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PHOTO BY LORI GRAHAM

The New River Voices Choral Society performed their debut concert at the Salvation Army in Christiansburg in front of a packed room.

Packed audience experiences New River Voices Choral Society Winter Concert 2023

Lori Graham
Contributing writer

Every seat was filled for the New River Voices Choral Society debut concert Dec. 22 at the Salvation Army Worship Center in Christiansburg. The hour-long program, directed by Anthony Woodyard and accompanied by pianists Daniel Taylor and Benjamin Slaughter, presented a diverse range of cultural and traditional holiday, hymnals and Christmas music. The concert opened with a piano duet by Slaughter and Taylor during the prelude and processional of "Ding-Dong Merrily on High" by Mark Hayes, and "O Sanctissima", which is a prayer to

the blessed Virgin Mary. The audience then rose to the singing of "The Star-Spangled Banner." Director Woodyard produced rich baritone sounds in his solo performance of "Oh Holy Night" with Taylor accompanying on the piano. The audience was often included in the form of a sing-along with both traditional and fun Christmas carols such as "Frosty the Snowman," "Joy to the World" and "Jingle Bells." Many diverse spiritual hymns were beautifully performed by the group as well. Especially highlighting the mixes of deep bass, alto, tenor, and soprano

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Local publishing company now under new ownership

Heather Bell
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Pocahontas Press, a local publishing company in operation for nearly 40 years, is under new ownership. Lori Graham, author, newspaper reporter and American Sign Language Interpreter, recently purchased the company. Graham is a contributing writer for the News Messenger and Radford News Journal. "Mary Holliman began Pocahontas Press in 1985, publishing her father's autobiography, "A Teacher's Story," Graham wrote in an owner's message on the company's website, www.pocahontaspres.com. "For the next quarter century, she continued publishing stories in the form of poetry, autobiography, and history. Upon Mary's death, published author Michael Abraham, along with his wife Jane Abraham, and published author Deborah Warren, have seen the business through the years to its continued existence today." Graham credits Holliman with her start in writing and publishing, so this new



PHOTO COURTESY OF LORI GRAHAM

Lori Graham, author, newspaper reporter and American Sign Language Interpreter, recently purchased Pocahontas Press.

venture is a full circle moment. "Mary Holliman gave me my first opportunity to work in and learn about publishing in 1995," Graham said in a recent interview. "I began by writing blurbs for book releases, editing, and my most memorable piece of work was a late 1800s diary that I transcribed for a family." Graham, who worked with a United Kingdom company as part of a team completing memoirs for people in southwest Virginia, said she will continue that type of outreach at Pocahontas

See **Local**, page 3

Christmas for the fishes: donate Christmas trees to Claytor Lake

Don't forget to drop off your live Christmas trees for the fish at Claytor Lake State Park. Help the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources and Claytor Lake State Park create fish habitat reef structures each year by saving your live trees. "Drop day," the day volunteers will drop the trees into the lake to create the fish habitats, is currently Jan. 18, with a backup weather date of Jan. 23. The habitat structures "help ensure years of great fishing at Claytor



Trees will be accepted until Jan. 14 at the marina parking lot.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF FOCL

Artificial reefs are made by connecting the discarded trees to cinder blocks.

There are some who call me twig: IDing trees in winter

A big part of appreciating the habitats around us can come from understanding what plants make up those habitats. Virginia has an incredible diversity of habitats and plant species, including more than 350 species of trees. Of these, 78 or so are considered "common." We use leaves, fruits, and flowers to help us identify these species, but those aren't necessarily helpful when enjoying a winter walk in the woods. Fortunately, there are still plenty of clues that can help narrow down what you're looking at. **Where are you?** Some trees are only found in specific parts of Virginia. A red spruce might be found in the mountains of western Virginia while a bald cypress grows in the floodplains of the Coastal Plain. **Green all year** We have a number of evergreen species that keep their leaves all year. This includes conifers like pines. Take a close look at the bundles of needles on the twigs of pine trees—these can help identify the tree. Two needles in a bundle with short,

twisted needles is a sure sign that you've found a Virginia pine. Some of our broadleaf trees are evergreen as well. The scalloped edges and glossy leaves of American holly are unmistakable. Female holly trees also have bright red berries that are a favorite of winter songbirds. **Bark** Many tree species have distinctive bark. For species like American sycamore, it's enough to identify the tree all on its own. Irregular patches of gray or tan flake off to reveal smooth pale bark below. It gives the trunk of the tree a jigsaw or camouflage pattern that is unmistakable. Sweet gum may have corky ridges. **Persistent fruits or leaves** Some trees like beech or many of our oaks hold onto leaves well into winter. This can be a good clue when the surrounding trees are sporting bare branches. Sometimes distinctive fruits will remain on the tree through the year. The cone of winged fruits from a tulip poplar or the gumball of a sweetgum are dead giveaways.

Detective work Even if none of these clues are obvious, you can still solve your tree mystery. The twigs of trees have a variety of unique characteristics that help us identify the tree species. There aren't any special tools needed to investigate, but a hand lens and a pocketknife can be useful. When the leaves fall off a tree in the fall, they leave behind scars where they attached to the twig. These scars have unique shapes and arrangements. The thing to look at is how the leaves (or their scars) are arranged on the twig. Do they alternate from side to side or were they opposite each other on the twig? The shape of the leaf scar can be distinctive as well—hickories have large, heart-shaped leaf scars sometimes referred to as "monkey faces." What do the buds look like? The buds themselves can be pretty identifiable. Beech trees have long narrow buds covered in overlapping scales. Tulip poplar buds have only two scales—almost like a clamshell.



