



## Christiansburg-Blacksburg Rotary Club names Dr. Scott Bailey its Citizen of the Year



PHOTO BY RICK FURR

The Christiansburg-Blacksburg Rotary Club recently presented its 2022 Citizen of the Year award to Dr. Scott Bailey, Director of Blacksburg Refugee Partnership. Pictured, left to right, are Club President Bridget Adams, Citizen of the Year Committee Chair Doug McAlister, Martha Bailey, BRP Director Dr. Scott Bailey, Chelsea Bailey, and BRP volunteers Jennifer and Dale Pike.

At its April 11 meeting, the Rotary Club of Christiansburg-Blacksburg presented its 2022 Citizen of the Year Award to Dr. Scott Bailey.

The Citizen of the Year Award honors a non-Rotarian whose voluntary acts and services have made the Christiansburg-Blacksburg area a better place in which to live. Dr. Bailey improves the community as co-founder and director of the Blacksburg Refugee

Partnership (BRP).

Dr. Bailey is an associate professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Virginia Tech who, with his co-founders, was moved by the plight of Syrian refugees in 2016 to organize BRP to provide a safe haven and support, to connect displaced families to the resources and ongoing support they need to successfully integrate into American society, to become self-reli-

ant, and to achieve fulfilling lives.

This support includes providing affordable housing, language training, jobs, transportation, and health care for immigrant refugee families resettling in Blacksburg. As Rotarian and BRP volunteer Ernie Bentley noted, these are "all the things Americans take for granted," but they required the coordi-

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After 22 seasons as conductor and music director of the Blacksburg Community Strings, Ake-Eric Renqvist will retire on May 1.

## Ake-Eric Renqvist to conduct his final concert with Blacksburg Community Strings after 22 seasons

Longtime leader of the Blacksburg Community Strings Ake-Eric Renqvist will retire from his position as the orchestra's music director and conductor after the group's concert on May 1, 2022.

Maestro Renqvist has served as music director and conductor of the Blacksburg Community Strings (BCS) for the past 22 years. He joined the group shortly after retiring to Newport after a long and distinguished career as a violist and conductor in his native Finland.

During his 29 years as a violist with the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, the orchestra made many recordings and toured all over the world. The President of Finland awarded Renqvist the title Director Musices in December 1995 in honor of his thirty years of teaching and conducting the North Kymi College of Music Symphony Orchestra and the Rauma Sinfonietta.

Åke (pronounced "oh-kay") first visited the United

States in 1968 at age 35 while on tour with the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra. He met his wife Helen in Finland, although she is a native of Virginia, and when the time came to retire from his busy life in professional music the two decided to relocate to Helen's hometown and continue their son Robbie's education in the United States.

His interest in the violin started at age 5 after seeing one played at a party. When he was 12 years old, he had taken only three violin lessons when Finland was attacked by the Soviet Union in 1942. After their home was destroyed in Helsinki his family moved to the country where Åke developed a love for cross-country skiing and continued to teach himself to play the violin. He later completed his studies on viola at Sibelius Academy, a music conservatory in Helsinki, and studied conducting with Premysl

See **Renqvist**, page 2

## Montgomery County Fire and EMS receives emergency medical services license

On April 7, 2022, the Virginia Office of Emergency Medical Services officially granted an EMS license to the Montgomery County Department of Fire and EMS. As an EMS license holder, Montgomery County paramedics and EMTs can provide medical attention to citizens.

The process to achieve the status of EMS license holder involved several steps to include policy and protocol development, recruitment and selection of staff, and the completion of an in-depth application for state licensure through the Virginia Department of Health Office of Emergency Medical Services.

As the population in Montgomery County continues to grow, so does the need for a variety of ser-

vices, including emergency medical care. In both 2020 and 2021, EMS volunteers responded to more than 10,000 calls throughout Montgomery County.

The Department of Fire and EMS recently hired 17 part-time and six full-time EMTs and paramedics to assist in responding to calls.

"The Board fully supports the newly created department and recognizes the need for paid EMS staff to assist the current volunteers," said Sherri Blevins, Chair of the Montgomery County Board of Supervisors.

"The EMS licensure and hiring of part-time and full-time paramedics and EMTs allows Montgomery County to continue to provide a service that our citizens

both need and expect to receive," Blevins said.

The Montgomery County Department of Fire and EMS provides various types of emergency services to the county's citizens and visitors. This includes provisions for emergency medical response, specialty rescue, emergency management, and hazardous material responses for the Town of Blacksburg, the Town of Christiansburg and rural Montgomery County.

"We will always value our volunteers and all they do for the County," said Montgomery County administrator Craig Meadows. "The newly hired staff members are simply there to help bridge coverage gaps at times when existing volunteers find it challenging to respond to calls."

## Flowers connect Hokies to past tragedy

The sweet smell of a flower garden permeated the Saunders Hall lab space.

Stray green leaves and clipped flower stems rested on the floor. Throughout the lab, big white buckets held bunches of flowers: white roses and carnations, orange tulips, yellow daisies, purple statice, white snapdragons, and more.

Standing at a table, Juan Gonzalez cut stems and carefully pushed red double roses, white daisies, and orange tulips into a foam piece attached to a standing flower cage.

"Trust your gut," Gonzalez, a senior majoring in horticulture and a teaching assistant for Virginia Tech's floral design class, said as he painstakingly determined which flower looked best in each spot.

He and at least 10 students and other teaching assistants spent Wednesday afternoon arranging flowers of all shapes, colors, and sizes into standing memorial sprays. But this assignment was more than a class project.

The students' work was placed at each of the 32 Hokie Stones at the April 16 Memorial on the Drillfield, which honors the Virginia Tech students and faculty who lost their lives on April 16, 2007.

This is the fourth year that the class has provided the

flowers placed on the memorial each April 16. Along with the standing sprays, the class creates three wreaths and two altar pieces and provides single-stemmed flowers that families place on the stones.

Family Relations, within Virginia Tech Alumni Relations, receives requests for flower arrangements from families, who often specify the colors and flowers that they want in their respective displays. The office reports the orders to the floral design class, and students get to work, typically about five days before Day of Remembrance events held annually on April 16.

Barbara Leshyn, a senior instructor in the School of Plant and Environmental Sciences who teaches the floral design course, said involving her students has helped them to better understand the tragedy.

"Everyone likes this partnership," Leshyn said. "These students were babies when this happened. It's a way to be involved and remember. It's Ut Prosim [That I May Serve] at its finest definition."

It's true for Gonzalez, who was 7 years old in 2007. Preparing the arrangements and, in particular, placing them at the memorial is a solemn activity for him.

"It becomes real," said Gonzalez, who has helped



Students in a Virginia Tech Floral Design class create flower arrangements for the April 16 Memorial on the Drillfield. Photo by Clark DeHart for Virginia Tech.

make the memorial arrangements for three years. "This is an important memorial."

The class includes 100 students and eight teaching assistants. Along with designing the flowers, the students build the wire cages on which the flowers are placed.

The class and Leshyn also provide floral arrangements for other university events.

This year was Mary Bayer's first to arrange flowers for the memorial. As the Virginia Tech sophomore clipped and fitted peach double roses, yellow daisies, and purple statice into the display, she said she

was nervous. She wanted to make sure the arrangement matched the family's wishes.

"It's an important event to have flowers for, and it's an honor to do," said Bayer, a hospitality and tourism management major who plans to work this summer in her aunt's New Jersey floral shop.

She lifted up her finished display and set it on the floor to check its appearance from a standing position. Bayer added a few more flowers to fill out the colorful design.

"It's Ut Prosim," she said. "You have to give when you can."

By *Jenny Kincaid Boone*

## Montgomery County resident Ennis convicted of Alabama murder

A Lee County, Alabama, jury has found 41-year-old Derrill Richard Ennis guilty of capital murder in the 2006 disappearance and murder of 21-year-old Lori Slesinski.

Ennis was living in Montgomery County when U.S. Marshals arrested him.

Because of COVID, the case had been postponed several times until this week. The case needed almost 10 days before the guilty verdict was handed down Thursday.

What ties the case even more to the New River Valley was the underlying fact that no body has been found. Thus, the case had eerie similarities to the disappearance and murder of Radford University student Gina Hall over 40 years ago.

Stephen Epperly was convicted in Hall's murder with no body to shed light in the case. Ennis's defense attorneys presented the same argument in the Alabama trial, saying there was no proof of the murder.

But prosecutors laid out a story in which Ennis was turned away after he told Slesinski he wanted a relationship. She said she just wanted to be friends.

Prosecutors are seeking the death penalty in the Ennis case, but it is not known when sentencing will be handed down.

