



Christiansburg Institute, Inc. awarded significant grant for preservation efforts

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Christiansburg Institute, Inc., got a big boost toward its preservation efforts recently with the award of a \$100,000 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

The successful grant proposal, titled 'The School Has Gone to the People: Increasing Community Interaction with Christiansburg Institute Museum & Archives' (CIMA) has been awarded as part of the Mellon Foundation's 'Community-Based Archives' grant program.

Christiansburg Industrial Institute educated generations of African-American families from

See Grant, page 2



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HISTORIC RESOURCES PHOTO

The Christiansburg Institute Museum and Archives (CIMA) will eventually be housed in the Edgar A. Long Building once restoration efforts are completed.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ALL ELITE WRESTLING.

Adam Page won the All Elite Wrestling World Championship recently.

High-flying Hokie alumnus soars in All Elite Wrestling

Travis Williams
Contributing writer

Stephen Woltz knows a thing or two about scaling the career ladder.

The 2011 Virginia Tech graduate also knows quite a bit about climbing literal ladders, as well as jumping off them onto opponents.

Woltz, who wrestles professionally as Adam "Hangman" Page, recently reached a pinnacle of the wrestling world by winning the All Elite World (AEW) Championship at the pay-per-view event Full Gear held in Minneapolis. His first reign as world champion, the victory came more than two years after being defeated in the AEW's inaugural world title bout and after three decades of climbing toward that dream.

"I was so tired," Woltz said of that moment. "It was a very surreal feeling, though, winning the championship I had chased for so long. The sense of accomplishment has taken a bit longer to set in, but I'm eternally grateful for the fans who have stuck with me along the ride, who never gave up on me even when I had given up on myself."

Woltz's journey began during his elementary school years when he wrestled on trampolines for the upstart promotion, Aaron's Creek Wrestling.

"Friends would come over, and we'd have fun putting on a show, jumping off of the deck railing for swantons and putting each other through cardboard boxes I'd co-opted from the fifth-grade book fair

deliveries," he said.

He began training professionally at 15 and wrestling independent shows at 16. He continued to progress while earning a bachelor's degree in communications in Blacksburg and while teaching multimedia journalism at Halifax County High School in South Boston, Va., before turning his focus entirely to wrestling in 2016.

"I turned in my notice to HCHS that May of 2016 and bet it all on wrestling," Woltz said. "It ended up paying off pretty well despite the weird looks I got when they announced I'd be leaving to 'go fight in Japan' at the year-end faculty meeting."

Largely considered the primary competitor for World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE), AEW airs multiple shows on television and online each week and produces quarterly pay-per-view events each year. Under the moniker of the "Anxious Millennial Cowboy," Woltz is a headliner for the promotion. He embraces a "work hard, play hard" attitude he believes parallels the blue-collar, service-oriented mentality he experienced at Virginia Tech.

Though it's been a while since he's been able to return to campus, Woltz said he always enjoys being able to soak up Blacksburg.

"When I do get the chance to come through, though, I love to just take a slow drive through campus. It's all such a pretty view," Woltz said. "And of course, the obligatory visit to TOTs [Top of the Stairs]."

DBI T-shirt design entries due Jan. 15

Entries for Downtown Blacksburg, Inc.'s Steppin' Out T-shirt design competition are due by Jan. 15, 2022. The winner will receive a \$500 prize.

Steppin' Out is the premier festival in the New River Valley. It is held on the first weekend of August each year. The 2022 event will take place on Aug. 5 and 6 and will mark the 41st celebration of the festival.

Activities will include live music, arts and crafts booths, merchant booths, children's arts and crafts activities, the Draper Mile running race, and lots of great food. Profits from the T-shirt sales fund the event and are used to support downtown and community improvements and activities such as the Farmers Market, the Downtown Master Plan, downtown benches, the 16 Frogs, the Arts Initiative, economic development, and numerous downtown festivals.

T-shirt designs should reflect the char-

acter of Steppin' Out and downtown Blacksburg in general. Designs will be judged by the DBI Festival Committee. The winning artist will be profiled through advertising/news articles, in store windows where t-shirts are sold prior to the festival, and at Steppin' Out.

T-shirts must have a maximum of six colors on the shirt back and two colors for the pocket logo. The shirt back design must incorporate the words "Downtown Blacksburg" and the date "August 5 & 6, 2022." The pocket logo should include the words "41st Steppin' Out."

Concept sketches should be delivered to the Downtown Blacksburg, Inc. office located at 318 N. Main St, Blacksburg or mailed to P.O. Box 233, Blacksburg, VA 24063 by Jan. 15. Once chosen, the winning designer must submit design files in eps or vector format and email them to events@downtownblacksburg.com no later than March 1, 2022.

Steppin' Out
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Basketball games evolving with COVID concerns

The Big South Conference has announced that due to the changing environment caused by the pandemic, it has canceled its COVID automatic forfeiture policy and will implement its Emergency Scheduling Policy for the 2021-22 basketball conference seasons.

If a game is postponed due to COVID, the teams have 72 hours from the original game date to reschedule the contest. If the game cannot be rescheduled, the game will be considered a no-contest. The conference commissioner can still enforce a forfeit if it is determined that one of the teams did not make

every effort to reschedule the game.

The Big South announcement came hours after several football bowl games were cancelled because of COVID concerns. The shutdown included the Fenway Bowl in Boston after the University of Virginia said the combination of COVID cases, injuries, and opt-outs caused them to pull out of the contest. Three bowl games have now been cancelled, and a fourth has lost one of its teams and has moved to find a replacement.

Miami is the third ACC team to be unable to play its bowl game, joining Boston Col-

lege (Military Bowl) and Virginia (Fenway Bowl) in making announcements Sunday.

In addition, the Atlantic Coast Conference announced earlier that the Georgia Tech at Syracuse men's basketball game, originally scheduled for Wednesday, Dec. 29, had been postponed.

Georgia Tech is in COVID protocols, resulting in the postponement. The program is adhering to the outlined protocols within the ACC Medical Advisory Group report, which is available on theACC.com (full report).

Following the ACC's modi-

field 2021-22 COVID-19 Game Rescheduling Policy, the ACC will look to reschedule the game.

The ACC's decision was similar to the Big South's and was unanimously supported by the league's athletics directors as a result of the current rise in COVID cases and its impact on winter sports programs. If possible, games that cannot be played as scheduled will be rescheduled. If a game cannot be played and cannot be rescheduled, it will be considered a no-contest.

For men's and women's basketball, a team must have a

roster minimum of seven game-available student-athletes and one countable coach to play a game. If a team does not have the requisite number of participants and elects not to play, the game shall be a no-contest. If a team has the requisite number of participants and does not participate, the game will be declared a forfeit. This policy shall be retroactive to any results beginning with the 2021 ACC winter sports schedule.

The Big South women's basketball conference season began play on Wednesday, Dec. 29, while the men tip off league play on Wednesday, Jan. 5.

UPCOMING EVENTS

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.

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 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 Feb. 28:

MFRL Adult Winter Reading Program

Join the Montgomery Floyd Regional Library's Adult Winter Reading Program, challenging 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/>.

Saturday, Jan. 1:

Blacksburg Holiday Closings

The Blacksburg Community Center is closed. The Blacksburg Aquatic Center is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. There is no Blacksburg Transit service.

Holiday Library closures

The Radford Public Library and all branches of the Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library are closed for New Year's

Day.

Monday, Jan. 3:

Sock Snowmen
At the Christiansburg Library at 2 p.m. Make a sock snowman that does not require any sewing. For all ages. Registration required.

Tuesday, Jan. 4:

Crafternoon: Tape Resist Painting
At the Meadowbrook Public Library at 3 p.m. Participants will be creating designs on canvas board using painters tape and paints. All supplies will be provided. Registration is required. Contact spahl@mfri.org for more information.

Movie Matinee
At the Blacksburg Library at 1 p.m. A Yeti is convinced that the elusive creatures known as "humans" really do exist. This is a movie matinee with crafts. Rated PG.

Wednesday, Jan. 5:

Computer Basics: Part 1
At the Meadowbrook Public Library at 10:30 a.m. This is a computer class for beginners that will cover types and parts of the computer and information about hardware, software, and applications. This course will also demonstrate saving and organizing files, safe internet-use, and emailing.