PHOTOS BY STEPHEN LIVING/DWR

The spiky leaves and red berries of a female American holly.

See **Tree ID**, page 3

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, Jan. 4:

Game On

At the Christiansburg Library; 1 – 3 p.m. Gamers of all ages are welcome to play a variety of video games. Participants are encouraged to bring their portable device, but it is not required. In addition, we have a variety of board and card games. Connect with other gamers. Refreshments provided.

Friendship Bracelet Palooza

At the Blacksburg Library; 3 – 4:30 p.m. Big beads, small beads, colored string and mini rubber bands. Just bring your imagination! An all ages event. All supplies provided.

Friday, Jan. 5:

Paint and Sip

At the Blacksburg Library; 2 -3:30 p.m. Enjoy the afternoon with a hot beverage and a creative project! You will be provided all materials to paint a canvas and drink hot chocolate while working. No instructions are necessary as this is a time to relax and create whatever comes to mind. Paint a gift for someone else or yourself. Open to all ages. No registration required, but supplies are limited.

Saturday, Jan. 6:

Jigsaw Puzzle Tournament

At the Meadowbrook Library; 1 – 3 p.m. Looking for a fun way to kick off the new year? Join us for a jigsaw puzzle tournament to celebrate National Puzzle Month in January. Compete on teams to see who can finish their 500 piece puzzle in the least amount of time! Prizes will be awarded! For ages 10 and up. Registration is required.

Monday, Jan. 8:

Soup in Your Instant Pot

At the Meadowbrook Library; 5 – 7 p.m. Join us as we make soup in an Instant Pot! Angie Helm with

Virginia Cooperative Extension will be providing samples and sharing some great prep tips to save time using your Instant Pot to prepare delicious and healthy soups during winter. Registration is required.

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.

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, Jan. 9:

Fall Prevention and Balance in the Home

Join Blacksburg Parks and Recreation at 2 p.m. for a presentation on Fall Prevention & Balance in the Home, by Cindy Henderson with CORA Physical Therapy. In addition to the presentation, this program offers participants free injury screenings, live demos, giveaways, and a Q&A session. This program will be held at the Blacksburg Community Center and is free to attend. Registration is required. To register, call 540.443.1142 or email jherbert@blacksburg.gov.

School Board meeting

The Radford City School Board will convene for its regular meeting at 6 p.m. at the School Administration Building, 1612 Wadsworth St. The agenda for the meeting can be viewed at www.rcps.org.

Blacksburg Town Council meeting

The 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.

Saturday, Jan. 13:

Mount Tabor Ruritan Biscuit Breakfast

Mount Tabor Ruritan Club will be serving up hot biscuits topped with delicious sausage gravy, or with the latest batch of our “world-famous” apple butter. We will also have scrambled eggs, juice and coffee. Breakfast will be served in the Fellowship Hall of Slusser’s Chapel, 1543 Mount Tabor Rd, Blacksburg; 8 – 10 a.m. This is below the Sanctuary, on the lower church parking lot level. This is a fundraiser for our club to help us as we serve our community, and donations will be accepted for the breakfast. More information at <https://fb.com/MtTaborRuritan>

On-going:

Now through Jan. 15:

Blacksburg Transit reduced service

Blacksburg Transit will operate on reduced service for the holiday season beginning Dec. 14. Reduced service will remain in effect until Jan. 15. There will be no bus service on Christmas Day and New Year’s Day. For more information, please contact 540-443-1500.

Top financial resolutions for 2024 and how to keep them

Get a 5%+ return on your cash
In recent years, the APYs on bank accounts weren’t high enough to really bother comparing. Now, after numerous rounds of Federal Reserve rate hikes, you can save a lot of money by strategically selecting your bank account. Now, the average online savings account has an APY around 3.75%, and you can get a 5%+ annual return from the best deposit accounts.

If you’d like a recommendation, check out WalletHub’s picks for the best high-yield savings accounts and the best CD rates.

Protect your identity

More than 1 million identity theft complaints are submitted to the Federal Trade Commission each year, and having your identity stolen can be extremely frustrating, time consuming and expensive. Some of the fraud that identity thieves commonly perpetrate will get flagged by free credit monitoring services, including unauthorized credit card and loan applications. But things like fraudulent bank account changes and payday loan applications would not.

To better protect yourself, consider upgrading to an identity protection service. For example, WalletHub Premium provides bank account and alternative loan monitoring, plus dark web monitoring, identity theft insurance and other helpful features.

Make a realistic budget and stick to it

The fact that we’re on pace to end 2023 with over \$1.2 trillion in credit card debt is a clear sign that we need to do a better job budgeting. The best way to make a budget is to gather your bills from the past few months and make a list of all your recurring expenses. Then rank them in order of importance, with true necessities such as housing, food and healthcare obviously taking the top spots. After that, you can simply cut from the bottom of your list until your take-home exceeds what you plan to spend.

Finally, keep track of your monthly spending throughout the year to make sure you’re abiding by your budget. This will help you finetune the allocation of your funds, too.

Explore ways to refinance high interest rates

Refinancing opportunities are most abundant when rates are falling, and we’re not there yet, but you might find opportunities to save if your credit score and

income have gone up since you got your credit card or loan. For example, the best balance transfer credit cards can help you consolidate debt and pay it off with no interest for as long as 21 months. The best personal loans for debt consolidation give you even longer to pay off consolidated debt, but the APR won’t be quite as low.

