

News Messenger

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Blacksburg

Christiansburg

Saturday, February 18, 2023

www.ourvalley.org

USPS 016-490

\$1.00

Master Circuit Court Clerk Erica Conner to retire

Citing "ongoing medical issues," Montgomery County Master Circuit Court Clerk Erica W. Conner has announced her intentions to retire effective the end of February and has recommended that the voters of Montgomery County support Master Circuit Court Supervisor Tiffany Couch as the most qualified candidate for Circuit Court clerk in November's general election and that the judiciary appoint her as interim clerk to finish the remainder of her term.

In a lengthy statement released Tuesday, Feb. 14, Conner recounted her accomplishments during her 15+ years as the first female court clerk in Montgomery County's history.

Conner wrote, "My campaign themes [almost 16 years ago] were "Dedicated, Experienced, and a Commitment to the Future." She then provided a list of 11 accomplishments that she said fulfilled her campaign promises.

1) Preserved and digitized the county's historical records through grants from many different agencies, totaling over \$442,473. These records include every marriage license, deed book, will book, order book, Town of Christiansburg Minute book, original Montague Map, and many more.

2) Located the Free "Negro" Register Volume II and The Cohabitation Register, previously lost and unattended, thus opening critical research never previously known to descendants of persons listed in these documents.

3) Made the office technologically up to date by introducing the office to email, installing a Marriage License Kiosk, providing Secure Remote Access to land records, Officer of the Court Remote Access, along with in-house access to all historical records. Due to these efforts, our office was prepared



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERICA CONNER
Citing ongoing medical issues, County Circuit Court Clerk Erica Conner will retire at the end of February.

and ready for a seamless transition when the COVID pandemic shut down many governmental functions, which enabled us to maintain "business as usual" to the greatest extent possible.

4) Implemented e-filing of land records and other documents online. I also implemented the digital court file and served on the Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission Committee to research and implement sentencing guidelines across Circuit Courts in Virginia.

5) Two years ago, I implemented the issuance of plastic concealed handgun permits, eliminating the paper permit to ensure durability and longevity of the card.

6) I moved the entire Clerk's Office from the basement of the former

See Conner, page 4



PHOTO COURTESY OF JERRY JONES, MONTGOMERY-BLACKSBURG KIWANIS CLUB

Montgomery-Blacksburg Kiwanians work concession stand, donate proceeds to Special Olympics

Kiwanians Gene Cliff (left), John Ficenec, Stephen Boyle, and Sue Bentley were among the workers from the Montgomery County-Blacksburg Kiwanis Club who operated the concession stand at the Area 9 Southwest Virginia Special Olympics on Sunday, Feb. 5, at the basketball tournament at Cassell Coliseum. All proceeds from the sales were donated to Special Olympics. The Kiwanis Club also donated a \$100 check in memory of Joanne Jones. The Kiwanians worked in teams for two-hour shifts.

Construction of new hand-in-hand playground to begin in March

The Hand-in-Hand playground, a wooden play structure located in Municipal Park, has served the families of Blacksburg for thirty-one years, but the passage of time has brought inevitable wear and tear to the structure. Thus, beginning March 1, the playground will undergo a refresh and renewal, bringing it up to current national safety standards.

Leathers & Associates, the same company that designed the original playground, was once again contracted by the Town of Blacksburg to design and construct the new outdoor experience using modern materials. The new playground will be built on the footprint of the current Hand-in-Hand and will continue to serve ages 2-12.

The refurbished playground will include benches and small tabletops throughout the space and will feature American Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant engineered wood fiber chips as its base. The natural integrity of the playground will be preserved by the continued presence of shade trees that will be pruned and maintained to encourage healthy long-term growth.

In another nod to the original Hand-in-Hand playground, the existing personalized fence pickets will be refurbished and re-installed as part of a new playground fence. Those who wish to purchase a new engraved picket may do so by visiting Let's Talk Blacksburg and completing the order form. Each panel costs \$75 and can accommodate a maximum of 12 letter spaces. Orders and payment must be made by May 1, 2023 for inclusion in the playground's grand

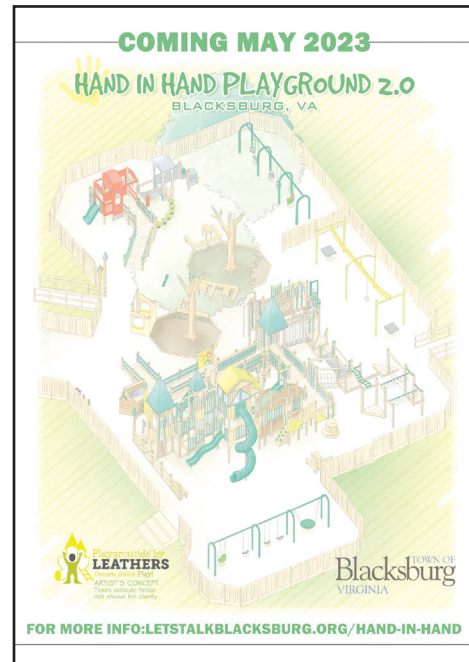


PHOTO COURTESY OF TOWN OF BLACKSBURG PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

opening activities. Families may choose to engrave their surname or names of family members, and non-profit organizations may use their name.

The Blacksburg Parks and Recreation department, in partnership with the Blacksburg Housing and Community Connections office, worked to ensure citizens had a voice throughout the design process. Through online and in-person engagement opportunities, citizens worked closely with the town to suggest improvements and additions for the new Hand-in-Hand playground.

"We tried hard to understand the elements of the playground that people loved, and worked to keep those essential elements while creating a base for the new design," said Kim Thurlow, Manager of Housing and Community Development Initiatives for the town. "Through this thoughtful design that marries the old with the new, citizens will recognize the new playground as the unique 'hidden castle in the woods' that they remember, a feeling that is a recognizable hallmark of Hand-in-Hand," said Thurlow. "Favorite items like the tire bridge will exist

See Playground, page 4

Montgomery Supervisors Board commends deputy for saving Auburn Middle School student's life

Monday evening at its regular meeting, the Montgomery County Board of Supervisors passed a proclamation commending Auburn Middle School resource officer Deputy Steven E. Parks for his prompt action that saved the life of 12-year-old Cody Linkous, who was choking on some food.

First, Deputy Parks performed the Heimlich maneuver, and then he administered CPR to save Linkous's life.

The text of the board's proclamation reads as follows:

"The Montgomery County Board of Supervisors hereby commends Montgomery County School Resource Officer Deputy Steven E. Parks for his life-saving actions on January 31, 2023.

"We, the Montgomery County Board of Supervisors, wish to thank Deputy Parks for his immediate response to an

incident at Auburn Middle School that resulted in saving a child's life. Due to his quick response by administering the Heimlich maneuver and CPR, a 12-year-old child is with his family today.

"Our board has always valued public safety in our community. We believe School Resource Officers serve a significant and worthwhile purpose in our schools. We know each School Resource Officer interacts with the students in our community throughout the week and serves as an excellent example for them.

"Now, Deputy Parks has highlighted yet another reason for the importance of having School Resource Officers in our schools. His training and dedication to his profession has provided a very happy and priceless ending to what would have otherwise been a tragedy that no one should have to face.

"It is with great honor that the Board of



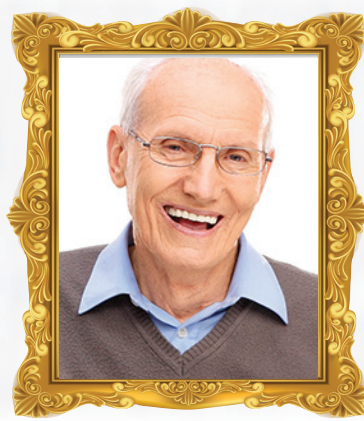
PHOTO COURTESY OF WHSV
SRO Deputy Steven Parks acted quickly to save the life of 12-year-old Auburn Middle School student Cody Linkous. Parks performed the Heimlich maneuver and administered CPR.

