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A letter from VT President Tim Sands: Mask requirements may be lifted in the coming weeks

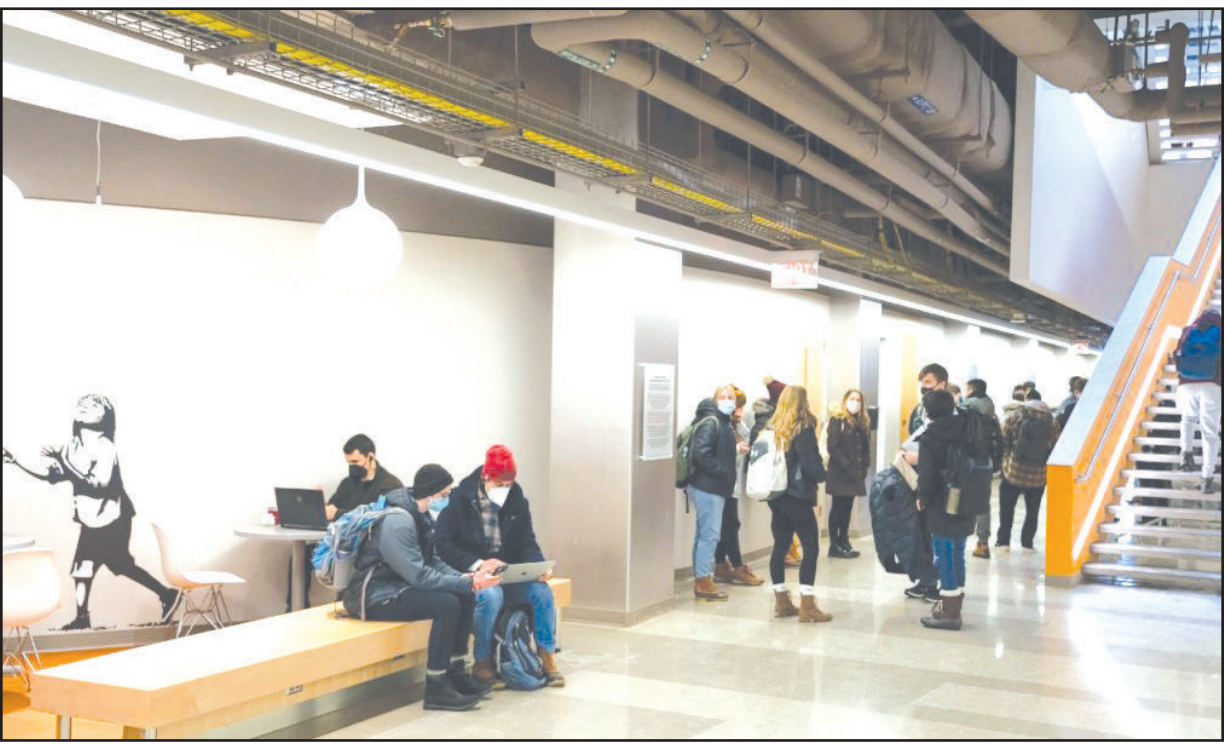
Dear Hokie community,

As Virginia Tech persevered through the past two years of disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, everyone in our community has looked forward to an eventual return to normalcy. As confidence grows that the omicron wave of the COVID-19 pandemic has nearly passed, it appears that we will soon have the opportunity to eliminate the complications of required masks and distancing from our daily routines.

Since last summer, Virginia Tech has required masks for everyone in indoor public spaces, including classrooms, labs, theatres, and sports venues. Working with vaccinations and boosters, these mask requirements have kept COVID-19 cases manageable on our campuses. As COVID-19 recedes, we continue to follow the guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and track the following data to inform our decision on lifting mask requirements:

- New hospitalizations for COVID-19 in Virginia and in the region.
- Numbers of employees and students in isolation while recovering from COVID-19.
- Employees unavailable for work and students unavailable for learning due to the impact of COVID-19 on families.
- Weekly numbers of reported positive tests per 100,000 people on campus and in our communities.
- Percentage of faculty, staff, and students who are fully vaccinated.

All of these indicators are currently trending in the right direction, though on a later timeline than communities where the omicron variant first surged. Once we are confident that these trends will be sustained in our local communities, mask requirements will be lifted. Based



Students meet up in the hallway between classes at the start of the spring semester in January 2022. PHOTO BY LEE FRIESLAND FOR VIRGINIA TECH

on current data, we expect to reach this threshold in the next several weeks.

When we determine that the time has come to make a change, we will post an announcement on the Ready site that will take effect immediately and will be followed by email and social media messages. Until such a time,

it is important that we all continue to comply with the current mask requirement. Please understand there may still be a need to recommend continued protections in certain situations outside of our campus and while using

See **Letter**, page 4

Virginia Tech Helmet Lab takes on snow sports

Moguls. Aerials. Half-pipe. Big air. Skiing and snowboarding events send athletes soaring through the air and racing downhill at speeds creeping over 80 miles per hour.

These high-energy sports attract a rapt audience at the Winter Olympics every four years, but they're also wildly popular among recreational athletes. The National Ski Areas Association reported 59 million visits to skiing or snowboarding areas in the U.S. during the 2020-21 season.

But like any activity that combines high speeds and hard surfaces, snow sports come with a risk of getting hurt, and hundreds of thousands of skiing and snowboarding injuries occur annually. Head injuries account for 28 percent of those and are the No.-1 cause of fatality in these sports.

That makes it critical to know which helmet provides the most effective buffer between the head and the ground for skiers who lose their balance or a snowboarder who doesn't stick a landing. In time for

peak ski season, the Virginia Tech Helmet Lab has added snow sports to the list covered by its nationally

regarded five-star helmet rating system.

See **Snow sports**, page 4



Caitlyn Jung, a second-year student majoring in biomedical engineering and mechanics, sets up an impact test for a snow sports helmet in the Virginia Tech Helmet Lab. The lab's new safety ratings are the first to evaluate the helmets worn by skiers and snowboarders.

Virginia's 4 p.m. burning law now in effect

The Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) and fire departments throughout Virginia are reminding the public about the 4 p.m. burn ban, which began Tuesday, Feb. 15.

The law prohibits burning before 4 p.m. if the fire is in or within 300 feet of woodlands, brush, or fields with dry grass and other flammable materials.

More than 60% of the commonwealth's annual average of 700 wildfires happen in the spring, especially in March and April.

Many areas have had a lot of moisture recently, but Virginia is still recovering from a significant deficit last year. Sunny days with brisk winds can easily dry out fuels such as storm-downed limbs, increasing the potential for wildfires.

Even though burning

is allowed from 4 p.m. to midnight, the Virginia Department of Forestry says people burning debris should be cautious of weather conditions and winds. "The 4 p.m. burning law is one of the most important tools we have in the prevention of wildfires in Virginia," said John Miller, VDOF's director of fire and emergency response. "The number one cause of wildfires in the commonwealth is people burning yard debris and/or trash, and the 4 p.m. burning law goes a long way toward reducing the risk associated with wildfires each year."

Violation of the burn law is a Class 3 misdemeanor and is punishable with a fine of up to \$500. Forestry officials say those who allow a fire to "escape" are liable for the cost of suppressing the blaze and any property damage it causes.

Virginia House passes bill making parole board votes public information

RICHMOND - House Bill 1303, which classifies parole-board votes as public information and subject to the Freedom of Information Act, originally introduced by Delegate Wren Williams (R - Stuart) on Jan. 19, has passed the Virginia House of Delegates with a 95-5 vote.