Both the best cards and the best loans require at least good credit for approval. You can check your credit score for free right here on WalletHub.

Save more money

Millions of Americans do not have a rainy-day fund, according to the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority. Like someone without insurance, people who lack an emergency fund are tempting fate, putting themselves at risk of financial catastrophe in the event of unexpected unemployment or major medical expenses. A lot of people found that out the hard way over the past couple years.

So, building up some reserves should be one of the first orders of business for any financial makeover. We recommend ultimately building a fund with about 12 to 18 months’ take-home income. But it’s important to understand that won’t happen overnight. In other words, you don’t need to put the rest of your financial life on hold until your emergency fund is complete. Rather, chip away at it over time.

Start with a goal to set aside two months’ pay so you’re better prepared for a significant downturn in the economy. According to a recent WalletHub survey, 54% of people say they’re not financially prepared for a recession. Once you have that safety net, you can add to it at your own pace.

Repay 20% of your credit card debt

Americans owe way too much credit card debt: more than \$10,000 per household. That debt is extremely expensive, too. Something eventually has to give. And you’d much rather that be your outstanding balance, paid down on your own terms, than your ability to afford monthly minimum payments and, in turn, your credit score. So it’s time to get serious about getting out of credit card debt.

Some of the other steps mentioned here – including budgeting, automation and the Island Approach – will help in terms of reducing your future

reliance on debt. But the problem of what to do about existing balances still remains. The answer for people with at least “good” credit is the combination of a 0% balance transfer credit card and a credit card calculator, which has the potential to help you save hundreds of dollars while getting out of debt months sooner than you would otherwise.

But it’s probably best to start small. So we recommend making a plan to pay off 20% of what you owe over the course of 2024. That would amount to about \$1,800 for the average household, requiring monthly payments of \$150 with a card offering 0% on balance transfers for at least 12 months. You can use a credit card payoff calculator to crunch the numbers in your situation, and if you can afford higher payments, by all means make them. The sooner you can reach debt freedom, the better off your wallet will be.

Use different credit cards for everyday purchases and debt

The Island Approach involves using different accounts to serve different financial needs, as if they are a chain of islands. The most basic example is using a rewards credit card for everyday purchases and a 0% APR card for balances that you’ll carry from month to month.

Doing so enables you to get the best possible terms on each card, rather than settling for average terms on a single card. It will also help you reduce the cost of your debt, considering everyday purchases won’t be inflating your average daily balance. And if you ever incur interest on your everyday card, you’ll know you spent too much that month.

Fight back against inflation

Prices are unusually elevated, but there are ways you can level the playing field a bit. For example, you could save 5% at your favorite retailers by getting their store credit cards. Most store credit cards require just fair credit for approval and have \$0 annual fees, and the best cards give up to 5% back on every purchase. You can start by applying for the card affiliated with the retailer you spend the most money at, then wait at least a few months before applying again.

There are plenty of other ways to stretch your money further in the face of inflation, too, including shopping around for everything you buy, taking advantage of deals and coupons, turning the thermostat down,

buying in bulk and cutting back until prices come down. Adopting these strategies basically enables you to adjust your own prices for inflation.

Pay bills right after receiving your paycheck

Taking care of monthly obligations before letting yourself indulge in any luxury expenses is a helpful budgeting strategy. It gives you a better sense of what you can truly afford and what you can’t. It also helps you avoid ever having a late payment reported to the major credit bureaus, which is one of the easiest ways to damage your credit score. Furthermore, paying your bill early improves your credit utilization, and thus your credit score, by reducing the balance listed on your monthly statement.

We recommend setting up two automatic monthly payments from a deposit account: one for right after payday and another for a couple days before your monthly due date. The second payment will help you avoid interest on any purchases made between your first payment and the end of your billing period. If you don’t know when your billing cycle begins and ends, simply check your monthly statement. You can also request to change it to whatever day of the month is best for you.

Look for a better job

Sometimes, we get so caught up in spending less and saving more that we forget to address the other side of the equation: how much we earn. But the benefits of finding a higher-paying job could actually end up outweighing everything else put together.

Even if you don’t switch jobs altogether, you could find opportunities to supplement your income during your free time. Side gigs seem to be everywhere these days.

Make sure you have enough insurance for a catastrophe

The past year has shown just how fragile and precious life is. And if other people depend on you, the last 12 months should illustrate the importance of making sure those people are taken care of, even if you’re not around or able to work. In particular, that means taking steps such as purchasing life insurance and disability insurance, in addition to making sure you have enough health insurance coverage. Hopefully, your family won’t need to file any claims for a very long time, but it’s better to be prepared.

Focus on physical health, given its strong connection to financial health

There is a clear connection between physical, emotional and financial health. For starters, the average person spends around \$13,000 on health care each year. Inflation and the economy are also our biggest sources of stress, according to the American Psychological Association. And people who get regular exercise tend to have better credit scores.

This underscores the importance of getting your financial house in order as well as exercising regularly and engaging in other healthy practices aimed at reducing health care costs. It won’t be easy, but this is one resolution that will certainly pay dividends in multiple areas of your life.

“If you begin to make small healthy changes to your diet, increase exercise in small increments, and practice yoga and meditation, you will feel better,” says Deborah Bauer, a distinguished senior instructor of finance at the University of Oregon. “Feeling better will lead to wiser financial decisions that focus on the long term.”

