



# News Messenger

Blacksburg

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Saturday, May 13, 2023

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## Montgomery County Administrator Meadows announces retirement

Montgomery County Administrator Craig Meadows will be retiring on November 3, 2023, after serving in the role since 2009.

According to a statement by Montgomery County, the Board of Supervisors "will be discussing next steps for the County Administrator position."

"Craig is an absolute champion for Montgomery County," said Montgomery County Board of Supervisors Chair, Sherri Blevins. "His leadership has been and will continue to be valued by both the board and employees. Montgomery County has been extremely fortunate to have such an exemplary leader like Craig. We will all miss him greatly, but we wish him and his family all the very best in his retirement."

Meadows said he will continue to live in the community.

"I have enjoyed my time as County Administrator in Montgomery County," said Meadows. "Our community really is a special place,

with a rich history and a very exciting future. This is home for me and my wife, Rhonda. We will continue to be engaged in our community as we enjoy our retirement and our children and grandchildren."

As Montgomery County Administrator for the past 14 years, Meadows "has led Montgomery County through significant growth and even a few tragic events with grace and strength," reads a statement from the county.

"He has facilitated over 20 new construction and renovation projects in our community to address education, public safety, recreation and key infrastructure needs," the statement reads. "He also continues to focus on economic development and growing and expanding existing businesses in our community."

"I was on the Board of Supervisors when Craig was hired as the Administrator," said Montgomery County Board of Supervisors Vice Chair, Mary Biggs. "As soon as we

met Craig, we knew he was exactly what Montgomery County needed. He has always been accessible and approachable. He is a wonderful collaborator with local, regional and even national partners and colleagues. His service and leadership in outside organizations has brought both recognition of and increased knowledge to Montgomery County."

Meadows involvement in regional organizations and initiatives over the years "have had a significant impact on [the] community," the county statement reads, including helping to establish the New River Valley Emergency Communications Regional Authority, which includes the towns of Blacksburg and Christiansburg, Montgomery County, and Virginia Tech.

Meadows also organized a forum to discuss the planning and anticipated growth of Carilion Clinic and Virginia Tech and facilitated a

See Meadows, page 4



PHOTO COURTESY OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY  
Montgomery County Administrator Craig Meadows will be retiring on November 3, 2023.

## Montgomery County Board of Supervisors votes to dissolve Shawsville Rescue Squad



GRAPHIC COURTESY OF MONT. CO.

Lori Graham  
Contributing writer

CHRISTIANSBURG - The Montgomery County Board of Supervisors unanimously voted to dissolve the Shawsville Volunteer Rescue Squad at its Monday, May 8 meeting.

The area will now be served by Montgomery County EMS departments.

The Shawsville Volunteer Rescue Squad served eastern Montgomery County in support of providing emergency services to the area's citizens for decades. The

board expressed their gratitude for the volunteers' many years of service to their community.

"They have really provided great service to the citizens of eastern Montgomery, and we definitely want to recognize that," said Supervisor Fijalkowski. "Especially that any volunteers that wish to continue, they have that option to continue volunteering with the county EMS."

Reimbursements in the amount of just

See Shawsville, page 4



Arthur smiles for a picture with Emma Lemley, Virginia Tech Softball pitcher.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ABBEY ROSE ERWIN  
Arthur leads his cheer with fellow softball fan Chip right beside him.

## Virginia Tech Softball's biggest fan brings the energy to every game

Gracie Moyers  
Contributing writer

BLACKSBURG - Behind home plate sits Virginia Tech's biggest fan, cheering on the girls that are now more than just a softball team in his eyes.

Arthur Erwin has

become the heart and soul of the Virginia Tech softball team. He is six years old and battles cerebral palsy; however, that does not get in his way. The positivity, energy and enthusiasm that he embodies and brings to each game has quickly made him a celebrity around Tech

Softball Park.

"Arthur is like the team's little brother, and he is our most loyal fan," said Emma Lemley, sophomore pitcher for the Virginia Tech softball team. "He's at every home game and most of our away

See Fan, page 3

## Christiansburg Town Council discusses real estate tax rate

CHRISTIANSBURG - A real estate tax increase of \$0.14 for the FY 2023-24 was discussed by Christiansburg Town Council in their regular meeting on May 9, 2023.

"We're proposing the tax rate to be \$0.14; that's a decrease from the current \$0.16 tax rate, although because of the reassessment, it is an effective increase," said Christiansburg Town Manager Randy Wingfield, opening the discussion with the council during the public hearing portion of the agenda. "So, we do have to advertise it as such and that is the reason we've advertised it as a tax increase, although we are proposing to actual lower the rate by two cents."

A water and sewer rate increase for FY 2023-24, of one dollar per thousand gallons, has been proposed. Out of town

rates for water and sewer have also been proposed for an increase, with the first 0 to 1,000 gallons increasing from \$13.50 to \$20.

Also in public hearing, Jones Real Estate Investment and Recycling Company, Inc., requested to rezone a 1.1-acre portion of a 2.002-acre parcel located between the south side of Scott Street, NE and the north side of Roanoke Street, and approximately 1.21 acres located at 1413 Scott St. NE, and approximately 0.26 acres located adjacent to the east side of 1413 Scott St. NE. The purpose of this rezoning is for a planned housing development of 47 townhomes.

Paul Henegar, Lumson Associates Civil Engineers of Roanoke, addressed the council on the proposed rezoning request. Henegar explained the property

is currently split-zoned, but the owner, Jared Jones, wishes to have the property zoned R-3, multi-family residential, to accommodate the proposed plans for housing.

"This property exists in a whole bunch of different parcels so, one of the things we would do if we get the approval today, would be at some point in time, we would vacate all those exterior, or interior lot lines to create one parcel of property" Henegar said.