Talking About Books: "Apples Never Fall"
At the Christiansburg Library at 11 a.m. To be discussed this month is "Apples Never Fall" by Liane Moriarty. Meeting in-person and virtually.

Sensory Playtime
At the Blacksburg Library at 2 p.m. All supplies will be provided and all ages are welcome for an hour of sensory playtime.

Oreo Taste Test
At the Christiansburg Library at 3 p.m. Try several new limited Oreo flavors and rate them. All ages are welcome. Supplies are limited, registration is required.

Talking about Books: "The Night Tiger"
At the Meadowbrook Public Library at 6 p.m. To be discussed is "The Night Tiger" by Yangsze Choo. Call (540) 268-1964 for more information or to reserve a copy.

Thursday, Jan. 6:

River City Quilt Guild
The River City Quilt Guild meets the second Thursday of each month at 9:30 a.m. in Grove United Methodist Church, 1020 Tyler Avenue, Radford. All skill levels of quilters are welcome. For more information, call Anna Handy at 540 320 7791.

American Legion meeting
American Legion Harvey-Howe-Carpenter Post 30 will meet at 7 p.m. at the VFW Post Home on 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.

Monday, Jan. 10:

RCPS begins
Classes resume for Radford City Public School students.

City Council meeting
The regularly scheduled meeting of the Radford City Council will be held at 7 p.m., at 10 Robertson St., Radford.

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 General 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.

Wednesday, Jan. 12:

Brown Bag Book Club
At the Radford Public Library from noon to 1 p.m. A book discussion is held on the second Wednesday of each month. Participants may bring a lunch if they like. To be discussed this month is "Nomadland" by Jessica Bruder.

Evening Book Talk: "Save Me the Plums"

At the Christiansburg Library at 6:30 p.m. To be discussed this month is "Save Me the Plums: My Gourmet Memoir" by Ruth Reichl. Meeting in-person and virtually.

Thursday, Jan. 13:

Vision Board Workshop
At the Blacksburg Library; 6:30 p.m. Participants may create a 2022 vision board to serve as a daily reminder of their dreams and goals. All supplies will be provided, but participants may bring any personal pictures to add. The program is recommended for adults.

Saturday Jan. 15:

Caturday
At the Christiansburg Library from noon to 1 p.m. Sign up at the front desk for a 15-minute slot to read to a cat from the Montgomery County Animal Care and Adoption Center to practice reading and socialize shelter cats. All Ages. Email shodges@mfri.org for more information.

Dyslexia: The Basics
At the Meadowbrook Public Library at 1 p.m. Participants can learn straightforward information about a very complex and prevalent condition. Vicki W. Brackett, CCC-SLP, will give a brief overview of the symptoms and cause of dyslexia. Her presentation will include the myths, the symptoms to look for in both young children and adults, and what can be done to help overcome some of the issues associated with dyslexia. This program will help develop an awareness of the positive aspects of dyslexia and teach some strategies and programs that may help. Handouts will be provided. Vicki W. Brackett is a Pediatric Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) and Dyslexia Consultant.

Author Talk: Mary Ellen Campagna
At the Christiansburg Library at 2 p.m. Join local author Mary Ellen Campagna as she discusses her new book "UNA: Queen of Trouble." Books will be available for preorder at the event.

Teen DND
At the Blacksburg Library at 2 p.m. Join in for Teen DND in January.

Chess Club
At the Blacksburg Library at 3 p.m. Ages 8 and up are welcome to come sharpen their chess skills. Supplies will be provided. All skill levels are welcome.

Local students receive academic honors, graduate

Four local students receive Outstanding Student Awards

Four business students who will graduate this month received acknowledgement at the Davis College of Business and Economics Honors Ceremony, held Dec. 1 in the

form of Outstanding Student Awards.

The Outstanding Student Award recipients selected by the department for fall 2021 were economics, Benjamin Jones '21 of Radford; finance, Braxton Gilmer '21 of Pearisburg; management,

Autumn Shortridge '21 of Christiansburg; Nya McCutcheon, MBA '21, of Blacksburg.

"We are recognizing demonstrated excellence, both in and out of the classroom, and that is the reason why they have been selected by their faculty

in their respective disciplines," Dean Joy Bhadury said in his opening remarks at the top of the event, which was held virtually.

"We recognize those among us who have given extra and are to be rewarded for a job well done," Bhadury told the viewers and award winners.

"We really are recognizing the heart and soul of the Davis College of Business and Economics."

Two local students inducted into honor society

Kierston Mann of Christiansburg (Old Dominion University) and Emma Kennedy of Blacksburg (University of Richmond) have been inducted into Omicron

Delta Kappa, the National Leadership Honor Society. Fewer than five percent of students on a campus are invited to join each year.

A group of 15 students and faculty members established the society to recognize and encourage leadership at the collegiate level. The founders established the ODK Idea, the concept that individuals representing all phases of collegiate life should collaborate with faculty and others to support the campus and community. The society's national headquarters are located in Lexington, Virginia.

Michael Cruz named to Fall 2021 President's List at Cumberlands
Michael Cruz of Blacks-

burg has been named to the Fall 2021 President's List at University of the Cumberlands.

To be eligible for the President's List, students must be enrolled in at least 12 credit hours (a full course load), maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average of 4.0, receive an "A" grade in UC Engage, and be in good academic standing.

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

Grant

from page 1

across the state of Virginia and beyond for a century. CI, Inc.'s efforts today focus on preserving the history of the school and renovating the remaining building from the school to be used as a museum detailing the important role the institute served in the community.

CI, Inc., Executive Director Chris Sanchez said the grant will go a long way in supporting CI, Inc.'s mission.

"The inter-generational social movement happening today is clear; the equitable preservation and reinvestment in black histories and stories is a civic responsibility and moral obligation inseparable from any honest pursuit of justice," said Sanchez. "We are tremendously honored to receive a successful grant award from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, significantly empowering Christiansburg Institute to keep strong at our pursuit of justice today."

The grant award will fund "artifact maintenance and preservation materials, a series of educational community programs curated to increase public engagement with CII's history, and a part-time archivist tasked with cataloging the organization's archival collections," the organization announced. "The preservation of CIMA's collections will provide the public with unique insight into the social, economic, and political

atmosphere in Southwest Virginia during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries for African Americans that attended Christiansburg Industrial Institute in Montgomery County."

Christiansburg Institute was established in 1866, one year after the Emancipation Proclamation and conclusion of the Civil War, by the federal government's Department of War and its extension agency, the Freedmen's Bureau.

"Today, we operate a community-based living museum and digital repository containing an archival collection powerfully illustrating the 100-year legacy of the historic school and African-American life and culture across Southwest Virginia," according to CI, Inc. "Key to our community education and cultural organizing work is offering an honest and nuanced telling of African-American stories and history in rural Appalachia, particularly where history is contested and trauma is inter-generational."

Christiansburg Institute Museum & Archives (CIMA) and the Learning Resource Action Center (LRAC) will eventually be housed in the historic Edgar A. Long building once preservation efforts are completed at the building, hopefully by 2024.

ONLINE ONLY AUCTION

Ends Thursday January 20th @ 4 PM
Storage Units for Sale at Auction in Floyd VA
Sunny Ridge Rd Floyd VA 24091

Bid Now at VaAuctionPro.com



You have the opportunity to purchase this great investment property! This property features 12 10x10 storage units for sale in Floyd County VA. The units were built in 2004 and are in great condition. The lot consists of .21 acres and is easily accessible. They are located right next to a set of green boxes (dumpsters) which is very convenient for cleaning out units! Storage units are in high demand in Floyd County. These units are rented on a month - to - month lease for \$45 / mo., but similar units in the area are getting around \$100 / mo. 9 out of 12 of the units are currently rented - seller using the other 3 for personal use.