Get an A in financial literacy

Financial literacy levels in this country are far too low, and they’re headed in the wrong direction. As of 2023, roughly 40% of Americans grade their financial know-how at a “C” or below, according to WalletHub.

So, start 2024 by taking our WalletLiteracy Quiz and getting a baseline score. Then, throughout the year, study the areas where you struggled and periodically re-test yourself to gauge your progress. Your goal should be to get at least an A- by the time 2025 rolls around.

Improve your WalletScore

Your WalletScore is like your credit score, but it grades your finances overall. In addition to your credit history, your WalletScore evaluates areas such as your spending habits, emergency preparedness and retirement planning to give you a holistic understanding of your financial strengths and weaknesses.

You can check your WalletScore for free on WalletHub and get your personalized improvement plan. All you have to do is follow the recommendations, and your finances will be in better shape.

OBITUARIES

Sweeney, John Calvin

John Calvin Sweeney, 92, of Christiansburg, went home to be with his Lord and Savior on Thursday, Dec. 28, 2023, at Lewis Gale Montgomery.

He was born in Ellett, Va. on March 13, 1931

to the late John Walker and Leler Lovern Sweeney. He was preceded in death by his wife Patricia Hodge Sweeney.

He is survived by his daughters, Sandra Clontz and Sherry (David) Parsons; sisters Louise Mc-

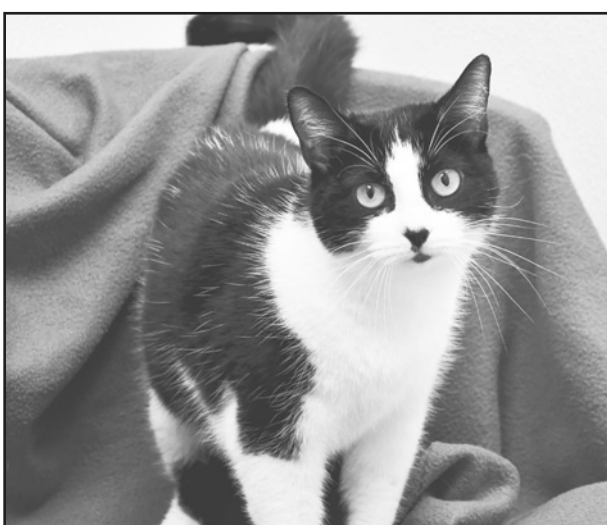
Coy and Garnet (Fred) Linkous; grandchildren Angela Alderman (Jay Mathis), and Amy (Steven) Kokkinakos; and great grandchildren Mackenzie Mathis and John Kokkinakos. Services will be private.

PETS OF THE WEEK

Cinderella has her slippers on and is ready for the ball. She may be a little shy at first when she feels out of her element, but she is quick to warm up to folks. Cinderella's fairytale ending would be a furever home as the only pet with lots of treats and rubs. Visit the Animal Care and Adoption Center to meet this princess.



Miley is no wrecking ball. She's more like a party in the USA! (And by party we mean a snuggly nap partner!) Miley is a sweet girl who could share a home with other cats. Come by the Animal Care and Adoption Center to see if Miley is your purrfect match.



These pets and many others are available for adoption at the Montgomery County Animal Care and Adoption Center, 480 Cinnabar Rd., Christiansburg. Phone: (540) 382-5795

Tree ID

The center of a twig is usually made up of soft spongy tissue called pith. The color and shape of this can also provide clues to identifying your tree. Hickories have a pith that is somewhat star-shaped in cross-section, while tulip poplar's pith is segmented into chambers.



Putting it all together With so many different features, how can you begin to decipher the trees you see when you're exploring habitats around you?

Pick up a copy of the Virginia Department of Forestry's Common Native Trees of Virginia Identification Guide. This easy-to-use guide has keys and full descriptions of the species you are likely to encounter.

Check out this key from Virginia Tech (<https://dendro.cnre.vt.edu/dendrology/twigkey.htm>). After you answer a series of questions, it will steer you toward an answer about your tree. There are also apps like Seek, PlantNet, LeafSnap, or others.

A sweet gum seed ball - a spiky, round, dried ball - among dead leaves.

By *Stephen Living/ Department of Wildlife Resources*

www.montcova.com

Concert

sections of the choral group was the recital of the Latin song "Adoramus Te", scored by Andy Beck. The layering of the harmonic sounds provided a rich production that resonated throughout the audience, creating a relaxing and warm atmosphere.



Director of NRVCS Anthony Woodyard gave an astounding solo performance of "Oh Holy Night" with Daniel Taylor accompanying on piano.

Additional talented productions came from bass trombonist Carrie Hibbert and euphonium player Benjamin Slaughter who performed a duet instrumental rendition of "In the Bleak Midwinter". Ken Owens solo performance of "Mary, Did you Know?" was a favorite of the evening as well.

Soprano BreAnna Martin thrilled the audience with the last solo of the evening accompanied by Slaughter on the piano. Her rendition of "Ave Maria" was brilliantly produced and revealed precision in her vocal range and talent.

The full concert can be viewed on the New River Voices Choral Society Facebook page. The group was formed over the 2023 summer and encourages anyone

that loves to sing to join their group. Before presenting their last hymn of the evening, Woodyard invited others to come out to future practice times.



PHOTOS BY LORI GRAHAM

BreAnna Martin was a featured soloist awing the crowd with a beautiful rendition of "Ave Maria."