Jones Company, Inc. also requested a conditional use permit for the same proposed housing development. Henegar spoke in response to some public concern and comments previously heard by the company during planning commission

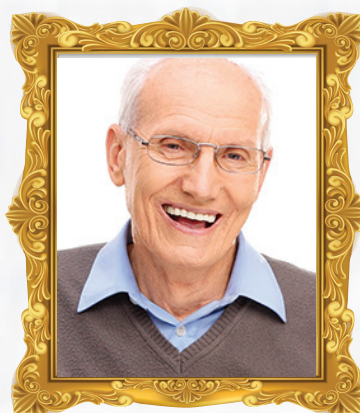
See Tax rate, page 3



GRAPHIC COURTESY OF TOWN OF CHRISTIANSBURG

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# UPCOMING EVENTS

## Saturday, May 13:

### Mount Tabor Ruritan fish fry

Mount Tabor Ruritan Club will hold its May Fish Fry, 5 to 7 p.m. at Slusser's Chapel Picnic Shelter, 1543 Mount Tabor Rd, Blacksburg. Serving fish, fries and slaw; homemade desserts; and beverages. DJ Earl Brown will be spinning some hits to get the 2023 fry season off to a swinging start! Adults-\$12, children under 12 - \$6, (under 3)- free, carry-outs- \$12. Held rain or shine. Call or text 540-449-6178 for further information. On Facebook at MtTaborRuritan.

### Rockin' Main Street Concert

Downtown Christiansburg; 5 - 9 p.m. Hosted by The Town of Christiansburg's Parks and Recreation Department. Enjoy musical entertainment by the Carolina Shreds and Miller Holler, as well as beer, wine, and other food and drinks from your favorite local vendors.

## Sunday, May 14:

### Market Day at Long Way

At Long Way Brewing; 1 - 5 p.m. A dozen artisan vendors will be on site to browse and shop as visitors sip on Long Way Brewing's signature craft brews.

## Tuesday, May 16:

### Blacksburg AARP May Chapter Program

At the Blacksburg Community Center, 725 Patrick Henry Dr., Blacksburg 11:30-noon (coffee and conversation), 12 -1 p.m. (presentation). Guest speaker will be Dwayne Yancy of Cardinal News. Yancy has more than four decades of experience in Virginia journalism. Non-members are welcome.

### DIY Terrariums

At the Christiansburg Library; 4:30 -5:30 p.m. Assemble a miniature terrarium. Ideal for ages 8-plus.

## Wednesday, May 17:

### VR Wednesday

At the Radford Public Library; 2- 3 p.m. Come take a hike, paint a masterpiece, or explore the international space station at the library! Try all these things and more using our new Meta Quest 2 VR headset. If that's not a good time for you, email duncan.hall@radfordva.gov to schedule a time for a 30 minute demo!

## Thursday, May 18:

### Community Quilting Bee

At the Blacksburg Library; 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Join us for our weekly quilting and sewing group. Bring your

supplies and join us for conversation.

### Meadowbrook Quilters

At the Meadowbrook Library; 6:30 - 8 p.m. All age groups and skill levels are encouraged to participate in this informal gathering of individuals who love quilting or just want to learn the craft. Meetings are held on the third Thursday of the month, in the Studio Room of the Meadowbrook Center.

### Sons of Confederate Veterans

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 Rd. Members of the United Daughters of the Confederacy are also invited to this meeting. For further information, please call 540-320-4315 or 540-239-9864.

## Monday, May 22:

### Radford City Council meeting

The Radford City Council will hold its regularly scheduled meeting at 7 p.m. in council chambers at the Radford Municipal Building, 10 Robertson St., Radford. See the agenda at [www.radfordva.gov](http://www.radfordva.gov).

### Montgomery County Board of Supervisors meeting

Public meetings are the second and fourth Monday of each month at the Montgomery County Government Center, 755 Roanoke St. in Christiansburg. Closed sessions begin at 6 p.m. if needed. Open sessions begin at 7:15 p.m. Citizens are invited to attend and allowed to speak at each meeting. All regular meetings of the Board of Supervisors are rebroadcast on Montgomery County Comcast and Shentel Channels 190 daily.

## Tuesday, May 23:

### Blacksburg Town Council meeting

Town Council meets in regular session the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month 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 televised live on WTOB Channel 2.

### Christiansburg Town Council meeting

Regular Town Council meetings are held on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month beginning at 7 p.m. in the Council Chambers of Town Hall (100 E. Main Street). The public is welcome and encouraged to attend, with a citizen hearing time reserved at each meeting for residents to bring any matter they desire before the entire council.

## On-going:

### Glencoe Mansion announces call for art for Mary Draper Ingles Show

Glencoe Mansion is calling for art for its July-August 2023 Gallery Exhibit, "A Journey For All," a multi-artist show themed on the life and times of Mary Draper Ingles. Accepted artwork should reflect the life and times of Ingles (Colonial times). Can include depictions of local landmarks (Ingles Farm, the Cultural and Heritage Park, Ingles Tavern and other connected sites in the region), and Colonial style art. Painting, plein air, illustration, digital media, textiles, mixed media and photography will be considered - up to three work per artist. Applications will be accepted through 5 p.m. on June 13. Open to artists in and around the NRV area. Entry forms at [www.glencoemansion.org](http://www.glencoemansion.org) or by contacting [arts@glencoemansion.org](mailto:arts@glencoemansion.org).

### Blacksburg Farmers Market

Hours now through October: Wednesdays 2 - 6 p.m. and Saturdays 8 a.m. - 2 p.m. Located at Market Square Park, on the corner of Roanoke Street and Draper Road in downtown Blacksburg. Features growers of locally grown produce and meats, alongside artisans of baked goods, prepared foods, cheese, handmade crafts, and more.

### Christiansburg Farmers Market

Thursdays; 3 - 7 p.m. Located in the Recreation Center parking lot. Features local farmers and vendors. Seasonal produce, plants, fresh baked goods, crafts, fresh flowers, handmade jewelry and more. Items for purchase vary week-to-week. Check our Facebook page for details about weekly themes, prizes, vendors, and live music.

### Radford Farmers Market

2023 season of the Radford Farmers Market kicked off Saturday, April 22 on the grounds of Glencoe Mansion, Museum and Gallery, located just off West Main Street, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. each Saturday until October 14. Features produce, plants, baked goods, artisans, fresh squeezed lemonade, eggs, meats, cheeses and more.