Directions - From Town of Floyd - 221 north towards Roanoke - Left on Bethlehem Church rd. - right on Sunny Ridge rd. - property on immediate right past green boxes. See signs

Terms - 10% Buyer's Premium will be added to final high bid to arrive at contract price. Earnest Money Deposit of \$5,000 required on day of sale. Close in 30 days. Subject to seller confirmation. Property sold as is, where is with any and all faults. Buyer is expected to complete their own due diligence. Please note that during the last two minutes of bidding, if a new bid is placed, the clock is automatically extended an additional two minutes. Download Bidder Information Pack for complete terms and conditions, purchase contract, and maps at VaAuctionPro.com

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PETS OF THE WEEK



Three-year-old Monkey is a shy kitty who currently spends his time in a community cat room at the Animal Care and Adoption Center. He can be a little shy but is likely to warm up, when he feels comfortable.



Boone is a younger adult dog looking for a pawsome home. He's a happy boy that likes attention and interaction with people. Boone is housetrained and should do well in a home with older children and adults.

Letter from VT President Tim Sands: Booster shots, tests, and masks required for spring semester start

Dear Hokies,

We can all be proud of how our community responded to COVID-19 throughout the fall semester. We took important steps early on to give ourselves the best chance at a full, in-person experience, and we stuck with it. As a result, our active cases, positivity rate, and isolation numbers were consistently manageable from start to finish. We were able to enjoy many of the cherished hallmarks of the Hokie experience.

We must begin the new year with that same commitment as we will likely be fighting two COVID-19 variants along with seasonal influenza and other common respiratory infections. Our goal is to operate safely and in person to the greatest extent possible while also protecting the capacity of the health care systems in our communities.

Building on our successful strategy in the fall, we are requiring our community to take three important steps as we turn to the spring semester:

First, get a COVID-19 booster as soon as you are eligible.

Our biggest challenge is likely to occur with the

omicron variant in the first few weeks of the semester. Although evidence is still coming in, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has recommended that everyone ages 18 and older should get a booster shot.

We are requiring booster shots within 14 days of eligibility for all students and employees. If you are eligible now, updated information is due by Feb. 1, and we urge you to get your booster as soon as possible. If you are not eligible yet, please schedule your booster as soon as you are able to do so.

Students and employees need to upload their updated vaccination record as soon as they receive a booster dose. Procedures remain in place for students and employees to request medical and religious exemptions. Existing exemptions will be honored. For those with medical concerns about the booster shot, please consult your physician.

Second, take a COVID-19 test before returning to campus or your workplace.

All residential students will be required to provide a negative COVID-19 test result prior to moving back onto campus. A PCR

or Antigen test will be accepted and must be administered no more than 72 hours before returning to campus. We urge you to obtain your test results prior to arriving on campus.

Testing will be provided for those students who cannot obtain a test before arriving; however, if you test positive on arrival, you will not be able to move into on-campus housing until you have completed your isolation period.

All students and employees who have traveled over the holiday break are asked to take a COVID-19 test prior to the start of the semester. If your result is positive, please do not return to campus or Virginia Tech facilities until you complete the recommended isolation period. Many pharmacies provide testing services. The Virginia Department of Health website also provides testing location information. Testing for students and employees will resume on the Blacksburg campus on Jan. 3.

We will continue to test unvaccinated students and employees weekly and conduct limited surveillance testing of vaccinated community members. Those with updated vac-

cination records including a booster will be exempt.

Third, continue to wear a mask and take steps to improve your mask strategy.

While we had hoped to relax mask requirements for indoor public spaces, the uptick in infections tells us our best approach is to continue wearing masks in indoor public and instructional spaces for at least the beginning of the spring semester. Beyond vaccines, masks are the most important tool we have for reducing the spread of COVID-19.

If you have been using loose-fitting cloth or

surgical masks, now is the time to upgrade to a better fitting and more protective mask such as a KN95 or equivalent. The omicron variant appears to be more transmissible, and these masks protect you and others. If you have any risk factors or are not fully vaccinated, please consider wearing masks to protect yourself indoors even when not required.

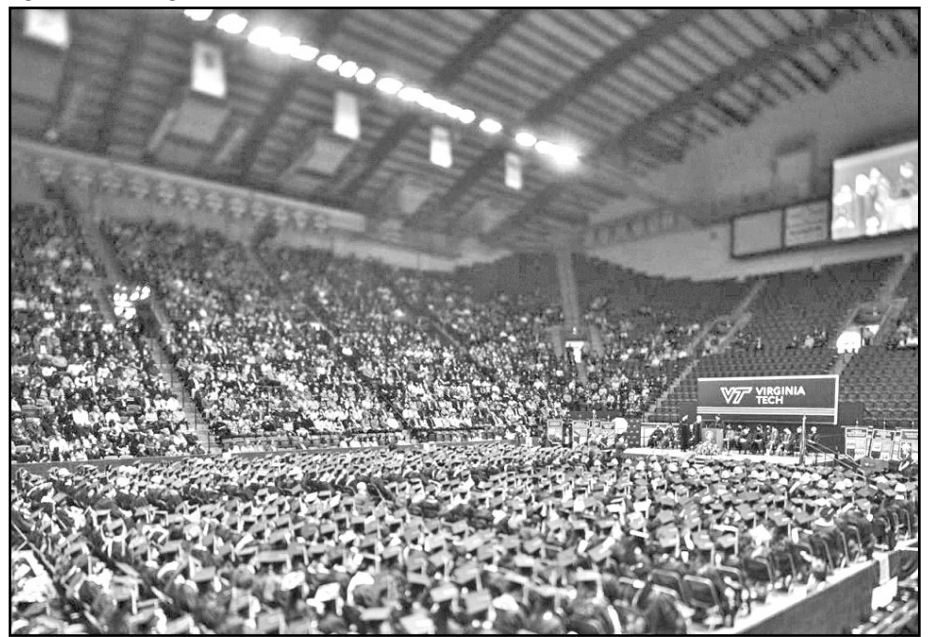
Currently, the isolation and quarantine plan for residential students remains the same as the fall semester.

We all wish that this pandemic was over and moved into the back-

ground of our everyday lives. But for now, we must continue to ask for the same extraordinary patience, understanding, and commitment you've displayed over the past 21 months. The actions we take today build on last semester's successful strategy and give us the best opportunity to protect our community and maintain the Virginia Tech campus experience we all hope for this spring. Together we can get there.

Go Hokies!

Tim Sands,
President



Virginia Tech expert: Invasion of Ukraine would be catastrophic for all

Thousands of Russian troops are massing on the border with Ukraine, but a Russian invasion of that country would be a catastrophe for all, including the Russians, according to Virginia Tech expert in international affairs Gerard Toal.

"The United States has a responsibility to state clearly to Ukraine that the U.S. cavalry is not coming if Russia decides to invade. The U.S. should be confident that invading Ukraine would be a major strategic blunder by Russia, and it will be weakened by this in the long run," said Toal.

"It is worth emphasizing," according to Toal "that there is no area outside of the Ukrainian territories currently controlled by Russia where the Russian army would be welcomed by a majority of the population."

Toal says that Russian President Putin is dramatizing his geopolitical preoccupation with Ukraine. While a perceived Ukrainian act of aggression is likely to be presented as the immediate trigger for any invasion, he believes any number of reasons could ultimately provide motivation for an invasion.

1) If Putin believes that

an invasion would strengthen the position of the Russian supported territories there and inflict a painful defeat on Ukraine's military, forcing them back to the bargaining table to accept Russia's demand that the country a neutral power;

2) He believes that war is the only way to force the United States and its NATO allies to deal with Russia's security 'redlines in Ukraine and accept that expanding NATO infrastructure to Russia's western border with Ukraine is an existential issue for Russia;

3) He believes a short in-

vasion would boost his standing at home and his place in the history books;

4) He believes he has a providential mission to stop Ukraine becoming a beachhead for a hostile alliance (NATO) to attack Russia.

"As you can see, a great deal rides on the perceptions of one man," said Toal. "Part of the problem, and this is something folks don't like to hear, is that the U.S. and NATO are already deeply involved in Ukraine, training its army, sending weapon supplies and building infrastructure with a view to future military exercises together. There's a rea-

sonable argument to be made that this has helped inflame Russian, and particularly Putin's paranoia about Ukraine."

Dr. Gerard Toal is a professor in the School of Public and International Affairs at Virginia Tech's campus in the Washington D.C. metro region. A native of Ireland, he is the author of more than a hundred peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters on critical geopolitics, territorial conflicts (mostly in post-communist contexts), U.S. foreign policy, de facto states, and media and discourse analysis.