## News Brief: Blacksburg police investigate shooting

On Saturday, April 16, 2022 at 1:48 a.m. Blacksburg police responded to the report of shots fired in the 300 block of Hunt Club Drive, Blacksburg. A victim in the shooting suffered a gunshot wound and was treated and released from a local hospital. Officers emphasize no immediate threat to the community exists

while suspects remain at large. An active investigation continues.

Anyone with information about this case is encouraged to contact the Blacksburg Police Department at (540) 443-1400 or to remain anonymous by calling the Blacksburg Police Tip Line at (540) 961-1819 or by emailing ciu@blacksburg.gov.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## Now through April 22:

**Montgomery Chamber Best Places to Work Survey**  
Virginia Tech's Center for Economic and Community Engagement and the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce are asking businesses to participate in the annual Best Places to Work survey. Chamber membership is not required, and the survey is open to all businesses in Montgomery County. The survey has two components, one for the employer and the other for employees. The top 20 Best Places to Work will be announced on May 18 at the Leadership in Changing Times and Best Places to Work Conference. This survey will be open only until April 22. For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/lcbestplaces22>. Contact [marketing@montgomerycc.org](mailto:marketing@montgomerycc.org) with any questions.

## Now through April 23:

**Blacksburg Fire Hydrant Flushing NE Quadrant**  
The Town of Blacksburg will be flushing fire hydrants in the Northeast Quadrant of town through April 23. Hydrant flushing can cause temporary pressure fluctuations and discolored water. These conditions will subside after the flushing is complete. For more information, call 540-443-1300.

## Now through April 30:

**Free prom dresses**  
By appointment only at the Meadowbrook Public Library, which has prom dresses of all sizes available for free to anyone in Montgomery County, Floyd County, and throughout the New River Valley. Call (540) 268-1964 to make an appointment to try on and choose a free prom dress.

## Now through May 7:

**Blacksburg Parks & Rec Toddler and Children Art Classes**  
Art & More for 2's \$1  
For 2-year-olds, 9:45 to 10:45 a.m. at the Parks and Recreation administrative offices. Fee is \$42 for residents, \$52 for non-residents. This class will introduce toddlers to art in a semi-structured setting. The classes will consist of a variety of art projects, story time, and songs. Parent participation is required.  
Art Smart \$1  
For three- and four-year olds at the Blacksburg Parks & Recreation administrative offices from 11 a.m. until noon. Fee is \$42 for residents, \$52 for non-residents.  
Toddlers will be exposed to different media while learning how to use colors, shapes, patterns, and sizes. They will be encouraged to use imagination, expression, and communication through art. The emphasis will be on fun and social interaction.  
Register online at [www.blacksburg.gov/recreation](http://www.blacksburg.gov/recreation), by phone 540-443-1140 or 540-443-1100, or in person at any Blacksburg Parks and Recreation facility.

## Wednesday, April 20:

Loops group

At the Blacksburg Library; 2 p.m. Attendees can bring their projects and join the library's loops group for community and conversation. Everyone is welcome.

**Art Club: Recycled art**  
At the Christiansburg Library; 2 p.m. Participants will create a unique art piece out of recycled materials. For ages 8 and up. Registration is required.

**MFRL Library Board of Trustees meeting**  
The Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library Board of Trustees will meet at 7 p.m. at the Blacksburg Library.

**Free GED classes with NRCC**  
At the Radford Public Library; 9 a.m. to noon. Free GED prep classes offered by New River Community College in the library's community room. Call (540) 674-3682 for additional information.

## Thursday, April 21:

**"Still Upright and Headed Downstream" author's talk**  
At the Radford Public Library; 7 to 8 p.m. Author John Lane is an emeritus professor who taught creative writing and environmental studies at Wofford College. As an avid kayaker, he has written often about water and rivers. He will visit the library to discuss his new collection of poetry and prose, written over thirty-five years, about kayaking, rivers, and river people.

**Talking About Books: "The Code Breaker"**  
At the Christiansburg Library; 11 a.m. To be discussed this month is "The Code Breaker: Jennifer Doudna, Gene Editing, and the Future of the Human Race" by Walter Isaacson, in-person and virtually.

**Early birders with New River Land Trust**  
At the Blacksburg Library; 4:30 p.m. Join the New River Land Trust for a bird scavenger hunt and other bird-related activities.

**Peep Houses**  
At the Christiansburg Library; 4:30 p.m. Build a cozy graham cracker home for little marshmallow Peeps. Registration is required. All ages.

## Saturday, April 23:

**Spring children's consignment sale**  
Blacksburg United Methodist Church (BUMC) will hold its semi-annual consignment sale of children's items at the Whisner Building of the main church campus, 111 Church St. from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Families can get great deals on gently used kids' clothes and shoes, toys, books, games, movies, baby gear and accessories, sports equipment, maternity clothing, and more. Many items are like new (some are even brand new). Some items will be half price between 12:30 and 1:30 p.m. Proceeds will benefit local charities. Due to contact with young children, masks will be required.

**Bingo for All Ages**  
At the Meadowbrook Public Library; 1 p.m. An afternoon of free bingo with a variety of prizes at the library. For all ages and registration is required as space

is limited.

**Craft Supply Swap**  
At the Blacksburg Library; 2 p.m. Bring items in to swap with other crafters. The event is free and is open to everyone. All leftovers will go to benefit library craft programs and the Creative Reuse Center.

## Sunday, April 24:

**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, April 25 through Wednesday, April 27:

**Lifeguard instructor training**  
The Christiansburg Aquatic Center will offer lifeguard instructor training April 25-27. The schedule for Monday, April 25, is 8 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. The schedule for Tuesday, April 26, is 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., and the schedule for Wednesday, April 27, is 8 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. The fee for the course is \$300. Persons interested in taking the course should contact Caroline Ratkus at [cratkus@christiansburg.org](mailto:cratkus@christiansburg.org).

## Tuesday, April 26:

**Radford University guitar ensemble concert**  
"African Influences" at the Davis Performance Hall in the Covington Center on Radford University's campus; 7:30 p.m. Free and open to the public.

## Thursday, April 28:

**IBLA grand prize performance concert**  
At the Davis Performance Hall in the Covington Center on Radford University's Campus; 7:30 p.m. Free and open to the public.

## Thursday, April 28, and Friday, April 29:

**"Dancing on the Edge"**  
In the Bondurant Auditorium on Radford University's Campus; 7:30 p.m. Tickets: Adults \$7; Children \$3.50; Students with RU ID admitted free. For tickets, visit [www.radfordactivities.com](http://www.radfordactivities.com) or call 540-831-5420.

## Saturday, April 30:

**American Business Women's Association April Luncheon Meeting**  
11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Holiday Inn Christiansburg-Blacksburg. 99 Bradley Dr. Christiansburg. Cost is \$14.25. Instead of hearing from a guest speaker this month, the association will use its time together to get to know one another better. RSVP by contacting Terri Welch at [christiansburg@wineanddesign.com](mailto:christiansburg@wineanddesign.com).

**"Dancing on the Edge"**  
In the Bondurant Auditorium on Radford University's campus; 2 p.m. Tickets: Adults \$7; Children \$3.50; RU students admitted free with ID.. For tickets visit [www.radfordactivities.com](http://www.radfordactivities.com) or call 540-831-5420.

**Healthy Kids Day**  
From 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. on the field and tennis courts between Cassell Coliseum and the YMCA Lancaster House on Washington St. SW in Blacksburg.  
The YMCA at Virginia Tech will celebrate Healthy Kids Day, a national initiative to improve the health and well-being of kids. Healthy Kids Day is a free "summer kick-off" event consisting of music, games, healthy snacks, crafts, and educational activities for families. Local organizations will also be promoting various summer programs and activities that are perfect for kids.

## Thursday, May 5:

**Virginia Tech Forest Landowner Extravaganza**  
The College of Natural Resources and Environment and the Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation will host the first-ever Forest Landowner Extravaganza from 12:30 to 5 p.m. The program begins with a catered lunch with speakers.  
After lunch, participants can choose from five opportunities. Transportation to off-campus sites will be provided. They are Preparing for Generation NEXT Legacy Planning (workshop); Tree Identification and Forest Ecology at Pandapas Pond (walking tour); Agroforestry Options at Catawba Sustainability Center (walking tour); Tour of Virginia Tech's Urban Forest (walking tour); or Ongoing Research and Innovations in Forest Products (workshop).

The extravaganza takes place concurrently with the Virginia Forestry Summit at the Inn at Virginia Tech May 3-5. The cost is \$10 for summit attendees, \$15 for others. Questions? Contact Jennifer Gagnon at 540-231-6391 or [jgagnon@vt.edu](mailto:jgagnon@vt.edu).

**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. For further information, call 540-250-2283 or 540-239-9864.

## Tuesday, May 10:

**Sons of Confederate Veterans Meeting**  
The Sons of Confederate Veterans, Stuart Horse Artillery Camp 1784 will meet at 7 p.m. at Aly's Italian Family Restaurant on 3204 Riner Road. Members of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) are invited to attend. Camp member James Evans will give a talk on the "CSS Hunley." For further information, call 540-320-4315 or 540-239-9864.