### Radford Field of Honor

Field of Honor on the grounds of Glencoe Mansion, Museum and Gallery- displayed until the Fourth of July by the Radford Noon Rotary Club. Sponsor flags to honor a veteran, first responder, family member, teacher, associate, etc. Individual flags - \$50. Blue sponsorship - \$500, includes five flags plus signage. White sponsorship - \$1,000, includes 10 flags plus signage. Red sponsorship - \$2,500, includes 10 flags plus premium signage. Money raised benefits scholarships to RHS students attending Radford University, polio eradication, Rotary Youth Leadership Awards, Glencoe Mansion, Radford-Fairlawn Daily Bread, Elf Shelf, the Women's Resource Center, Sleep in Heavenly Peace, Vittles for Vets, Beans and Rice, the Wheelchair Foundation, Wonder Universe Children's Museum, Shelterbox and Sunset Garden. Contact Tom Alston with Radford Noon Rotary at [rotary.club.of.radford.noon@gmail.com](mailto:rotary.club.of.radford.noon@gmail.com) or register at: <https://registrations.dacdb.com/Register/index.cfm>.

## Community Foundation of the NRV celebrates 10th Anniversary of GiveLocalNRV Annual Online Giving Day

BLACKSBURG - This year is the 10th anniversary of the GiveLocalNRV Giving Day, an annual, online event hosted by the Community Foundation of the New River Valley (CFNRV) that encourages charitable giving to nonprofits serving the New River Valley (NRV.) Since 2014, thousands of donors in the NRV have come together through this event to raise \$2.6 million for dozens of nonprofits, providing vital support for their missions.

Currently 73 nonprofits are registered for the event, and others are invited to register by Thursday, May 25 at [givelocalnrv.org](http://givelocalnrv.org). Organizations that serve the NRV and are categorized as 501c3 by the IRS or those who work with a 501c3 as a fiscal agent are eligible to participate.

This year, the early giving period will begin on Thursday, June 1, which allows participating nonprofits to fundraise throughout the month. The Giving Day will kick off at noon on Wednesday,

June 28 and end at noon on Thursday, June 29. During the early giving period and the 24-hour celebration of giving, nonprofits will compete for \$25,000 in incentive grants and prizes provided by the CFNRV and its generous sponsors.

"Giving Day gives us the unique opportunity to extend our reach much further than we would be able to on our own," said Morris Fleischer, vice president of the board of the Giles County Christian Service Mission, a long-time GiveLocalNRV participant. "It provides us with a platform for sharing our story, a conduit through which we can extend our gratitude and appreciation to previous donors, and a catalyst for attracting new givers."

The grants and prizes reward nonprofits for things such as the highest number of unique donors and most money raised. As a special prize this year, participating nonprofits will have the opportunity to



GRAPHIC COURTESY OF COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF THE NRV

compete to be featured on an episode of Buzz4Good, which airs weekly on Blue Ridge PBS and features the work of regional nonprofits to generate more "buzz" for their missions.

"We are so excited to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the GiveLocalNRV Giving Day with the New River Valley community," said Jessica Wirgau, Chief Executive Officer of the CFNRV. "This event shines a light on how when many people come together, they can make a huge impact. Every donation, no matter what size, makes a difference to the participating nonprofits."

This year's generous sponsors of GiveLocalNRV are: National Bank of Blacksburg, Atlantic Union Bank, First

Bank and Trust, Carter Bank and Trust, Olio Financial Planning, Automation Creations, Inc., Meridian Bird Removal, Virginia Community Capital, Brown, Edwards, and Co. LLP, Jim and Sue McAlister, 5 Points Creative, Buzz4Good, and NRV Magazine.

For all the details on this year's event, the grants and prizes, and how to register your organization, please visit [givelocalnrv.org](http://givelocalnrv.org). For more information on how to participate as a nonprofit or a donor, please reach out to the CFNRV team at [cfnrv@cfnrv.org](mailto:cfnrv@cfnrv.org).

*Submitted by the Community Foundation of the NRV*



GRAPHIC COURTESY OF KIWANIS CLUB OF CHRISTIANSBURG  
(L-R) Ms. Harris-Gilliam, DECA sponsor, Marketing Teacher-CHS, Ty French, CHS 11th grade CHS DECA representative to Nationals, Kiwanian Oliver Lewis, MCPS, Tiered Intervention Specialists.

## Kiwanis Club sponsors CHS student at international competition

The Kiwanis Club of Christiansburg, which "focuses on serving the children of the world" is proud to have Christiansburg High School (CHS) Junior Ty French contending for International Champion at the DECA International Career Development Conference.

April 21-26, Ty attended the DECA International Career Development Conference known as ICDC is Orlando, FL. DECA ICDC is the culmination of the DECA year where more than 20,000 high school students, teacher-advisors, business professionals and alumni gather for several days of DECA excitement. Prior to this conference, Ty finished first in his category on the district-level at the District Leadership

Conference (DLC) held at Roanoke College and qualified him for a run at the State Leadership Conference (SLC) held at Virginia Beach. He was one of eight students to represent Christiansburg High School at the state-level conference. As a result, Ty finished 9th overall at SLC.

Ty competed in the DECA Competitive Events - Principles of Marketing category at ICDC where he demonstrated college and career knowledge and skills.

Ms. Harris-Gilliam, DECA sponsor and Marketing Teacher at CHS said, "The CHS DECA program is back in full-swing and hopes to continue to shape emerging leaders for careers in Marketing, Business, Finance, and Hospitality.

In addition to representing CHS on the international level, Ty serves as the Vice President of Marketing for our local chapter."

The Kiwanis Club of Christiansburg ([www.christiansburgkiwanis.com](http://www.christiansburgkiwanis.com)) is proudly supporting Ty with his representation of CHS at ICDC through club events like the Town Spring Kickoff and Rockin' on Main event, with the third weekend in September 50th anniversary of the Kiwanis Wilderness Trail Festival in downtown Christiansburg ([www.wildernesstrailfestival.com](http://www.wildernesstrailfestival.com))

Kiwanian Oliver Lewis presented Ty French with a check in April to help with his attendance in the ICDC.

- Kiwanis Club of Christiansburg



# Shawsville from page 1

over 2.1 million dollars to the Montgomery County Public Schools were unanimously approved by the board of supervisors during Monday night's meeting as well.

Annie Whittaker, Deputy Superintendent, requested the funds from the supervisors for CARES/ESSER and insurance reimbursements to the school operating fund. According to the resolution presented at the board meeting, CARES/ESSER funds are to cover the FY 2022-23 retention bonus for non-SOQ (Standard of Quality) positions and ESSER position salaries and benefits. Specific

information on the reimbursement requests can be found on the county's meeting agenda at [www.montva.com](http://www.montva.com).