Supervisors of Montgomery County, Virginia, hereby recognizes Deputy Steven E. Parks with highest regard and gratitude for his heroic actions that led to saving a child's life."

- News Messenger staff report

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MEMORIAL GARDENS of the NEW RIVER VALLEY

2551 North Main Street, Blacksburg • (540) 552-7800 • www.memorialgardensnr.com

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, Feb. 18:

Free tax assistance with NRCA
At the Christiansburg Library; 1 to 4 p.m. The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program and NRCA will provide free income tax preparation assistance. Income limits may apply. Walk-Ins Only. For more information visit <https://newrivercommunityaction.org/vita> or call 540-320-3217.

Grownup board game club
At the Radford Public Library; 2 to 4:30 p.m. Participants can bring a friend, a board game, or just themselves to get some quality board-gaming time in at the library. The staff has a collection of games on hand, but players are welcome to bring a game from home.

The Great Backyard Bird Count Library Scavenger Hunt
At the Radford Public Library; 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Children can practice their bird counting skills in the

children's section of the library. The scavenger hunt will be available all day, and any child who finishes the hunt will receive a prize.

Sunday, Feb. 19:

Chess Club
At the Blacksburg Library; 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. US Federation member Rishi will be on hand to teach some chess. Ages 8+. All skill levels are welcome. Supplies will be provided.

Monday, Feb. 20:

Blacksburg Presidents' Day schedule
Town administrative offices will be closed. Blacksburg Transit will operate on full service. The Blacksburg Community Center and the Blacksburg Aquatic Center will operate with regular hours. Trash Pickup will take place in the Southeast Quadrant.

Tuesday, Feb. 21:

Lviv National Philharmonic Orchestra of Ukraine
The Lviv National Philharmonic Orchestra of Ukraine will perform at Radford University's Bondurant Auditorium in Preston Hall at 7:30 p.m. This unique opportunity brings audiences a chance to hear these remarkable Ukrainian musicians lead by Theodore Kuchar, one of the world's most recorded and decorated conductors. Tickets are available online, at the Hurlburt Hall Information Desk or by calling 540-831-5420.

Wednesday, Feb. 22:

Sustainable Blacksburg Lunch and Learn: Become a Tree Rescuer
At the Blacksburg Library; noon to 1 p.m. This is the launch of a new program to preserve trees locally following the lead of a successful Northern Virginia program.

Movie and a meal: "Respect"

At the Radford Public Library at 5:30 p.m. Watch the movie about the Queen of Soul in honor of Black History Month. "Respect" stars Jennifer Hudson and Forest Whitaker in the telling of the rise of Aretha Franklin to fame. Rated PG-13; 145 minutes. Pizza provided.

Thursday, Feb. 23:

Community quilting bee
At the Blacksburg Public Library; 10 a.m. to noon. Participants are welcome to bring their supplies and join this weekly quilting and sewing group that includes some lively conversation.

Monday, Feb. 27:

Radford City Council meeting
The Radford City Council will hold its regularly scheduled meeting at 7 p.m. in the council chambers at the Radford Municipal Building, 10

See Events, page 4



Marketplace



The Fincastle Herald The Vinton Messenger The New Castle Record Salem Times Register News Messenger Radford News Journal

Positions Wanted

Quality Inn
Hiring Full/Part Time Housekeeping and Front Desk. Apply in Person. Ph-540-639-3000

Legals - Montgomery County

Legals - Montgomery County

Legals - Montgomery County

Legals - Montgomery County

Legals - Montgomery County

Legals - City of Radford

Radford Seeks Applications for CDBG Action Plan 2023-2024

The City of Radford is seeking applications from certified 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations, for the upcoming PY 2023 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. Public service programs include, but are not limited to: health care, recreation programs, education programs, anti-violence programs, services for senior citizens, youth services, services for homeless persons, substance abuse counseling and treatment, domestic violence services, mental health services, immigrant services, disability services, and fair housing/tenant landlord counseling. Applications may be found at www.radfordva.gov. You may mail or deliver your proposal to: Melissa Skelton, 10 Robertson St, Radford, VA 24141 or submit electronically to melissa.skelton@radfordva.gov. Applications must be received by March 10, 2023 to be considered for funding during this Annual Action Plan cycle. If you have questions, please contact Ms. Skelton at the email above or by phone at 540-267-3188.

Legals - Montgomery County

NOTICE OF TRUSTEE'S SALE OF IMPROVED REAL ESTATE LOCATED AT: 2948 Den Hill Road, Christiansburg, Montgomery County, Virginia 24073

Tax Map# 082-A-41 / Parcel ID: 021649 IN EXECUTION OF A DEED OF TRUST IN THE ORIGINAL PRINCIPAL AMOUNT OF \$60,000.00, DATED THE 2nd DAY OF AUGUST, 2013, RECORDED IN THE CLERK'S OFFICE OF THE CIRCUIT COURT OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY, VIRGINIA, AS INSTRUMENT NO. 2013007664, DEFAULT HAVING OCCURRED IN THE PAYMENT OF THE NOTE SECURED THEREBY, AND AT THE REQUEST OF THE HOLDER OF THE NOTE, THE UNDERSIGNED SUBSTITUTE TRUSTEE, WILL OFFER FOR SALE AT PUBLIC AUCTION AT THE ENTRANCE OF THE CIRCUIT COURT OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY, LOCATED AT: 55 EAST MAIN STREET, CHRISTIANSBURG, VIRGINIA 24073, ON FEBRUARY 28, 2023 AT 10:00 A.M., THE REAL ESTATE WITH

IMPROVEMENTS THEREON, LYING AND BEING SITUATE IN THE COUNTY OF MONTGOMERY, STATE OF VIRGINIA AND MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS: ALL OF THE FOLLOWING TRACT OR PARCEL OF LAND, SITUATE, LYING AND BEING IN THE SHAWSVILLE MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY, VIRGINIA, AND DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS, TO-WIT: BEGINNING at a locust tree on the north side of Virginia Secondary Highway No. 641 located 283 feet west from intersection of Route No. 460 and Route 641; thence a new line thru lands of (now or formerly) Raymond H. Baker, et al in a northwesterly direction 100 feet to a point; thence in a southwesterly direction 150 feet to a point; thence in a southerly direction 100 feet to a point located on said Virginia Secondary Highway No. 641; thence in a northeasterly direction with said road 150 feet to the point of BEGINNING. Tax Map No. 082- A 41 Parcel No. 021649 BEING THE SAME REAL ESTATE CONVEYED ERBIE G. YOUNG AND DOROTHY YOUNG, HUSBAND AND WIFE, TENANTS BY THE ENTIRETY WITH SURVIVOR SHIP, FROM RAYMOND H. BAKER AND ROXIE BAKER, HUSBAND AND WIFE, BY DEED DATED SEPTEMBER 13, 1961, AND OF RECORD IN THE CLERK'S OFFICE OF THE CIRCUIT COURT OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY, VIRGINIA, IN DEED BOOK 230, PAGE 207. REFERENCE BEING MADE TO SAID DEED. SUBJECT TO RESTRICTIONS, RESERVATIONS, EASEMENTS, COVENANTS, OIL, GAS OR MINERAL RIGHTS OF RECORD, IF ANY SALE WILL BE MADE SUBJECT TO ALL EXISTING EASEMENTS AND RESTRICTIVE COVENANTS AS THE SAME MAY LAWFULLY AFFECT THE REAL ESTATE. TERMS OF SALE: CERTIFIED FUNDS OR CASHIER'S CHECK. A BIDDER'S DEPOSIT OF TEN PERCENT (10%) OF THE SALES PRICE, WITH FULL SETTLEMENT TO BE MADE WITHIN FIFTEEN (15) DAYS FROM DATE OF SALE. ADDITIONAL TERMS MAY BE ANNOUNCED AT THE TIME OF SALE. THIS NOTICE IS AN ATTEMPT TO COLLECT A DEBT AND ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. PLACE OF SALE: FRONT OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY COURTHOUSE, LOCATED AT 55 EAST MAIN STREET, CHRISTIANSBURG, VIRGINIA 24073 DATE OF SALE: FEBRUARY 28, 2023 TIME OF SALE: 10:00 A.M. FOR INFORMATION CONTACT: Daniel D. Hamrick, Agent for Daniel D. Hamrick, P.C., Trustee 104 South Franklin Street Christiansburg, VA 24073 (540) 382-0131