## Thursday, May 12:

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

## Ongoing

**Free GED classes with NRCC**  
At the Radford Public Library; 9 a.m. to noon. Free GED prep classes offered by New River Community College in the library's community room. Call (540) 674-3682 for additional information.

## Renqvist from page 1

Charvat, then principal conductor for the National Opera in Prague.  
Renqvist has also had an extensive teaching career, including many years at Helsinki Conservatory and other music academie. He also served as director of a private music school in Helsinki. He has mentored a number of students who have gone on to play professionally around the world.  
During his tenure as conductor in Virginia, he collaborated with former students and colleagues as featured soloists while many local students, including BCS players, have flourished under his instruction.  
"Mr. Renqvist accepted me as an adult student learning cello as a new instrument," said John Crawford, the principal cellist of the Blacksburg Community Strings. "I had no prior experience with string instruments, but he helped me get from being an absolute beginner to the 'gigging' cellist I am today. He always challenged me not only to play

the notes on the page but to also play them well. I was as much a student of cello as I was a student of music."  
Current student and treasurer of the BCS, Andrea Muscatello, remarked "Åke's teaching is to foster the love of music in his students, regardless of ability. He finds the talent and musical voice from inside the student and rejoices in their success."  
"During my time as president, I grew to understand how deeply committed Åke is to the development of amateur musicians," noted Marta Brinberg, past president of the BCS. "He guides and celebrates the progress of each ensemble member. His motto seems to be 'of course you can do it.'"  
Maestro Renqvist will continue to teach violin, viola, and cello lessons from his home studio, but his wealth of experience and generosity of spirit will surely be missed on the podium in front of this local community orchestra.

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# Agape to expand food bank operations in Christiansburg

The Agape Food Bank has served over 1,700 people here in the New River Valley in the past two years and expects the number to steadily increase this year. In anticipation of the new number, the group has purchased the former Montgomery County Public Schools Facility location at 1175 Cambria Street.

The school system moved its operations to the former Christiansburg Middle School site, thus placing it on the market earlier this year.

Kim Bowman is the Director of the NRV Center. "We decided to purchase the school

property because of its ideal location. Also, there's enough space to expand our current services now and still have room for future growth," she said.

The group had been operating out of a rented space at New River Fellowship for the past two years and will now go from 9,500 sq. ft to right under 30,000.

Agape NRV is one of four centers in Virginia, owned by the Agape Center Corporation in Moneta, Virginia. The down payment on the property was funded by the corporation, but much more needs to be done.

As much as 40 percent of the local funding is provided by member churches. Currently, 10 churches are a part of the NRV facility, but Bowman said a large renovation to the Cambria Street location will need additional monies. Approximately \$500,000 will have to be raised.

"The new facility will enable us to bring all our current services together in one location," said Bowman. "In addition to our food and diaper pantries, we will also have a clothing store, a furniture store, a household department and even a gift department for Christmas and birth-



PHOTO COURTESY OF AGAPE FOOD BANK

**The Agape Food Bank of the New River Valley is moving to the former Montgomery County Public Schools Transportation facility on Cambria Street.**

day programs." She said one of the things the agency is most excited about is the addition of an intense 11-week program called "Getting Ahead Class," which is designed to lift people out of poverty. "It will also help them to establish life skills that build a firm foundation," Bowman said.

Agape currently offers a 12-step Celebrate Recovery program at its center.

Donations can be made to the capital campaign at P.O. Box 1281, Christiansburg, 24068.

Last year, Agape NRV utilized 385 volunteers. In addition to more funding, the need for volunteers will also grow. Those interested in volunteering can contact [agapecenternrv@gmail.com](mailto:agapecenternrv@gmail.com)

# Christiansburg police seek suspect wanted in connection with vehicle reported stolen

The Christiansburg Police Department continues its search for an at-large suspect wanted in connection with a vehicle reported stolen on April 13 in Giles County.

The department's investigation began on Thursday, April 14, at approximately 10:02 a.m., when an officer conducted a routine traffic stop in the 2700 block of Roanoke Street for a vehicle with an expired inspection sticker.

While the officer attempted to pull the vehicle over, the driver sped up and ran over a traffic sign. The driver then pulled into a parking lot where both the driver and a passenger fled on foot. With help from the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office, police were able to arrest one suspect, Robert Joseph Franklin Smith, Jr., age 31 of Christiansburg.

Police were transporting Smith to the Montgomery

County Magistrates Office when he began experiencing a medical emergency. Christiansburg Rescue was called and arrived on the scene in under 30 seconds. Smith was transported to LewisGale Montgomery Regional Hospital, but no updates on his medical status had been released as of Monday morning. Charges are pending.

Police are continuing their search for the second suspect,

identified as a white male with tattoos, last seen wearing jeans but no shirt or shoes. Law enforcement deployed both K9 tracking units and drone units in an effort to locate the suspect, but he had not yet been located as of Monday morning.

During the department's investigation, police found that the vehicle the suspects were using was reported stolen in Giles County on Wednesday,

April 13. Investigators believe the suspect at large may be armed. While no information indicates the suspect poses a threat to the public, residents in neighborhoods along Roanoke Street near the top of Christiansburg Mountain are encouraged to keep their vehicles and residences locked, and be alert to any suspicious persons.

The investigation remains ongoing.

# Virginia Tech's Big Event a big help for Glencoe Mansion

On Saturday, April 9, a group of engineering students from Vir-

ginia Tech participating with The Big Event, the school's day of service

to the community, gave of their time to help Glencoe Mansion, Mu-

seum, and Gallery. The students helped with the daunting task of

cleaning the museum's enormous window. In the process they also

learned about the history of the area.



# Rotary Club

from page 1

nation of "hundreds of local citizens, many area churches and mosques, non-profits such as the YMCA at Virginia Tech and Literacy Volunteers of the New River Valley, and local employers. Scott Bailey and the BRP have done this quietly without generating much publicity for the group."

Dr. Bailey's continued role as Director of BRP has fostered its continued success and contributed to the resettlement of 21 adults and 19 children from countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, Burundi, and Somalia with the ultimate goal being safety, peace, and independence for each of these immigrants.

BRP volunteer Jennifer Pike spoke of Dr. Bailey's tireless optimism and how he "often volunteers to do the hard stuff and often does it alone." Pike commended Dr. Bailey's ability to "provide an opportunity for so many to make a difference."

In Dr. Bailey's comments upon receiving the Citizen of the Year Award, he said that the award represents the Blacksburg Refugee Partnership's group efforts and not

his as an individual. "To be a member of the BRP is an honor," he said, "I'm routinely inspired by the group's ideas. So many people want to make a difference and be welcoming."

The Rotary Club of Christiansburg-Blacksburg has awarded a Citizen of the Year since 1987, but as Committee Chair Doug McAllister said, "We don't give an

award unless someone truly qualified has been nominated. Dr. Scott Bailey meets and exceeds the expectations for our Award."

Club President Bridget Adams concurred saying, "Scott has dedicated the last five years to [the Rotary motto] 'Service Above Self,' a true representation of the spirit of Rotary and Rotarians everywhere."

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## ONLINE AUCTION

**Ends Thursday, May 5<sup>th</sup> @ 4 PM**  
**Lots for Sale on Claytor Lake in Pulaski VA!**  
**Graham Morris Ln, Pulaski VA 24301**

**Bid Now at [VaAuctionPro.com](http://VaAuctionPro.com)**

You have the opportunity to purchase lakefront property in Pulaski VA! There are 5 lots available which range from 2 – 6 acres. The depth along the bank ranges from 12-15' and is about 70' in the middle. The lots are located on Graham Morris Lane which is a private drive in Pulaski County on the Peak Creek Section of Claytor Lake. Each lot is mostly wooded, has frontage on Claytor Lake, are approved for well and 3 BR septic and have dock permits.

Extensive, deliberate, and careful consideration was taken by engineers, soil scientists, developer, & APCO to ensure each lot within Grahams Pointe has great shoreline, road access, buildable areas, & dock permits, while preserving the lake view & private setting of the neighborhood and each individual lot.

The lots will be sold in five separate offerings. Bidders desiring more than one lot will need to be high bidder on all lots desired. Each offering will stay open until all bidding is complete and all offerings will close simultaneously.

**Offering # 1 – 2.73 Acres**  
Accessed by Left Fork Ln off Graham Morris Ln. Perked for 3 BR Home. Has a Dock Permit and 250' of Claytor Lake Shoreline.

**Offering # 2 – 3.403 Acres**  
Accessed by Graham Morris Ln. Perked for 3 BR Home. Has a Dock Permit and 159' of Claytor Lake Shoreline.