Williams submitted this legislation as a response to the series of scandals pertaining to the parole board's votes and disregard for legal guidelines, which led to convicted murderers and cop killers being released on the street with

See **Parole**, page 4

News Brief: Man arrested here for Alabama murder given court date

Derrill Richard Ennis, arrested in Montgomery County in 2018 for an unsolved murder in Auburn, Ala., has finally received a court date of March 28. He is charged with the kidnapping and murder of 24-year-old Lori Ann Slesinski in 2006.

Prosecutors say they will seek the death penalty.

Federal marshals were able to track him to his home in Pilot after someone saw a social media post. Ennis was always a person of interest in the case and had been questioned by police before his disappearance.

Slesinski's body has not been found despite the

See **Arrested**, page 4

News brief: Judge throws out former state senator's plea agreement

A Giles County Circuit Court judge has rejected a plea agreement in the embezzlement case of former state senator Joseph Yost, who resides in Blacksburg.

Yost had entered a



Former Virginia state senator Joseph Yost

See **Plea**, page 4

Cremation Memorialization helps the family move forward from grief to remembrance



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UPCOMING EVENTS

Now through Feb. 28:

MFRL adult winter reading program

The Montgomery Floyd Regional Library’s adult winter reading program challenges 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://mfrl.beanstack.org/>.

Grab & Go meals

All the month of February at the Meadowbrook Public Library. Children and youth 18 years and younger can come and get a weeks’ worth of meals and snacks. Each box contains a five-day supply free to all children/teens during library hours. Sponsored by Feeding Southwest Virginia.

Saturday Feb. 19:

High School Art Show

At the Radford University Art Museum on Tyler, 214 Tyler Ave., Radford. An opening reception will be held at 11 a.m. Artwork of area high school students will be on display until Saturday, Feb. 26.

Through Feb. 21

The Great Backyard Bird Count

Each year in February millions of people count the variety of birds that can be seen and heard in their own backyards. This year’s bird count continues through Monday, Feb. 21, 2022. The Great Backyard Bird Count allows people from all over the world to come together and share their love of birds while celebrating and learning about migration patterns. These observations help scientists better understand global bird populations before one of their annual migrations. Participants in the bird count need only to log the birds in a 15-minute period on at least one of the days of the event. Those who want to participate can download the Merlin Bird ID app to help identify the area’s birds. The Great Backyard Bird Count contributes to a global study that helps protect bird populations all over the world.

Caturday

At the Christiansburg Library; noon. 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 to socialize shelter cats. All ages. Email shodges@mfrl.org for more information.

Teen DND

At the Blacksburg Library; 2 p.m.

Sunday, Feb. 20:

Chess Club

At the Blacksburg Library; 3 p.m. Ages 8 and up can come sharpen their chess skills. Supplies are provided. All skill levels are welcome.

Monday, Feb. 21:

Radford Public Library closed

The Radford Public Library will be closed in observance of George Washington Day.

Blacksburg Administrative Offices closed

All Town of Blacksburg administrative offices will be closed for Presidents Day. All Blacksburg Parks and Recreation administrative offices will also be closed. Blacksburg Transit will operate with a full schedule in Blacksburg. All BT administrative offices will be closed. The Blacksburg

Aquatic Center is closed for maintenance and repairs. The Blacksburg Community Center will be open for its regular hours. There will be trash pickup in the southeast quadrant.

Radford offices closed

Radford City offices will be closed for Presidents Day. Solid waste collection scheduled for Monday, Feb. 21, will be collected on Feb. 22. Garbage should be ready for collection at 7:30 a.m.

Tuesday, Feb. 22:

Is it love? Or a scam?

At the Radford Public Library; 1 p.m. Adults of all ages are looking for love and companionship and often using a dating website or app to make connections. The downside of this romantic potential is the risk of finding a phony suitor, and romance scams can even lead into other forms of fraud. Riley Ginger of the Better Business Bureau serving Western Virginia will educate attendees on romance scams.

National Hedgehog Day

At the Meadowbrook Public Library; all day. The original celebration for this date is Feb. 2, but the hedgehog tends to live in the “shadow” of GroundHog Day. Celebrate this later date all day with hedgehog craft and a hedgehog bookmark. This celebration is for all ages.

Black History Month storytime

Join Morgan at the Radford Public Library for a special storytime in honor of Black History Month; 5 p.m. Black History Month is an annual celebration of achievements by African Americans and a time for recognizing their central role in U.S. history. Two picture books celebrating this history will be read.

Kids candle making

At the Blacksburg Library; 4:30 p.m. Come make your own candles. Supplies will be provided. Registration is required. Email mroach@mfrl.org with any questions.

Science fiction/fantasy book club

At the Blacksburg Library; 6:30 p.m. To be discussed is “Klara and the Sun” by Kazuo Ishiguro. Call (540) 552-8246 for more information or to reserve a copy.

Wednesday, Feb. 23:

Lunch and Learn: Listening Session

At the Blacksburg Library; noon. This month’s lunch and learn program will feature both organizers and volunteers discussing some of the most impactful projects in the area and how everyone can get involved.

Complete a Pokédex Event

At the Blacksburg Library; 5 p.m. Bring a Rolodex and Pokémon games to trade with other Pokémon trainers to complete a Pokédex. Find missing version exclusives, evolve a trade-evolution Pokémon, and enjoy meeting others in the area who love Pokémon. Email Trainer Sally at sstauffer@mfrl.org with any questions.

Virtual program: Radford reads with Matthew Raidbard

Author and former basketball coach Matthew Raidbard will join the Radford Public Library on Zoom at 6 p.m. to talk about his book, “Lead Like A Pro: Effective Leadership Styles for Athletic Coaches.” This event is free and is open to the public. Join on Zoom with event ID 897 6700 7543.

Thursday, Feb. 24:

Bad Art Night (for Adults)

At the Blacksburg Library; 6:30 p.m. Staff will be setting

out random craft supplies for an evening of really awful art. Have a laugh and turn off the self-judgment and perfectionism that keeps everyone from truly enjoying their creativity. Registration is recommended. Adults only.

Friday, Feb. 25 and Saturday, Feb. 26:

Radford Public Library Book Sale

The Radford Public Library will hold book sales on Friday, Feb. 25, and Saturday, Feb. 26, from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. Book topics during the sale include fantasy, science fiction, fishing, and cooking plus DVDs, CDs, and gun books. The sale will feature a free table. All hardbacks are \$1 and paperbacks are \$.50. Children’s books are half that. Funds raised will assist the Lamplighters.

Sunday, Feb. 27:

Chess Club

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

Monday, Feb. 28:

Talking about Books: “The Book of Longing”

At the Blacksburg Library; 11 a.m. To be discussed is “The Book of Longing” by Sue Monk Kidd. Call (540) 552-8246 to reserve a copy.

Crafternoon Delight for Adults Only

Learn how to knit or crochet with library staff at the Radford Public Library; 1 p.m. Needles, crochet hooks, and yarn will be available for tutorials and practice during this session of Crafternoon Delight. Bring any project.

Thursday, March 3:

American Legion Meeting

American Legion Harvey-Howe-Carper 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 is canceled. For further information, contact 540-250-2283 or 540-239-9864.

Friday, March 4:

Christiansburg Aquatic Center free fitness Fling

At the Christiansburg Aquatic Center from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. and from 5:30 – 7 p.m. Try a 10-to-12- minute sampling of various fitness classes offered at the aquatic center and ask instructors questions about the classes.