"We would like you to join us, if you feel so inclined, we have a lot of fun. We practice on Monday nights from 7 to 8:30," Woodyard said.

Following the conclusion of the program, all audience members were invited to refreshments of hot cocoa and desserts in the downstairs reception area of the worship center.

Supporters can follow the group on their Facebook page as well and donations are accepted to help the group as they

continue to grow and access new performance materials.

Local

Press.

"Pocahontas Press will continue to provide support to authors in the publishing of their work in a variety of genres and styles but will also offer the gift of your family's story through memoirs or autobiographies," she wrote in the owner's message. "I will be continuing Holliman's outreach to specific stories centered in the Appalachian region as well, promoting the understanding of culture, people, and community that has evolved over the years in this region."



Pocahontas Press has been in operation for nearly 40 years.

Graham has a master's degree in English and Certificate in Appalachian studies from Radford University, as well as a bachelor's degree in American Sign Language, with more than 15 years working with people with disabilities.

"As an avid reader and storyteller, I dreamed of being an author someday, and I am currently working on my first novel that has a planned release by Spring, 2024," she said in the interview. "However, what I enjoy more than anything is

listening to people's stories and helping them transfer their thoughts to paper. Everyone has a story to tell; what's your story?"

"It is my mission as the next owner of Pocahontas Press to support writers in the sharing of their stories," she explained in the owner's message. "Although many published works will focus on the rich heritage of

the Appalachian history, culture, music, memoirs, and poetry of the region's people, Pocahontas Press will accept a diverse range of submissions for consideration. Whatever your story is, I assure you it is as unique as you are."

For more information, go to www.pocahontaspress.com or www.facebook.com/PocahontasPress.

BLACKSBURG TOWN COUNCIL

Blacksburg Town Council will hold a public hearing regarding the Town Manager's Recommended Capital Improvement Program for Fiscal Years 2024/2025 to 2028/2029 in the Roger E. Hedgepeth Chambers of the Blacksburg Municipal Building, located at 300 South Main Street, Blacksburg on Tuesday, January 9, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. A summary of the proposed expenditures is listed below. Copies of the Recommended Capital Improvement Program are available for review in the offices of the Town Manager and Town Clerk located in the Municipal Building at 300 South Main Street, weekdays 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and in the Blacksburg Branch Library located at 200 Miller Street SW.

RECOMMENDED CIP EXPENDITURES SUMMARY

Fund	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total Recommended FY 2025-2029
General Fund						
Finance	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 26,600	\$ 64,200	\$ 90,800
Fire	1,276,073	1,142,437	1,142,437	1,142,437	1,087,437	5,790,821
Rescue	903,155	468,155	469,155	429,155	429,155	2,698,775
Parks and Recreation	961,000	1,160,000	1,073,000	2,150,000	100,000	5,444,000
Planning and Building	-	-	-	-	-	-
Engineering and GIS	427,500	957,600	2,637,500	11,622,500	47,500	15,692,600
Police	1,783,558	1,002,308	1,002,308	1,002,308	1,002,308	5,792,790
Public Works	4,826,439	4,285,327	5,828,327	2,905,327	2,975,327	20,820,747
Technology	245,000	120,000	80,000	510,000	374,000	1,329,000
Town Manager	351,400	273,800	2,510,000	22,668,500	725,000	26,528,700
Total General Fund	10,774,125	9,409,627	14,742,727	42,456,827	6,804,927	84,188,233
VDOT Revenue Sharing Fund	600,000	580,000	13,375,000	3,730,000	1,165,000	19,450,000
Stormwater Fund	66,375	365,975	891,375	66,375	66,375	1,456,475
Water and Sewer Fund	2,790,004	1,508,104	4,305,404	2,406,804	1,314,204	12,324,520
Transit Fund	11,017,900	2,745,000	15,742,500	6,853,500	4,135,300	40,494,200
Building Systems and Equipment Replacement Funds - Major Purchases	2,060,281	2,440,700	5,960,550	1,229,488	2,005,300	13,696,319
Solid Waste/Recycling Fund	228,650	178,650	178,650	178,650	178,650	943,250
GRAND TOTAL ALL FUNDS	\$27,537,335	\$17,228,056	\$55,196,206	\$56,921,644	\$15,669,756	\$172,552,997

OPINION

It's budget time in Richmond

Right before Christmas, Governor Glenn Youngkin presented his vision for the Commonwealth's budget for the coming biennium to the Joint House and Senate Appropriations Committees. As with every budget document, the bill itself is massive. The House and Senate Appropriations Committees will now put

forth their own versions of Virginia's budget, and lawmakers will spend much of the 2024 legislative session reviewing and debating this legislation. I'd like to offer you some highlights that are worth keeping an eye on as the budget considered by the General Assembly. Economists estimate

that that the 2022-2024 biennium will end with a surplus of nearly \$2.4 billion dollars, which will be available as a resource in the upcoming budget. In response to this surplus, Governor Youngkin wants to reduce by 12% all income tax rates, which means the top rate would be 5.1%. To offset the

loss of income tax revenues, Virginia's sales tax would be increased by less than a percent to 5.2%. This change would take place in the 2025 tax year, if successful.

