate students swapped pipettes for glue sticks, test tubes for glitter, and petri dishes for pencils at the first Science on Canvas event hosted by the Virginia Tech Communicative Science Club (CommSci) in partnership with the Taubman Museum of Art.

"Growing up, I was surrounded by my uncle's artwork, which was always a source of creativity for me," said Frankie Edwards, a student in the Translational Biology, Medicine, and Health (TBMH) Graduate Program and one of the event's creators. "This event was a way for me to honor him and take art and creativity and mesh it together with research that could help graduate students

to identify aspects of their research that they may have a hard time communicating."

Edwards serves as co-president of the CommSci Club along with fellow TBMH graduate student Amanda Hensley. The two conceived Science on Canvas together and pitched the idea to Katrina King-Singh, strategic partnerships manager and assistant to the executive director at the Taubman Museum of Art.

"Science on Canvas is a new initiative to get graduate students to put their research on canvas and express it in a new and artistic way," King-Singh said. "More than that, we're also providing a way for them to express their research to the public as we'll be displaying their artwork here at the Taubman

Museum of Art. It gives them an opportunity to showcase what they're doing at Virginia Tech."

The event focused on skill development, as King-Singh led the students in three distinct activities: collaborative collage, communication through observation and drawing, and doodle journaling.

"I'm a writer, so words are my typical medium. Drawing, painting, and using the visual arts is a bit of a challenge for me," said Gates Palissery, a TBMH graduate student working at the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute. "This event was all about learning how to communicate in a new way."

At the conclusion of the evening, each attendee was provided with a blank canvas to produce a work of art depicting

his or her research over the next month. Once completed, that artwork was to be displayed at the Taubman Museum of Art for two weekends

and then put on display at the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute for the remainder of the 2022 spring semester.

"This was a pilot

event, but I hope that it can be an annual thing, for sure," Edwards said.

By Clayton Metz



PHOTO BY CLAYTON METZ FOR VIRGINIA TECH. Virginia Tech graduate students recently participated in a collaborative collage session during the first Science on Canvas event at the Taubman Museum of Art.

May God bless and watch over you and your loved ones at Christmas and always. We hope the holiday season finds you together, sharing with family and friends.

We wish you a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Mullins Funeral Home & Crematory
120 West Main Street
Radford, VA 24141
540-639-2456

Glad Tidings to You!

Wishing you and yours a happy holiday season filled with good times, good friends and good memories.

We thank you for your support this past year and look forward to serving you in the new year.

Price's Body Shop
2592 Ellett Rd.,
Christiansburg
382-7300

Rejoice in the Gifts of the Season

May Christmas deliver the best gifts of all to you and yours this year: Peace, Love, Health, Happiness & Friendship

Merry Christmas, and best wishes for a blessed New Year.

Price's Service Center
1107 N. Main Street
Blacksburg
540-552-5041

Tree Snake

from page 1

the family's property in Robertson, the Western Cape, soon afterwards. The snake was female and between 1.3 meters (4.3 feet) and 1.5 meters (4.9 feet) long, Heyns told CNN on Tuesday.

He said he instructed the family to stay away from the tree, but to "keep their eyes on the snake" until his arrival.

"The snake stayed in the tree for two hours until I got there," Heyns said. He used "snake tongs" to place it on the floor, where it was "easier to handle," he added.

"Once I had it under control the family came right up to see the snake. It didn't try to bite or be defensive because I gave it no reason to. A scary moment turned into an exciting moment for the children," Heyns said.

He then held it behind the neck and placed it in a "snake tube." As it was getting dark, Heyns took the reptile home where he temporarily housed it in a snake enclosure before releasing it back into the wild on Sunday.

Heyns said the snake would have likely entered the property in search of food, water and shelter.

"Probably when it saw the first movement it tried to escape into the nearest hiding place which was the tree," he said.

Heyns, who has removed hundreds of snakes from South African homes, said that bites from a boomslang are rare.

Heyns said that in his eight years as a professional catcher, he has only been bitten once and that was because he hadn't realized the animal had been shot and was acting defensively.

Season's Greetings

May you enjoy a wonderful holiday with family and friends. We're very grateful to you for your support and look forward to serving you again next year.

BLACKSBURG PHARMACY
1403 North Main Street, Blacksburg
(540) 552-3000

CHRISTIANSBURG PHARMACY
470 North Franklin Street, Christiansburg
(540) 382-9000

Peace & Goodwill to All

As we celebrate this holy season, let's remember to treat one another with kindness, love and understanding. We hope you'll join us in the true spirit of the season with prayers of peace and goodwill toward all mankind.