Tuesday, March 8:

Sons of Confederate Veterans Meeting

Sons of Confederate Veterans, Stuart Horse Artillery Camp 1784, will meet at 7 p.m. at Aly’s Family Italian Restaurant, 3204 Riner Road. Members of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) are invited to attend. Mr. Will Reed will continue with Part Three of his series on “Confederate Small Arms.” If Montgomery County Pub-

See **Events**, page 3

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News Messenger

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755 Roanoke St. Suite 1A
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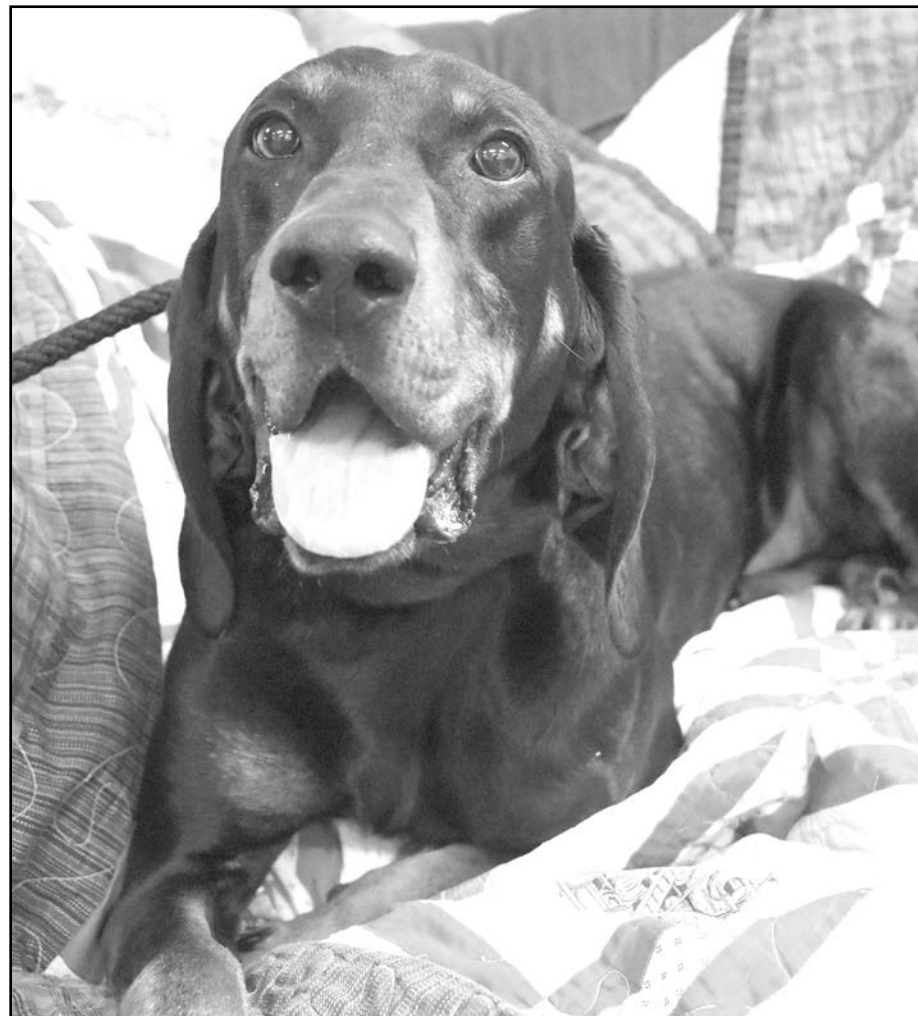
For online information and applications please go to MONTVA.COM click on Elected Officials, Commissioner of the Revenue, Tax Relief.

DEADLINES:

FOR REPEAT FILERS March 1, 2022

FOR FIRST TIME FILERS December 31, 2022

PETS OF THE WEEK



Meet Ice! Despite his name, he's more of a goofy canine than a cool cucumber. He is the epitome of hound dog-ness. He likes to sniff, roam around, sing songs periodically, and eat yummy treats. He would do best in a home where he is the only pet. Stop by the Animal Care and Adoption Center to get to know Ice.



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Ozzy is a friendly dog who is ready for his furever home. At two-years-old, he's a younger boy who will need some basic doggie training, including walking on a leash. Ozzy is treat-motivated, which may help his learning. He also enjoys attention from his favorite humans.

Virginia Tech's orbital launch vehicle team celebrates successful launch in California

By Jama Green

In business terms, taking a “30,000 foot view” means stepping back and gaining a high-level, big-picture perspective on a project or challenge. The metaphor also fits the Orbital Launch Vehicle Team (OLVT), a Virginia Tech student design team that has learned to slow down, move forward from past missteps, and take the time needed to build toward its long-term goals in measured, incremental steps.

While some student design teams work all year long toward an annual competition, the OLVT team has loftier, long-term aspirations in sight. For several years, team members have worked continuously to progress technology on their launch vehicles and advance opportunities for student rocketry and small satellite teams in hopes of becoming the first collegiate organization to deliver an object into low Earth orbit.

The team recently moved one giant step closer, with a successful launch of its current subscale test rocket, the Test Turkey, in the Mojave Desert.

Test Turkey
It's been a long two years since this team has attempted any sort of large-scale launch. During this period, the OLVT

team has taken its time to develop and iterate a number of technologies on Test Turkey, striving to design and fabricate the cleanest, safest, and most effective launch vehicle possible. Team members rigorously verified their designs, regularly meeting with their faculty advisors and gathering input from industry experts.

This past semester, the team specifically focused on developing an efficient recovery system, or parachute ejection system. According to Reece Preisser, a senior majoring in physics and OLVT co-president, this proved to be one of the most elaborate parts of building the rocket.

“In space, we'll need to use CO2 cartridges to eject, and it's important that we learn how to properly deploy that system at any altitude for a safe recovery,” Preisser said. “With a good system in place, we'll be able to successfully recover this rocket, or an even larger-scale launch vehicle down the road.”

Trip to the desert

Depending on the scale and magnitude of any amateur rocketry flight, finding a launch site can be complicated. While the OLVT team is able to perform small-scale tests at nearby Kentland Experimental Aerial Systems Laboratory, the sheer size of the Test Turkey and its



SUBMITTED PHOTO

As the Virginia Tech orbital launch vehicle team works toward development of the Hokie 0.75, a two-stage sounding rocket designed to place a 5-kilogram payload beyond the Kármán line, members have created a subscale version dubbed Test Turkey. Test Turkey recently flew to an altitude of 30,000 feet in the Mojave Desert. Photo courtesy of OLVT.

projected altitude would require the launch to be executed in a vast open space, far from civilization.

The team predicted that the Test Tur-

key would fly to an altitude approaching 50,000 feet. Because the Federal Avia-

See **Launch**, page 4

Events

from page 2

lic Schools are closed on Tuesday or Wednesday of this week due to weather, the meeting is canceled. For further information, call 540-320-4315 or 540-239-9864.

Wednesday, March 23:

Radford Army Ammunitions Plant Community Meeting

At the Christiansburg Public Library; 6 p.m. This community meeting will discuss modernization and environmental projects and compliance and corrective actions at the Radford Army Ammunition Plant. Staff members from the U.S. Army and BAE Systems will be on hand to engage with the public. Questions: usarmy.radford.peo-eis.list.rfaap-public-affairs@mail.mil.

Ongoing:

Blacksburg Aquatic Center closed for repairs

Repairs on the hot tub, gutters and deck surface at the Blacksburg Aquatic Center are ongoing. The Aquatic Center will remain closed for several more weeks. A re-opening date will be announced once it is confirmed.

Send community news and photos to community news @ourvalley.org

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Directions – From Christiansburg - Head northeast on W Main St toward S. Franklin St - Take Ellett Rd NE approximately 6 miles - Left onto Lusters Gate - Property on right, before clubhouse drive.

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VT class fights for Appalachia

By Melody Warnick

If you live near Virginia Tech's Blacksburg campus, chances are good you live in Appalachia, the storied cultural region that meanders through 13 states, from Mississippi to New York. That doesn't mean you know much about it. For many, Appalachia is a fuzzy concept, a combo-pack of stereotypes and statistics.