As mentioned in a past column, the Governor's budget also provides a substantial amount of funding for mental and behavioral health response. It adds \$316 million over the biennium to eliminate the Priority 1 waiting list for

Developmental Disability Waiver slots, funds the opening of additional crisis centers, and provides \$10 million for ongoing student mental health services. Speaking of our children and those who help us care for them, the budget provides over \$448 million per year to expand childcare options through the Governor's Building Blocks program. Teachers will receive a 1% bonus in fiscal year 2025, and an

additional raise is planned for fiscal year 2026.

To address economic development, Governor Youngkin proposes \$3.9 million annually for Virginia's Community Colleges' Career Placement Centers. \$20 million will go toward a new "Diploma Plus" program, which provides grants to students to attain industry-recognized credentials.

See **Budget**, page 8

From Christiansburg to West Virginia, these are a few of my favorite restaurants

Evans "Buddy" King

Columnist

The gift that keeps on giving, storyworth.com, which allows me to submit columns to be electronically stored for future binding and gifting to family and friends when I run out of ideas or time, suggested this week that I write about my "all-time favorite restaurants." I previously wrote a piece about The Farmhouse and The Outpost, two all-time Christiansburg favorites from my youth, so here goes with my list of "others."

As always with my writing, there's some serious here and some whimsy. And a tad of nostalgia.

The Wonder Bar, Clarksburg, West Virginia. Originally opened in 1946 and operated for many years by John Folio, a professional boxing referee who officiated a couple of world championship fights during his time, remains in business and booming to this day. It is a quintessential steak house known for red carpet on the walls, the faint background sounds of Sinatra crooning, and a wonderful wait staff. In my early days there, Mr. Folio

sat on a stool in a corner next to the entrance to the main dining room, in full black tie, and you had better be well-dressed and you better pay your respects when you came in. Or you didn't come in. Reputedly the favorite restaurant of Bill Mazeroski and other members of the 1960's Pittsburgh Pirates, who came down frequently in the offseason. I have eaten in many great steak places in my travels, but none beat the Wonder Bar.

Julio's Cafe'. Another iconic Clarksburg restaurant located in a largely abandoned warehouse area and opened in the

1960's by Frank Iaquina, a successful plumbing contractor who it is said ran the restaurant as a "hobby". It remains open to this day, only on weekends and by "appointment", operated by Frank's granddaughter Costanza and grandson Giuseppe, who took over from their parents. Frank would be thrilled to know the tradition continues. In the days of Frank's operation, he made his own wine and anisette and pasta. My readers will be shocked to learn that Julio's is an Italian

See **Restaurants**, page 8

News Messenger

Established 1869

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The News Messenger is a newspaper of, by and for the people of Montgomery County. We encourage letters from our readers on topics of general interest to the community and responses to our articles and columns. Letters must be signed and have a telephone number where you can be reached for verification. All letters will be verified before publication. We reserve the right to deny publication of any letter and edit letters for length, content and style.

The News Messenger (USPS 016-490) is published twice a week for \$44 a year in Montgomery County, \$53 elsewhere in Virginia, and \$54 out of state by Virginia Media Inc., P.O. Box 429, Lewisburg, WV 24901. Periodical postage paid at Christiansburg, VA. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to NEWS MESSENGER 1633 W. Main St., Salem, VA 24153.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I would like an opportunity to respond to a letter to the editor about our Delegate Jason Ballard and his proposed bills on the problem of gun violence. Several comments have been made about the most, by far, popular sporting rifle in the country, the AR-15. Some, even many, have chosen to publicly call this, incorrectly by the way, an "assault weapon". Factually, this is not an assault rifle as anyone with basic military knowledge will tell you. An "assault weapon" is a fully automatic weapon that has the ability to fire until the magazine is empty without removing your finger from the trigger. This, an AR15, is not, it is a "sporting rifle", one such model I am proud to own myself. It does not have the ability of an assault rifle but is a semiautomatic weapon that requires that you pull the trigger individually each time you choose to fire. Another piece of knowledge is that no standing army in operation in the world today uses the AR-15 .223 cal. or 5.56mm version as it is ineffective as a military grade weapon, the caliber is too small. Also, one other fact, the overwhelming majority of crimes are carried out with handguns, not AR-15's.

It was also reported this is used a "hunting rifle", which is also not correct as these calibers are illegal to use in hunting big game, again, the caliber is too small to be effective. I want to get into an area of conversation that I realize will not be very well received and that is based on a comment that stated "these weapons are used to hunt and kill people. The area I'm speaking of is the reality that guns don't kill people, people kill people. Much of trouble we have as a society is tied to the mental illness aspect that we are facing and I'm in no way denying that it does not exist, but If I might dig deeper, I would venture to say that much of the mental issue problem comes from the fact that there is evil in society that is causing these shootings. Many other factors could and do play into this but, the bottom line is that evil is real and because of that evil, there are people who desire to cause harm, maim and yes, kill.

It appears that the commenter's favor a "total ban," in other words strip society so that no one owns a weapon, well, the reality is, it's been tried in several countries around the world and it does not work. All you would have is a society of "totally defenseless citizens" and the only guns will be in the hands of criminals who don't give a flip how many laws like this proposal we pass. If they don't respect

the laws we currently have, why would we ever believe that the so called "total ban" would accomplish anything but the opposite effect where no one has the ability to defend themselves, a "right and privilege" enshrined in our Constitution by the way.