**Offering # 5 – 6.175 Acres**  
Accessed by Graham Morris Ln. Perked for 3 BR Home. Has a Dock Permit and 657' of Claytor Lake Shoreline.

**Offering # 3 – 2.944 Acres**  
Accessed by Graham Morris Ln. Perked for 3 BR Home. Has a Dock Permit and 325' of Claytor Lake Shoreline.

**Offering # 4 – 4.417 Acres**  
Accessed by Graham Morris Ln. Perked for 3 BR Home. Has a Dock Permit and 528' of Claytor Lake Shoreline.

**Preview Dates – Saturday April 23rd at 11 AM & Wednesday April 27th at 3 PM**

**Terms** - 10% Buyer's Premium will be added to final high bid to arrive at contract price. \$10,000 Earnest Money Deposit per lot required day of sale. Close in 45 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. Download Bidder Pack at [VAAuctionPro.com](http://VAAuctionPro.com)

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# OPINION

## Is fishing on concrete a sign you've lost your mind?

**Slim Randles**  
*Home Country*

It was just one of those things. It didn't really mean Marvin Pincus had lost his mind. Consider this yourself for a minute. Marvin had opened the mail that morning and in it was the Fenwick glass fly rod he'd ordered. Oh, it was used, of course. But there's a feel to a Fenwick that only a man dedicated to a life of using dry flies can appreciate.

Marvin had broken his ankle the previous week and was temporarily in a wheelchair. It was his right ankle, so he couldn't drive down to the creek. And there, in his hands, was the Fenwick. He put it together, attached a reel and some four-weight line and set it on the couch and looked at it.

Marjorie was off visiting her sister, so she couldn't help him. But there's a pull, an irresistible draw to a fly rod. He had to cast

it. Now.

It took Marvin about 20 minutes to negotiate the front steps with that wheelchair and the Fenwick. Finally, he negotiated the sidewalk and then the edge of the street itself.

Up came the Fenwick. A few swishes in the air told Marvin he'd done the right thing in ordering the rod. So he ran out some line and began casting. About halfway across the street was a large mulberry leaf. He

did a double haul on the line and sent the fly toward the leaf. It took several tries before he hit it, but when he made that cast, you could've sold tickets to it. His fly came to rest about three feet above the leaf and then fluttered gently down onto its target. Marvin's smile said it all.

Then the school bus came around the corner full of kids heading home, and Marvin realized he was casting a fly rod from a wheelchair onto dry

pavement.

"Hi Mr. Pincus!" yelled one of the kids. "Catch anything?" "A little slow today, Billy," he yelled back.

"Isn't it hard to catch fish without water?" Billy yelled.

"It's okay, son," Marvin said with a grin. "I'm using a dry fly!"

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Brought to you by Fenwick. <https://www.purefishing.com/pages/fenwick> Feel everything.

## Virginia's individual income tax filing and payment deadline is May 2

Virginia Tax is reminding taxpayers in Virginia that they have until Monday, May 2, 2022, to submit their returns.

"This year, the Virginia filing deadline falls on the first business day after Sunday, May 1," said Tax Commissioner Craig M. Burns. "We are, as always, encouraging taxpayers to file electronically and request a re-

fund, if they have one coming, via direct deposit."

Electronically filed returns are typically processed within two weeks while mailed returns may take up to eight weeks or longer to process.

Here is some other important information taxpayers should keep in mind:

No penalties or interest will

apply so long as a return is filed and full payment is made by the deadline.

Taxpayers are eligible to file their taxes for free if their income was \$73,000 or less in 2021.

If taxpayers miss the filing deadline, Virginia has an automatic, 6-month filing extension. No application is re-

quired. Taxpayers still need to pay any taxes owed on time to avoid additional penalties and interest.

Taxpayers who do need to make a payment have several easy-to-use options available including online, directly from their bank account; check or money order; and credit or debit card, both of which incur

an additional fee.

For secure, online self-service, taxpayers can create and log onto an online individual account. This allows taxpayers to track their return or refund. They can also check the status of their refund by calling 804.367.2486, or using the Where's My Refund application on the Virginia Tax website.

Submit letters to the editor to [editor@ourvalley.org](mailto:editor@ourvalley.org)

### News Messenger

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## Financial Focus: Health Saving Account (HSA), a healthy way to save for retirement

Many expenses in life are unpredictable, but there are two things we know we'll have to pay for: medical bills and retirement. Everyone probably needs to take a variety of steps to meet these costs, but one financial instrument that can help is a health savings account (HSA).

Here are the basics about an HSA: Eligibility – Persons enrolled in a qualified high-deductible health plan (HDHP) can generally contribute to an HSA. HSAs are typically offered through employers, but workers can still open one even if the employer doesn't provide it. Those who are self-employed can also open one, though they must have HDHP coverage. They also can't be enrolled in another health insurance plan, other than those permitted, such as dental, vision, long-term care and disability insurance, and they can't be enrolled in Medicare. Also, employees can't be claimed as a dependent on another person's tax return.

Contribution limits – In 2022, employees or the self-employed can put in up to \$3,650 to an HSA with single coverage, or \$7,300 for family coverage. Those who are 55 or older can put in an extra \$1,000 per year.

Tax benefits – An HSA has triple tax advantages: The contributions

are made with pre-tax dollars, so they can reduce the taxable income for the year; the earnings grow tax-free; and the withdrawals are tax-free, provided the money is used for qualified medical expenses. (Withdrawals taken before age 65 that aren't used for qualified medical expenses are taxable and are subject to a 20% penalty. Once a participant reaches 65, the penalty no longer applies, although withdrawals are still taxable.)

In addition to providing tax benefits, an HSA can help participants in other ways. Perhaps most significantly, the HSA can be an additional financial resource for retirement. That's because the money in the HSA can be carried over from year to year. Participants aren't obligated to "use it or lose it." So, the money not spent on annual medical expenses can continue to grow tax-deferred. Plus, an HSA is "portable." It moves with the participants when they leave a job.

Furthermore, unlike a 401(k) or a traditional IRA, an HSA does not require participants to begin taking withdrawals once they reach 72. They can leave the account untouched for essentially as long as they'd like. And while participants

may need to use their HSA funds to meet their medical expenses in retirement – which can be considerable, even with Medicare – they can use what they don't spend on medical costs for their other needs without penalty, once they reach age 65. (As mentioned above, any HSA withdrawals not used for qualified medical costs are taxable.)

Here's one other point to keep in mind: The HSA likely contains investment options, along with a cash account. If participants put all their funds in the cash account, as many people do, they might be depriving themselves of the growth opportunities provided by the investment options. On the other hand, of course, these investments generally carry more risk. One possible way to benefit from both parts of an HSA is to keep enough cash to cover the health insurance's out-of-pocket maximum and invest the rest.

An HSA can help participants in numerous ways. Those who have access to one should consider taking advantage of it.

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Edward Jones, Member SIPC.

## Virginia's gas prices fell another 4.5 cents per gallon last week

Average gasoline prices in Virginia fell 4.5 cents per gallon last week, averaging \$3.93/g Monday, April 18, according to GasBuddy's survey of 4,081 stations in Virginia.

Prices in Virginia are 19.5 cents per gallon lower than a month ago but stand \$1.22/g higher than a year ago.

According to GasBuddy price reports, the cheapest station in Virginia was priced at \$3.41/g Monday, April 18, while the most expensive was \$5.49/g, a difference of \$2.08/g.

The national average price of gasoline fell 3.8 cents per gallon last week, averaging \$4.06/g April 18. The national average is down 21.1 cents per gallon from a month ago but stands \$1.21/g higher than a year ago, according to

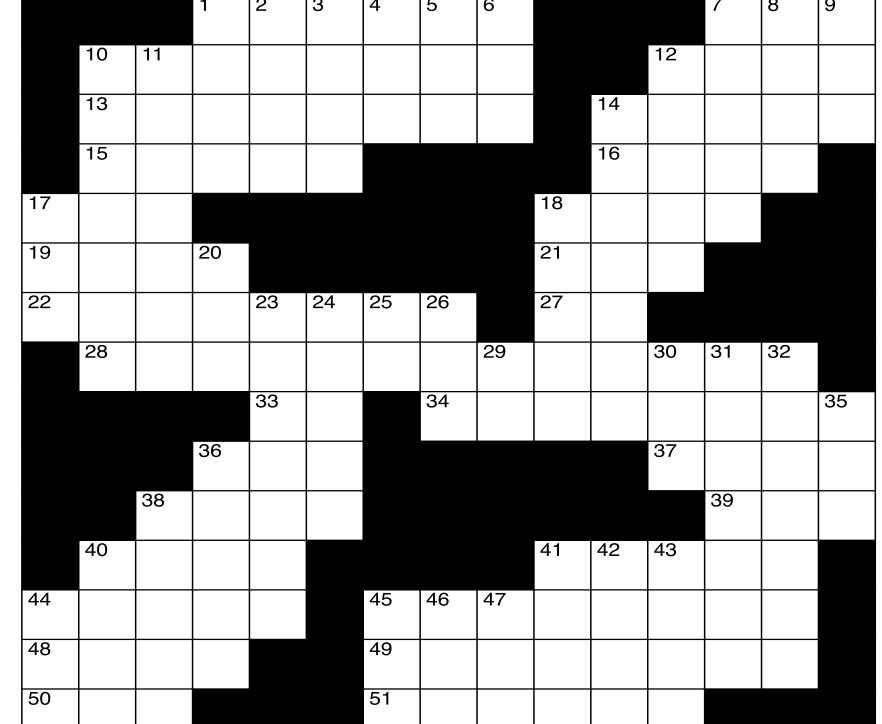
GasBuddy data compiled from more than 11 million weekly price reports covering over 150,000 gas stations across the country.