NOTICE OF TRUSTEE'S SALE OF IMPROVED REAL ESTATE

LOCATED AT: 122 Clowers Drive, Elliston, Montgomery County, Virginia Tax Map No: 060-A-15D / Parcel ID: 130093 IN EXECUTION OF A DEED OF TRUST IN THE ORIGINAL PRINCIPAL AMOUNT OF \$64,400.00, DATED THE 12 TH DAY OF NOVEMBER, 2020, RECORDED IN THE CLERK'S OFFICE OF THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE COUNTY OF MONTGOMERY, AS INSTRUMENT NO. 2020-10776, DEFAULT HAVING OCCURRED IN THE PAYMENT OF THE NOTE SECURED THEREBY, AND AT THE REQUEST OF THE HOLDER OF THE NOTE, THE UNDERSIGNED SUBSTITUTE TRUSTEE, WILL OFFER FOR SALE AT PUBLIC AUCTION AT THE ENTRANCE OF THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE COUNTY OF MONTGOMERY, LOCATED AT: 55 EAST MAIN STREET, CHRISTIANSBURG, VIRGINIA 24073, ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2023 AT 10:00 A.M., THE REAL ESTATE WITH IMPROVEMENTS THEREON KNOWN AND DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS: An improved parcel of land located off Old Roanoke Road, Montgomery County, Virginia, being New Parcel 3, containing 0.501 of an acre, shown on survey dated February 23, 2006, recorded in the Clerk's Office, Circuit Court, Montgomery County, Virginia, in Plat Book 26, page 47. TOGETHER WITH an ingress and egress easement over, across and through a private paved drive referred to as Clowers Drive, to and from Old Roanoke Road as shown on plat of survey in Plat Book 26, page 47, and the right to use "New 10" Sanitary Sewer Lateral Easement shown on said plat of survey, and the water line which runs through New Parcel 2 and is adjacent to the said Clowers Drive as more particularly shown on said plat of survey, together with the right of ingress and egress to repair, replace and maintain the said sewer/water lines from time to time, as needed.

Tax Map# 060-A-15D / Parcel ID: 130093 Property Address: 122 Clowers Drive, Elliston, Virginia

SALE WILL BE MADE SUBJECT TO ALL EXISTING EASEMENTS AND RESTRICTIVE COVENANTS AS THE SAME MAY LAWFULLY AFFECT THE REAL ESTATE. TERMS OF SALE: CERTIFIED FUNDS OR CASHIER'S CHECK. A BIDDER'S DEPOSIT OF TEN PERCENT (10%) OF THE SALES PRICE, WITH FULL SETTLEMENT TO BE MADE WITHIN FIFTEEN (15) DAYS FROM DATE OF SALE. ADDITIONAL TERMS MAY BE ANNOUNCED AT THE TIME OF SALE.

THIS NOTICE IS AN ATTEMPT TO COLLECT A DEBT AND ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. PLACE OF SALE: FRONT OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY COURTHOUSE LOCATED AT: 55 EAST MAIN STREET, CHRISTIANSBURG, VA 24073 DATE OF SALE: MONDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2023 TIME OF SALE: 10:00 A.M.

Daniel D. Hamrick, PC Substitute Trustee

By: Daniel D. Hamrick, Agent

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT: Daniel D. Hamrick, Agent for Daniel D. Hamrick, P.C., Substitute Trustee 104 South Franklin Street Christiansburg, VA 24073 (540) 382-0131

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN

By the Board of Supervisors of the County of Montgomery, Virginia that the Board of Supervisors hereby schedules a public hearing for Monday, February 27, 2023, at 7:15 p.m., or soon thereafter, to receive public comment on a proposed Ordinance Amending Chapter 2 Entitled Administration of the Code of the County of Montgomery, Virginia by Creating Division 11, Entitled Cigarette Tax Sections 2-190 through 2-203 in order to Establish, Administer and Create a tax at the rate of forty cents (\$0.40) for each package containing twenty (20) cigarettes and two cents (\$0.02) for each cigarette contained in a package of fewer or more than twenty cigarettes sold or used within the unincorporated area of the County of Montgomery, Virginia. A copy of the full text of the Ordinance is on file in the Office of the County Administrator and is available 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday for public inspection or copying. BY ORDER OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS F. Craig Meadows County Administrator

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, March 6, 2023, at 7:00 PM in the Council Chambers of the Christiansburg Town Hall, 100 E. Main Street, Christiansburg, Virginia 24073, pursuant to Sections 15.2-2204 and 15.2-2285 of the Code of Virginia, as amended. The purpose of the public hearing is to receive public comments concerning: A. Conditional Use Permit request by Rockstep Christiansburg LLC, Property Owner, to allow a Carnival from April 29, 2023 through May 17, 2023 on the property located at 782 New River Road NW, Tax

Parcel 435 - ((A)) - 41, Parcel ID 007741, zoned General Business District B-3. The property is designated as Business/Commercial 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.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN By the Board of Supervisors of the County of Montgomery, Virginia

That the Board of Supervisors hereby schedules a public hearing for Monday, February 27, 2023, at 7:15 p.m. or as soon thereafter, at the Montgomery County Government Center, 755 Roanoke Street, Christiansburg, Virginia, in order to receive citizen comments on the intent to adopt a resolution amending the FY 2022-2023 budget by more than one percent of the total expenditures shown in the currently adopted budget, not to exceed \$9 million, by appropriating CARES/ESSER Funds for the Montgomery County Public Schools capital projects. A copy of the proposed resolution and the current adopted budget is available for inspection Monday through Friday 8:30-5:00 pm in the County Administrator's Suite in the Montgomery County Government Center, 755 Roanoke Street, Suite 2E, Christiansburg, Virginia. BY ORDER OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS F. Craig Meadows County Administrator

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING OF THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 15.2-2204 & 15.2-2285 of the Code of Virginia of 1950, as amended, the Montgomery County Planning Commission hereby gives notice of a public hearing to be held on March 8, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. in the County Government Center, 755 Roanoke St., Christiansburg, Virginia, in order to hear citizen

comments regarding the Planning Commission's intention to act on the following Ordinance: A request by Derek M. Lytton (Owner) to rezone property identified as Tax Map 07-A 72D (Parcel ID: 032267), totaling 1.228 acres in the Riner Magisterial District. The applicant requests a rezoning with proffered conditions of 1.228 acres from Residential (R1) to Agricultural (A-1) to place a manufactured home on the lot. The subject property is addressed as 3040 Spaulding Road, and is located approximately 0.15 miles off of Walton Road (State Route 663) and 0.47 miles west of Switchback Road (State Route 719). The property lies in an area designated as Rural in the 2025 Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan. Copies of the proposed plans, applications, ordinances or amendments may be examined at the Department of Planning and GIS Services, County Government Center, 755 Roanoke St., Suite 2A, Christiansburg, Monday through Friday between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. or at <http://www.montgomerycountyva.gov/pendingapplications>.