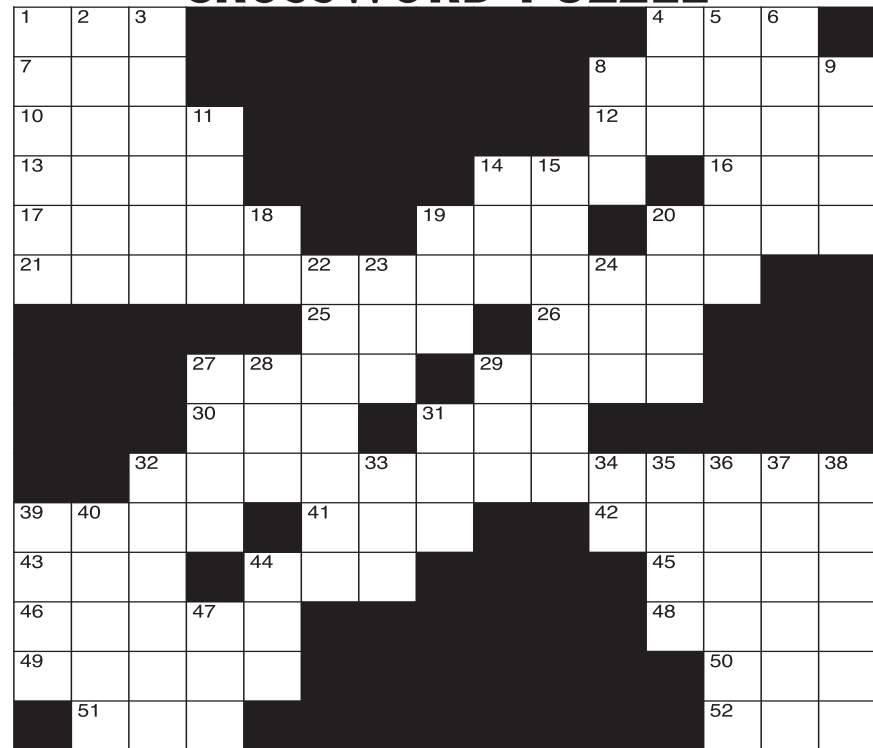
Instead of calling the efforts of Del Ballard "hypocrisy", maybe we should look at both sides here and realize that he is trying to find common on the issue of guns without allowing the government to become "totalitarian" and strip us of our Second Amendment rights, in other words, don't attempt to fix the problem by punishing every law-abiding citizen like myself, who legally possess and responsibly use firearms. Keep in mind, all our other rights guaranteed in the Constitution hinge on the second amendment "the right to keep and bear arms," which by the way to quote Gen. George Washington, that "every man should possess enough weapons and ammunition to protect themselves against anyone threatening to harm them, even their own government".

I sympathize with anyone who has suffered loss due to gun violence, but stripping law-abiding citizens is not the solution and I think if we take a serious look at our society, regardless of where you are with religion or faith, and be honest with each other and admit there is much evil in today's world and at some point, that evil may be at your door step and I would want you to have the ability to defend yourself, with deadly force, if that is the only option. The comment was made that "no one needs to have a semi-automatic rifle for hunting or self-defense", well, if you're planning on using a bolt action single round rifle for self-defense, I hope you are an expert shot, because if you miss, in the panic of the moment, your assailant would be on you before you could reload. Another comment was, "these rifles are meant to hunt people." Well, no one in their right mind, goes and purchases a rifle of this type to "hunt people".

In closing, my view on this is that the bill that Del. Ballard is opposed to, House Bill 2, is an attempt to get around the Second amendment and strip legal, law-abiding citizens of their right to own and keep firearms, regardless of type or caliber. Enforce the laws we already have and get people that need help off our streets.

W.P. Turpin
Blacksburg

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



- | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| <p>CLUES ACROSS</p> <p>1. Basics</p> <p>4. Swiss river</p> <p>7. Constrictor snake</p> <p>8. Building occupied by monks</p> <p>10. Discount</p> <p>12. Deal a blow to</p> <p>13. Relating to the ear</p> <p>14. Thyrotropin</p> <p>16. Loud, unpleasant noise</p> <p>17. Large intestines</p> <p>19. Move with a curving trajectory</p> <p>20. Witnesses</p> <p>21. You need both to live</p> <p>25. Dash</p> <p>26. Network</p> <p>27. Dig</p> <p>29. C. European river</p> | <p>30. Supplement with difficulty</p> <p>31. Corporate executive</p> <p>32. Carroll O'Connor's onscreen wife</p> <p>39. No variation</p> <p>41. Airborne (abbr.)</p> <p>42. "Heidi" author</p> <p>43. Affirmative</p> <p>44. Pie ___ mode</p> <p>45. W. Asian country</p> <p>46. Grotesque or bizarre</p> <p>48. Delicacy (archaic)</p> <p>49. Textile</p> <p>50. Denial</p> <p>51. Electronic data processing</p> <p>52. Attempt</p> | <p>CLUES DOWN</p> <p>1. Engulf</p> <p>2. Waterside hotel</p> <p>3. Printed cotton fabric</p> <p>4. Defensive nuclear weapon</p> <p>5. One who follows the rules</p> <p>6. Lace up once more</p> <p>8. Fire byproduct</p> <p>9. Hankerings</p> <p>11. Outer</p> <p>14. One-time aerospace firm</p> <p>15. Seafood</p> <p>18. Commercial</p> <p>19. Epoxy hardener (abbr.)</p> <p>20. Samoan monetary unit</p> <p>22. Type of gland</p> <p>23. Arrest</p> <p>24. Check</p> <p>27. Past participle of be</p> | <p>28. Alias</p> <p>29. A major division of geological time</p> <p>31. Kids programming channel (abbr.)</p> <p>32. Joked</p> <p>33. Helps little firms</p> <p>34. Roman numeral 50</p> <p>35. Impressive in size or scope</p> <p>36. Domineering leader</p> <p>37. A person who delivers a speech</p> <p>38. One after 89</p> <p>39. Young hawk</p> <p>40. The scene of any event or action</p> <p>44. A team's best pitcher</p> <p>47. Integrated data processing</p> |
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Help Wanted - Clerical

Part-time receptionist for Oakey's Funeral Service - Vinton Chapel.