"There are two different reimbursements," Whittaker explained to the board. "One is from insurance, as you know, we had some significant weather issues over the holiday at winter, so that is, we pay it out of our operating and they reimburse us. The other is ESSA reimbursements, again we pay it out of operating and they reimburse us the funds after we have spent them."

"Sometimes it just gets confusing if you are

spending money that is coming out of operating, but it was not actually designated for operating. You could be in a deficit if you already spent that money," Chair Sherri Blevins expressed.

Also on Monday, Brea Hopkins, Director of Planning and GIS Services, addressed the board to request a special use permit for a lighted park; Auburn Park located at 3595 Riner Rd. in Riner.

"We do propose the installation of lighting for the fields," said Hopkins. "It does consist of the following lights: 21 sixty-foot poles, 1 seventy-foot, and eight 80-foot poles for a total of 144 downcast lighting fixtures. So, additional lighting does create a safer place for our kids to play. They will be LED lights, they will only be on during use . . . and shielded to only light the areas needed and prevent glare."

Additional information presented by Hopkins stated that the park and recreational department will regulate play hours and when lights will be on, but all games will end prior to 10 p.m.

Board members responded with a few questions for Hopkins, following her presentation. April DeMotts asked if the lights would be programmable from the government center office, similarly to a previous

park in the area. Hopkins confirmed this would be the case.

Supervisor Todd King asked about the size of the field in response to a previous citizen request. Hopkins explained they are looking at extending softball field two for the purpose of accommodating the 13-18 age group of boys.

"We're looking at changing one of the fields from a 225-foot fence down the line to a 300-foot, 350-foot in the center with a 90-foot base pass, to accommodate traditional baseball sized field; 90-foot bases and 60-foot pitching mound" Bradley St. Clair, Assistant County Administrator added.

The BOS approved the special use permit for the installation of the park lights with unanimous approval from all seven board members present.

In other county business, David Clarke, Virginia Department of Transportation Residency Administrator, updated the board on road improvements and repairs. Citizens can expect to see piping replaced, tree clean-up, road patching, and ditching repairs in various locations of the county. High Top Road has been completed. Some of the other roads VDOT is currently working on are Huffville Road, with work expected to be completed on 615/Christiansburg

Pike Road as well. Clarke shared that Blacksburg's Glade Road, although expected to be done, will not be completed this year.

"The only six-year plan project that is going to occur this year is the bit of Craig Mountain Road that we have in between the end of pavement and where we did about a half-mile section a few years ago; we are going to connect that about one-third mile gap," Clarke said.

Additional areas on the schedule for VDOT work are Taylor Hollow off of Luster's Gate and the design of Poplar Hill.

Board members joined Clarke recently on a driving survey of the county's roads. Fijalkowski thanked Clarke for riding with the board members in surveying the county's roads.

"When you hear about a lot of these roads that aren't in our own districts, which we all know our districts fairly well, it really benefits us to get a good idea what's involved, and by having you there riding with us, you can really give us the realistic opinions that you've seen through your own experience" Fijalkowski said.

Citizens spoke in response to the board's real estate tax rate deduction and budgetary appropriations' decisions during the citizen comment period of the meeting.

"I'm not one who enjoys

paying high taxes, but I am also intelligent enough to appreciate the things that make Montgomery County a great place to live." Matthew Fentress, of Christiansburg, said. "I hold in high regard the men and women of our country and our county that wear a badge and protect the families of Montgomery County."

Fentress went on to discuss the impacts to the ACCE program, teachers and staff, and reductions from the contingency funds.

Bob Beard, Christiansburg, spoke in support of having a revenue neutral budget, presenting statistics to the board in support of his argument.

Wayman Pack, of Riner, expressed, "how have we not progressed, but regressed to get to our current state? If one side of the board argued for a \$0.70 rate and the other for a \$0.73 rate, in my naivete, believed that the parties would cooperate and try to reach a compromise solution."

Supervisor Todd King, just prior to the close of the meeting, expressed to the board members that "if you haven't seen the school board meeting from last Tuesday, I would encourage you to watch that, because I wasn't too happy with some of the words that were said in that meeting."

## News Messenger

Established 1869

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USPS 016-490 Online: [www.ourvalley.org](http://www.ourvalley.org)

Michael Showell, *Publisher*

Heather Bell, *Editor*

[hbell@mainstreetnewspapers](mailto:hbell@mainstreetnewspapers)

Aila Boyd, *Executive Editor*

[aboyn@ourvalley.org](mailto:aboyn@ourvalley.org)

Randy Thompson, *Advertising Consultant*

[advertise@ourvalley.org](mailto:advertise@ourvalley.org)

Give us your view:

[editor@ourvalley.org](mailto: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.

## Meadows from page 1

Regional Trail Initiative.

"All of these things have increased efficiency for each locality and greatly expanded and improved services to citizens throughout the region," the county stated.

Meadows serves on the New River Valley Emergency Communications Regional Authority; the New River Valley Regional Water Authority; the Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Board; the Western Virginia Regional Jail Authority; the Economic Development Authority; Montgomery Regional Tourism Board; Public Service Authority; Greater Montgomery Liaison Group and County/School Liaison Group; and the Fire and Rescue Commission. He has had an active

role on the New River Valley Regional Public Health Task Force since its inception in March of 2020 to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

He also has roles in state and national organizations including the Virginia Association of Counties; the Virginia Local Government Management Association; and the International City/County Management Association.

Meadow's career prior to Montgomery County included a stint as Interim Town Manager of Red Springs, N.C., city manager of Monroe, N.C., and of Bedford, Va., as assistant city manager in Monroe, N.C., and as Director of Finance of Monroe, as well as assistant city

manager and director of finance and administration in Mount Airy, N.C.

Meadows is a certified public accountant who started his career in private industry in accounting. He has an undergraduate degree from Gardner-Webb University and is a graduate of the municipal administration program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's School of Government. He also earned a graduate certificate in local government management from Virginia Tech in 2012 and is a 2015 graduate of the Senior Executive Institute at the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia.