"We've now seen the national average price of gasoline decline every week for the last month, a feat we most likely would not have expected ahead of summer and given the continued turns in Russia's war on Ukraine," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy. "However, the downturn could slow or could even reverse in the days ahead if the rally in oil prices continues. A barrel of crude is now \$14 higher than it was last week, as the European Union weighs placing harsher sanctions on Russia. This could further tilt the delicate

balance of supply and demand in the wrong way, potentially sending oil prices up significantly if implemented. The path forward at the pump remains murky, however, with many possible outcomes, so motorists should be prepared for a bumpy ride," said De Haan.

*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>.*

### CROSSWORD PUZZLE



- CLUES ACROSS**
- A woman of refinement
  - Body part
  - One who imitates
  - Tropical Asian starlings
  - A type of delivery
  - W. Australian capital
  - Many wombs
  - Wings
  - Expression of amusement
  - Brews
  - Mild yellow Dutch cheese
  - Mild expression
  - Solitary
  - Distance to top
  - The rebirth of a soul in a new body
  - Police who investi-

- gate police (abbr.)
- Begrudged
- Popular sports league
- Autonomous republic of Russia
- Double-headed drum
- Type of light bulb
- Czech River
- Male servants (Span.)
- Previously
- Minor
- Metrical foot
- Days that follow Mondays
- Small European viper
- News shows have one

- CLUES DOWN**
- Inspiration
  - Resembling wings
  - Form of Persian
  - Consumed
  - Extinct flightless bird of New Zealand
  - Sea eagle
  - Jaguarundi
  - Poker stake
  - Bravo! Bravo! Bravo!
  - South American nation
  - A colorless, odorless gas
  - Disturbance
  - Artist's tool
  - Polish peninsula
  - Ottoman military leaders
  - Bird-like dinosaur
  - Drinking glass
  - Central Florida city

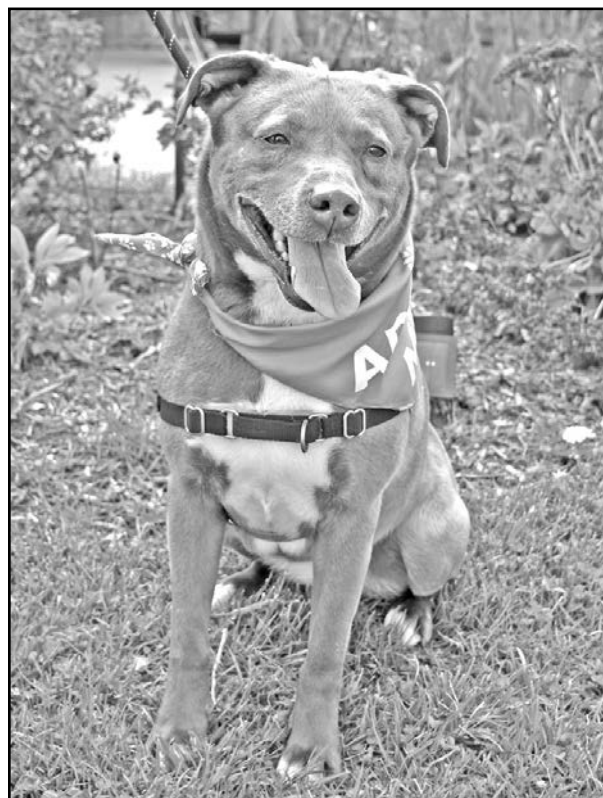
- One's mother
- To do it is human
- Atomic #10
- Used to write
- The branch of medicine concerned with the ear
- Adversaries
- Have already done
- One of conspicuous wealth
- It flies over sporting events
- Geological times
- Net
- Musical phrase
- Chadic dialect
- Private Internet Access (abbr.)
- Lizard genus
- Woman of the church
- Having ten

Submit letters to the editor to [editor@ourvalley.org](mailto:editor@ourvalley.org)

# PETS OF THE WEEK



**Suki is a sweet, friendly gal with special needs. She would do best in a home where she can take it easy. She may also need to be the only pet in the home. Stop by the Animal Care and Adoption Center to meet this pawsome gal.**



**Need a hiking buddy or a partner for the great outdoors? Sophie says, "Pick me! Pick me!" She's a sweet older dog who loves exploring and checking out the world. She does well on a leash and enjoys attention and affection. Her adoption is sponsored by Montgomery County Friends of Animal Care and Control.**

## OBITUARIES

### Brogan, Shelby Bell Bane

Shelby Bell Bane Brogan, 82, of Radford, passed away Tuesday, April 12, 2022.

She was a member of East Radford Church of God.

Shelby was preceded in death by her parents, Carl William and Agnes Brunk Bane; her husband, James Earl Brogan; four brothers and one sister; and a son-in-law, Richard Green.

Survivors include her daughter, Debra Jean Green; sons Randy Wayne Brogan and Ricky Lee Brogan; several grandchildren and great-grandchildren; sisters



Barbara Giles and Reba Blevins; brothers Charlie Bane and Lewis Bane; and many other relatives and friends.

The family received friends on Tuesday, April 19, 2022, at the Mullins Funeral Home in Radford. Memorial services followed with the Rev. Wayne Poston officiating. Interment was private in the Hickman Cemetery in

Radford.

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

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

### Harmon, Crystal La'Shawn

Crystal La'Shawn Harmon passed away peacefully surrounded by her closest family at her bedside in Winston Salem, N.C. on Thursday, April 7, 2022.

Crystal left only in soul on the 7th as she was able to live on by donating her organs and giving life to others on April 9, 2022.

Crystal was born in Radford to the late Jamma James and Howard Baldwin. She was always a princess to the late Leander Lee Lewis, Jr.

Left to cherish and celebrate Crystal's life is her only child, Infinity Harmon. She is also survived by two brothers, Garyl "Jay" Jones and Randal "ES" Stigger; a sister, Danetta Claytor, other special family and friends; and a host of nieces and



nephews.

Crystal loved to travel and adored her family. She loved to spend time shopping with her daughter Infinity, and spoiling her nieces and nephews. She was the best Kool-Aid maker ever and she had even ventured out in cooking. Crystal was a lover and truly cared for the ones she loved. She will be truly missed.

Memorial services will be held today, Wednesday, April 20, 2022, at 1 p.m. at New Mount Olive United Methodist Church in Radford.

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

www.mullinsfuneralhome.com.

### Pennow, Russell James

Russell James Pennow, 99, of Radford, passed away Friday, April 15, 2022.

He was retired from AT&T and was a past member of the Woods Church of the Nazarene in Warren, Mich.

Russell was a U.S. Army veteran having served during WWII. He was preceded in death by his parents, William and Lizzie Pennow; his wife, Constance Lillian Pennow; a brother, Walter Pennow; and a sister, Betty Pennow.



Survivors include his sons and daughters-in-law, Dean and Lorraine Pennow of Poquoson, and Dale and Nancy Pennow of Snowville; grandchildren Nicholas Pennow and Amy, and Michelle Pennow and Michael; and many other relatives and friends.

Funeral services will be private with burial in the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery.

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

### Vaught, Jane Ellen

Jane Ellen Vaught (Rodden), 75, passed away, Tuesday, April 5, 2022, at Piedmont Mountain Hospital in Jasper, Ga., after suffering a heart attack.

Mrs. Vaught was born December 30, 1946, in Norfolk, Va. the daughter of the late James Rodden and Ellen Noreen Metzger (Berman).

Jane worked as a weaver at New River Industries in Radford for over 25 years.

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband, William "Joby" Vaught of Pembroke; her son, David Scott Bryant; her brothers, James,



Herman, and David Rodden; and her sister, Mary Anna Phillips (Rodden).