That changes fast for students in Virginia Tech's transdisciplinary Appalachian Community

Research (ACR) course, an elective in the new Appalachian Cultures and Environments Pathways minor. For Emily Satterwhite, an associate professor in the Department of Religion and Culture, who's co-taught the class for three of the past four years, the proof is in the end-of-semester student reflection papers. "There's a strong theme of, 'How have I been here three or four years and not ever spoken to a local person about what it's like to live here?'" she said.

Or, as one past student put it, "Academia rarely seems to be more than peripherally connected with its greater community. This class was very special in the way that it was entirely shaped by it."

The course is shaped by it, and hoping to have an impact on it, most recently by tackling one of Appalachia's most intractable problems: its substance use crisis.

Between April 2020 and April 2021, 100,000

See Appalachia, page 6



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Members of the Appalachian Community Research class join professor Emily Satterwhite (back row center) on the porch of Solitude.

Launch

from page 3

tion Administration requires waivers to fly high-power rockets weighing more than 3.3 pounds and flying on greater than 4.4 ounces of propellant, potential launch sites for the Test Turkey proved to be limited.

Working with the Friends of Amateur Rocketry organization, a not-for-profit organization providing infrastructure for testing and launching large amateur and experimental rockets, OLVT applied to launch the Test Turkey before the Thanksgiving holiday. The organization's test and launch facility is located in California just north of Edwards Air Force Base and near the Mojave Desert. With the site's strict safety regulations and higher launch ceilings, it quickly emerged as one of the only organized and viable places to launch the Test Turkey.

Kevin Engel, who serves as OLVT co-president along with Preisser, remembered the anticipation felt by the team members on launch day. "One of the key things we tried to do was keep what is known as 'rocket fever' at bay," said Engel. "That build-up of excitement and nervous energy can outweigh common sense if you let it get a hold of you. We tried to tone that down, and our preparation with outlining launch procedures really helped with that."

Once ready, the team members found one group ahead of them, and anxiously waited approximately 30 minutes to load the Test Turkey onto the launch rail. All participants onsite were directed to take shelter in bunkers, and the safety officers announced OLVT's launch over the communications system. The

countdown began, and the group held a collective breath. With a thunderous roar and a flash of flame and smoke, the rocket lifted off.

"The launch of our vehicle was successful," said Preisser. "The motor worked properly, it left the ground, our parachutes successfully deployed, and we were able to find the rocket shortly after launch. After about three seconds, you aren't able to see what happens to the vehicle in flight, so we rely on the onboard avionics and data collection systems for our results. While it didn't quite make the height we initially predicted, many of the systems we wanted to test were a complete success."

According to Engel, the Test Turkey landed about 1.2 miles away from the launch rail, and with the assistance of

drones relaying live video back to the team, the students were able to walk into the desert and find the body of the rocket in a quick and painless recovery.

After returning to Blacksburg, the team reviewed the data collected and examined the external factors leading up to the launch. While waiting their turn to get on the launch rail, their camera battery had died early, and their altimeters began logging data during that period, causing it to run out of storage space too soon. The motor did not burn as long as the team had expected, resulting in an altitude of 30,000 instead of 50,000 feet. In addition, the main parachute deployed a bit early, as the rocket was spinning, and caused some vibrations that had an effect on the shear pins that enclosed the chute.

News Messenger

Established 1869

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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.

Plea

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guilty plea with the understanding of a plea agreement. With the denial earlier this week, Yost withdrew his guilty plea in the case. He has been charged with embezzling money

from the Giles County Historical Society.

From 2012 through 2018, Yost represented the 12th Senate District that includes Radford, Giles Coun-

ty, and portions of Montgomery and Pulaski counties in Southwestern Virginia.

A new court date has been set for April 12.

Arrested

from page 1

fact her car was found burned shortly after her disappearance.

Ennis was living off Pilot Road and working as a yurt builder when

he was arrested. He was indicted by an Alabama grand jury in August 2018. Investigators from the Virginia State Police spent three days digging

in and around the Virginia location. No details were released about what was found during that dig.

Ennis has been held in

Parole

from page 1

no notice given to victims' families. Williams's bill spearheads the Republican-led effort to make the parole board's actions more accountable and transparent.

"The Virginia Parole Board is made up of public servants who can have a massive impact on the lives of Virginians," Williams said. "With a single vote, they can release a dangerous killer into a neighborhood and make victims relive the worst moments of their lives again."

"Before now, votes of the board

were shielded from the Freedom Of Information Act. The previous parole board abused this to hide their votes and conceal the fact that they rarely met in person or voted. They corruptly disregarded the rules and the laws."

"In January, Governor Youngkin fired the corrupt parole board so we could start with a clean slate," Williams said. "Moving forward, the parole board's power will come with accountability and transparency. With House Bill 1303's passage, we

are fulfilling the promise we made to Virginians and bringing these votes into the sunlight."

"Last year the Virginia Parole Board, while 'drunk with power' released murderers and cop killers without notifying the victims," said Attorney General Jason Miyares. "This legislation will make the parole process in Virginia more transparent and ensure parole board members are held accountable to the public so that a scandal like this never happens again."

Snow sports

from page 1

tem.

Out of 35 helmets the

lab tested, two helmets merited all five stars and eight earned four. The remainder earned three or fewer.

The ratings, which are built on years of Virginia Tech's research and expertise in injury biomechanics, provide a unique, evidence-based way for consumers to know which helmets offer the best protection. They're made possible by the lab's rigorous analysis of what happens during a head impact in a particular sport, and which impacts are most likely to turn into injuries. The research is a collaboration with the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine.

"The circumstances that lead to head injuries are unique for every sport," said Steve Rowson, an associate professor of biomedical engineering and mechanics and the Helmet Lab's director. "What part of the head usually gets hit? At what angle? How fast? Understanding those conditions thoroughly enough to

recreate them in the lab is the key to assessing how effective helmets will be in a way that's relevant to what athletes experience in the real world."

The lab's rankings are the first to evaluate how effectively snow sports helmets protect athletes from brain injuries like concussion and how they perform relative to each other.

As with most sports, the existing safety regulations for this gear are based on a standard associated with lethal injuries like skull fractures. The pass-fail metric doesn't capture differences between helmets or assess their performance against injuries like concussion, which occur at lower levels of force but are still potentially devastating.

More granular data on helmet efficacy could help address a puzzling mismatch between trends in helmet use and injury rates. Helmet use in skiing and snowboarding has been climbing steadily. Today, more

than 80 percent of skiers and snowboarders wear helmets on the slopes, up from just 25 percent two decades ago. But while rates of catastrophic injuries have dropped, rates of other injuries, like concussion, haven't. A rating system that judges helmet performance at a border range of forces could begin to move the needle on some of those other injuries.

Snow sports are the lab's seventh major ratings release. Rowson, along with Harry Wyatt Professor of Engineering Stefan Duma, published the first ratings for varsity football helmets in 2011. In the decade since, hockey, soccer, cycling, and youth football helmets have all been added to the portfolio.