From our staff to yours, go our best wishes for a blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year

McCOY FUNERAL HOME, INC.
WITH CREMATORY
150 COUNTRY CLUB DR. SW
(540) 552-3211 — BLACKSBURG, VA 24060

WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS

With warm wishes for a happy holiday season, along with heartfelt thanks for your friendship and goodwill.

ELECTRICAL SUPPLY, INC.
594 Depot Street, Christiansburg
Cambria Station
540-382-6179
electricalsupply@verizon.net
Hours: Monday - Friday 7:30-5PM

AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

MONTGOMERY SPORTS

Casey Graham is all-county, all-city player of year

Marty Gordon
NRVsports@ourvalley.org

Quarterback Casey Graham led Christiansburg High School to 10 wins this past season as he set a new school single-season passing yardage record. For his effort, Graham is 2021's all-county/all-city News Messenger/News Journal player of the year. He was also named the offensive player of the year.

Graham finished the season with 106 passes on 169 attempts with 1,850 yards and 18 touchdowns. He also rushed 39 times for 235 yards with seven touchdowns.

This season was one of the Blue Demons' best in eight years, and Graham was a big part of it. His coach, Alex Wilkens, said he was instrumental to

the success of the Christiansburg football team this year.

"I think our team was a microcosm of his demeanor," Wilkens said. "He was the unquestionable vocal leader of our team. Casey was a player you knew you could count on day in and day out. Adversity never fazed him, and he never shied away from the big moment."

"I really felt like that was the DNA of our team this year. Our team was not intimidated by anybody, and Casey was a big part of that," Wilkens said.

Of course, Graham, like most of his teammates, took the Lord Botetourt playoff loss hard. "It was tough," he said. "We felt like we should have won it and gone farther."

On Sunday, Graham gave credit

for his outstanding season to his teammates, especially his offensive line. "I could not have done it without them," he said.

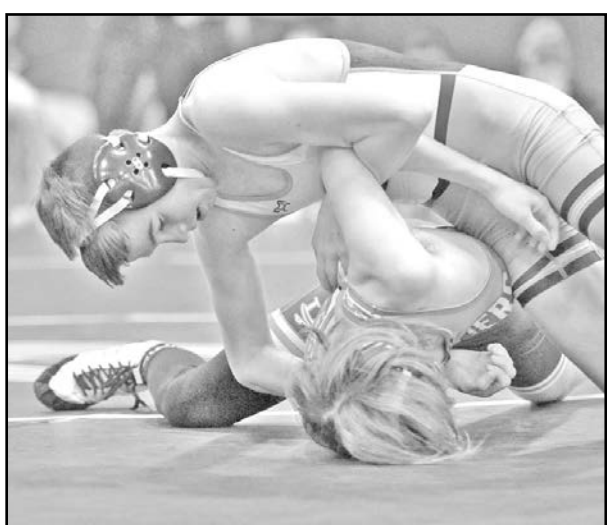
For the past two years, he has not played any other sport but football. Previously he also played basketball until a wrist injury shut down his season.

His football ties include an uncle who played on a state championship team at Glenvar, which ironically at the time had a defensive assistant by the name of Wilkens, the same coach who now leads the Christiansburg program.

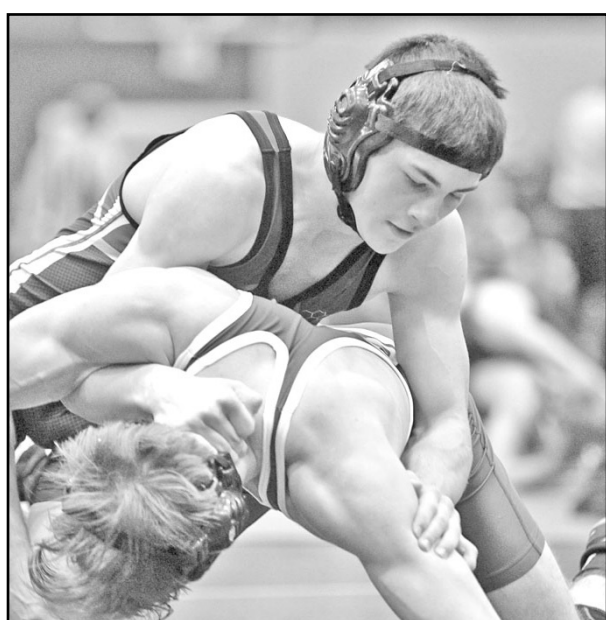
Several Old Dominion Athletic Conference teams have been in contact with the senior signal caller, but so far, he has not made a decision where he will take his talents next.