Classified Advertising DELIVERS

Local climbing gym sends team to Division 8 competition



PHOTO COURTESY OF JULIE BURGER

Christiansburg Crimpers Climbing Gym Youth team members (left to right) Maddoc Spraker, Coach John Johnson, Raegan Slade, and Clara Corl competed in the USA Climbing Division 8 bouldering competition qualifying round Saturday, Feb. 11, in Bridgeport, Penn. Spraker also competed in the Division 8 finals on Sunday, Feb. 12.

Members of Crimpers Climbing Gym (Christiansburg) Youth Team attended the USA Climbing Division 8 Bouldering competition held in Bridgeport, Penn., over the weekend. Clara Corl and Raegan Slade, both from Blacksburg, and Maddoc Spraker from Wytheville, competed in the Division 8 Qualifying round on Saturday, Feb. 11. Spraker also competed in the Division 8 Finals

on Sunday, Feb. 12. Bouldering is a type of indoor climbing without a harness or ropes over pads on walls no higher than 15 feet.

The competitors qualified at the Jan. 14 Region 81 (Virginia and Maryland) competition in Washington, D.C. and were invited to attend the Division 8 Bouldering competition by placing in the top 13 of their age group in

Region 81.

Division 8 is made up of competitors from Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, New Jersey, Eastern Pennsylvania, and Western New York. The top six competitors from each age group will move on to the National Youth Climbing Championships in Austin, Texas.

- News Messenger staff report



PHOTO COURTESY OF DARIO CALMESE

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Jacquelin Harris

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's main company to perform in Southwest Virginia for the first time

A groundbreaking company that has forever changed American dance and culture, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, comes to the Moss Arts Center for two performances on Tuesday, Feb. 28, and Wednesday, March 1, at 7:30 p.m.

Marking the first time the main company has performed in Southwest Virginia, each evening performance features a distinct and diverse repertoire of new and classic works as well as founder Alvin Ailey's masterpiece, "Revelations."

The performances will be held in the center's Anne and Ellen Fife Theatre, located within the Street and Davis Performance Hall at 190 Alumni Mall.

The program on Tuesday, Feb. 28, will include Robert Battle's "For Four" (2021), featuring four amazing Ailey dancers and Wynton Marsalis' jazz score – written in 4/4 time, and Paul Taylor's 1964 "Duet," set to the music of Franz Josef Haydn.

The evening also includes a new production of "Survivors" (1986), Alvin Ailey's impassioned tribute to the profound courage and terrible anguish of Nelson and Winnie Mandela, which will be seen this season for the first time since 1988. A soundtrack of Max Roach's richly varied drumming and Abbey Lincoln's powerful vocals sets the emotional tone for a work that presents a portrait of people transformed by injustice and lifts up those who resist

oppression in any form.

The performance on Wednesday, March 1, will include acclaimed choreographer Kyle Abraham's "Are You in Your Feelings?" (2022), a celebration of Black culture, Black music, and youthful spirit, scored to a mixtape of soul, hip-hop, and R&B featuring artists such as Jhené Aiko, Drake, Lauryn Hill, Kendrick Lamar, Jazmine Sullivan, and Summer Walker.

Using an original composition by Duke Ellington and four jazz standards given an avant-garde twist by composer Rafiq Bhatia, "In a Sentimental Mood" (2022) by Jamar Roberts bridges the past and present, making these musical classics freshly relevant and timely.

Both evenings will include performances of Alvin Ailey's "Revelations." Since its creation in 1960, "Revelations" has been seen by more people around the world than any other modern dance work, moving audiences with its powerful storytelling and soul-stirring music, evoking timeless themes of determination, hope, and transcendence. Springing from Ailey's childhood memories of growing up in the South and attending services at Mount Olive Baptist Church in Texas, "Revelations" pays homage to the rich cultural heritage of the African American and explores the emotional spectrum of the human condition.

- Virginia Tech

Virginia's spring fire season in effect through April 30

Virginia has entered the spring fire season as established by the Virginia Department of Forestry, which means the 4 p.m. burning law went into effect on Wednesday, Feb. 15, and will remain in effect through April 30.

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

Although Virginia also has a wildfire season in the fall, more than 60 percent of the commonwealth's annual average of 700 wildfires occur in the spring, especially in March and April. Rising temperatures, low humidity, and windy conditions increase the potential for wildfires and make them harder to extinguish.

Violation of the burning law is a class 3 misdemeanor and is punishable with a fine of up to \$500. Those who allow a fire to "escape" may be liable for the cost of suppressing a fire and any resulting property damage.

To learn more about Virginia's 4 p.m. burning law and fire prevention, visit: <https://dof.virginia.gov/wildland-prescribed-fire/fire-laws/4-pm-burning-law/>

In addition to the statewide 4 p.m. burning law, individual cities and counties may have specific burn laws,

bans, or restrictions. Check with local officials in your area before burning.

"The 4 p.m. burning law is one of the most important tools we have in the prevention of wildfires in Virginia," said VDOF Director of Fire and Emergency Response John Miller. "The number one cause of wildfires in the commonwealth is escaped debris burning, and the 4 p.m. burning law goes a long way toward reducing the risk associated with wildfires each year. VDOF coordinates closely with local firefighters and first responders across Virginia, so please call 911 to report a fire."

VDOF suggests keeping these things in mind this spring:

The 4 p.m. burn law applies to any fires not contained within a fireproof device (e.g., campfires, brush piles, warming fires, etc.).

Even when burning after 4 p.m., fires should never be left unattended.

Be cautious of changing weather conditions. Avoid burning during dry and windy conditions.

No fire may be started, and nothing can be added to a fire after midnight.

Have a shovel, rake, and charged hose on hand for controlling the fire.

Call 911 if a fire escapes your control.

- Va. Dept. of Forestry

New River Conservancy to plant 10,000 trees along Stroubles Creek

On Feb. 25 and 26, New River Conservancy will launch the Big Plant, a massive effort to plant over 10,000 trees across 39 native species along Stroubles Creek in Blacksburg. The project will continue through March 5.

It will take place at Virginia Tech Stream Lab with the conservancy's perennial partner, Virginia Tech Biological Systems Engineering.

Anyone and everyone is invited to come out and help with this project. Volunteers can sign up for The Big Plant on Feb. 25 and 26 at <https://sites.google.com/vt.edu/thebigplant/home?pli=1>.

Volunteers can sign up to plant on all other days through March 5 at <https://docs.google.com/.../1FAIpQLScy.../viewform>.

Why is the New River

Conservancy planting trees?

Stroubles Creek is a federally listed 'impaired waterway.' One of the top stressors leading to the impairment is a lack of native riparian buffers. A riparian buffer is a strip of native vegetation along a waterway that

1. Improves water quality by filtering out pollutants and lowering the cost of drinking water
2. Absorbs excess stormwater runoff, thus reducing the risk of catastrophic flooding
3. Stabilizes stream

See **Trees**, page 6

Virginia Tech offers research space, respite for Ukrainian researcher

Virginia Tech is offering respite and research space for a Ukrainian scholar who has been displaced from the country after the Russian invasion.

The College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences is seeking a full-time research assistant professor from Ukraine to work on campus and live in the area for a year.