PHOTO CREDIT: PEXELS

Virginia Tech's Gerard Toal says that Russian President Putin is dramatizing his geopolitical preoccupation with Ukraine. While a perceived Ukrainian act of aggression is likely to be presented as the immediate trigger for any invasion, he believes any number of reasons could ultimately provide motivation for an invasion.

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OPINION

Virginia gas prices fell again last week

Virginia gas prices fell 1.7 cents per gallon in the past week, averaging \$3.16/g on Monday, Dec. 27, according to GasBuddy's daily survey of 4,081 stations in Virginia. Gas prices in Virginia are 9.0 cents per gallon lower than a month ago but still stand \$1.05/g higher than a year ago.

According to GasBuddy price reports, the cheapest station in Virginia was priced at \$2.71/g Monday while the

most expensive was \$3.89/g. The national average price of gasoline fell 4.3 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$3.25/g Monday. The national average is down 14.1 cents per gallon from a month ago but is still \$1.00/g higher than a year ago.

"Nearly every state saw average gasoline prices decline last week as millions of Americans took to the road for holiday travel, with the national average now nearly

20 cents per gallon lower than in early November," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis for GasBuddy. "While the fall in prices is welcomed, we set an ugly new record for the holiday: It was the most expensive Christmas Day we've ever seen by two tenths of a penny. The average on Christmas was \$3.264 per gallon, just a fraction of a penny higher than Christmas Day 2013 which saw the national average at

\$3.262 per gallon," De Haan said. "Motorists shouldn't get too worked up about it. The downward direction in gas prices should persist into this week in most areas. However, gas prices are likely to jump in the Great Lakes due to a behavior called price cycling, caused by a rise in the wholesale price of gasoline against a backdrop of prices in the region that have now fallen under replacement cost. This will trigger a likely jump in

gas prices in Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Illinois and Kentucky very soon."

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>.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Coalfields Transition

To the editor: I hope to address a critical juncture in our

economic growth and sustainability. Our efforts to address this ever-evolving

crisis are imperative as we navigate strengthening the foundation for future economic success.

Between 1990 and 2019, employment in Virginia's coalfields fell from 10,600 jobs to just 2,500, dropping steeply alongside the metric tons miners pulled out of the ground. With domestic and global demand for coal continuing to decline and clean energy on the rise, this isn't a trend that's going to self-correct, therefore commanding that Congress help retool the Appalachian economy while

also addressing a legacy of pollution in the coalfields.

This means passing a Build Back Better Act that recognizes the economic and environmental plight of Appalachia, by helping retool idled factories, clean up abandoned mines, remediate Brownfields and Superfund sites, and invest in programs to re-establish Main Street economies.

Federal investment can also invigorate the energy economy of tomorrow by investing in renewable energy manufacturing and job training, and incentivizing the build-out of

clean energy. These efforts will create jobs in the near- and long-term, helping to create the balance between building new industries and modernizing old ones. Appalachia has long been the land of large and ambitious while building a legacy of broken promises in economic development and specifically, in transitioning away from a fossil-fuel-dependent economy. Congress has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to turn the tide on decades of neglect and begin driving the long-term change the people of Appalachia

need.

I call on my members of Congress, U.S. Senators Mark Warner and Tim Kaine and U.S. Rep Morgan Griffith, to pass a Build Back Better Act that puts Appalachians back to work building a new economy with new opportunity for all.

Sincerely,

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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 Department of Transportation road watch Jan. 1, 2022

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.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

I-81 NORTH-

BOUND 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.

ROUTE 643 PAVING PROJECT -

Beginning soon, exact date to be determined, a project is being scheduled to resurface an unpaved portion of Route 643 (Yellow Sulfur Road). The work area begins .7 mile south of the intersection with Route 642 (Jennelle Road) and ends 1.7 miles north of the bridge over Route 460. Traffic impacts will include intermittent flagging operations between these intersections. This project has an estimated completion date of May 2022.

LANE CLOSURES:

Intermittent single lane closures utilizing flagging operations will be in place between the intersection of Teaberry Road and Jennelle Road.

UTILITY WORK ON

ROUTE 460 - MMI will be installing fiber optic along Route 460 and Route 8 from the Giles County line to the Floyd County line. This work will be ongoing. Motorists should expect shoulders and/or lane closures for travel in both directions.

VARIOUS ROADS FOR UTILITY WORK

- Utility crews will be working on overhead lines along a general corridor alignment following Route 114 (Peppers Ferry), Route 460 Business (Franklin Street) and Route 114/460 (Roanoke Road). The work zone will span from the Pulaski/Montgomery county line to the Montgomery/Roanoke county line. In addition, various side roads will be impacted by intermittent closures for crossings. Motorists should expect shoulder closures and lane closures

INTERSTATE 81

BRIDGE HEIGHT RESTRICTIONS -

Due to bridge painting, several height restrictions are in place along I-81 north and southbound. Maximum height allowed is 14'6" at the following bridges over I-81 at the mile marker locations of 135, 109 and 108 until mid-January. Overheight vehicles will need to be rerouted. Message boards are in place.

INTERSTATE 81

LANE WIDENING CONSTRUCTION

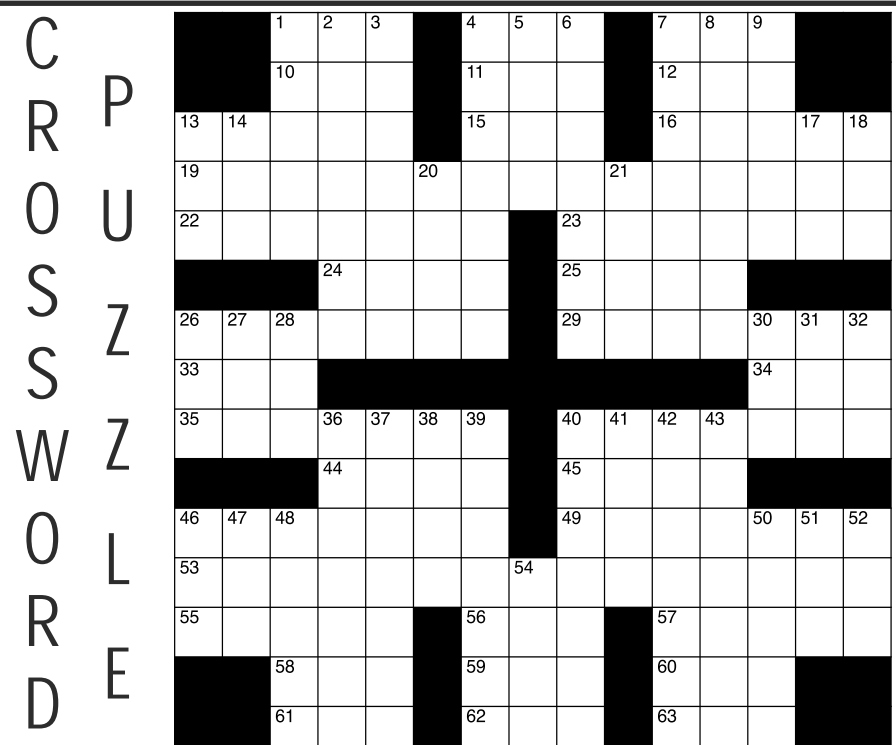
EXIT 141 TO EXIT 143 -

A project to widen the lanes on I-81 in Roanoke in both northbound and southbound directions between Exit 141 to Exit 143 has been underway. One new lane in each direction of I-81 and two lanes northbound onto I-581 at exit 143 opened just before Thanksgiving between mile markers 141 and 143. All lanes will remain open through winter with periodic lane closures at night as needed. The final surface paving and markings for northbound will resume with the next paving season in spring 2022. Estimated completion date of the project is summer 2022.

LANE CLOSURES:

Alternating lane closures may be in place for milling and paving on I-81 southbound during nighttime hours, 9 p.m.