Casey Graham put up big numbers this past season for Christiansburg High School including a single-season school passing record of 1,850 yards.

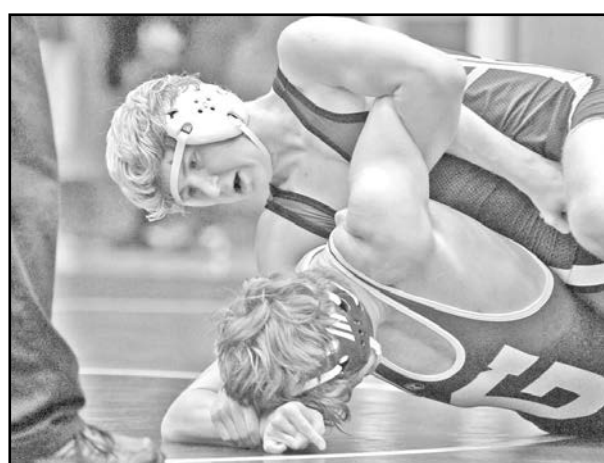


Christiansburg's Evan Mefford works to pin his Lord Botetourt opponent at 126 pounds at Saturday's Bruin Brawl Dual Tournament. The event at Blacksburg High School included an 8-team dual match tournament with teams from Christiansburg, Glenvar, Cave Spring, Lord Botetourt, E.C. Glass, and Liberty Christian.



Blacksburg's Layne Waldron defeats an E.C. Glass wrestler during a first round match at Saturday's Bruin Brawl.

Bruin Brawl



Blacksburg's Ryan Ankrum would pin his first round E.C. Glass opponent as the Bruins hosted the "Bruin Brawl," an 8-team duals tournament on Saturday.

PHOTOS BY JON FLEMING

COVID continues to affect local athletics

Marty Gordon
NRVsports@ourvalley.org

The Radford University men's basketball game scheduled for Monday in Akron has been postponed due to a COVID-related issue within the Zips' program. In addition, Radford High School's girls' basketball team had to take a pause last month because of COVID cases within its ranks.

Over the past month, several high schools have had to reschedule games because of the protocols put into place to handle COVID cases and contact rules.

The same took place during the fall high school football season. Christiansburg and Blacksburg lost games because of COVID. The question now is what happens as we move forward.

The vaccination numbers are increasing across the board with hopes this could ease the problem.

Communication specialist Nathan Wise at Radford University confirms that approximately 95% of the student-athletes within the Radford Athletics Department are vaccinated, including the vast majority of men's and women's basketball players.

Radford University's current policy states that all students and staff are required to be fully vaccinated unless valid medical or religious exemption is provided. Any unvaccinated individuals must receive a PCR test weekly. They also conduct tests on any individual who is symptomatic or had a known exposure per Virginia Department of Health guidelines.

Meanwhile in Blacksburg, associate athletic director Brian Cox would not give specific numbers.

"University policy does not permit us to segment our vaccination rates among any one group on campus," he said.

According to Cox, the university's policy is that vaccinations are required for all students, faculty, and staff at Virginia Tech, with exemptions for medical rea-

sons and sincerely held religious beliefs.

Both RU and Tech require masks at their home basketball games.

The Atlantic Coast Conference has updated its protocols for winter sports within the league's Medical Advisory Group (MAG) Report. The report specifically addresses enhanced safety standards and testing measures in basketball, wrestling, and low-transmission-risk sports.

The ACC's Medical Advisory Group has been meeting weekly since the spring to share information on the impact of COVID-19 on ACC campuses and intercollegiate athletics. The first MAG report was released on July 29 (ACC Announces Plans for Football and Fall Olympic Sports) and enhanced on Aug. 28 (ACC Enhances

Safety Standards Within its Medical Advisory Group).

The MAG report outlines minimum standards for each campus to follow in the areas of testing, reporting positive test results, and the protocols for cleaning and sanitizing competition areas.

The updated MAG Report calls for all team members and those in close contact with the teams in men's and women's basketball and wrestling, to be tested three times each week on non-consecutive days. One molecular (PCR) test must be administered within three days of the first competition of the week. The visiting team must have results from the test performed within three days prior to the competition before the team travels to the site. A test shall also be administered within 48 hours of the conclusion

of a game and may be either a molecular (PCR) or antigen test.