The position comes after more than a year of work to create this kind of opportunity by a group made up of people from across Virginia Tech with a strong desire to welcome international faculty who fled their countries because of war. When Russia's invasion of Ukraine began in February 2022, the group focused its efforts on creating a position specifically for a Ukrainian faculty member.

"With the really amazing support that the international stage has shown Ukraine, we thought we could move this initiative forward," said Katrina Powell, who is chair

of the search committee and director of the Center for Refugee, Migrant, and Displacement Studies at Virginia Tech. "We wanted to do something to support a colleague who may need a place to work."

Virginia Tech joins numerous higher education institutions in the United States and internationally who are providing opportunities for Ukrainian academics to continue their work.

At Virginia Tech, the professor's focus would be on research, rather than teaching, but the professor would participate in public lectures, advise on program building, and be involved in other work with students and faculty.

According to the job description, there is not a required research area for the scholar. The individual's work must be an innovative, cross-disciplinary approach to addressing complex problems.

The candidate could be affiliated with any number of areas at Virginia Tech

from the Department of Political Science to the Center for Refugee, Migrant, and Displacement Studies. A review of applicants began on Feb. 15, and applications will be accepted until the position is filled.

Iuliia Hoban, assistant director for intercultural learning at Cranwell International Center and a native of Ukraine, said it's important to recognize what a war and displacement can do to a scholar's ambitions.

"They might have had an amazing career before the war or disaster, but when they are displaced and end up in situations where they can't continue their work, it deprives them of agency," said Hoban, who helped to create this new position. "This type of initiative allows them to come to a safer place and continue their work and thrive as a scholar."

The scholar also will bring a unique perspective to the Hokie community.

See **Researcher**, page 5

Blacksburg Business License Reminder



Town of Blacksburg business license renewal forms for 2023 are due by Wednesday, March 1, 2023. Businesses are assessed an annual license tax based on prior year's annual gross receipts.

Tax and fees must be filed and paid by March 1, 2023 to avoid late filing and late payment penalties of 10% each and 10% interest.

Renewal forms were mailed in early January. If you have not received the form, email businesslicensegroup@blacksburg.gov or call 540.961.1108.

Events

from page 2

Robertson St., Radford.

Montgomery County Board of Supervisors meeting

The Montgomery County Board of Supervisors will meet in a closed session at 6 p.m. and an open session at 7:15 p.m. at the Government Center, 755 Roanoke St. in Christiansburg. Citizens are invited to attend and will be allowed to speak at each meeting and present their concerns to the board. All regular meetings of the Board of Supervisors are rebroadcast on Montgomery County Comcast and Shentel Channels 190 daily.

Tuesday, Feb. 28:

Blacksburg Town Council meeting

The Blacksburg Town Council will meet in regular session at 6:30 p.m. in the Roger E. Hedgepeth Chambers of the Blacksburg Municipal Building, 300 S. Main St. These meetings are open to the public and are televised live on WTOB Channel 2.

Christiansburg Town Council meeting

The Christiansburg town Council will meet at 7 p.m. in Council Chambers of Town Hall (100 E. Main Street). The public is welcome and is encouraged to attend, with a citizen hearing time reserved at each meeting for residents to bring any matter they desire before the entire council.

Lunch and Learn with New River Community College

At the Radford Public Library; 1 to 2 p.m. Adult Career Coach & Community Outreach Specialist Stephanie Addikis of New River Community College will talk about the many resources and

support services available for students of all ages. NRCC has something for everyone be it teenager, senior, or any age in between. Addikis will give a brief presentation, and a financial aid advisor will help with questions about enrollment and affordability. Contact Elizabeth at Elizabeth.sensabaugh@radfordva.gov to place a request for a free lunch (an assortment of sandwiches, chips, apple and a drink).

Wednesday, March 1:

Blacksburg business license renewal forms due

The Town of Blacksburg business license renewal forms for 2023 are due by Wednesday, March 1, 2023. Businesses are assessed an annual license tax based on the prior year's annual gross receipts.

Taxes and fees must be filed and paid by March 1, 2023, to avoid late filing fees and late payment penalties of 10% each plus 10% interest.

Renewal forms were mailed in early January. If you have not received the form, email businesslicensegroup@blacksburg.gov or call 540.961.1108.

Thursday, Mar. 2:

Crab Creek Watershed Project kick-off meeting

Participants can come take part in the Crab Creek Watershed Project Kick-Off Meeting to discuss how to get involved and how to receive funding to install watershed-friendly landscaping on their property.

Thursday, Mar. 9:

River City Quilt Guild

The River City Quilt Guild will meet at 9:30 a.m. at Grove United Methodist Church, 1020 Tyler Ave., Radford. The guild welcomes all skill levels of quilters. For more information, call Anna Handy, 540 320 7791.

Women's leadership conference

At the Inn at Virginia Tech and Skelton Conference Center. The deadline to register is March 2. Register at <https://montgomerychamber.com/chambermaster.com/eventregistration/register/9932>.

Ongoing:

Cap and Gown Drive

The Town of Blacksburg Sustainability Office is partnering with Blacksburg High School and Sustainable Blacksburg to encourage re-use of previous years' graduate gear for the 2023 senior class. Gowns (blue only - from 2018 and later), caps, stoles, and cords are accepted. Donations can be made between 8:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m., Monday through Friday at the Main Entrance of Blacksburg High School. In an effort to keep project costs affordable, materials may be dry cleaned before donation, though it is not required. For more information, contact the Town of Blacksburg Sustainability Office at 540-443-1617 or sustainability@blacksburg.gov.

Blacksburg 2023 Citizens Institute

The Town of Blacksburg will sponsor a 2023 Citizens Institute to give citizens a chance to meet town staff and to learn about the functions of Blacksburg's government. Classes will be held on Monday evenings beginning April 6, from 6 to 8 p.m. Participants must be 18 years of age or older, and residents of the Town of Blacksburg. To register, call the Community Relations Office at 540-443-1090 or email cro@blacksburg.gov.

Free GED Classes

New River Community College is offering free GED classes at the Meadowbrook Library every Tuesday and Thursday evening from 5 to 8 p.m. through Thursday, May 11. For more information or to sign up, call the Meadowbrook Library at 540-268-1964.

News Messenger

Established 1869

(540) 389-9355
P.O. Box 1125 • Salem, VA 24153

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editor@ourvalley.org

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.

Playground

from page 1

alongside exciting new additions of a climbing wall, treehouse, and features that promote accessibility site-wide: ramps, ground-level play features and accessible swings, to name a few. These and other new

design concepts that encourage discovery, play, and exploration will ensure Hand-in-Hand remains a local favorite for generations to come."

The demolition of the current wooden

structure is scheduled to begin on March 1, 2023. The completion date of the new playground is projected for May 2023, just in time for summer fun. Families who would like to say their goodbyes to the

current Hand-in-Hand structure should plan to stop by this month and are encouraged to visit the new playground this summer.

- Town of Blacksburg

Conner

from page 1

courthouse to a new state-of-the-art facility in the new courthouse.

7) Streamlined the Jury Commissioner process from a manual one to a digital one, saving county resources.

8) I oversaw two high-profile criminal jury trials, including change of venue and the largest and most voluminous civil jury trial in the county.

9) Began an internship program with Radford University to recruit students as interns to open new career pathways to our citizens. In the past, provided internship opportunities with Virginia Tech, New River Community College, and local high schools.

10) I have served the Virginia Court Clerk's Association by being on the Education Committee, the Executive Committee, the By-Laws Committee, and am currently Parliamentarian. I served the Library of Virginia as a committee member

to provide support and guidance to the Virginia Circuit Court Records Preservation Program.