Jane is survived by her sons, LTC (Retired) James W. Bryant, Jr. (Jene) of Talking Rock, Ga., and John R. Bryant of Holtwood, Penn.; her grandchildren, Eleina, Hunter and Brayden Bryant and Johnathan, William, Taylor and Karenia Bryant and Jessica Miller; and her great-grandchildren, John and Jesslynn Hensel.

A memorial viewing will be held, Saturday, April 23, 2022, at 1:00 p.m. in the Main Chapel at Highland Memorial Gardens in Dublin.

### Legal Notice

APPLICATION OF ATMOS ENERGY CORPORATION, FOR EXPEDITED APPROVAL OF A SPECIAL CONTRACT PURSUANT TO § 56 235.2 OF THE CODE OF VIRGINIA CASE NO. PUR-2022-00043

On March 11, 2022, Atmos Energy Corporation ("Atmos" or "Company") filed an application ("Application") with the State Corporation Commission ("Commission") pursuant to § 56 235.2 of the Code of Virginia ("Code") and the Commission's Rules for Filing an Application to Provide Electric and Gas Service Under a Special Rate, Contract or Incentive, requesting expedited approval of a special contract for gas transportation service to Blue Star Manufacturing, LLC and Blue Star NBR, LLC (jointly, "Blue Star").

In support of its Application, the Company states that effective January 27, 2022, Atmos and Blue Star entered into a "System Expansion and Interruptible Transportation Service Agreement" ("Contract") to construct a system expansion and transport gas to Blue Star's industrial facility under construction in Wytheville, Virginia. Atmos states that Blue Star's manufacturing facility and gas service requirements require a system expansion by Atmos to serve this facility. The Company states that as part of this system expansion, Atmos was able to negotiate system expansion and transportation service conditions with Blue Star that include a minimum margin requirement, which is to protect Atmos and its current customers in the unlikely event that Blue Star's future usage falls short of expectations and ends up being insufficient to justify the investment in the system. Atmos states what while Blue Star will be paying tariffed rates, the minimum margin requirement is not specifically contemplated in the Company's tariff. Accordingly, Atmos is submitting this agreement for approval as a special contract.

Atmos states that no customers would be prejudiced by the Commission approving the arrangement with Blue Star and approving the Contract. The Company states that Blue Star will be a high-volume customer that brings significant economic benefits to the region; Blue Star will be paying tariffed rates; and the minimum margin requirement in the Contract will protect other customers should Blue Star's usage fall short. Atmos states that pursuant to the terms of the Contract, the Company is only required to construct a system expansion in order to transport and redeliver confirmed quantities of gas that it receives into its system for Blue Star, and as such, reliable service to other customers will not be jeopardized by providing service to Blue Star.

In support of its request for expedited approval, the Company states that since Blue Star expects to be operational in or around August 2022, Atmos has already begun work on the system expansion in order to meet Blue Star's operational requirements. Atmos further states that the only item in the Contract for which the Company seeks Commission approval that is not already covered by the Company's existing tariffs is the provision implementing a minimum margin requirement.

The Commission entered an Order for Notice and Comment that, among other things, ordered the Company to provide notice of its Application and provided interested persons an opportunity to comment and/or request a hearing on the Company's Application.

The Commission has taken judicial notice of the ongoing public health issues related to the spread of the coronavirus, or COVID-19. In accordance therewith, all pleadings, briefs, or other documents required to be served in this matter should be submitted electronically to the extent authorized by 5 VAC 5-20-150, *Copies and format*, of the Commission's Rules of Practice. Confidential and Extraordinarily Sensitive Information shall not be submitted electronically and should comply with 5 VAC 5-20-170, *Confidential information*, of the Rules of Practice. Any person seeking to hand deliver and physically file or submit any pleading or other document shall contact the Clerk's Office Document Control Center at (804) 371-9838 to arrange the delivery.

Pursuant to 5 VAC 5-20-140, *Filing and service*, of the Rules of Practice, the Commission has directed that service on parties and the Commission's Staff in this matter shall be accomplished by electronic means. Please refer to the Commission's Order for Notice and Comment for further instructions concerning Confidential or Extraordinarily Sensitive Information.

A copy of the public version of the Application may be obtained, at no charge, by requesting it in writing from the Company's counsel, Timothy E. Biller, Esquire, and James G. Ritter, Esquire, Hunton Andrews Kurth LLP, Riverfront Plaza, East Tower, 951 E. Byrd Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219, [tbiller@huntonak.com](mailto:tbiller@huntonak.com), [ritterj@huntonak.com](mailto:ritterj@huntonak.com). A public version of the Application and related documents may be downloaded from the Commission's website: [sec.virginia.gov/pages/Case Information](http://sec.virginia.gov/pages/Case%20Information).

On or before May 6, 2022, any interested person or entity may submit comments on the Application with the Clerk of the Commission by following the instructions on the Commission's website: [sec.virginia.gov/casecomments/Submit Public Comments](http://sec.virginia.gov/casecomments/SubmitPublicComments). Those unable, as a practical matter, to submit comments electronically may file such comments by U.S. mail to the Clerk of the State Corporation Commission, c/o Document Control Center, P.O. Box 2118, Richmond, Virginia 23218-2118. All such comments shall refer to Case No. PUR-2022-00043.

On or before May 6, 2022, any interested person or entity may file a request for a hearing on the Application with the Clerk of the Commission at [sec.virginia.gov/clk/efiling](http://sec.virginia.gov/clk/efiling). Those unable, as a practical matter, to file electronically may file a request for hearing by U.S. mail to the Clerk of the Commission at the address listed above. Such request for hearing shall include the email addresses of such parties or their counsel, if available. Requests for a hearing shall include: (i) a precise statement of the filing party's interest in the proceeding; (ii) a statement of the specific action sought to the extent then known; (iii) a statement of the legal basis for such action; and (iv) a precise statement why a hearing should be conducted in this matter. All requests for a hearing shall refer to Case No. PUR-2022-00043. Persons filing a request for hearing shall serve a copy of their request upon the Company's counsel at the address set forth above.

On or before May 6, 2022, any interested person or entity may participate as a respondent in this proceeding by filing a notice of participation with the Clerk of the Commission at [sec.virginia.gov/clk/efiling](http://sec.virginia.gov/clk/efiling). Those unable, as a practical matter, to file a notice of participation electronically may file such notice by U.S. mail to the Clerk of the Commission at the address listed above. Such notice of participation shall include the email addresses of such parties or their counsel, if available. Pursuant to 5 VAC 5-20-80 B, *Participation as a respondent*, of the Rules of Practice, any notice of participation shall set forth: (i) a precise statement of the interest of the respondent; (ii) a statement of the specific action sought to the extent then known; and (iii) the factual and legal basis for the action. Any organization, corporation, or government body participating as a respondent must be represented by counsel as required by 5 VAC 5-20-30, *Counsel*, of the Rules of Practice. All filings shall refer to Case No. PUR-2022-00043.

ATMOS ENERGY CORPORATION

# VT forestry students create management plan for AD Whit Babcock's family farm



Virginia Tech Athletic Director Whit Babcock, at far left, and the College of Natural Resources and Environment students who are completing a forest management plan for his family farm, from left, Mitchell Parvin, Ben Stauffer, and Hunter Varner. Photo by Krista Timney for Virginia Tech.

When envisioning the future of his 170-acre historic family farm in Concord, Va., Hokie Athletic Director Whit Babcock knew just where to turn for expertise: Virginia Tech forestry students.

Three seniors in the College of Natural Resources and Environment (CNRE) are spending their final semester creating a forest management plan for Babcock's farm as part of their culminating experience, a capstone course called Integrated Forest Management Practicum. The course is a hands-on final test of skills developed throughout four years in the Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation.

"I'm beyond excited to have the opportunity to partner with Whit Babcock for the capstone project," said Hunter Varner, a senior from Stanley, Va., who has a job with Dominion Energy as a distribution forester after graduation. "It's surreal to

work with such a well-known figure within the Virginia Tech community."

The partnership formed over the course of a casual discussion between Babcock and CNRE Dean Paul M. Winistorfer. After Babcock mentioned that he had recently inherited the fourth-generation family farm, Winistorfer volunteered the forestry capstone students to provide professional consultation.

"I think it's wonderful. It makes me proud," Babcock said. "It means more to have Virginia Tech involved. This is my school, and hopefully it's giving the students some real-world experience."

The land holds a special place in Babcock's heart. It's been in the family ever since his great-great-grandparents built a farmhouse and sawmill there in the 1880s. He has fond memories of hunting and fishing there as a child, as well as

seeing generations of pine forests planted and harvested — including one stand that paid for his college education.

Babcock hopes the students will help him "gain a better understanding" of the property, "to preserve it as a place to go, to work the land, and have it to pass on to my kids one day." He also said, "I hope the students get something out of it, too."