The lab's research has also been instrumental in understanding the risks of drone flights over people. They're currently working on developing ratings for equestrian helmets, baseball, softball, sensors, and other sports.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9	10	
11				12						13	
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49				50	51				52		53
	56					57		58			59
			60				61				
				62						63	

CLUES ACROSS

1. Emperor of Russia

5. Abounding in rocks

11. Increase in speed

14. Music app

15. Not nice

18. Tables (Span.)

19. Decomposes

21. ___ student: learns healing

23. Nursemaid

24. Joke-teller

28. Male parent

29. Group of countries (abbr.)

30. "Rambling Rose" actor

32. Midway between south and southwest

33. Cartoon Network (abbr.)

35. Peacock network

36. Principal ethnic group of China

39. Made of fermented honey

and water

41. Exclamation of surprise

42. Evaluates skill or knowledge

44. Stage in ecological succession

46. Ethnic group of SE Asia

47. Not small

49. A cat is one

52. Broken piece

56. French president

58. Artist's workroom

60. Ability to apply knowledge and skills

62. Visually stunning

63. Ancient region south of Dead Sea

CLUES DOWN

1. Used to pour beer

2. Con game

3. Skin disorder

4. Communists (slang)

5. Subjects to hostility

6. A major division of geological time

7. Hitting statistic (abbr.)

8. British thermal unit

9. Influential envoy to Woodrow Wilson

10. Fits on neck of animal

12. Fertile soil

13. Type of battery

16. Khoikhoi peoples

17. Consist of two parts

20. Small group of trees

22. Execute or perform

25. Millinery

26. 007's creator

27. Associated with esoteric doctrine

29. Electronic counter-measures

31. Schenectady County Airport

34. No (Scottish)

36. Position of leadership

37. Statement

38. Raccoons belong to this genus

40. One who diagnoses

43. True mosses

45. Blood type

48. Albanian

50. Emergency response notification system

51. College reservists

53. Away from wind

54. Tough outer layer

55. Art __, around 1920

57. Born of

58. The greatest of all time

59. Georgia rockers

61. Natural logarithm

Letter

from page 1

public transit.

Your patient and faithful adherence to our public health measures have protected our community, kept our university operational, and supported our mission throughout the past two years. Thank you for doing your part to help

us reach this important milestone. Please continue to take care of yourself and support others who are in need by using the resources available and shared below.

By Tim Sands,
Virginia Tech President

OBITUARIES

Bussey, Carolyn Faye Mitchell

Carolyn Faye Mitchell Bussey, Crissman, Joy B. Burton, and 69, of Radford, passed away Richard Bussey; grandchildren Tuesday, Feb. 16, 2022. Haley, Bella, Thomas, and Taquilla; and many other relatives and friends. The family will receive friends from noon until 2 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 20, 2022, at the Mullins Funeral Home in Radford. Memorial services will follow with Pastor A. J. Groschel officiating. The Bussey family is in the care of Mullins Funeral Home & Crematory in Radford. www.mullinsfuneralhome.com.



Epperly, Ritchie Wayne

Ritchie Wayne Epperly, 63, of Christiansburg, was a man of many trades. Throughout his life, he constructed things as big as homes to pieces as small as a peach seed whittled into a basket. Later in life, Oreo and he could be found in his car port with a piece of wood constructing hope chests, Johnny outhouses, tables, wardrobes, china cabinets, potato bins and many others. Projects he started usually developed into a production where one piece became ten and was then given to family and friends. Ritchie was preceded in death by his father, Luther Willard Epperly; his mother, Helen Furrow Epperly; and his best bud of 18 years, Oreo. Left to cherish his memory is his son, Phillip Epperly and his wife, Ashley; his daughter, Brooke Epperly and her fiance, Seth Van Hoy; his one and only granddaughter, Vivienne Epperly; his brother, Barry Epperly and his wife, Diane; his niece and nephew, Corissa and Caleb Epperly; and his uncle and puzzle buddy Ray Epperly and his wife, Edith; as well as a number of friends. Friends meant the world to him, and he was always grateful for the time he got to spend with each of them. The family will receive friends from 4 to 6 p.m. today, Saturday, Feb. 19, 2022, at North Fork Baptist Church, 905 Lusters Gate Rd. Blacksburg, Va. 24060.



www.montcova.com

See Obituaries, page 6

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

PLACE OF REFUGE

Read Numbers 32:1 through 36:13

Select some towns to be your cities of refuge, to which a person who has killed someone accidentally may flee. They will be places of refuge from the avenger, so that a person accused of murder may not die before he stands trial before the assembly. (Numbers 35:11,12).

God commanded that if anyone died because of violence, and murder was assumed, the murder suspect was not automatically to be considered guilty. Instead, he was allowed to flee to a city of refuge (one of six to be chosen in the Promised Land) that would assure the accused would be treated justly and justice would be done. In this way God provided justice in a culture where protecting the innocent was not a typical response.

When we hear accusations of guilt against others, our first response should be to provide them with a place of refuge in our hearts. That is, we should not rush to judgment, assume their guilt, and be careless in our speech about them. We should treat them fairly, as God intended.

Prayer for Today: Ask the Lord to make your heart and mouth a place of refuge rather than a fount of accusation for others.

Quicklook: Numbers 35:6–15

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

Electric 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

OBITUARIES

Lawson, LaVonda Shaver

LaVonda Shaver Lawson, 54, of Narrows, died Sunday, Feb. 13, 2022, at her home.

She was born in Blacksburg on July 17, 1967, and was preceded in death by her husband, Wally Lawson, and her father, Ralph Shaver.

She is survived by her mother, Brenda J. Shaver; a sister and brother-in-law, Angie and Greg Frazier; a nephew, Levi Frazier; a niece, Ella Frazier, who affectionately called her “DaDa”; a step-niece, Devon Frazier; aunts and uncles

Janie Moss, Jackie and Ramonia Vaught, Jeanne Davis, Melvin and Melinda Shaver, and Yvonne Shaver; plus numerous cousins and other relatives and friends.

A funeral service was held on Wednesday, Feb. 16, 2022, at 2:00 p.m. in the McCoy Funeral Home Chapel with Pastor Shake Smith officiating. Interment followed at Roselawn Memorial Gardens, Christiansburg. The family received friends from noon to 2 p.m. prior to the service at McCoy Funeral Home, Blacksburg.

Muse, Willie Junior

Willie Junior Muse of Christiansburg entered his heavenly home on Feb. 14, 2022.

Junior was born in Pittsylvania County on Aug. 29, 1931, to John Swanson and Mary Muse on the family farm in Penhook.

He was married to Lola Francis Muse for 45 years until her death in 1999. He was preceded in death by siblings Claude Muse, Dudley Muse, Clark Muse, Monsey Muse, Francis Muse, and Hazel Ray, and his beloved border collie, Maggie.



Junior is survived by his sons, Barry Muse (Vickie), Kevin Muse (Sebrena), and Aaron Muse (fiancée Kelly Doss); daughters Deborah Zimmerman, Teresa Muse, Tammy Goodyear (Ken), Renee Dalton, and Stephanie Harris (Scott); 10 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Junior began working on the family tobacco farm at a very young age helping to grow crops and milking cows. After leaving the farm, he joined the United States Air Force and was promoted to staff sergeant while serving in the Korean Conflict and was honorably discharged in 1956.

Junior then started selling produce throughout West Virginia, North Carolina, and Virginia before settling in Christiansburg and opening the B & M

Market that was well known for some of the best produce and fresh meats in the area. While working in his market on a daily basis, he began farming and raising hogs and sheep while concentrating on his cow calf operation.

Junior was supportive of his family and was a volunteer 4-H leader in Montgomery County, helping his children with their livestock projects and taking time off from work to take them to livestock shows throughout Virginia. Junior was a member of Fellowship Baptist Church where he enjoyed the fellowship and word of the Lord.

The family received friends on Friday, Feb. 18, 2022, at Mullins Funeral Home in Radford. Funeral services were held at 2 p.m. with Pastor James Bradley officiating. Interment with full military honors followed in the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Dublin.

In lieu of flowers, please consider contributions to the Christiansburg Rescue Squad, 190 Depot St. NW, Christiansburg, VA 24073 or the Auburn High School FFA, 1650 Auburn School Dr., Riner, VA 24149.

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

Monroe, Mary Margaret Marston

Mary Margaret Marston Monroe, 75, of Blacksburg, passed away peacefully on Sunday, Feb. 6, 2022.