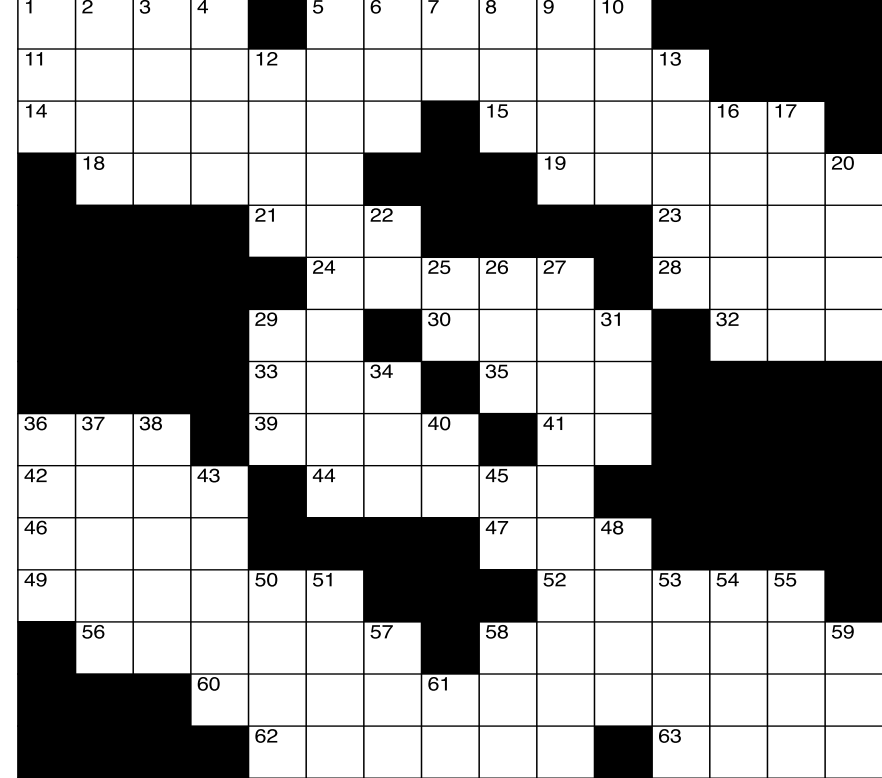
11) Maintained a talented and diverse staff. The clerk's office employs two bi-lingual employees who can better serve our Spanish-speaking citizens; an employee who serves our country through the United States Army; and five employees with educations from Radford University programs, two of whom interned with our office before hiring, among other amazing employees who are highly trained and have had the privilege of working with you.

Conner then concluded by saying, "Despite all the joys that serving you as Clerk of Court of Montgomery County has brought to me over almost two terms, due to ongoing medical issues, I am no longer able to fulfill the final months of my term. As such, I will be retiring at the end of February.

I have asked my highest-ranking Deputy Clerk who is eligible to fill the office of the Clerk of the Court to assume the role of Interim Clerk to finish the remainder of my term, and I have requested that our judiciary appoint her to ensure a seamless transition. Master Court Clerk Supervisor Tiffany Couch has worked alongside me for the past four years and has performed every task in the office. She has been a key player in helping us to reach some of our mentioned accomplishments. I have every confidence in my staff and in Tiffany Couch to continue the promises I have made to you. I wholeheartedly request that you support her as the most qualified candidate for Circuit Court Clerk at the next general election in November."

- News Messenger staff report

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



- 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
 - 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
 - 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. Millihenry
 - 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
- CLUES DOWN**
- 1. Used to pour beer
 - 2. Con game
 - 3. Skin disorder



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OBITUARIES

Agee, Ruth Talbert

Ruth Talbert Agee, 93, of Radford, and Madeleine Harris and Duncan Shipman; and many other family members and friends.



She was preceded in death by her parents, Ray and Ethel Talbert; her nine siblings; and her daughter, Carolyn A. Bower.

Survivors include her husband of 73 years, Murray Franklin Agee; a son, Murray Franklin Agee, Jr.; grandchildren Erin B. Harris, Christina A. Shipman (Philip), and Brian Agee; great-grandchildren Alisa

The Agee family is in the care of Mullins Funeral Home and Crematory in Radford.

The family will receive friends from noon until 1 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 22, 2023, at the Mullins Funeral Home in Radford. Funeral services will begin at 1 p.m. with Pastor Don Smith officiating. Burial will be held privately.

The Agee family is in the care of Mullins Funeral Home and Crematory in Radford.

Graham, Dorothy McDonald

Dorothy McDonald Graham, 80, McCroskey; her brother and sister-in-law, Kevin Timothy and Sherri McDonald; and many other family members and friends.



She was preceded in death by her parents, Wilbur Lee and Dorothy Radcliffe McDonald; her husband, David Alan Graham; and her brother, Wilbur "Buddy" McDonald, Jr.

Survivors include her son and daughter-in-law, Chris and Michelle Graham; a daughter, Kelly McCroskey; grandchildren Tyler and Megan Graham, and Noah and Zachary

The Graham family is in the care of Mullins Funeral Home and Crematory in Radford.

See Obituaries, page 6

Researcher

from page 3

"This position is a testament to the critical work we are doing to forge solutions to some of the world's most complex problems," said Laura Belmonte, dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences. "Hosting a Ukrainian scholar who has been displaced by the war is a powerful way to bring critical firsthand perspectives into multiple facets of our research,

teaching, and outreach missions. We hope to sustain this position for the long-term and open it to displaced scholars from around the world."

The scholar's salary will be funded by the college while living expenses are provided by a donation from the Bill and Ellen Cranwell Charitable Trust to the Cranwell International Center.

The Cranwells gave \$100,000 to the center in February 2022 after the invasion of Ukraine. A portion of their gift helped Virginia Tech's Ukrainian students and sponsored a communitywide event to show support for Ukraine.

Now, a portion of those funds will support the new Ukrainian scholar.

This work hits home for

Hoban, whose parents still live in Ukraine and had to leave their home in Kyiv for a time.

"You feel helpless," she said of watching the war upend her family's lives. "I think having the opportunity to make a tangible difference, to use this position to make something like this happen, is fulfilling."

All of this work comes together

to position Virginia Tech as an international leader, Hoban said.

"It places Virginia Tech in this larger conversation of a land-grant university striving to have this global impact," she said.

- Virginia Tech Communications

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 nurture meaningful connections to God and others through worship, spiritual growth, and 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: fbradford.org 540-639-4419. Worship is in-person and live-streamed on Facebook and on our YouTube channel: First Baptist Church Radford.

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: Hal Sonafrank, 1-336-583-4822. 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!

(DOC - DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)

Snowville Christian Church, 5436 Lead Mine Rd., Hiwassee, VA 24347, Pastor: Jerry King, Website: www.SnowvilleChristianChurch.com (and Facebook), Office: 540-633-3761, Email: office@SnowvilleChristianChurch.com, Sunday Worship Service: 11:00 a.m., Sunday School: 10:00 a.m., Thursday Bible Study: 6:00 p.m., We are: "Inspiring hope, helping people grow their faith, and sharing God's love with others!"

ECKANKAR

Eckankar, the Path of Spiritual Freedom, is a simple teaching that focuses on the Light and Sound of God to help people find more love in their life. The Roanoke Eckankar Center is located at 1420 3rd St. SW, Roanoke, VA 24016. A spiritual event is held on the 2nd Sunday of each month at 10:30 a.m. Since contracting COVID-19 may still be possible, please take the health steps that are best for you. It is appreciated that by attending you are taking responsibility for your own health. Visit www.eck-va.org, www.meetup.com/Roanoke-Spiritual-Experiences * Group* or call 540-353-5365 for other Eckankar programs and for more information about how the teachings of Eckankar can 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 Service twice a month. Fellowship and refreshments follow services. Find us on

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

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 luthermemorialblacksburg@gmail.com, or contact the church office, (540) 951-1000. Rev. Monica Weber, pastor.