Men's and women's basketball officials are required to test three times per week and to undergo symptom and temperature checks upon arrival at the venue. Any personnel seated at the scorer's table(s) must complete a symptom and temperature check upon arrival at the venue and must wear a face covering at all times. Wrestling officials shall be tested once per week.

While in season, any team member who leaves the institution for more than three days (ex. NCAA-mandated holiday break), must quarantine for 24 hours upon return to campus. During quarantine, team members will be tested with a molecular (PCR) test and may return to practice if, and when, the result is

negative. In addition, team members must record a second negative test (either PCR or antigen) prior to the first competition following the break.

In low-transmission-risk sports, all team members must be tested once per week during weeks in which there is competition. The test must be a molecular (PCR) test and must be completed within three calendar days of the first competition of the week. During weeks in which the sport does not compete, testing should follow the institution's plan for all students following local, state, and national health guidelines. Additional testing may be conducted at the institution's discretion. Any table officials in those sports are required to wear a face mask.

As previously announced, every student-athlete who

tests positive will undergo a cardiac evaluation that includes an electrocardiogram, a troponin test, and an echocardiogram before a phased return to exercise.

In addition to the updated ACC MAG report, the ACC has significantly adjusted its 2020-21 Men's and Women's Basketball Game Management protocols. Specifically, there must be a minimum of 15 feet separating the general public and the areas on the court occupied by essential personnel (team bench/scorer's table, etc.). Individuals deemed essential to have access within the 15-foot perimeter will be required to meet specific and consistent health and safety standards as agreed upon by all 15 schools, including a temperature screening, symptom check, physical distancing, and masking.



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Legals - Montgomery County

Public Notice

The Christiansburg Town Council will hold a Public Hearing on Tuesday, January 11, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Room, Christiansburg Town Hall, 100 E. Main Street to receive comments on a resolution for the disposition of a Town-owned lot at the intersection of West Street and Johnston Street (Tax Parcel 497-((12 Sec 3)) - 16A: Parcel ID 070451). The property is described as follows:

"Beginning at the point of intersection of the eastern line of West Street with the southern line of Johnston Avenue; thence running east with the southern line of Johnston Avenue 72 feet to a stake in said line; thence running south with the southern boundary line

Legals - Montgomery County

of the Montgomery Investments, LLC property 35 feet to a point; then running west with the northern boundary line of the Joseph D. Stump property 70 feet to a point in the eastern line of West Street; then with the eastern line of West Street N 10° West approximately 37 feet to the Beginning."

The Town is hereby making the property available for purchase through sealed bids. Sealed bids should be submitted to the Town at the address below by January 31, 2022 at 4:00 p.m., at which time they will be opened in the Town Manager's office. The Town will accept the highest bid for the property and reserves the right to restrict construction of a single-family residence on the property unless it is

Legals - Montgomery County

combined with another property and made compliant with applicable zoning and subdivision regulations by deed restrictions. The Town also reserves the right to retain an 8.5-foot street widening and public utility and drainage easement on the West Street side and a 10-foot street widening and public utility and drainage easement on the Johnston Street side of the property through the transfer deed, which will be prepared by the Town Attorney. Town Council reserves the right to reject any and all bids and cancel the sale at any time.

A copy of the proposed resolution and information on the preceding item may be viewed in the Office of the Town Manager, 100 E. Main Street, Christiansburg, VA 24073-3029 during

Legals - Montgomery County

normal office hours of 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. For more information, contact Randy Wingfield by phone at (540) 382-6120 ext. 1119 or by email at rwingfield@christiansburg.org.

s: Randy Wingfield
 Randy Wingfield
 Town Manager

SELL IT FAST

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Boys' basketball preview: Bobcats regroup with youngsters, Christiansburg riding success of football team



Radford High School boys' basketball coach Rick Cormany picked up his 700th career win in 2019 and is looking for another double-figure season in 2022.



Last season, Auburn's Ethan Millirons averaged 22 points, 4.3 assists, and five rebounds per game.

Marty Gordon
NRVsports@ourvalley.org

Radford High School is a perennial playoff team in boys' basketball and has become accustomed to winning championships year-after-year, but this season might be a learning experience for Coach Rick Cormany and the Bobcats. He brings seven sophomores and only two seniors to the table and will look for them to grow up quickly.