Born July 8, 1946, she was the daughter of the late Ralph George Marston and Hester Vivian Fergusson Marston. She was preceded in death by her parents, a sister, Suzanne Marston Borck, a brother, Dr. Ralph Scott Marston, and her husband, Richard Walter Monroe.



Mary was raised in Takoma Park, Md., and she is a graduate of W.T. Woodson High School (1964) and the University of Mary Washington (1968). In high school she was active in the school choir and was a cheerleader. In college, Mary earned a bachelor's degree in education and subsequently taught elementary school in Stafford and Fairfax counties.

She married Richard Walter Monroe in 1971 and accompanied him through numerous career locations in six different states. Richard and Mary were happily married for 51 years. She enjoyed being involved with her children's school activities, volunteering in their classrooms, and teaching part-time and full-time in several school systems. She also taught preschool for a number of years.

As a member of Blacksburg United Methodist Church, Mary served on the church visitation committee, calling on members in their homes and assisted-living facilities. She also helped lead a weekly balance and strength class.

Mary took great pride in her home and family. She treasured family gatherings and loved to entertain. She had a remarkable gift for remembering every family birthday, always taking time to send a card to her many grandchildren, nieces, and nephews as well as other friends and family.

She loved crafting of all kinds, making Christmas decorations as gifts to others. She treasured her Christian family heritage and worked to organize and document it for generations to follow.

She is survived by her children, Jennifer Monroe Holliday and Spencer Grant Monroe; a son-in-law, Todd Holliday, and a daughter-in-law, Kelli Simpson Monroe; grandchildren Grant Monroe Holliday, Samuel Ayers Holliday, and Keeton Elizabeth Monroe; a brother-in-law, Jonathan Searle Monroe; a cousin, Elizabeth Brand Monroe; sisters-in-law Rosa Crocker Monroe and Deborah Cahoon Monroe; nephews James Lord Borck and Owen Searle Monroe; nieces Kimberly Borck Pollard, Amity Borck Dey, Frances Tucker Monroe, Megan Monroe Guerrero, Meredith Monroe Rodriguez, and 21 great-nieces and great-nephews.

The family is grateful for the love and support from family, friends, and many medical professionals. A memorial service will be held in Mary's honor on March 7, 2022, at 2:30 p.m., preceded by a visitation at 2 p.m. at Blacksburg United Methodist Church. The family requests that those attending kindly wear a mask.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions can be made to Blacksburg United Methodist Church, P.O. Box 931, Blacksburg, VA 24063.

Arrangements are in the care of McCoy Funeral Home, Inc., 150 Country Club Drive SW, Blacksburg, VA 24060; (540)-552-3211. Online condolences can be shared at www.mccoyfuneralhome.com.

See Obituaries, page 8

Appalachia

from page 4

Americans died from drug overdoses. That's like an airplane full of people falling out of the sky every single day for a year.

Things are particularly dire in Appalachia, where the overdose mortality rate in 2018 was 43 percent higher for 25- to 54-year-olds than it was elsewhere in the country.

Yet, until he signed up for the Appalachian Community Research class in fall 2021, none of this was really on Saket Bikmal's radar. "I'd heard of the opioid crisis in Appalachia," said the senior in computational and systems neuroscience, who hails from Northern Virginia. Beyond that, "I was actually pretty clueless to this whole thing."

On the first day of class in Solitude, the 200-year-

old historic home near the Duck Pond, Satterwhite and co-teacher Julia Gohlke, an associate professor of environmental health in the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine, challenged their students to develop policy recommendations for substance use disorder recovery in Southwest Virginia. ACR participates in a grant program from the Appalachian Regional Commission, called the Appalachian Teaching Project, which stipulates that students conduct original research and develop an innovative project to bolster community development in Appalachia.

One of the best conversations happened early in the semester with community partner Bently Wood, a peer recovery specialist with New River Valley Community Services, who shared his personal experiences with drug addiction and recovery. Hearing Wood's story changed Bikmal's ideas about substance use. Suddenly he could see how someone's life could land here. How Wood wasn't so different from him. "I think that's probably what started the emotional connection for me," he said.

ACR students from a cross-section of majors such as public health, biological sciences, and humanities for public service embraced Wood's guidance on person-first language, abandoning the term "addict" in favor of the less-stigmatizing "person with substance use disorder."

The course's 11 students conducted interviews with 27 key informants, including government officials,

local nonprofit leaders, and medical professionals. Cheryl Hartman, a faculty member in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine at Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine, spoke with students several times, as did Sam Rasoul, a member of the Virginia House of Delegates from Roanoke.

One issue that came up repeatedly in interviews with key informants was the pervasive lack of housing and treatment facilities in Southwest Virginia for those who suffer from substance use disorder.

Currently, services are available for only about one in 10 people who need them, said Wood. Pregnant women, new mothers, and those with additional health problems are at particular risk.

Perhaps, it was suggested, Catawba Hospital, a sprawling state mental health facility northeast of Blacksburg, could be expanded into a substance use disorder treatment facility.

Hannah O'Malley, a senior majoring in neuroscience, didn't think college students took field trips. But early in November, she found herself riding in a Virginia Tech van through the autumn leaves outside Blacksburg, headed toward Catawba Hospital's 700 forested acres. "I had never heard of this happening in a class before," O'Malley said. "Usually you go in, and you take a test."

No tests that day. Satterwhite drove the van onto the Catawba Hospital grounds. Five students hopped out. With supervision from the hospital's chief operating officer, Cynthia McDaniel, they explored the grounds, originally built in 1858 as a resort.

Even During This Pandemic, Everyone Deserves a Burial Service So Their Family and Friends Can Say One Last "Goodbye"

We Offer Graveside Services with Social Distancing, at no additional cost.

- Services can be broadcast to attendees' car radios.
- At the completion of the service, the family will receive visitors via drive-through visitation as the attendees leave the service.
- Families have been very appreciative of these services.
- Arrangements can be made on very short notice.

Memorial Gardens

OF THE NEW RIVER VALLEY

After You Have Acquired a Cremation Urn from the Funeral Home, the Process is Not Yet Complete Until the Urn is Permanently Placed.

Because folks just don't know what to do, Nearly One-Third of All Homes Still Have Ashes of a Loved One.

Let us help you choose among our beautiful Columbarium, Urn Bench, or Ground Space options.

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The Vinton Messenger

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SALEM TIMES-REGISTER

News Messenger

RADFORD News Journal

For Sale - Miscellaneous

FOR SALE
Unprinted end rolls of newsprint. Great for packing & shipping, moving & storage and for art projects. Various sizes available. Stop by the Salem Times-Register 1633 West Main St. or call (540)389-9355 for details.

Legals - Montgomery County

ABC NOTICE
K and S Food Mart LLC, trading as K and S Food Mart, 3620 S Main St, Blacksburg, Montgomery County, Virginia 24060-7015.

The above establishment is applying to the VIRGINIA ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) AUTHORITY for a Wine and Beer Off Premises license to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages.

Khem R Wagley, Member

NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 days from the publishing date of the first of two required newspaper legal notices. Objections should be registered at www.abc.virginia.gov or 800-552-3200.

Legals - Montgomery County

LEGAL NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING OF THE TOWN OF CHRISTIANSBURG PLANNING COMMISSION
The Town of Christiansburg Planning Commission will hold a Public Hearing on Monday, February 28, 2022 at 7:00 PM in the Council Chambers of the Christiansburg Town Hall, 100 E. Main Street, Christiansburg, Virginia 24073. The purpose of the public hearing is to receive public comments concerning:

A. Conditional Use Permit request by Jacqueline Marshall, owner, and Shaun Chuyka, lessee, to allow a contractor's equipment storage yard in the General Business District (B-3) on property located at 301 Depot Street, NW, Tax Parcel 526 - ((23)) - (BK1) - 12, Parcel ID 007535. The property is designated as Business/Commercial on the Future Land Use Map of the 2013 Christiansburg Comprehensive Plan.