See VDOT, page 6



- CLUES ACROSS**
- Type of health plan
 - Atmospheric haze
 - A period of time
 - Auricle
 - Copycat
 - Manpower
 - Delicate fern genus
 - Diego, Francisco or Anselmo
 - Zanzibar copal
 - Jackie's 2nd husband
 - Calcified tooth tissue
 - Conjoined twins
 - Mythological birds
 - This (Spanish)
 - Lowest hereditary title
 - Pre-transplant plot
 - Fiddler crab genus
 - Professional legal
 - organization
 - Most thick
 - Sleeve indicator of mourning
 - Far East housemaid
 - Hmong
 - With three uneven sides
 - Tempts
 - Jewelry finding
 - Showed intense anger
 - Black tropical American cuckoo
 - Sculpture with a head
 - A single entity
 - What part of (abbr.)
 - Before
 - Confined condition (abbr.)
 - Hurrah
 - Transport faster than
 - sound
 - CLUES DOWN**
 - Sorli's Tale hero
 - A musical master
 - Speech
 - Swiftest
 - Opaque gem
 - Origins
 - Proceed from a source
 - Rechristened
 - Liquorice flavored seed
 - Small amount
 - Mineral aggregate
 - Prefix for wrong
 - Prefix midway between E and SE
 - A single instance
 - French river
 - Undeveloped blossom
 - One pip domino
 - Fled on foot
 - Sheep bleat
 - One point N of due E
 - Father
 - A projecting part
 - Improved by editing
 - Made melodious sounds
 - Treatment
 - Agreeableness
 - Bell sound
 - Tennis contests
 - Furnace vessels
 - Cruce potassium bitartrate
 - Licensed accountant
 - Furnace vessels
 - Cruce potassium bitartrate
 - Insert mark
 - Election Stock Market (abbr.)
 - A health resort
 - So. Am. Indian people

Submit letters to the editor to editor@ourvalley.org

OBITUARIES

McCoy, Billy Ray

Billy Ray McCoy, 67, of Ripplemead, died Thursday, Dec. 23, 2021, at Roanoke Memorial Hospital.

He was born on May 30, 1954, to the late Carl Christy and Opal Mae Duncan McCoy.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Barbara Jean McCoy, and his brother, Larry W. McCoy.

He is survived by his brothers, Alvin A. McCoy (Pat), Charles R. McCoy (Tanya), a sister,



Linda M. Smith, a son, Jacob L. Dowdy, a grandson, Austin D. Dowdy, sisters-in-law Patricia McCoy, Linda Cook, and Loretta Farley, and a special friend, Margaret Nester.

Graveside services were conducted Thursday, Dec. 30, 2021, in the Birchlawn Burial Park, Pearisburg. The family received friends Wednesday evening at the McCoy Funeral Home 150 Country Club Dr. SW, Blacksburg.

Vaught, Ronnie Gale

Ronnie Gale Vaught, 59, of Pearisburg went to be with the Lord on Wednesday, Dec. 22, 2021, at Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital.

He was born in Radford on Dec. 20, 1962, to the late Melvin and June Price Vaught Reinemann.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Rosa



Lea Sadler Vaught.

He is survived by his son, Andrew Vaught of Staffordville, step-daughters, Angie and Tommy Combs of Narrows and Amanda Donathan of Pearisburg.

A memorial service will be held at a later date. Arrangements by McCoy Funeral Home, Blacksburg.

Wechtaluk, David Vincent

David Vincent Wechtaluk, of Blacksburg, passed away on Dec. 26, 2021, at the age of 72 after a 20-year battle with Parkinson's Disease.

David was a lifelong sports enthusiast and athlete, having played baseball and basketball in high school and college, and a strong supporter of Virginia Tech athletics and his children's other alma

maters, Purdue University and Penn State.

Born Jan. 20, 1949, in Elmira Heights, N.Y., David was a proud graduate of Rider University (Lawrence Township, N.J.). He had a long career in the accounting field, working for Park Broadcasting (Ithaca, N.Y.), St. Elizabeth's Hospital (Lincoln, Neb.) where both of his children were born, and the

Montgomery County Department of Social Services.

David is survived by his wife of 44 years, Kathleen Parrott of Blacksburg; his daughter, Leah Wechtaluk-McFarren, and son-in-law Matthew McFarren of Christiansburg; his son, Ethan Wechtaluk, daughter-in-law Courtney Walker, and granddaughters Alice Wright, Lucy Wright, and Pe-

nelope Wechtaluk of Clarksburg, Md.; his mother Eva Wechtaluk of Elmira Heights, N.Y.; his brother Kevin Wechtaluk of Elmira Heights, N.Y.; his sister Susan Wechtaluk of San Francisco, Calif.; and his beloved and adoring cat, Patches.

A visitation was held Thursday, Dec. 30, at McCoy Funeral Home (150 Country Club Dr

SW, Blacksburg, VA 24060). A graveside service was held on Friday, Dec. 31, at Memorial Gardens of the New River Valley (2551 N Main St, Blacksburg, VA 24060).

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations to be made in his memory to The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research.

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.

Montgomery County

WORSHIP DIRECTORY

READY OR NOT
Read Revelation 22:1-21

At the turn of the century, the world was in a panic. On the eve of a new millennium, no one was sure what midnight would bring. Experts claimed a programming glitch could cause computers to struggle with the date change. The acronym Y2K became a household phrase connected to the possible collapse of computer-dependent industrialized nations.

Some scoffed, but others prepared. They stockpiled canned goods and bottled water. They outlined a strategy for living without electricity. They took the doomsday warnings seriously and wanted to be ready.

John's Revelation contains a similar foretelling of a future event that will change life on earth.

"Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done" (Revelation 22:12).

Whether or not you prepared for Y2K, the forewarned tragedy did not amount to anything. As believers, however, we all must be ready for Christ's return. The events prophesied in Scripture will come to pass. So, as 2012 comes to a close, ask yourself this question: Am I ready?

Prayer Suggestion: Lord, help me be ready for Your soon return.

Quicklook: Revelation 22:7-17

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

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

VDOT from page 4

to 6 a.m. the next morning. Expect lane closures on Route 8 between the on and off ramps of I-81.

RAMP CLOSURES: Weather permitting, the I-81 southbound exit 114 on and off ramps may be closed during nighttime hours for milling and paving from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. Message boards will update drivers. Only one ramp will be closed at a time.

Nighttime lane closures may be in place periodically on I-81 southbound from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. the following morning.

DMV Notice: The bridge on I-81 northbound at mile marker 114 currently has a restricted width for wide loads of 26 feet or larger.

I-81 PAVING OPERATIONS – Weather permitting, crews will pave, patch and repair pavement on various routes. Lane closures may be in place during nighttime hours, 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. the following morning. Drivers should watch for signs and expect possible delays.

I-81 BRIDGE DECK REPAIRS – Weather permitting, crews will repair bridge decks on Interstate 81. Between mile markers 147 to 162, right and left lane closures will be in place northbound and southbound during nighttime hours, 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. the following morning. Drivers should watch for signs and expect possible delays.

I-81 POT HOLE PATCHING OPERATIONS – Weather permitting, crews will patch potholes along southbound and northbound Interstate 81. Mobile right and left lane closures will be in place and moving along northbound and southbound lanes during nighttime hours, 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. the following morning. Drivers should watch for moving vehicles and equipment. Expect possible delays.

INTERSTATE 581 ROUTE 581 BRIDGE WORK OVER WILLIAMSON ROAD – Work is underway to rehab the bridge on I-581 that crosses over Route 11 (Williamson Road) in Downtown Roanoke. On Route 11 (Williamson Road) drivers can expect intermittent and alternating lane closures between the intersections with Rutherford Avenue and Wells Avenue. Any impacts to I-581 will be minimal. The project is expected to be complete at the end of 2021.

I-581/220 EXPRESSWAY PAVING OPERATIONS – Weather permitting, crews will pave, patch and repair pavement on various routes. Lane closures may be in place during nighttime hours, 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. the following morning. Drivers should watch for

signs and expect possible delays.

I-581/220 LANE & RAMP CLOSURES FOR PAVING AND MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS IN ROANOKE COUNTY – Weather permitting, crews will be milling and paving along Interstate 81. Right and left lane closures will be in place along northbound and southbound lanes during nighttime hours. Drivers should expect possible delays.

I-581 BRIDGE DECK REPAIRS – Weather permitting, crews will repair bridge decks on Interstate 581. Right, center and left lane closures will be in place northbound and southbound during nighttime hours, 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. the following morning. Drivers should watch for signs and expect possible delays.