Meanwhile this year's Christiansburg squad is riding the success of the school's football team, which just finished play three weeks ago. The longer season meant Coach Mike Hunter was sitting and waiting for several of those football players to join the team.

Over in Riner, Auburn is loaded and hoping for another shot at a state title with the reigning state player of the year in Ethan Millirons.

Blacksburg and Eastern Montgomery have several questions as the boys' basketball season begins.

Radford has won 20 of the last 21 regular-season championships

in the Three Rivers District, 16 of 17 tournament championships, the last four Conference 45 championships, four Region C championships (2001, 2002, 2004, 2013), three Region 1A West Championships (2014, 2016, 2017), two Region 2C Championships (2018, 2019), and has finished three times as the state runners up, made it to nine state Final Fours, and won six state championships in the last 12 years.

Last year, Radford was 15-1. Cormany, who is now in his 29th season of coaching, is 730-239 overall and 566-167 at Radford High School. The team lost its top three scorers from last season. Gone are Cam Cormany (17.3 points per game), now at the Naval Academy, Alex Kanipe (10.3 points and 3.8 rebounds), and P.J. Prioleau (eight points per game). The leading candidate to help pick up the production is sophomore Landen Clark who averaged 8.5 points per game last season.

Two of the three team's seniors do bring some experience, but Nate Wesley averaged only 3.7 points per game, and

Joseph Mitchell averaged only 2.5 points and 2.5 rebounds per game.

"I expect them to be a lot better at the end of the year than they will be at the beginning," Cormany said. "This is a young team with seven sophomores and only two seniors."

The longtime coach expects James River and Glenvar to be tough district foes this season.

This past week, Radford rolled to a 62-31 win over Pulaski.

Millirons has announced plans to continue his playing career at one of the top Division II college basketball programs in the country: St. Thomas Aquinas College in upstate New York.

In his last full high school season (sophomore), Millirons averaged 22 points per game, 4.3 assists, five rebounds, and made 67 3's to go along with a 47% field goal percentage and an 89% free throw percentage. He currently holds the school records for points in a season, 3-pointers made, free-throw percentage, and 3-pointers in a game (7). He was named all-Mountain Empire Dis-

trict and the Region C and Class 1 player of the year.

This past spring, Auburn finished 5-2. Terry Millirons enters his 18th year at the helm of the Eagles with expectations being very high for this squad. "We are inexperienced but have a really good group of sophomores and juniors surrounding Ethan and Nick Millirons (a sophomore and Ethan's younger brother and Terry's son)," the head coach said.

Coach Millirons feels the key will be for this team to become comfortable playing with each other and to learn how to compete on the defensive end of the court.

Christiansburg's football season delayed the start of basketball season, and four players moved to the court a short time later. Now, Coach Mike Hunter, who is in his seventh season at the school, hopes the success on the turf will provide some fuel on the court as he lost four of five starters from a team that finished 4-2 last year.

Hunter expects this year's team to play hard. "This year's team can be

really good if they can have the team-before-me-attitude," he said. "This group is a real talented group, and we will surprise a lot of teams this year."

The roster includes Tyrique Taylor, Kenyon Johnson-Buchannon and Stephan Myrthil who are trying to get their basketball legs under them after the playoff run with the football team. Jacob Moles, Austin Purcell, and Joseph Tuck will also play some key roles for the Blue Demons.

"The key to winning this year is that we need to be prepared every night," Hunter said. "Being locked in and doing the things that are asked of them. We have to be better on defense, and we have to hit jump shots. We have to play well as a team. Players have to do their part, and coaches have to do their part by getting them prepared for every game."

The coach expects the River Ridge District to be tough this season with the likes of Cave Spring, Pulaski, Blacksburg, and Patrick Henry, who are all going to be really good this season.

Doug Day, who is

in his 19th year at the school, has to be optimistic this season at Blacksburg where he will field a team of 15 underclassmen. The Bruins finished 4-4 last year and lost in the regional championship.

Blacksburg returns 11 players over 6-2 including 6-3 Spencer Campbell and Alex Trexell, 6-4 Sam Davis and Keegan Appear, and 6-5 Owen Walters.

"I feel like if we continue to work hard and get better each day that we have the potential to have a good season," Day said. "We must play good sound fundamental defense, take care of the basketball, and have good shot selection on the offensive end."

Eastern Montgomery's Josh Blevins begins his fifth year at the school and will regroup after losing all of his starters from this past year, but he does return seven seniors who will all contribute.