The capstone students gain the invaluable experience of working with real-life "clients" to synthesize four years of learning into a professional forest management plan, said Scott Barrett, associate professor and extension specialist, who leads the class.

"Many of the students will go on to work as professional foresters, and many foresters will write management plans as part of their job," Barrett said. "This helps the students prepare for future careers while integrating the skills they have

learned in their other discipline courses."

Babcock's partnership with the students kicked off during a February Zoom meeting where he outlined objectives for the property including promoting wildlife habitats, developing a timeline for growing and selling timber, and preserving keystone hardwood species such as oak. He also asked the students to explore suitable locations for building a possible future retirement home.

The student team has spent the past weeks documenting all 170 acres by dividing the property into "stands" — areas of similar tree species and age — and conducting a detailed field inventory of each stand.

"We collect data including tree species, height, diameter, age, hydrologic features, and site quality index, to name a few," said Mitchell Parvin, a senior from Floyd County who will work at Weyerhaeuser in

Georgia after graduation. "We then input the information into data tables and growth modeling software. This allows us to analyze the data and make an informed plan to manage forest resources now and in the future."

In May, the team will present its management plans to the landowners, classmates, and other faculty in the department, along with a written plan.

"This experience has been a valuable exercise in professionalism and application," said Ben Stauffer, a senior from Catonsville, Md., who will practice arboriculture at Bartlett Tree Experts after graduation. "I've enjoyed using my knowledge to help a forest landowner achieve their goals and sustainably manage forested land."

"Getting to roam the woods with a couple friends to put together a final project has also been fun," Stauffer said.

## Virginia Tech recognizes employees for 15,530 years of combined service

Virginia Tech has recognized more than 841 employees for their commitment to service and for exemplifying the university motto, Ut Prosim (That I May Serve). Collectively,

these employees have dedicated 15,530 years of service to the university.

Recognition events took place March 29 through April 14.

"Recognizing more than

15,000 years of service is remarkable, and so are the individuals we celebrate for reaching these notable milestones," said Virginia Tech President Tim Sands. "The dedication and commitment of our employees is the foundation of Virginia Tech's success."

"We owe so much to the loyalty and dedication of our employees," said Vice President for Human Resources Bryan Garey. "Virginia Tech benefits from their knowledge and the long tenure of service they provide. They are truly the backbone of Virginia Tech."

The service recognition program acknowledges employees' service to the university in five-year increments, beginning at 10

years. Of the employees recognized this year, 92 have served Virginia Tech for 35 years or more, representing more than 3,535 years of combined service.

Employees with 25 or more years of service received an etched Hokie Stone, a symbol of strength and stability. The stone reflects the foundational commitment of each employee. Starting at 40 years of service, employees receive a Hokie Stone personalized with their name and years of service.

Three employees were recognized for 50 years of service: Betty Higginbotham from the College of Science; Steven Lowe, who recently retired from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences; and Joseph



Starting at the 40-year mark, employees receive Hokie Stone personalized with their name and years of service.

Pitt, professor emeritus of philosophy. Together, they mark 150 years of service, a fitting total during the university's 150th anniversary.

Betty Higginbotham began her career at Virginia Tech working for the Center for Environmental Studies in the biology department. In the late 1980s, she moved to the Department of Statistics where she still works as a senior program support technician.

Higginbotham has seen big changes at Virginia Tech. Her job once included using a manual typewriter and carbon paper to make copies, taking shorthand, and using a Dictaphone. She has made many good friends on campus. "I treat everybody with respect, and it pays off," she said.

Steven Lowe joined Virginia Tech in 1972 as a laboratory technician in the Department of Anaerobic Microbiology, which has since merged into the biochemistry department. He later became a laboratory mechanic.

"It's really fun working with graduate students," he said. "You learn about

what they are doing. You learn so many processes." Since his retirement, he misses the people the most. "I can always find a machine to work on at home." He also values the faculty members he worked with. "They are world-class, brilliant people," he said. "You learn so much."

Joseph Pitt came to Virginia Tech in 1971 as an instructor, reaching the rank of professor in 1983. The physical campus has changed a great deal since his arrival.

"The amount of building going on right now is mind-blowing," he said. One thing that has remained steady, however, is his affection for his students. "They see Virginia Tech as a big family, and that is why talking about Virginia Tech as home makes so much sense," he said.

All employees received a service lapel pin and a certificate. A redesigned website shows employees recognized this year.

The Service Recognition Program's time period is April 1 of the previous year through March 31 of the current year.

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### Dr. Stephen Hudgins Announcement

Dr. J. Stephen Hudgins is retiring from practice effective May 1, 2022. Contact the office at (540) 382-8316 no later than May 9th if you would like to obtain or transfer your medical records.

After this date, you may obtain a copy of your medical records at Dr. Farhi's office in Blacksburg.

A reasonable cost-based fee will be associated with the copying or transfer.



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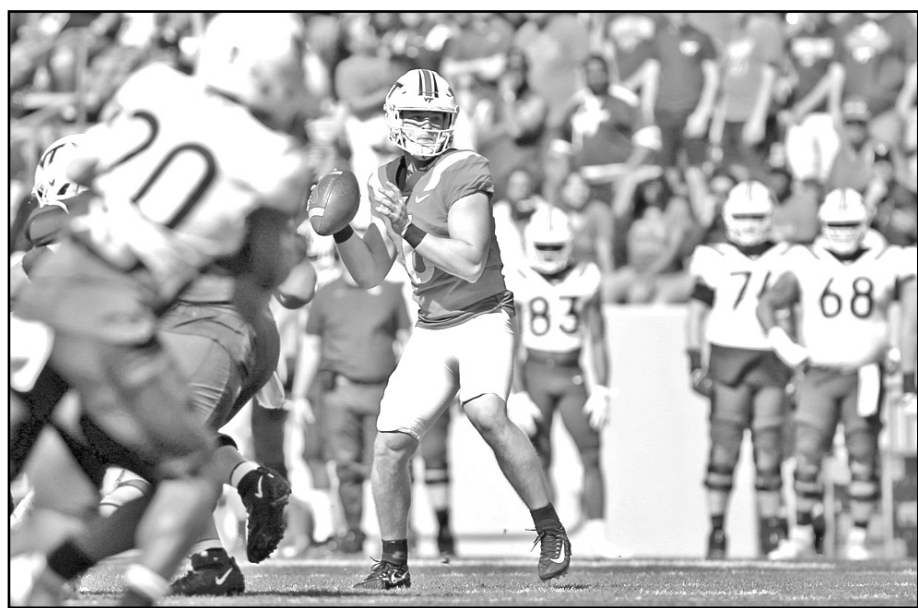


# MONTGOMERY SPORTS

## Maroon Team wins VT spring game with 26-10 defeat of the White Team



Hokie fans filled the west side stands on a sunny afternoon in Blacksburg for the 2022 spring game, the first open to spectators since 2019.



Hokies transfer quarterback Grant Wells had a good day with two long touchdown passes to Maroon teammate Kaleb Smith. Wells is a redshirt sophomore transfer from Marshall and looks to be the odds-on favorite for the starting spot in the fall.



Numerous NFL Hokies were on the sidelines during the spring game, including Tyrod Taylor, who was popular with autograph seekers.



Blacksburg's Brian Crist, a senior analyst for the Hokies' football staff, talks with quarterbacks Jason Brown (left) and Grant Wells during halftime of the spring game.

PHOTOS BY JON FLEMING

**Marty Gordon**  
 NRVsports@ourvalley.org

Brent Pry's first spring at Virginia Tech has come to an end with the school's annual spring game, one which was more of a traditional gameday than fans had become accustomed to.

The Maroon Team ran away with it, earning a 26-10 victory over the White Team at Lane Stadium.

The Maroon Team outgained the White Team 293-126 in total yards in the two-hour game while each team had three sacks on the day. The day saw a combined eight runs and passes for over 20 yards.

Two of the eight were passes from quarterback Grant Wells to receiver Kaleb Smith with Smith grabbing both a 47-yard touchdown and a 51-yard touchdown in the first quarter. In one-on-one coverage, Smith beat his man both times, and Wells threw two dimes right where they should be. Smith finished the day with 103 receiving yards and three catches.

But many questions are still to be answered before the team prepares for summer workouts.

One of the biggest questions still remaining is who might be the starting kicker. The candidates are all unknown commodities.

William Ross is a redshirt-sophomore from Rock Hill, S.C., who started at Coastal Carolina last season before transferring to Tech. He played with a national all-star

soccer team in Spain and was a member of the U.S. Development Academy program.

Freshman John Love of Spartanburg, S.C., comes to Blacksburg with a nice resume. Some scouting agencies have labeled him a five-star recruit. He was ranked as the No. 14 high school kicker in the country by 247Sports Composite.

The Hokies will miss the long-legged Parker Romo, as most of his kickoffs were never returned for the past two seasons.