INTERSTATE 77 (CARROLL COUNTY)

INTERSTATE 77 BRIDGE HEIGHT RESTRICTIONS – Due to bridge painting, several height restrictions will be in place along I-77 north and southbound beginning late January. Maximum height allowed is 14'6" at the following bridges over I-77 at the mile marker locations of 10.5 and 7. Overheight vehicles will need to be rerouted. Message boards will be in place. Painting is scheduled to be completed by March 2022.

I-77 PAVING OPERATIONS – Weather permitting, crews will be performing paving operations along Interstate 77 between mile marker 24 and 0. Right and left lane closures may be in place along northbound and southbound lanes during nighttime hours, 7 p.m. to 6 a.m. Drivers should watch for moving vehicles and equipment. Expect possible delays.

I-77 BRIDGE DECK REPAIRS – Weather permitting, crews will repair bridge decks on Interstate 77. Right and left lane closures may be in place northbound or southbound during nighttime hours, 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. the following morning. Drivers should watch for signs and expect possible delays.

I-77 LANE & RAMP CLOSURES FOR MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS IN CARROLL COUNTY – Weather permitting, crews will be milling, paving and performing maintenance along Interstate 77. Right and left lane closures will be in place along northbound and southbound lanes during nighttime hours. Drivers should expect possible delays.

MOWING, BRUSH REMOVAL & SHOULDER WORK – Weather permitting, crews will remove and clear brush and work on shoulders and

slopes along I-77 northbound and southbound from mile marker 17 to 14 during nighttime hours, 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. the following morning. A left lane closure will be in place.

ROANOKE CITY 13th STREET SE IMPROVEMENTS WITH DETOUR – A project to improve a portion of 13th Street SE in Roanoke is underway. Located in a residential neighborhood just east of downtown Roanoke, this project will improve traffic flow and connectivity along 13th Street SE from Tazewell Avenue to Norfolk Avenue. The project entails reconstructing about 0.2-mile of 13th Street as an improved, two-lane roadway with 10.5-foot-wide travel lane and a raised median. A new roadway will extend 13th Street to Norfolk Avenue and the intersection at 13th Street and Wise Avenue will be reconfigured to include a roundabout. Bike lanes, sidewalks, crosswalks and curb and gutter will also be added. Southbound 13th Street traffic has a detour in place using Norfolk Avenue onto 12th Street to Tazewell Avenue. This detour will be in place throughout the duration of this project. Signs will be posted to designate the detour route. Northbound 13th Street will remain open to traffic. Flaggers may be possible and the speed limit through the work zone is 25 mph. The project is expected to be completed in summer 2023.

ROANOKE COUNTY

ROUTE 760 (DIUGUIDS LANE) BRIDGE REPLACEMENT & DETOUR – A project to replace the Route 760 (Diuguids Lane) bridge over the Roanoke River is underway. The bridge is located at the Salem city limits near Route 760's intersection with Route 639 (West Riverside Drive). Typical work hours are expected to be Monday through Saturday during daytime hours with occasional work on Sunday. During construction, traffic will be detoured for 45 days starting in late January or early February 2022. Signs will be posted two weeks in advance of the road closure. The traffic detour will be removed by March 31, 2022. Drivers will use Mill Lane or West Riverside Drive to detour and return to Diuguids Lane. Flagging operations may be in place periodically and occasional night work is possible. Drivers can expect short-term lane closures with flaggers controlling traffic on West Riverside Drive periodically. Access to Green Hill Park, private entrances and businesses will be maintained at all times. Completion is expected late spring 2022.

ROUTE 220 SLOPE REPAIRS IN ROANOKE COUNTY NEAR CROSSBOW CIRCLE INTERSECTION – Work to repair a slope along southbound Route 220 just south of its intersection with Route 1290 (Crossbow Circle) in Roanoke County has begun. Heavy rains in recent years have caused debris and soil along this slope to move. Drivers can expect short-term lane closures with flaggers directing traffic on Crossbow Circle when construction equipment is being moved into the site. A shoulder closure along southbound Route 220 will be installed in the months ahead as work progresses. Weather permitting, the project is expected to be completed January 2022.

BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY CLOSURE – The Blue Ridge Parkway will be repairing slope failures. Detour signs to detour traffic around the Bent Mountain section of the Parkway will be in place. Traffic will be rerouted to Route 220 south to Route 419 north to Route 221 south. Traffic traveling north on the Parkway would be reversed. The detour is expected to be in place through spring 2022.

BEDFORD COUNTY

ROUTE 460 S-CURVE REALIGNMENT – Work has begun to realign 1.4 miles of the eastbound lanes of Route 460 in Bedford County near Montvale, about eight miles west of Bedford and approximately 2.3 miles east of Montvale. Westbound Route 460 is reduced to one lane. Drivers can expect the speed limit in both directions of Route 460 to be reduced to 45 mph in the work zone. In addition, there will be alternating long-term, single lane closures on westbound and eastbound Route 460. Message boards will be posted to alert drivers of upcoming lane closures and traffic pattern changes. Completion is expected in Summer 2022.

JANUARY 2022 TRAFFIC SWITCH: Weather permitting, a new traffic pattern will begin in mid-January on Route 460 near Montvale in Bedford County as crews continue working on the road improvement project. Route 460 eastbound traffic will be shifted into the newly constructed outside eastbound lane to improve safety by permanently eliminating the "S" curves in the area. Route 460 Westbound traffic will continue to be reduced to one lane with a median barrier in place.

In addition, the Route 726 (Wilkerson Mill Road) intersection with eastbound Route 460 will also be closed. Drivers on Wilkerson Mill Road will be detoured to use Route 692 (Quarterwood Road) to access eastbound or westbound Route 460. This change will affect Misty Ridge residents.

ROUTE 715 BRIDGE REPLACEMENT – A bridge replacement project over Norfolk Southern Railroad has closed Route 715 (Lowry Road). The bridge is located 0.085 mile south of Norfolk Southern Railroad to 0.048 mile north of Norfolk Southern Railroad on Route 715. Message boards will alert drivers. This replacement will change the current single lane steel and wooden bridge to a two-lane concrete bridge. A detour will be in place. Travelers will use Route 671 (Timber Ridge Road) to Route 221 (Forrest Road). The detour will remain in place until project com-

pletion which is scheduled for Fall 2022.

ROUTE 122 UTILITY WORK - MMI will be installing fiber optic along 122 from the Franklin County line to the Town of Bedford line and Route 460 eastbound from the Town of Bedford to Alum Springs Road. This work will be ongoing. Motorists should expect shoulder or lane closures for travel in both directions. Intermittent slow rolls will be required for periods lasting no longer than 15 minutes.

ROUTE 622 BRIDGE REPLACEMENT – Work to replace the bridge over the Norfolk Southern Railway on Route 622 (Everett Road) is underway. The bridge is closed. The closure is located 0.48 mile north of Route 1329 (West Crossing Drive) and 1.06 miles south of Route 646 (Gladden Circle). Since work is over the railway, strict requirements require work be stopped for passage of trains during work hours for safety purposes. A signed detour will be in place. Drivers traveling from the south end of the bridge will use Route 811 (Thomas Jefferson Road) to Route 221 South (Forest Road) to Route 646 (Gladden Circle) to Route 622 (Everett Road) Drivers traveling north will use Route 646 (Gladden Circle) to Route 221 North (Forest Road) to Route 811 (Thomas Jefferson Road) back to Route 622 (Everett Road). The road is scheduled to be closed until May 2022.

ROUTE 122 BRIDGE REPLACEMENT OVER BIG OTTER RIVER - Construction is underway for a bridge replacement on Route 122 over Big Otter River. The bridge is located from 0.232 mile south of the intersection at Route 640 to 0.072 mile north of the intersection at Route 640. Drivers can expect both lanes of traffic to remain open during most of the bridge's construction. Occasional short-term lane closures with flagging operations may be in place to construct portions of the new bridge. The completion date is scheduled for June 2022.

BOTETOURT COUNTY

ROUTE 817 (OLD RAIL ROAD) BRIDGE WORK – Old Rail Road in Oriskany is closed for repairs to the bridge over Craig's Creek, the McCallister Truss Bridge. The bridge is located 0.60 miles from Route 704 (Branchwater Road) and 0.20 miles from Route 770 (Edlo Lane). The bridge will be closed during daytime hours, 8 a.m. through 5 p.m., Monday through Thursday. All traffic between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. will use the Edlo Ford. Signs have been posted to alert drivers. Estimated time for completion February 2022.