The Mustangs finished 1-4 in a shortened 2020-2021 thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic and shutdowns. Blevins said the key will be hitting the boards and command of the paint.

Girls' basketball preview: Linkous takes over in Blacksburg; Second-year coaches in Auburn, Radford, Christiansburg

Marty Gordon
NRVsports@ourvalley.org

Blacksburg High School will start a new chapter in girls' basketball this season with a new coach. Matt Linkous, who has spent the past six years as the junior varsity coach, takes over for Roger Henderson, who roamed the varsity sidelines for the past 12 years.

Lamont Calloway in Christiansburg, Kayla Ragsdale in Auburn, and Timothy Worles in Radford, all begin their second year as head coaches.

Eastern Montgomery's Kelley Sutphin is probably the most experienced coach in the area with five years in her second stint at the school.

Radford finished 9-3 in Worles's first season as a varsity coach after spend-

ing three previous seasons as an assistant. The team will have to replace Maggie Turk, who was the team's best on-ball defender last year, and Machenzie Page, who contributed nine rebounds per game. The Lady Cats do return senior Laney Cline, who averaged 14 points and nine rebounds.

Worles said he expects his team to compete at a high level every time they step on the court. "Our girls got a taste of getting a few steps into the playoffs last year, so we hope they play hungry this season to experience the same," he said.

According to Worles, the key will be gaining confidence and competing. "If we come out and focus on the principles we have built our program around every day in prac-

tice, I believe it will give us a chance at competing with whomever we step on the court with during game days."

Christiansburg will start several underclassmen and hope they can mature quickly. Six sophomores dot the roster along with at least one freshman. In most contests, that group will be the starting five. Antwaniqua Banks is the only senior and returns after sitting all of last year after suffering an MCL injury while juniors Brailyn Williams (10 points, 10 rebounds) and Maakyah Sherman will bring leadership to the group.

Sophomore Krystin Lowe is one of those underclassmen who saw action last year when the Blue Demons finished 1-6.

Calloway admits they are a young team but expects them to be competitive with defense being the key. "We will have to play one possession at a time."

Linkous brings lots of coaching experience to the Blacksburg sideline.

He served as an assistant varsity coach at Radford High School from 1995-2002, a varsity head coach for six years at Gateway Christian Academy where he won the 2005 state title, two years at Pathway Christian Academy where he won the 2010 state title and the national private school title, the head coach at Dayspring Christian Academy from 2011-2015 where he won the 2015 state title and national private school title, and then the past six years as the junior varsity coach at Blacksburg.

The Lady Bruins return Morgan and McKenzie Cheynet, who have played on varsity the last three years. Linkous said they will be solid senior leaders starting at the guard and post positions.

"They have signed to play soccer at Radford University, and their tenacity, leadership and competitive fire will lead

the team this year," he said.

Seniors Emma Anderson, Emily Venie, and Miranda Linkous will also provide solid minutes off the bench at the post.

Gabby Brooks and Mila Jones are returning juniors from last year's team and will be a threat from the outside, as well as their ability to get to the basket off the dribble.

"This will be a year of continuous improvement. We are varsity game inexperienced, but this group is a very coachable group. This is a foundation building year, and I couldn't ask for a better group of young ladies," Linkous said.

The key to winning, according to Linkous, will be developing better overall basket IQ, fundamentals, and continuing to work on the offensive threat. "Our defense will be our strength, but we have to improve our knowledge and offense skills," he said.

Auburn returns the

most experienced girls' team after going 4-1 in the shortened 2020 season. Coach Ragsdale said it was hard to single anyone out because she has a very talented team.

"Everyone on my roster is capable of scoring 12 plus points a night," she said. "I have guards who can outrebound post players, so it's an overall effort. We are still rebuilding our program, but I expect to win conference, districts, and regions."

The Lady Eagles still have something to prove, according to Ragsdale. "Last season, we weren't close to playing our best basketball, but I think we did well overall. However, if I had to pick a specific team (that will be tough to be this season), I would say Grayson County. We weren't quite ready for our season to end that soon last season."

Kelley Sutphin is working on her second tenure at Eastern Montgomery and finished 2-2 in last year's shortened season. The team did lose Elli Underwood, who led the team in all categories for the past two years.

Her sister, Lilly Underwood, leads a squad that will look to fill that void. "Teamwork, great defensive effort, surviving in clutch situations, and staying out of foul trouble will be the key for us," Sutphin said.

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