*News Messenger staff report*

**CROSSWORD**

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- CLUES ACROSS**
- Easy as 1-2-3
  - Goat and camel hair fabric
  - A women undergarment
  - British bathrooms
  - Assemblages of parts into one entity
  - Semitic fertility god
  - Dull & uninteresting
  - Yemen capital
  - Stare impertinently
  - Banished persons
  - Heart failure & energy supplement
  - Reduction in force
  - Women's \_\_\_ movement
  - Polynesian wrapped skirt
  - Double-reed instruments
  - Own (Scottish)
  - Summer window dressings
  - Many not ands
- CLUES DOWN**
- Vestment worn by priests
  - The trunk of a tree
  - Transmission line cable
  - Freshwater duck genus
  - Bulk storage container
  - Oil obtained from flowers
  - Shopping containers
  - Abnormal breathing
  - Brew
  - Bake eggs in their shells
  - Serviceable
  - A person in the navy
  - A child's slight injury
  - Fain
  - Supports trestletree
  - Panian Chronicle discovery site
  - Greek famous for fables
  - Farical afterpiece
  - Dispatches by mail
- CLUES ACROSS**
- Hall of Fame (abbr.)
  - Aah
  - Unnaturally pale
  - Before
  - Fixed in one's purpose
  - Madames
  - Frosts
  - City drains
  - Baseball playoff
  - Cruise
  - Steeple
  - Precipitation
  - Ancient Greek rhetorician
  - A unit of two
  - Viewed
  - Taxis
  - 4840 square yards
  - London radio station
  - Perform work regularly
  - Longest geological time

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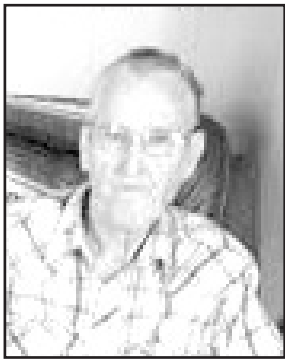
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# OBITUARIES

## Cumbee, Roy Miller

Roy Miller Cumbee, 86, of grandchildren, Brandon Spencer, Dublin, died, Monday, May 8, 2023, at Pulaski Health and Rehabilitation Center.

He was born on June 8, 1936, to the late Charlie and Lida Bell Cumbee. He is also preceded in death by his sisters, Marie Janney, Buelah Ann Shaver, and Maybelle Dooley; and brothers, Alfred Cumbee, Calvin Cumbee, and David Cumbee. He is survived by his daughter, Cheryl Stephanie Spencer; son, Roy Christopher Cumbee;



Brandon Spencer, Sarah Spencer, and Triston Cumbee; great-grandchildren, Briley Spencer and Hunter Harshbarger; brother, Richard Cumbee (Barbara); sister-in-law, Dorothy Cumbee; several nieces, nephews, special friend Sheila, and his dog Murray.

Graveside services will be conducted Monday, May 15, 2023, at 11 a.m. in the Westview Cemetery with Pastor David Neal officiating.

## Gaines, Linda Lee Wilcher

Linda Lee Wilcher Gaines passed away peacefully at home with her family on May 7, 2023, due to complications from Lewy Body Dementia.

Linda was born in Hagerstown, Md. on June 23, 1947, and was the daughter of Master Sergeant Robert Lee and Catherine Wilcher. She traveled considerably in Europe and in the United States with them while her father was serving in the U.S. Army. She settled on the Eastern Shore of Maryland when her father retired from the military. She graduated from North Dorchester High School and received an Associate's Degree from Goldie Beacom College.

She had two sons, John C. and Michael, and raised them in Federalsburg, Md. She worked at the Trinity Episcopal Church of Easton, Md., for the Bishop of Easton where she met the Rev. Charles and Jean Ellestad. Her friendship with the Ellestad family led her to opportunities in Frankfort, Kentucky, where she became the Administrative Assistant to the Rector, the Rev. Charles Ellestad. This critically important work was at



the Episcopal Church of the Ascension. While employed there, Linda met Dr. Paul Gaines.

They were married for 26 years and shared a loving family with their four sons and the children of their sons. She was a loving wife, mother, and grandmother, who always put her family first. She loved being Nana to her grandchildren.

Linda made a significant impact at Inorganic Ventures, where she served as a key executive. She was instrumental in relocating the company from New Jersey to Christiansburg in 2009. She was a visionary in long-term sustainability and growth through ownership restructuring. Linda's work in this capacity was critical in the subsequent success of Inorganic Ventures.

Linda is survived by her husband, Dr. Paul Gaines; her brother, Bobby Wilcher (Kay); and her sister, Kelly LeCates (Daniel). She also is survived by her sons: Chris Gaines (Mary Kate),

Send community news and photos to [communitynews@ourvalley.org](mailto:communitynews@ourvalley.org)

See Obituaries, page 6

### ANGLICAN CATHOLIC

**St. Peter the Apostle Anglican Church**, 230 W. First St., Christiansburg, VA. Fr Peter Geromel OHI Th.M., Vicar, Fr. Alex Darby, "Associate", 540-382-0432/540-270-9166. Sundays: 8:00 am & 10:00 am Holy Eucharist followed by Christian Education and refreshments. Holy Communion most Thursdays at 12:00 noon, 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.sttofo.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 Prayer twice a month. Fellowship and refreshments follow services. Find us on

# Montgomery County WORSHIP DIRECTORY

## ON GUARD

Read 1 Chronicles 7:1 through 9:44

It was a great privilege and honor to be one of the men chosen to be gatekeepers at the entrance to God's house. Even more awesome was the responsibility of four principal gatekeepers who guarded the rooms and the treasures.

They would spend the night stationed around the house of God, because they had to guard it; and they had charge of the key for opening it each morning (1 Chronicles 9:27).

No doubt some nights must have felt especially long, but falling asleep while on duty was not an option. The gatekeepers needed to remain alert to any sound or movement that might indicate the treasures they guarded were in danger.

Today many churches install electronic security systems, although they probably rely on a person to make sure all the windows and doors are locked each night. But when it comes to guarding that which is most important—our children and youth—nothing can replace the prayers of parents and the church family.

Challenge for Today: Ask the Lord for the name of a young person He wants you to safeguard with prayer.

Quicklook: 1 Chronicles 9:22-27

If your church is not listed and if you are interested, call Randy Thompson at 540-389-9355 or email at [advertise@ourvalley.org](mailto: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@stmhc.us or visit our Website [www.st-michael-lutheran-church.org](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://christwesleyanchurch.org)



# MONTGOMERY SPORTS

## Motor Mile changes name to The Pulaski County Motorsports Park

**Marty Gordon**  
NRVsports@mainstreetnewspapers.com

The Motor Mile Speedway, located near Radford, is changing its name. During a press conference on Wednesday, local officials gathered to hear the new name "The Pulaski County Motorsports Park." The Rusty Wallace Racing Group took over the speedway three years ago. The track has been known over the years as the New River Valley Speedway and has changed its name four times since its opening over 20 years ago. A five-year agreement was signed in 2020 by RWRG. The multi-year lease agreement allows the RWRE to take over venue operations, with the speedway becoming the home track for the RWRE and its companion companies.