Our Saviour Lutheran Church ELCA, 1845 Cambria St NE, Christiansburg. Worship each Sunday at 10 am, in person and online at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMsB-gbyjmV5ce9mr43dbCw. Please visit our website at www.oslc-cburg.org and our Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/oslcchristiansburg to learn more about us. Little Free Pantry and Little Free Library located in our parking lot. Pastor Joshua L. Copeland; church office 540-382-2223.

St. Michael Lutheran Church, 2308 Merrimac Road, Blacksburg, VA 24060. Worship service each Sunday at 10 AM, Sunday School 9 AM. We are a community of God's people where people gather for worship, learning and service. Visitors and new members are always WELCOME! Google comments: "Wonderful, welcoming congregation...A place where all are truly welcome... Nice, friendly, competent staff." You will like our minister, The Rev. Michelle L. Stramiello. Her previous service was as Family Faith Formation Director at Cross and Crown Lutheran Church, Indianapolis, IN, Pastor of St Matthew Lutheran Church, Paducah, KY, and Hospice Chaplain in Largo, Fl. St. Michael started and administers Micah's Backpack which

has great community impact, Micah's Soup for Seniors, Micah's Garden, Closet, and Mini Pantry. Also, partnering with Rainbow Riders and Total Action for Progress, we opened open the first Early Childhood Head Start in our community (6 weeks to age 3), and have numerous other programs including a Justice & Mercy Fund providing assistance for those needing emergency assistance with critical bills. Further St. Michael sponsors an awesome Scouting program of Boy & Girl Scout Troops, Venture Scouts for older youth, and a new Cub Pack for girls & boys kindergarten - 5th grade. Directions: From Price's Fork Road, turn onto Merrimac Road and St. Michael is 3/10ths of a mile down on the left. For more information about any of our activities: Phone 540 951-8951. Email hope@stmlc.us or visit our Website www.st-michael-lutheran-church.org

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 every-

one 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 540-510-0952. The building is totally handicapped accessible. Website: christwesleyanchurch.org

Obituaries from page 5

Naff, David Arnold, Sr.

David Arnold Naff Sr., 93, entered his heavenly home on Monday, Dec. 19, 2022.

He was born to the late Archie and Melissa Naff on Oct. 11, 1929.

Preceding him in death was his wife of 72 years, Dorothy Christine Rutter Naff; six brothers: Preston Naff, J.T. Naff, Elbert Naff, Paul Naff, Bill Naff, and Harold Naff; and three sisters: Ruth Ziegler, Melba Bryant, and Dianne Trump.

Those left to cherish his memory include five children: Stephen Naff (Leisa), David Naff (Peggy), Darryl Naff (Beckie), Joan Handy (Kenny) and Byron Naff (Missy); three sisters: Helen Altizer, Joyce Moore, and Lola Clower (Harless); two sisters-in-law: Dorothy Rutter and Nancy Naff; 14



grandchildren; 23 great-grandchildren, and many nieces and nephews.

A celebration of life service will be held at 11 a.m. on Saturday, April 8, 2023, at Christiansburg Church of the Brethren. Following the service, the family extends an invitation to a reception and visitation with family and friends.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Music Department at Christiansburg Church of the Brethren Post Office Box 3050 Christiansburg, VA 24068.

To send flowers, contact the Northside Flower Shop at (540) 639-9361 or 5964 Belspring Rd, Radford, VA 24141.

Sweeney, Carmen Fernandez

Carmen Fernandez Sweeney, 88, of Blacksburg, formerly of Mandeville, La., died Dec. 2, 2019, at her home.

She was born in Norco, La., on June 10, 1931, to the late Alvin J. and Lucille Lehmann Fernandez. She was preceded in death by an infant daughter, Shannon Ann Sweeney, and a sister, Mrs. Betty Jo Guttuso.

She is survived by daughters Dr. Erin S. Champagne (Tom) and Kerry S. Lockamy (Bill); two granddaughters, Dr. Stephanie G.

McGarvey (James) and Dr. Camille W. Graham; a great-grandchild, Clare; a sister, Lucile (Bobbie) Siragusa; as well as many beloved family and friends.

Carmen was a longtime member of the Catholic Church having attended local churches where she lived. She enjoyed art, music, cooking, and time with family. She was a devoted wife and mother.

A memorial will be held at a later date in Louisiana.

Sweeney, II, Neil

Neil Sweeney, II, 92, of Blacksburg, formerly of Mandeville, La., died Saturday, Feb. 11, 2023, at his home.

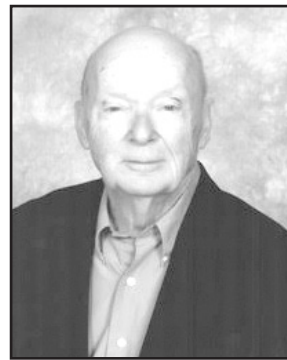
He was born in New Orleans on July 28, 1930, to the late Robert Price and Geraldine Cupit Sweeney. He was preceded in death by his wife, Carmen Fernandez Sweeney, and an infant daughter, Shannon Ann Sweeney.

He was a veteran of the United States Navy and a lifetime member of the Catholic Church having attended the local churches where he lived. Neil gained dual citizenship by tracing his genealogy to County Donegal,

Ireland. His wife and he enjoyed camping, sailing, traveling, and visiting with family and friends. He was a devoted father and husband.

He is survived by his daughters, Dr. Erin S. Champagne (Tom), Kerry S. Lockamy (Bill); and granddaughters Dr. Stephanie G. McGarvey (James), Dr. Camille W. Graham; and great-grandchildren, Clare, Kate, and James; as well as many other beloved family and friends.

A memorial service will be held at a later date in Louisiana.



Powers, Wanda Gale Sheppard

Wanda Gale Sheppard Powers, 80, passed away Monday, Feb. 13, 2023, at her home in Fairlawn.

She was retired from the Accounting Department at Virginia Tech.

Wanda Gale was preceded in death by her parents, T. Ward and Hattie Sheppard, and her son, Darren Yates.

Survivors include her husband, Aubrey Powers, Jr.; a son,



Hairston; five grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren; and many other relatives and friends.

A graveside service will be held for Wanda at 2 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 20, 2023, at the Stanger Cemetery in Christiansburg with the Rev. Sebert Rorrer officiating.

The Powers family is in the care of Mullins Funeral Home and Crematory in Radford.

Prater, Betty Jo

Betty Jo Prater, of Blacksburg, passed away on Feb. 3, 2023.

Betty Jo was born on Nov. 19, 1933, to Douglas and Juanita Robinson of Blacksburg. She graduated from BHS in 1951 and married Jack Prater in 1954. Moving from town to town, they made happy homes, lifelong friends, and lasting memories together.

Betty Jo is survived by her brothers James L. Robinson and Douglas Robinson, Jr., and a sister, Bertha Crabtree and her husband Bill; her sons Steve and his wife Elaine, and Will, and a daughter, Molly; grandchildren Corey Tucker, Samantha Boeji and husband



Michael, Jack Prater and wife Hanna, Kristina Williams, Chad Eveleth, Danielle Prater and Julie Eveleth; and her great-grandchildren, McKenzie, Maddison, and Maverick Boeji, Hope Williams, and Layla Lancaster.