A number of players are in the mix for running back as no one really stepped to the front of the line in Saturday's game. Malachi Thomas returns after an excellent second half last season but is still recuperating from an injury and did not play Saturday. Jalen Holston is a redshirt senior who has yet to show any breakout performances. The other remaining group consists of several freshmen looking for the opportunity.

The offensive line had its own problems in stopping the defensive unit from tagging the quarterbacks. The question remains who will line up on the starting five on game day.

The defense is still looking to develop a personality. The only plus is that Pry is a defensive genius and will turn to returning linebacker Dax Hollifield to lead.

Hollifield returns for a fifth season in 2022. The Shelby, N.C., native led Virginia Tech in total tackles (92), tackles for loss (nine) and sacks (four) in 2021. Hollifield has played in

47 games with 35 starts and has produced 267 total tackles (111 solo), 23 tackles for loss, 10 sacks, four interceptions, eight passes defensed, 14 quarterback hurries, one fumble recovery, and a forced fumble.

Chamarri Conner returns with experience. He ranked third on the squad in 2021 with 86 total tackles (57 solo). He tied for second on the team with 5.5 tackles for loss. Conner has played in 50 games with 37 starts at Tech.

The fifth question centers on who might be under center for the first game in September. Wells had a good day but felt little or no pressure. Meanwhile the other transfer quarterback, Jason Brown, was held in check.

Pry said he still was not ready to name a starter but liked what he saw from Wells. "I thought Grant ran the offense really well out there," the head coach said.

Pry was also pleased to see what the two dual quarterbacks, Taj Bullock and Devin Farrill, brought to the spring.

Farrell played well, rushing for 41 yards and scoring a touchdown in the fourth quarter.

A four-player competition heading into summer seems to have Wells and Brown as the leaders.

The key is how the Hokies will play is the group of transfers as they landed four mid-year guys.

The group includes quarterbacks Jason Brown (South Carolina) and Grant Wells (Marshall), as well as wide receivers Jadan Blue (Temple)

and Stephen Gosnell (North Carolina).

Brown (6-2, 229) helped the Gamecocks reach bowl eligibility in 2021. He went 2-2 as a starter, leading the Gamecocks to wins over Florida and Auburn. He completed 60 of 108 passes with eight touchdowns and six interceptions. He was a 2019 FCS All-America selection at St. Francis after leading the Northeast Conference with 3,084 passing yards, completing 251 of 403 passes with 28 touchdowns and six interceptions. Brown prepped at Chancellor High School in Fredericksburg, Va.

Wells (6-2, 205) comes to Blacksburg from Marshall where he was the starting quarterback for the past two seasons. He concluded his career with the Thundering Herd after completing 460 of 715 passes for 5,623 yards with 34 touchdowns and 22 interceptions. He also ran 115 times for 237 yards with nine touchdowns.

The Charleston, W.Va., native was named the 2020 Conference USA Freshman of the Year after leading the conference with 2,091 passing yards and 18 touchdown passes.

Blue (6-0, 190) arrives at Tech following a productive career at Temple where he caught 169 passes for 1,672 yards with 10 touchdowns in 35 games for the Owls. He also rushed 12 times for 44 yards. Blue had five games with 10 or more receptions and posted six 100-yard receiving games, including a career-high 132-yard performance at Maryland (9/14/19). He earned second-

team All-American Athletic Conference honors following the 2019 season when he hauled in a Temple school-record 95 receptions for 1,067 yards, becoming the first Temple player to ever accumulate a 1,000-yard receiving season.

Gosnell (6-2, 210) joins the Hokies from North Carolina where he played wide receiver the past two seasons. He appeared in 15 games for the Tar Heels during that span and recorded two receptions for 11 yards. He prepped at East Surry High School in Pilot Mountain, N.C. He helped East Surry to a 15-0 record and the IAA state championship as a senior after recording 68 receptions for 1,544 yards.

The busiest group on Saturday was the graduate student assistants as they ran across the field on every series change to call the plays on offense.

Pry presented several team awards during the halftime timeout. They were 2022 Most Improved Award, Tight End Nick Gallo and Defensive Lineman Josh Fuga; 2022 Offensive MVP, Receiver Da'Wain Lofton; 2022 Defensive MVP, Defensive Back Chamarri Conner; 2022 Special Teams MVP, Linebacker Keli Lawson and Defensive Back Jalen Stroman; 2022 President's Leadership Award, Linebacker Dax Hollifield; 2022 Frank Beamer Ultimate Teammate Award, Quarterback/Athlete Connor Blumrick.

The new coaching staff will look for answers as the players go home for a time before returning to campus.

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# Radford High boys claim title at All-American Relays

Marty Gordon  
NRVsports@ourvalley.org

Radford High School won the boys' championship at this week's All-American Relays.

The Bobcats tallied 153 points. Narrows finished in second place with 97 points, Floyd was third with 70 points, Giles finished fourth with 50 points, and the Eastern Montgomery Mustangs finished in sixth place.

Radford's David Woodard and Eliot Grayson were named the MVP's in the running and the field events respectively.

Woodard won the 200-meters run. Teammate Vance Steele finished second. Steele also won the 400-meters run.

Radford's Michael Hljduk led the pack to the line in the 800 meters. Grayson leaped 6'4" for first in the high jump

for the home squad. Woodward was the long-jump winner with Grayson second.

Woodward also claimed top honors in the triple jump at 37'5" with Grayson third.

Radford's Zeb Martin won the shot put with a heave of 39'9". Eastern Montgomery's Seth Burlison and Angel Ramos-Mendoza finished second and third.

Jack Woodard gave the host team another first-place finish with a mark of 121'4" in the boys discus.

In the girls' competition, Radford's Addie Tapp won the 800-meter run while Angie Lih won the 1,600-meter event.

Narrows won the girls' team title with 130 points. Floyd was second at 101. Eastern Montgomery placed fourth with 57 points. Host Radford finished sixth.

# 10U Five Star baseball team wins Christiansburg spring showcase



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The 10U Five Star baseball team won the United States Specialty Sports Association (USSSA) Southwest Virginia Elite Spring Showcase this past week at Harkrader Sports Complex in Christiansburg. The team finished 4-0 on the weekend, outscoring opponents 45-12. Pictured (front row, left to right) are Jax McKee, Hunter Akers, Josiah Underwood, Hunter Jones, Drew Peters, Walker Snidow, Mason Boggs, Eli Martin, Pace Hall, Dhanté Gaynor, and Owen Snider; (back row, left to right) Coach "O" Gaynor, Coach Tim Hall, Coach Travis Jones, Coach Josh Akers and Coach Derek Snider.

# Egg-cellent Easter action at Motor Mile Speedway



PHOTO COURTESY OF MOTOR MILE SPEEDWAY

Tyler Warriner took both Virginia mini-cup races Saturday night at Motor Mile Speedway.

Easter weekend racing at Motor Mile Speedway included some Easter fun for the kids.

Before the race cars fired up their engines, the little ones got to hunt for Easter eggs with prizes inside around the back of the grandstands. But the big prizes of cold hard cash were still to come on the racetrack.

Saturday, Motor Mile Speedway hosted drivers from all around the area for a 4-cylinder Open for the UCar and Pure 4 divisions with a top prize of \$2,000 for the winner in the 100-lap feature. That kind of prize is not typically seen at that level of racing. It was a race that saw Joshua Gobble leading early on before a mechanical failure put him in the wall. Instead, John Ketron came out with the trophy and the biggest paycheck.

Brandon Suther-

land and Blake Gordon rounded out the top 3.

The speedway also welcomed a visiting race series, The Virginia Mini-Cup, which brought its cool looking small race cars to buzz around the track. The cars are so small the drivers have to use an opening in the roof to get in. Six of these cars brought big action to the track for twin 25-lap races.

Tyler Warriner was the winner of both races, even with an inversion between the first and second, and Nate Thomas finished second in both races.

Third place was swapped between Tyler Roach in the first race and Nathen Reynolds in the second. The race with the highest car count of the afternoon was the Enduro class. Just like the open 4-cylinder class, the 100% stock car set-up Enduros had a shot at \$2,000 to

win. These cars are not actually race cars and can be any car 1965 or newer, have 4 to 8 cylinders, stock tires and rims that are original for the make and model.

A broken rule disqualified initial winner Tyler Murray along with the third- and fourth-place finishers.

So Jason Ketron was declared the winner of the race after post-race inspections. He was followed by Jason Lawson and Matt Trump.

The weekly racing series returns on April 23 with twin 50-lap races for the Late Model Division, twin 30-lap races for Sportsman. Super Streets, Mod-4's, and the U-Cars and Pure4's will combine again. The traveling 'Southern Ground Pounders' Vintage Racing Club will visit the track. They will be racing vintage modified and sportsman cars from the 1950's to the 1980's.

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