At the time, former NASCAR driver Rusty Wallace called Motor Mile Speedway and Dragway, one of the finest grassroots motorsports facilities in the nation. "We're excited to confirm a full schedule of racing and could not have picked a better home track for The Rusty Wallace Racing Experience and Pure Speed Drag Racing Experience," said Rusty Wallace. "The opportunity to call this amazing short track home for our more advanced programs has us primed for 2021 today. I can't wait to get up there in the spring." Pulaski County leaders joined in this week's announcement, saying it will help advance economic development for the growing tourism industry. The track will be in the national spotlight on Thursday, July 27 when the Superstar Racing Experience Series

(SRX) will be run and broadcast from the local track. County Administrator Jonathan Sweet expressed enthusiasm over the event. "SRX could not have picked a better track in a better community to host the Superstars of Racing, as we are known for having one of the most entertaining short tracks in the country and some of the best race fans in the world," said Sweet. "This new partnership marks our strong commitment to continue the long tradition of racing here in Pulaski County, and our desire to have our Motorsports Park become one of Virginia's prime tourism destinations as well as a world-class outdoor sports and event venue." The race will include several superstars, including Tony Stewart, Ryan Newman, Bobby Labonte, Kyle Busch and Marco Andretti.

The President of Rusty Wallace Racing Group, Mark Ebert said he is excited to work closely with the county and SRX. "The SRX Race will be amazing but that's just the start, we are truly a motorsports park! We have go-karting, IHRA Drag Racing, a world-class racing experience, and more, the Pulaski County Motorsports Park and the NRV are truly a destination for race fans of all ages." The park is home to the Rusty Wallace Racing Experience and features a 1/8th mile IHRA-sanctioned drag strip, a .416 NASCAR-sanctioned paved oval track, and the recent addition of a go-kart track. The name change takes effect immediately. Motor Mile, now Pulaski County Motorsports Park, is celebrating its 34th year anniversary this year.

## RU to play in Japan this summer

The Radford University men's basketball program has been invited to participate in the Sun Chlorella presents World University Basketball Series 2023 (WUBS 2023), a champions league-style tournament for world-class university basketball teams. The tournament will take place in Tokyo, Japan this August. "It is an honor to be invited to compete in the World University Basketball Series 2023," said Head Coach Darris Nichols. "This will be a tremendous opportunity for us to learn and grow both on and off of the court." WUBS 2023 is hosted by the All Japan University Basketball Federation (JUBF) with operation support provided by Rakuten Sports, a Rakuten Group business focused on creating partnerships

with professional athletes and other sports services. Held again with presenting partner Sun Chlorella, this year's tournament marks the second in the series following last year's inaugural WUBS and will be held from August 10 to 13 at the Yoyogi National Stadium Second Gymnasium. For 2023, an expanded roster of universities will compete, with a total of eight men's university basketball teams from seven countries and regions - Australia, Chinese Taipei, Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, South Korea and the United States. This year's participating universities are the University of Sydney from Australia, National Chengchi University (NCCU) from Chinese Taipei, Perbanas Institute from Indonesia, the 74th All Japan Intercollegiate Basketball Championship

winners Tokai University and runner-up Hakuoh University from Japan, WUBS 2023 champions Ateneo de Manila University from the Philippines, Korea University from South Korea and the United States' Radford University, which includes Japanese athlete Ibu Yamazaki. The teams will compete in a series of 12 knock-out tournament games over three days from August 11 to August 13 to determine the 2023 series champion. In addition, on August 10, an "Opening Night" exhibition game will be held between the U-22 Japan national basketball team (university students) and WUBS 2022 champions, Ateneo de Manila University. Round 1 Friday, August 11, 2023 See **RU Japan**, page 8



PHOTO BY ASHLEY AKERS

## Auburn athletes sign with colleges

Three student-athletes from Auburn High School have inked their names to continue their careers next year in college. On Tuesday, Kenzie Swicegood (Shot put/Discus at Lynchburg University), Kelsie Groseclose (Soccer at Concord University) and Lauren Connelly (Track and Field at Roanoke College) signed their letters of intent in front of family, friends, coaches and teammates in the Auburn library.

## Obituaries

from page 1

N.C.; brother and sister-in-law, J. W. and Francie Crigger of Pulaski; grandchildren, Brooks and Katt Duncan, Afion O'Dell and Chris Jones, Landon and Brooke O'Dell; great grandchildren, Harper and Maisie Duncan, Camden Jones and Parker Kate O'Dell. The family received friends on Wednesday, May 10, 2023 at the Mullins

Funeral Home in Radford, 120 W Main Street, Radford. Funeral services followed with Pastor Burl Bowman officiating. Burial followed in the Shiloh Cemetery in Pulaski County. The O'Dell family is in the care of Mullins Funeral Home & Crematory in Radford.

## Shepherd, Norma Darleen

Our loving, devoted "Granny Darleen" made her way to heaven to be with her soulmate on Tuesday, May 9, 2023 at the young age of 84. Her desire to be with him the past two years has been constant, and we rejoice as a family knowing they have been reunited forever. Darleen was simple, kind, and worked alongside her precious love, Everett, for many years serving as Pastor's wife. She took that role to heart and reached many with her sweet, quiet loving spirit. She also worked for many years at Belview Elementary School as Head Custodian, being a confidant to many of her coworkers who became like family to her.



ones gone before her.

Granny is survived by her grandchildren who she loved and cared for like her own, Lori Tibbs, Anita Bland (Craig), and John Tibbs. Also surviving her are her great-grandchildren, Madison, Haley (Michael), Jordan (Michael), Hannah (Daylin), John Isaac and Michaela. She was also blessed to be great-great granny to Zoe. Her daughter-in-law Pamela Shepherd, and sisters in law, Ellen Linkous and Shirley Linkous also survive her.

Our family wishes to thank caregivers, Kathy McCoy, Missy Albert, and Wanda Lang for their love and support of Granny over the past couple years. Also, our gratitude to her nephew Carl Linkous for always stopping in for a visit or taking her for a ride. A special thank you to the nurses and staff at Good Samaritan Hospice for loving our granny and caring for our family during this time. Teresa, Debbie, Betsy, and Denise, you will forever be a part of our family.