Services will be held Feb. 25 at noon at Luther Memorial Lutheran Church in Blacksburg. Following the service, a reception will be held at The Inn at Virginia Tech, Smithfield Room, from 1 to 3 p.m. As an expression of sympathy in lieu of flowers, the family asks for donations to Montgomery Regional Library Foundation, Blacksburg Library, 200 Miller St., Blacksburg, VA 24060.

Wilson, Elmer Allen

Elmer Allen Wilson, 84, passed away Saturday, Feb. 11, 2023, at his home in Pulaski.

He was a member of Newbern Church of God and retired from Lynchburg Foundry where he was a master steel worker.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Wildie and Vina Mae Wilson; and a sister, Duffie Jean Berard.

Survivors include his wife, Katherine Coe Wilson; sons and daughters-in-law, Michael and Ashley Wilson and Wildie Allen and Jennifer Wilson; a brother and sister-in-law, Donald and Dottie Wilson; a sister and brother-in-law, Betty and William Barton;

grandchildren Michael, Peyton, Katherine, Gensis and Ashton Gray; a great-grandson, Julius; and many other relatives and friends.

Graveside services with full military honors were held on Friday, Feb. 17, 2023 in the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Dublin.

Memorial services will be held on Sunday, Feb. 19, 2023, at 4 p.m. at the Newbern Church of God, 5271 Wilderness Road, Dublin, VA 24084, with the Rev. David Cruft officiating.

The Wilson family is in the care of Mullins Funeral Home and Crematory in Radford.



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PHOTO COURTESY OF PEXELS

VT real estate professor Jonathan Everett says house hunters should pay more attention to the local market than to national trends and ask themselves if they can realistically afford the home they are touring and live with the financial outcome.

Real estate expert spells out what home buyers should pay attention to in volatile housing market

During the housing boom of 2022, homes were selling for well above list price and buyers had to compete for what little was available, but that boom has gone bust, brought low by high

interest rates, or so the headlines state.

Reports suggest the power has shifted to buyers, who can be pickier as the housing market slows, and that as prices come down, the number of

homebuyers requesting home tours has started to climb. Potential homeowners hunting for their first house are likely wondering what all of this means for them.

Yet those house hunters should pay more attention to their local markets than to national trends, said Virginia Tech real estate professor Jonathan Everett. "In a volatile market, like the one we are in now, I think 'timing' the market just right would prove challenging."

Standing in the shoes of a homebuyer right now, Everett said, "I would ask the following questions: Can I very realistically afford this home? How strong is the real estate market in my area? Can I live with the financial outcome?"

Everett says that the current interest rates of about 6% are higher than they were last summer but lower than the October-November peak. Generally speaking, housing prices and mortgage interest rates are interconnected. Lower rates tend to lead to higher prices, while higher rates can bring prices down.

"A homebuyer might imagine a dream scenario where they lock in a great purchase price with a chance to refinance at a lower interest rate down the road, but should not presume they

can afford a payment based on the hope of refinancing at a lower rate," said Everett.

Everett also encourages "homebuyers to not budget to the max limit of what they can afford" to leave a financial cushion in case their mortgage payment rises due to changes in property insurance and real estate tax expenses.

"A prospective home buyer should consider this question: If I bought this house, would my financial and personal goals be accomplished even if I never get the chance to refinance?" Everett says.

Everett recommends that potential homebuyers use apps like Realtor and Zillow to study what homes in their community and price range end up selling for. "This will help homebuyers calibrate to their local market and get a sense for reasonable prices and what constitutes a 'good deal,'" he says.

Prior to joining Virginia Tech's Pamplin College of Business, Jonathan Everett worked in the commercial banking industry. His background includes commercial lending and underwriting real estate projects.

Virginia Tech students use 3D printing to make drones that fly

3D printing typically involves a single machine creating an object, but a team of undergraduate researchers has taken that paradigm far outside its box in the Design, Research, and Education for Additive Manufacturing (DREAMS) Lab, led by L.S. Randolph Professor Chris Williams.

The project started with the goal of 3D printing a drone that could autonomously fly out of the printer and evolved into a highly robust, adaptable approach for manufacturing large mechatronic systems.

Drones are complex mechanisms with spinning

propellers, precisely calibrated electronics, batteries, and an array of other pieces and parts. One of the team's early challenges was approaching that complexity with 3D printing. Some parts, such as a charged battery and motor, simply couldn't be printed and instead required assembly. This assembly doesn't fit with the normal function of a 3D printer, which is to lay down stacked layers on top of one another, forming a single stationary object.

The team also needed to solve a somewhat sticky problem: setting the drone free. Because a 3D printer's

first layer slightly adheres to the build plate, the team needed to figure out how to scrape the printed piece off during the autonomous process.

A typical 3D printer wouldn't achieve all these objectives. While the machine can place layers to create a shape and even print different materials together, it cannot grab components and assemble them, and it cannot scrape off its own product. Determining how to complete all those steps autonomously would

See Drones, page 8

Trees from page 3

banks and reduces erosion

4. Provides vital food and habitat for terrestrial and aquatic wildlife and

5. Connects fragmented ecosystems and wildlife migration corridors

A number of partners are joining to make this massive project happen:

The Virginia Department of Forestry

The Environmental Coalition at Virginia Tech

The Virginia Tech Office of Sustainability

Virginia Tech Stormwater

The Virginia Tech College of Natural

Resources and Environment

The Virginia Tech Department of Forest Resources & Environmental Conservation

The Virginia Tech Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation

The Virginia Tech School of Plant

and Environmental Sciences and the

hundreds of volunteers who have already signed up to make this happen.

- News Messenger staff report

Auburn girls defeat Bland Co., Mundy sets school record



Auburn's Morgan Mundy brings the ball up the court in Monday's 53-24 win over Bland. During the game, Mundy broke the Auburn basketball single-season record for steals that was set by Brittany Kirtner (147) back in 2022. Mundy now has the new record with 158.



Carli Christian looks up the court as she brings the ball up in the Lady Eagles' win over Bland County. She finished the game with 14 points.

PHOTOS BY ASHLEY AKERS

Auburn boys roll past Bland County



Drew Royal drives the base line in Auburn's 73-41 defeat of Bland county this past Monday. With the win, the Eagles advanced in tournament play.



Auburn's Coahan Gordon goes up for a tough shot under the basket in his team's win on Monday night over Bland County.

PHOTOS BY ASHLEY AKERS

Drones

from page 6

be the critical factor in creating a working drone that successfully departed its maker.

The box becomes an arm

more work to program and operate, they also offer more options.

dimensional prints of each layer, the kinematic flexibility of the robot arm allows us to deposit material in any direction in 3D space."

sticky bond between the finished piece and the build plate. This became a lesson in thermodynamics.

The team planned to circumvent the typical 3D printer's function that uses a print head on a fixed gantry. Instead, the group used a robotic arm that could be equipped with tools for printing and component assembly. Although the arms take

"By attaching a print head to multi-axis industrial robotic arms, we gain additional degrees of freedom of movement that allows us to finally print in true 3D," said Williams. "Instead of just stacking a series of two-

Breaking the bond After the students designated parts for either printing or assembly, they needed to determine the best way to break the

The robotic printer's large, heated build plate, which acts as a base for the piece being built, is slightly warm to create enough adhesion so that the piece doesn't move during printing. Though essential to achieving the precision required to build, it created an obstacle for a printed piece that needs to fly away from its printer.

Team member Dalton Phillips discovered a surprisingly simple solution to remove the printed piece: let it cool. If the plate cooled a few degrees after the print finished, the adherence became weaker. Once the plate cooled to a certain point, a simple mechanical scraper could be used to push it away. This approach worked, and the drone could be set free.

- Virginia Tech

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