CARROLL COUNTY

ROUTE 58W Bridge Replacement - Work has begun to replace the bridge on Route 58W over Crooked Creek is underway. The bridge is located between the intersections with Route 822 (Fieldview Road) and Route 887 (Glen-dale Road). Initially, the project will focus on constructing crossovers between the above-mentioned intersections with intermittent and temporary single lane closures in place. These crossovers are temporary during the bridge replacement with single lanes in each direction until the end of the project. Once the crossovers are complete, Route 58W will be temporarily detoured through the left

lane of Route 58E, limiting travel in each direction to a single lane. A right lane closure will be in place traveling westbound and a left lane closure traveling eastbound. The project is scheduled to be completed in December 2022.

CRAIG COUNTY
None at this time.

FLOYD COUNTY

ROUTE 8 UTILITY WORK - MMI will be installing fiber optic along Route 8 (from the Montgomery County line to the Town of Floyd line). This work will be ongoing. Motorists should expect shoulder or lane closures for travel in both directions. Intermittent lane closures will be required for periods lasting no longer than 15 minutes.

FRANKLIN COUNTY

ROUTE 613 CLOSURE FOR CULVERT REPLACEMENT - Effective January 3 at 8 a.m., a section of Route 602 (Ferrum Mountain Road) will be closed for a box culvert installation. The structure is located 0.40 miles from Route 752 (Sawmill Road) and 0.40 miles from Route 640 (Six Mile Post Road). The road is scheduled to be completed on February 4, 2022 at 5 p.m.

ROUTE 122 at ROUTE 636 ROUNDABOUT – This project is currently underway to construct a roundabout. The project begins from 0.161 mile south of Route 636 to 0.090 mile south of Route 636. There will be periodic flagging between 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and possibly after 6 p.m. The scheduled completion date is May 2022.

ROUTE 834 SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS - Construction is underway on Route 834 (Brooks Mill Road) from Route 670 (Burnt Chimney Road) to Route 616 (Scruggs Road) for safety improvements to include widening shoulders, adding rumble strips and guardrail as well as removing trees and brush to improve sight distance. Flagging operations will be in place from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Work will be scheduled to avoid impacting morning or afternoon traffic at nearby Dudley Elementary School. The estimated completion date is May 2022.

GILES COUNTY
None at this time.

HENRY COUNTY

ROUTE 755 CLOSED TO THROUGH TRAFFIC - A portion of Route 755 (Woody Circle) is closed to through traffic from Route 57 (Fairystone Park Highway) to Route 1200 (Alan Adale Drive) for a pipe jacking project. During this time, directional signs will be in place to assist the traveling public. Weather permitting, the road is expected to re-open to traffic by Monday, Jan. 3, 2022.

PATRICK COUNTY

ROUTE 58 PAVING PROJECT – Milling and paving will take place on Route 58 eastbound near Route 867, 700 and 756. Drivers should expect left or right lanes closures and flagging operations on connection routes.

ROUTE 58 LOVER'S LEAP PROJECT – Construction is underway on the Lover's Leap area of Route 58. Estimated completion date is May 2026.

PULASKI COUNTY
None at this time.

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MONTGOMERY SPORTS

Blacksburg downs William Byrd



Blacksburg 6-5 center Owen Walters drives to the hole in Tuesday's 76-65 tournament win over William Byrd. Walters finished with 21 points.



PHOTOS BY BRIAN HOFFMAN

Matthew Joyce led Blacksburg with 27 points but also played a big role in shutting down Byrd's shooters in the Northside Invitational.

Top local sports stories for 2021: Auburn volleyball team of decade with another state title

Marty Gordon
NRVsports@ourvalley.org

Christiansburg High School won 10 games this past fall on the football field, and Auburn High School claimed another state volleyball championship enroute to 70-plus straight wins.

COVID continued to take its toll on local sports including several recreation seasons, and Blacksburg is looking for another football coach after the school's second straight winless season.

Virginia Tech gave up on the Justin Fuente era and fired its head football coach. These were just a few of the headlines in local sports this past year.

The Virginia Tech move was expected, and Athletics Director Whit Babcock moved quickly to hire a defensive assistant from Penn State, defensive coordinator Brent Pry, who is no stranger to Blacksburg after serving as a graduate assistant under former-coach Frank Beamer from 1995-97.

Pry, who is only 51 years old, is a 30-year coaching veteran. He has played an instrumental role in coaching top-10 defenses at Penn State, Vanderbilt, Georgia Southern, and Western Carolina. Since his promotion to defensive coordinator in 2016, the Nittany Lions have posted three seasons with 11 wins and four seasons with nine or more victories. He helped the Nittany Lions to the 2016 Big Ten Championship after defeating No.-6 Wisconsin in that conference's championship game.

Pry was a 2021 Broyles Award nominee for the top assistant coach in the country as the Nittany Lions ranked fourth nationally in Red Zone defense (66.7%), seventh in scoring defense (16.8 ppg), eighth in defensive pass efficiency (111.98), and held their opponents to 4.7 yards per play. Under Pry's direction in 2020, Penn State ranked third in the Big Ten in total defense (328.8 ypg), good for 17th nationally, second in pass defense (198.6 ypg), second in tackles for loss (6.7 per game) and fourth in rush defense (130.2 ypg). His defense has the unwritten belief instilled in him during those early years in Blacksburg with their own "lunchbox" mentality.

Auburn High School has showed that volleyball greatness runs through Riner. For its continued winning streak of state championships, Auburn has been named a News Messenger/News Journal Team of the Decade. The school joins the Radford High School boys' basketball team with such an honor.

Auburn claimed its third straight state title at the Salem Civic Center by taking down Riverheads in three sets 25-8, 25-10 25-9 and stretching their state record unbeaten streak to 74 matches.

The individual statistics were also pretty impressive. Auburn's Allyson Martin had 20 kills, 12 digs, three assists, and two aces; Anna McGuire add 34 assists, four digs, and two aces; Avery Zuckerwar finished with 10 kills and eight digs; Madeline Lavergne had 11 kills, 12 digs, and four aces while Stacy Lewis added 11 digs. Madison Ketterer collected 10 digs, and Emma Vance had two kills, two digs, and a block.

The hardware was never in doubt as Riverheads never got closer to Riner than 15 points in the second set.

For Coach Sherry Millirons, winning has come in bunches. The three-peat matches her first run at Auburn when the Eagles won the 2012, 2013, and 2014 state titles. Now, the new stretch includes 2019, 2020, and 2021. The 2020 championship was played this past spring because of COVID.

Thus, Auburn's players have been going since February. "The Streak - we discussed the record in September when we broke the record then we didn't talk about it," Millirons said. "We prepare for our next match every day in practice. I never used a winning streak to motivate the team."

The longtime coach said she was thrilled for the girls' winning this year's state title. "They have worked hard. In the off-season, they play, travel, and attend camps. During the season, we go hard every day. We practice two hours a day and lift/condition for 45ish after practice. So, it is great when hard work pays off," the head coach said. Millirons became a



Auburn High School continued its dominance this fall with another state volleyball championship. FILE PHOTO

rookie coach in word only in 2019 when she returned to the bench. The "second" first team had six seniors, and when they were allowed back in the gym in July 2020, there were plenty of new faces.

"Our Spring of 2021 season was unlike anything we have ever experienced," Millirons said. "We did our best to do the right thing and keep each other safe, while having COVID out there that could end our season at any time. This season felt normal. The girls went to school every day, they went to Homecoming, and we had fans at our matches. I am so happy the team got a season that felt normal." The idea that the volleyball state title runs through Auburn is definitely something other coaches are paying attention to. The title of Class 1 state champions lives in Montgomery County and might stay here for a long time.

Millirons has now become the winningest coach in western Virginia and possibly the state.

In Christiansburg, Coach Alex Wilkens has his eye set on the high mark ever since

he took over the football program five years ago. This season, the Blue Demons

rolled to 10 wins and a state playoff appearance before losing to Lord Botetourt.