And we could certainly never forget how kind and supportive McCoy Funeral Home has been to our family over the years.

Funeral services will be conducted on Monday, May 15 at 11 a.m. with visitation from 10-11 a.m. in the McCoy Funeral Home Chapel. Darleen's nephew, Reverend Rodney Linkous will officiate. In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to Good Samaritan Hospice, 1160 Moose Dr., Christiansburg. Proverbs 31:29

"Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all".

## Smith, Sally Ann Akers

Sally Ann Akers Smith went home to be with the Lord on Monday, May 8, 2023.

Sally was a lifetime member of Ellett Valley Pentecostal Holiness Church where she taught Adult Sunday School for many years.

Sally was preceded in death by her parents, Willie Allen Akers and Mary Stump Akers; brothers Steve, Bob and Elk Akers; and nephew Todd Akers. Left to cherish her memory are her loving husband of 57 years, John Henry Smith; her son, Leon (Melissa) Smith; the apple of her eye, her granddaughter, Chloey Ann Smith; grandson, Christopher Smith (Rachel); and great-grandson, Wylder D. Smith. Sally is also survived by her siblings, Rosemary (Paul) Rutherford; Wesley (Larry) Needham; and Billy Joe (Joyce Akers); her nieces and nephews; special friends and Pastors Steve and Marilou Akers; her church family at



Ellett Valley Pentecostal Holiness Church; as well as many friends and co-workers over the years.

Celebration of Life Service for Sally was held at Ellett Valley Pentecostal Holiness Church. Visitation was Thursday, May 11, 2023 at the church; and going home service was Friday, May 12, 2023 at the church. Graveside service follows at Roselawn Memorial Gardens.

The family would like to thank Dr. Robert Soloman; Medi Home Hospice Care; and the many friends and family who cared for Sally these past few months.

Flowers are welcomed, or donations can be made to Ellett Valley Pentecostal Church in memory of Sally.

"Though the weeping may endure for the night; the Joy comes in the morning..."

CROSSWORD ANSWERS grid with letters.

NRV SuperBowl Summer Leagues Beginning Soon. Register for the night or day Leagues. Night Leagues: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday & Sunday. Daytime Leagues: Tuesday morning Coffee League or Thursday Morning Senior Crazy 8's. Sign up now for a summer of fun and competition. (Register in person or online at www.superbowl.net) 575 Arbor Drive, Christiansburg 540-382-5525 • www.nrvsuperbowl.biz

# Blacksburg slips by Franklin County



Blacksburg's Mia Farley slides safely into third base and would later score against Franklin County during a Monday home game. Blacksburg won the game 3-2.



Blacksburg's Lindsey Polan digs in and waits for the next pitch against Franklin County.



Blacksburg's Emily Dickerson reacts after hitting an RBI single late to give the Bruins an insurance run against Franklin County.



Blacksburg's Lorelei Spradlin had 12 strikeouts in a 3-2 win over Franklin County on Monday.

PHOTOS BY JON FLEMING

# Former basketball coach back in Blacksburg

Marty Gordon

NRVsports@mainstreetnewspapers.com

In a twist of faith, a basketball coach that had been fired from Virginia Tech is now back with the football program.

James Johnson returns to the university after serving as the head coach of the men's basketball team from 2011-2014. Previously, he had served as an assistant for three years prior and compiled a 22-41 overall mark as the head man on the sidelines.

His new title will be director of high school relations.

"We are super excited to bring J.J. back to Blacksburg," said football coach Brent Pry. "As we have gotten to know each other, I couldn't be more impressed by his infectious

personality, ability to connect with student-athletes and mature approach to college athletics. His knowledge of Virginia Tech combined with nearly three decades successfully recruiting Virginia, the Carolinas, D.C., Maryland and Pennsylvania will be invaluable in his new role. We can't wait for him to get started and begin making an impact in our program."

Johnson has deep roots across the Commonwealth of Virginia and the Mid-Atlantic, allowing him to cultivate and sustain lasting relationships within the Virginia Tech recruiting footprint. He brings nearly three decades of experience in college athletics,

including more than 10 years in the ACC with coaching stops at Virginia Tech, Miami and North Carolina State, where he most recently worked under Kevin Keatts for five seasons. Throughout his career up and down the east coast, Johnson has made countless high school connections, and understands how crucial recruiting is to a successful program.

"J.J. has been in Blacksburg for a large part of his career and is connected to our staff," said Virginia Tech Director of Athletics, Whit Babcock. "He loves Virginia Tech and will be a great ambassador for our university. His relationships in our footprint and his rapport with Hokie Nation are what have led us to this opportunity. His vital connections with high schools will help us to attract the very best to play for the Hokies."

From 2017 to 2022, Johnson served as assistant coach for the North Carolina State basketball team.

Johnson had replaced his former boss, Seth Greenberg, at Virginia Tech but struggled in two seasons.

Johnson spent two seasons with Jim Larranaga at George Mason. The Patriots advanced to the 2006 NCAA Final Four before falling to eventual national champion Florida.

Johnson served as an assistant coach under Ed DeChellis at Penn State from 2003-2005. Johnson was also the recruiting coordinator for the Nittany Lions during his time in State College.

# Young Hokies put nation on notice

When things get hard, that's when you have to be great.

It's the mentality that true freshman Caleb Henson has lived by his entire life — and it resonates through the entire Virginia Tech wrestling room.

Similar values and beliefs have helped foster and maintain a culture of relentlessness within the program from the top down.

Despite each facing adversity at different points in their respective tournament runs, Henson and fellow underclassman Eddie Ventresca battled their way to All-American status in their first NCAA tournament appearances. They were two of Tech's five All-Americans in Tulsa — the program's most since 2017.

While Henson entered the 149-pound bracket as the No. 4 four seed — the highest seeding for a true freshman in program history — Ventresca was awarded only the No. 27 seed at 125 pounds.

After his rocky start to the regular season, the low seed was warranted, but it didn't discourage the redshirt freshman. He viewed it as a chance to reveal how talented he truly is as a wrestler — and he delivered.