B. Rezoning request by John D. and Arneida V. Elmore, owners, and

Legals - Montgomery County

Garand Hopkins III, contract purchaser, from Agricultural District A to General Business District B-3 for a portion of the property located at 710 Peppers Ferry Road, Tax Parcel 435 - ((A)) - 23; Parcel ID 021274. The property is designated as Residential on the Future Land Use Map of the 2013 Christiansburg Comprehensive Plan.

Town Hall will be open and available to receive public comment in-person at the time of this Public Hearing. A copy of the application, the Town's Zoning Map, Zoning Ordinance, and Future Land Use Map may be viewed in the Planning Department Office, 100 E. Main Street, Christiansburg, VA 24073 during normal office hours of 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Contact Benjamin Tripp, Planning Director, at (540) 382-6128 ext. 1120 or by email at btripp@christiansburg.org with any questions or if you require reasonable accommodations.

MAKE AN "A" IN ADVERTISING!

To place your ad, call 389-9355

Send community news and photos to communitynews@ourvalley.org

ADVERTISE!

MONTGOMERY SPORTS



SUBMITTED PHOTO
Former CHS assistant football coach Zach Leonard is the new head football coach at Blacksburg High School.

Zach Leonard named new Blacksburg head football coach

Marty Gordon
NRVsports@ourvalley.org

Blacksburg High School has a new head football coach. He is Zach Leonard, who has coached for the past four years at Christiansburg High School after stops in Rural Retreat, Glenvar,

and Patrick Henry. Blacksburg High School Athletic Director Peter Lyell said Leonard brings an abundance of football knowledge and experience to the football program. “Zach’s passion for the game and impeccable moral character make him the perfect fit for BHS,” he

said. He replaces Eddie Sloss who resigned last year after completing Blacksburg’s second winless season. The program has also fought the participation bug in the midst of COVID as they did not

See **Leonard**, page 8

Auburn’s Allyson Martin signs to play volleyball at Bluefield State

Marty Gordon
NRVsports@ourvalley.org

Auburn High School’s Allyson Martin will continue her volleyball career at Bluefield State College in Bluefield, West, Virginia. The two-time state player of the year signed a letter of intent Tuesday in the school’s library in front of family, friends, coaches, and teammates. Martin said she chose Bluefield State because of the campus and the coaching staff. She was named the 1A State, Region C, and Mt. Empire District Player of the year her junior and senior seasons and this past season reached the 1,000-kill plateau.

At Auburn, she was a part of four straight outstanding teams that brought home back-to-back state trophies.

Bluefield State has a current enrollment of 1,228. The school’s athletic teams compete as a member of the Division II level of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and as a member of the United States Collegiate Athletic Association (USCAA).



PHOTO BY ASHLEY AKERS

Twice the state volleyball player of the year, Auburn High School’s Allyson Martin (middle) signed on the dotted line Tuesday to play at Bluefield State. Also pictured at the signing are members of Allyson’s family (from left): Kevin Martin, Rodney Martin, Kim Bruce, and Mark Bruce.

The Bluefield State volleyball team finished 12-11 this past season.

Savanna Hammond is entering her first season as head coach for the Bluefield State women’s volleyball team at Bluefield State. Hammond was a walk-on at Radford University where she earned a full scholarship for her last three seasons. Her team at Radford earned two Big South regular-season titles, one Big South

Tournament championship, and one NCAA Tournament berth in 2013. Hammond is also an Associate Club Director for the River Valley Juniors Volleyball Club where she has coached at the nationals level for the last four club seasons.

At Bluefield State, Martin plans to major in nursing. On the court, she hopes to play as a freshman and make a quick positive impact.

East Mont girls roll past Bath 62-20 in region tournament



Eastern Montgomery’s Maddie Bruce eyes the basket as she drives into the lane against Bath County in a first-round Pioneer District tournament game. Bruce had 15 points in the Mustangs’ 62-20 win.



Eastern Montgomery’s Skyann Holloway puts up a fast-break layup against Bath County.



Eastern Montgomery’s Lily Underwood scored 15 points against Bath County Monday night.



PHOTOS BY JON FLEMING

Morgan Bahnken looks to pass inside to a Mustang teammate during the first half against Bath County.

Big South spans RU’s Nichols; Smith steps down at High Point

Marty Gordon
NRVsports@ourvalley.org

First-year Radford University men’s basketball coach Darris Nichols is in hot water with the Big South Conference. Nichols has been reprimanded for a violation of the League’s Ethical Conduct Policy in publicly criticizing the officiating following the Feb. 9 Radford game at Winthrop.

On the court, the team has had a rough first-year season under the former Radford High School and West Virginia University point guard. The Highlanders are 9-16 overall and 5-8 in Big South play.

The Nichols news comes on the same day as another major coaching change in the conference. Longtime Kentucky coach Tubby Smith has resigned his High Point University coaching position effective

immediately after contracting COVID-19 for the second time.

Smith said he felt that after contracting COVID 19 for a second time in less than a year and having been away from the program for an extended period that the timing was right for this change,

“I feel blessed to have had an amazing career leading, coaching, and teaching great young men at first-class institutions,” he said.

Associate head coach G.G. Smith, Tubby’s son, will take over the team for the remainder of the season and will serve as head coach in 2022-2023.

Tubby Smith will remain involved with the school through the end of the season with alumni, community engagement, and fundraising efforts, according to a release from High Point University.

He was an assistant at Kentucky from 1989-1991

before he got his first coaching job at Tulsa. After four seasons there, he coached at Georgia for two years before returning to Kentucky, going 263-83 in 10 years, winning five SEC titles, five SEC tournaments, and a 1998 NCAA title.

Tubby Smith currently holds an overall 642-369 mark including 11-15 this year at High Point.

Smith came to High Point University as a student in 1969. Soon after, Smith found his place on the men’s basketball team and earned a reputation as a hard worker and a natural leader.

Smith captained the basketball team and earned all-conference honors as a senior before graduating from High Point in 1973.

In the spring of 2018, High Point University announced that Tubby Smith would return to lead the men’s basketball program.

Statewide, Virginia farm bankruptcies declined in 2021

For the first time in the last decade, every region in the U.S. had fewer farm bankruptcies in 2021 than the year before.

With dramatic decreases in Chapter 12 farm bankruptcy filings, mid-Atlantic states, including Virginia, are keeping a slower pace with an 8% drop in filings in 2021.

Chapter 12 bankruptcy allows family farms to avoid liquidation or foreclosure. According to data from the United States Courts, Chapter 12 bankruptcy filings nationwide were down a staggering 50% last year.

“What a difference a year can make,” said American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) senior economist Veronica Nigh in an AFBF Market Intel report. “The number of Chapter 12 filings in 2021 is the lowest in the last decade, and this is the first time in at least 10 years that there were fewer than 300 filings. The decrease in bankruptcy filings is a noteworthy shift given the significant increases in the number of bankruptcies over the previous three years.”

Five farm bankruptcies were recorded in Virginia in 2021, the same as in 2020. The mid-Atlantic had 15 fewer Chapter-12 bankruptcies than in 2020.

A snapshot of previous years reveals a positive trend in Virginia. While farm bankruptcies in 2019 increased nearly 20% nationwide, there was no significant increase in the number of Chapter 12 filings in Virginia. Six Chapter-12 farm bankruptcies were listed for Virginia in both 2018 and 2019.