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2022 opens new doors in sports world



From the Sidelines
Marty Gordon

Instead of looking back, we need to look forward to the new year for sports.

Virginia Tech has a new football coach and maybe a new direction. Christiansburg High School has reached new heights in football and plans to stay there while Blacksburg High looks to a new chapter.

Blacksburg needs to make a major splash in hiring a new coach in order to build from the ground up. The current football foundation has a crack in several levels from recreation to high school.

At Virginia Tech, the 2022 schedule is favorable, and the Hokies could squeak out eight wins with its toughest opponents coming in the form of N.C. State, Miami, and West Virginia, which will travel to Lane Stadium for the first time in almost 10 years. Games on the road at Old Dominion and Liberty could post trap games for the Hokies.

But new coach Brent Pry seems to have the program rebooted and headed in a better direction. Fans need to be patient and remember the learning curve is usually the first two years. Justin Fuente was not given that opportunity as his first two teams in Blacksburg were loaded with talent.

Pry will have to turn to transfers thanks to the portal and recruiting sleepers. He has the right people in place to finally take back the commonwealth and keep some of the home-grown players here.

Predictions: Another run into the Super Regionals for the Virginia Tech softball team. The Hokies re-

turn a lot of players and should follow up this past year with another good time.

It's time for the Tech baseball team to take that next big leap, jumping into the top six of the ACC as youngsters gained a lot of experience this past year.

Meanwhile at Radford University, the softball team should also take the next step under a new coach and be competitive in the Big South Conference.

The Washington football team, formerly known as the Redskins, will become the Warriors and keep the "W" as its logo.

Christiansburg High School will gain some major new faces as the Tech coaching staff brings several athletes to the area.

Radford High School will make another run for a state basketball title, but Coach Rick Cormany will move to a slower-tempo offense as the younger players will have to grow up quickly.

For the first year in a decade, someone besides a Southeastern Conference team will win a national football championship.

The New York Mets will make a lot of noise this coming season and will be one win away from a World Series appearance. The New York Yankees will finally win another World Series trophy.

Liberty quarterback Malik Willis will be drafted by the Pittsburgh Steelers and be groomed to replace Big Ben.

Several countries will opt out of the upcoming Winter Olympics with the United States sending a very limited team of athletes.

COVID's disruption of sports will finally stop as we head into the spring, but winter sports will continue to battle the pandemic with consideration to cancel March Madness once again.



PHOTO COURTESY OF RU ATHLETICS

Twins Grace and Margaret Gleason bring a strong sense of family to the Radford University women's lacrosse team.

Twin power on RU's lacrosse field

As the Radford University women's lacrosse program enters its seventh season, Grace and Margaret Gleason own nearly eight percent of the recorded career offensive records.

The two sisters both rank in the top 10 in career points and shots. Grace holds spots in the top 10 for career goals, draw controls, free position goals, and man-up goals. Margaret ranks number five in career assists, and her 15 assists in 2021 is the sixth-highest total in school history.

When the Gleason sisters were asked about these accomplishments, though, it was clear that while the stats are great and can help to inform the story of two sisters whose bond extends onto the field, it is far from the whole story.

The story of the Gleason sisters is, in a way, the story of the Radford Highlander lacrosse program: It's a family thing.

The Gleason sisters grew up in the Nashville suburb of Brentwood, Tenn., and played their high school lacrosse at Ravenwood High School. For them, sports – and success in sports – runs in the family. Five Gleason siblings play or have played college sports: their sister Nicole played lacrosse at Marquette and their brothers Kevin and Jack played lacrosse at Augustana and football at the Air Force Academy, respectively. Their dad, Kevin, played football at Southern Illinois University. Kevin often jokes with his sisters about the perceived physicality of the women's game, knowing full well that women's lacrosse is just as, if not more,

physically taxing, fast-paced, and exciting as the men's game.

The Gleason sisters' connection to Radford began with their time in high school. Grace's best friend in high school was fellow Radford lacrosse standout Katie Bendrick. That trio was preceded at Radford by another former Ravenwood teammate, Megan Hawken, who started 60 games for the Highlanders – fifth most in program history – from 2017-2020.

The 2021 Radford Women's Lacrosse season was a landmark one. For the first time ever, the Highlanders not only had a winning record in conference play at 4-2 but went to the Big South Tournament as the three –seed and knocked off the number-two seeded Campbell Camels, 15-14. The win was the first in program history over Campbell and gave the Highlanders a chance to play for a Big South title against perennial-favorite High Point (who has won six of eight contested conference tournaments).

The Hollywood version of this tale includes a miraculous, triumphant upset victory for the underdog. But this isn't Hollywood and losing to a program like High Point does not make a season a failure. Quite the contrary, for two big reasons.

First, that Radford was even in the game was nothing short of extraordinary. For a program in its sixth year of existence to show that growth and make it to that moment is a testament to the character of the players and coaches who got it there.

Second, that's not where this story ends.

When Grace and Margaret were asked what's next for Radford and where this program can go from here, they didn't hesitate.

"The conference championship game, again," Grace said.

Margaret said, "We know the feeling of being at the bottom because when we were 0-9, we didn't think we were going to make the conference championship, but also going and beating Campbell by one, that was one of the best moments in our program ever, so we know what it's like to be on top as well."

Getting back to the Big South title game would in all likelihood involve another date with High Point. As Margaret says, "It helps us build as a team. Our schedule is tough, but at the end of the day, it makes our team more competitive, and I think it makes our team closer, too."

Margaret said that while the 2022 squad is very young, that doesn't mean they don't get along or that upperclassmen and underclassmen won't be friends. "The culture of being close with everyone, having the same respect for everyone, being weird – our team is so weird, and that's what makes our team so close – is that we can be like that with each other because everyone will be so comfortable with each other."

Grace said, "We win together, we lose together, and no matter what we do it together."



PHOTO COURTESY OF VT ATHLETICS

This past year was one for the memory books at Virginia Tech as the softball team played in the NCAA Super Regionals.

Looking back on Hokie softball in 2021

The softball program defeated UCLA in the first game of the NCAA Super Regional this past spring which served as the program's Moment of Celebration.

After making it out of the Tempe Regional as an unseeded team, Virginia Tech softball took down No.-2 UCLA 7-2 to go up 1-0 in its NCAA Super Regional.

The Hokies (37-13) handed the Bruins (44-5) just their fifth loss of the season and first of the 2021 NCAA Tournament behind Keely Rochard's (29-8) three-hitter. The junior took a perfect game into the fifth inning and closed out Thursday's win after allowing just two runs to the 2019 national champions.

Tech had another monster outing at the plate, putting up seven runs on 11 hits and handing Bruins' star pitcher Rachel Garcia (16-1) her first loss of the season. Kelsey Bennett started the Hokies' night with a two-run triple in the top of the first

and they never looked back. Freshman Cameron Fagan led the team with three hits and tied Bennett with a game-high two runs batted in.

After Kelsey Brown and Fagan led the game off with two infield singles, Bennett crushed a ball into right-center field and legged out her third triple of the season. Given a 2-0 lead, Rochard came out dealing, striking out the first six UCLA batters and retiring 13 Bruins in a row to start the game.

The Hokies struck again in the top of the fourth inning when Fagan hit a single into left field with the bases loaded, scoring Darby Trull and Emma Ritter. Tech would make it a 5-0 ball game in the top of the fifth after Addy Greene singled into right field with two on, scoring Jayme Bailey. Mackenzie Lawter got hit by a pitch with the bases loaded later in the inning and the Hokies held a 6-0 lead.

The Bruins were able to break

through in the bottom of the fifth and score two runs but that's all they could scrape off Rochard. Brown drove in an insurance run for Tech in the top of the seventh inning from an RBI single before Rochard closed out the win in the bottom half.

NOTES:

- Rochard recorded 12 strikeouts Thursday night, her 15th double-digit strikeout game of the season.
- Three Hokies had multi-hit games Thursday, led by Fagan's three. Brown and Bennett each had two hits in Game 1.
- Five of the Hokies' seven runs batted in came with two outs, including Bennett's two-run triple and Fagan's two-run single.
- Hokie lead-off hitters went 5 for 7 Thursday and Tech only had one inning without a baserunner (he sixth).

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