"I think that I proved myself [to be a force at 125]," Ventresca said. "Don't get me wrong, there was a lot of doubt, which I don't blame anybody. Me coming in as a No. 27 seed, not having a crazy strong season — people didn't really know what to expect. But also I just had that confidence because I know the work that I've put in and all the dedication I've put into this sport and I feel like other people don't see that. I give credit to my coaching staff because they were always making sure I was in a good mental standpoint [in the] second half of the season, making sure I was confident in myself, confident in my wrestling and I think it showed at the NCAA tournament."

The first domino to fall in Ventresca's underdog run was Northern Colorado's No. 6 Stevo Poulin (4-2), who he edged out in overtime. Then he took down Minnesota's No. 11 Pat McKee (4-2) in the second round.

Ventresca's pair of upset victories were two that few saw coming, but he didn't shock himself at all.

"I feel like in the regular season, every match that I lost, I felt like I was one takedown away," Ventresca explained. "[I was] one little peek away. One little technique standpoint or mental standpoint away from winning those matches."

"I knew that if I figured it out before the NCAA tournament that I was going to be able to make a run at it." Following a narrow overtime loss to Nebraska's No. 3 Liam Cronin (3-1) in the quarterfinals, he continued to fight back. Ventresca nabbed his third top-11 win in the consolation blood round over Wisconsin's No. 9 Eric Barnett (3-1) to secure his All-American finish.

After falling to Arizona State's No. 10 Brandon Courtney (4-2) in the consolation quarterfinals, the New

Jersey native wrapped a bow on his tournament with a win against West Virginia's No. 28 Killian Cardinale (7-6) in the seventh place match.

His 20-point jump from the No. 27 seed to his seventh place finish was one of the biggest leaps in the entire tournament — proof that he'll be a threat at 125 for years to come.

"It was a great feeling," Ventresca said. "I felt like there was a lot of shenanigans going on at the end of the year with who was starting [at 125] and people obviously didn't know what was going on in the room or anything. It was a good feeling. That blood round match, obviously I was a little nervous for it, who wouldn't be nervous for it. It's kind of do or die in that match and when that last buzzer rang and the whistle blew, I just had this big smile on my face. It was more of a relieving feeling."

Henson faced early adversity in his first NCAA tournament as well.

The ACC freshman of the year was knocked out of the championship bracket in the second round by Indiana's No. 20 Graham Rooks (5-4). The upset loss meant he needed three-straight wins to earn All-American honors.

Already being lauded as a favorite to finish in the top eight at 149 pounds before his first bout in Tulsa, the true freshman never wavered despite the initial hurdle.

"Pressure makes diamonds," Henson said. "I embrace it. It's another part of the tournament that's going to come with years to come. So having that pressure and those expectations, it's something I already have for myself."

Henson grinded out an overtime win over Central Michigan's No. 19 Johnny Lovett (5-3) in the second round of the consolation bracket, before besting Penn's No. 11 Doug Zapf (3-2) a round later.

Facing his first top ten opponent of the tournament, he handled Northwestern's No. 7 Thomas Yahya (7-2) in the consolation blood round to clinch an All-American finish in his first collegiate season.

"Just not having fear," Henson explained his mindset during the clutch run. "Allow my mind and body to do what I've worked so hard [for], just wrestle."

Henson lost to Penn State's No. 12 Shane Van Ness (5-3) in the consolation semifinals, but dominated Iowa's No. 8 Max Murin (12-3) in the fifth place match to finish in the top five at 149.

With a year of starting experience under their belts, Henson and Ventresca will be even more prepared heading into next season — and both are on a mission to ascend to new heights in 2024.

"I'll go back and watch some film and then get to work in the offseason," Ventresca said. "I didn't win [the national championship], so there's obviously places for me to improve. So that's our mentality over the next year."

Virginia Tech Athletics

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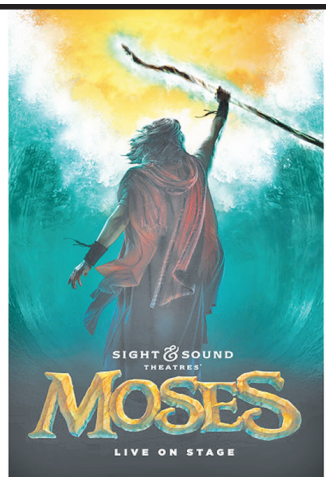
from page 1

10 p.m.: Game 1 - Tokai University (Japan) vs National Chengchi University (Chinese Taipei)  
12:30 a.m.: Game 2 - Korea University (South Korea) vs Radford

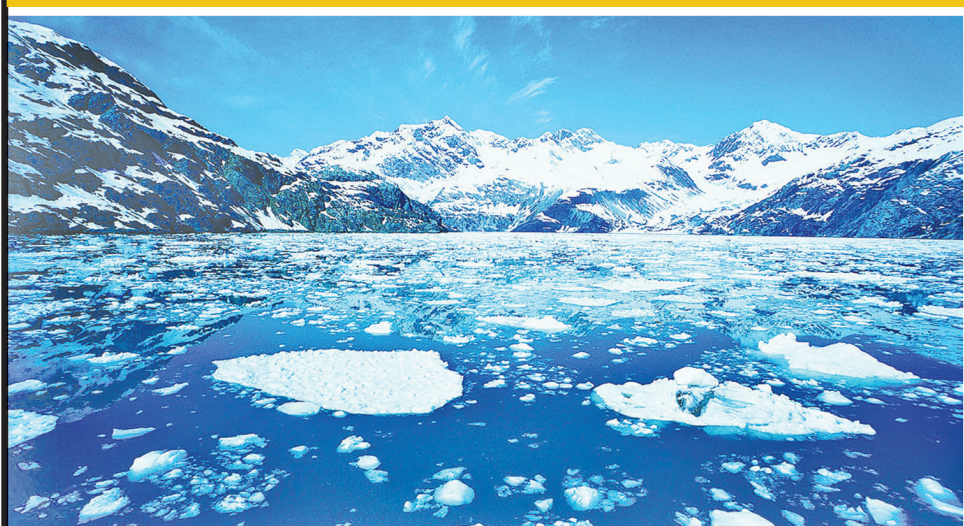
University (United States)  
3 a.m.: Game 3 - Perbanas Institute (Indonesia) vs Hakuoh University (Japan)  
5:30 a.m.: Game 4 - University of

Sydney (Australia) vs Ateneo de Manila University (Philippines)

Radford University Athletics



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