Industry specialists hope this slow-but-steady trend continues for Virginia and surrounding states.

MidAtlantic Farm Credit regional lending manager Matt Ritenour, who is based in Winchester, said the report is cause for optimism.

“Each farming operation is truly unique, but despite the many challenges 2021



SUBMITTED PHOTO

brought us, overall Virginia’s agriculture community had a positive year,” he said. “Our members and the industry have proven resilient and continue to successfully provide food, fuel and fiber for our country.”

Economists agree the decline is worthy of celebration; however, they don’t lose sight of the fact that 276 Chapter 12 bankruptcies were filed in 2021.

“Returns to farm operators have been incredibly volatile over the last decade,” Nigh said. “So, while the last year has brought higher commodity prices for some, it has most certainly brought higher input costs for all. How the latter compares to the former will dictate whether the trend of fewer bankruptcies will continue be ‘in’ or ‘out’ in 2022. For once, this is a trend we hope has some staying power.”

Virginia Tech awarded accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

By Melody Warnick

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), the primary regional accrediting agency for 11 southern U.S. states, recently awarded Virginia Tech a reaffirmation of accreditation.

The announcement came at the end of an intensive multi-year process that included an off-site peer review, an on-site peer review, and a final review by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. Along the way, more than 130 faculty members, administrators, and staff

contributed to building a comprehensive, interwoven picture of Virginia Tech’s commitment to its students, faculty and staff, the public that it serves, and its mission.

At its most fundamental, SACSCOC accreditation allows the university to continue to grant high-quality, nationally recognized degrees and to receive federal funding. It’s also an acknowledgment of Virginia Tech’s compliance with key SACSCOC principles, including integrity, institutional planning and effectiveness, student achievement, and financial and physical resources.

Accreditation takes place every decade with periodic evaluations to authorize new programs or instructional sites, such as when the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine was integrated into the university. The process can be arduous, yet it’s valuable for the university. “Accreditation provides an opportunity to do a deep dive into all aspects of our university, to reveal both areas of strength and opportunities for improvement,” said VT Executive Vice Provost Don Taylor.

Integral to SACSCOC’s accreditation is the required Quality Enhancement Plan

(QEP), a course of action to improve student learning outcomes or student success in an area the university considers important. “The QEP offers an opportunity to pursue a ‘big deal’ program of vital importance to our students that is aligned with our strategic goals,” Taylor said.

Past QEP efforts have successfully created university-wide improvements to student learning. Most recently, Virginia Tech’s QEP centered on creating first-year experiences for undergraduate students. As a result, the number of available first-year-experience courses

rose from five to 29 in five years.

A renewed focus on Virginia Tech’s “hands-on, minds-on” approach to undergraduate education is just one of the benefits of SACSCOC accreditation. “Students attending a SACSCOC-accredited university can be assured that the institution has demonstrated integrity throughout its operations and that it has a mission that is appropriate to higher education, well-qualified faculty, and effective university leadership,” said Kristin Bush, VT assistant provost for regional accreditation.

Leonard

from page 7

field a junior varsity team two years ago.

Leonard has been employed with Montgomery County Public Schools for five years and comes to Blacksburg High School with an extensive coaching background that has prepared him for his new role as head football coach for the Bruins. He most recently

served as offensive run coordinator in 2021 after serving as Christiansburg High School’s defensive coordinator for four seasons.

“I’m extremely humbled and excited to have this opportunity,” Leonard said. “Blacksburg is a great community with a great football tradition. I’m excited

to start building relationships and help our students reach their potential.”

The new coach met with returning players Wednesday and hopes to begin preseason workouts in the near future. The Bruins will return as many as 26 players including eight starters on both sides of the ball.

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Dr. Megan Thomas

The Community Health Center of the New River Valley is pleased to announce that Megan Cornwell Thomas, DO, FAAP, FACOI, FACP has joined our staff. Dr. Thomas will be serving patients in Christiansburg, Dublin, and at the Student Health Center at Giles High School. Dr. Thomas will be seeing patients for a full day at the Student Health Center each week, marking an expansion in the services at that location.

A graduate of Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine, Dr. Thomas has extensive experience as a practitioner, teacher, speaker, and mentor. She completed an Internal Medicine and Pediatrics residency at Geisinger Medical Center in Danville, PA. Dr. Thomas then returned to Montgomery County, serving as Core Faculty by supervising residents in the Internal Medicine Continuity Clinic at LewisGale Hospital Montgomery in Blacksburg, and serving as the Chair of Internal Medicine at VCOM. Throughout her career, she has mentored hundreds of students and interns and earned multiple teaching awards.

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COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER
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Community Health Center accepts patients with or without insurance.

Obituaries from page 6

Owens, Jr., James Linwood

James Linwood Owens, Jr., of Radford, formerly of Virginia Beach, went home to be with his Lord and Savior on Sunday, Feb. 11, 2022.

He was a retired tandem truck driver with the City of Virginia Beach and Ballio Sand Company.

He was preceded in death by his parents, James, Sr., and Nannie Poole Owens; five sisters: Sarah James, Evelyn Banks, Dorothy O’Neal, Barbara Hyman, and Deborah Baker; a brother, William “Buddy” Banks, Jr.; four brothers-in-law, and one sister-in-law.

Those left to cherish his memory are his brother and sister-in-law, Richard and Brenda Owens of Virginia Beach; his sisters and brothers-in-law, Jackie Green of Radford; Norma Owens of Radford, formerly of Virginia Beach; Sandra Owens Woodhouse of Virginia Beach; Carolyn and Vaughn Pitts of Detroit, Mich.; and Clara McPhearson of Virginia Beach; a special niece, Wanda Banks (Clarence Fonville, Jr.); brothers-in-law, Marlin Baker and Johnny Hyman, and many other relatives, friends, nieces, and nephews..

The family received friends from 5 p.m. until 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 16, 2020, at Mullins Funeral Home in Radford and also from noon until 1 p.m. today, Feb. 19, 2022, at Beach Funeral & Cremation Services in Virginia Beach. Funeral services will follow at 1 p.m. Interment will follow at a later date.

The Owens family is in the care of Mullins Funeral Home & Crematory in Radford and Beach Funeral & Cremation Services in Virginia Beach. www.mullinsfuneralhome.com.

Walsh, Betty Keister

Betty Keister (Hand) Walsh, 91, of Dublin, passed away on Saturday, Feb. 12, 2022.

She was born on Jan. 17, 1931, in Fairlawn to the late Robert H. Keister, Sr., and Mattie Lawson Keister. She was their first of five children, was the last surviving member of her immediate family, and was preceded in death by her husband, Thomas Clyde “Bud” Walsh; her parents; her precious granddaughter, Rae Leigh; and her siblings, Bobbie Wohlford, Phyllis McCauley, Carol Gray, and Robert Keister, Jr.

Survivors include her daughter and loyal daily guardian, Gail Leigh Hand of Dublin; son and daughter-in-law, Kenneth Alan and Kathy Hand of Easley, S.C.; grandchildren Charla Neil, Heather Matthews, and Shane Hand; great-grandchildren Rebekah, Karleigh Jo, Jeremy, Brayden, Kennedy, McKenzie, Easton, and Tilley; great-great-grandchildren Elizabeth and Kennedy; and many other relatives and friends.

The family would like to thank the staff at Cozy Home Haven for their loving care.

Per Betty’s request, there will be no services held at this time.

The family requests that donations be made to the New Dublin Presbyterian Church, 5331 New Dublin Church Rd., Dublin, VA, 24084.

Lord, we come to you again and again. We comfort ourselves that whatever we do you are with us because you told us, “Lo, I am with you always.” As we go about our daily lives, give us the assurance that you are with us always.

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

CROSSWORD ANSWERS

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