Hours vary with some weekday evening and daytime shifts and every other daytime weekend available. Please contact Joshua Dama, Manager at (540) 982-2221 or email jdama@oakeys.com.

Help Wanted Part-time Administrative Assistant

Buchanan Presbyterian Church is searching for a part time Administrative Assistant.

Duties include working with the minister and music team to prepare weekly Sunday bulletin and monthly newsletter; prepare PowerPoint for Sunday worship and be there to operate it; assist with recording and uploading services to YouTube; performance of other administrative jobs to assist the minister.

To apply or obtain complete job description please contact Tricia at 540-589-3107 or send resume to the church at P.O. Box 517, Buchanan, VA 24066

Help Wanted - General

WANTED Models

Models needed for life drawing class, male and female, \$65 for 3 hour session. Call David 540-473-3713

Product Support Manager & Application Engineer sought by Nippon Pulse America, Inc. in Radford, VA

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Legals - Botetourt County

NOTICE OF SPECIAL COMMISSIONER SALE OF 101 DRY BRANCH ROAD, BUCHANAN, VIRGINIA, 24066

Pursuant to a Decree of the Circuit Court of Botetourt County, Virginia, made and entered into November 29, 2023 in Case No. 23CL23-0036100, styled Barrett (Plaintiff) v. Cherokee rose Eubank (Defendant), a Will, on Friday 26, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. at the front door of the Courthouse of Botetourt County, Virginia, located in its new temporary quarters, offer for sale to the highest bidder for cash, the following described real estate: 101 Dry Branch Road, Buchanan, Virginia, 24066, being 2.56 acres in the Buchanan Magisterial District, Tax Map #53-4, property ID#99013634. A more accurate description can be procured as shown on a plat attached to Deed Book 128 at page 123 in the Clerk's Office of the Circuit Court of Botetourt County, Virginia.

Terms of Sale: Cash (10% on the day of sale with the remainder at closing within 60 days).

For further information, apply to:

Tommy Joe Williams, Special Commissioner, 2721 Brambleton Avenue, S.W., Roanoke, Virginia, 24015, office telephone number: (540)772-7848, cell phone number: (540) 797-4065.

I, Tommy Joe Williams, hereby certify that I have bond, with surety, as required by the decree.

Tommy Joe Williams
Special Commissioner

I, Tommy Moore, Clerk of the Circuit Court of Botetourt County, Virginia, hereby certify the Tommy Joe Williams, Special Commissioner, has given bond, as required by the Decree with Surety approved by the Court.

Tommy Moore, Clerk
Botetourt County Circuit Court

Legals - City of Radford

ABC NOTICE

RADFORD COFFEE COMPANY INC., trading as RADFORD COFFEE COMPANY, 333 WEST MAIN ST, RADFORD, VA 24141.

The above establishment is applying to the VIRGINIA ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) AUTHORITY for Restaurant-Wine, Beer, and Mixed Beverages license to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages.

Rachel Doyle-Owner.

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

Legals - City of Salem

Notice is hereby given to all interested persons that the Council of the City of Salem,

at its regular meeting on Monday, January 8, 2024, at 6:30 p.m., in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 114 N. Broad Street, in the City of Salem, Virginia, will hold a public hearing, pursuant to Sections 15.2-2204 and 15.2-2285 of the Code of Virginia, as amended, to consider approval of the following requests relative to the CODE OF THE CITY OF SALEM, VIRGINIA:

1. Consider the request of E2ST John, LLC, property owner, for rezoning the property located at 68 St. John Road (Tax Map # 155-2-2.1) from HBD Highway Business District to HM Heavy Manufacturing District.

2. Consider the request of Poindexter SW Florida, LLC, property owner, for rezoning the property located at 2105-2121 Apperson Drive (Tax Map # 281-1-2.2) from BCD Business Commerce District to HBD Highway Business District.

If approved, Salem City Council intends to adopt the ordinance(s) associated with the above item(s) on first reading, with a second reading of those ordinance(s) at a subsequent meeting.

Copies of the proposed plans, ordinances or amendments may be examined in the Office of Community Development, 21 South Bruffey Street, Salem, Virginia.

At said hearing, parties in interest and citizens shall have an opportunity to be heard relative to the said requests.

THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SALEM, VIRGINIA
BY: H. Robert Light
Clerk of Council

Notice is hereby given to all interested persons that the City of Salem Planning Commission,

at its regular meeting on January 10, 2024, at 7:00 p.m., in the Community Room, Salem Civic Center, 1001 Roanoke Boulevard, in the City of Salem, Virginia, will hold a public hearing, pursuant to Sections 15.2-2204 and 15.2-2285 of the Code of Virginia, as amended, to consider approval of the following requests relative to the CODE OF THE CITY OF SALEM, VIRGINIA:

1. Consider the request of T J Real Properties, LLC, property owner, for rezoning the property located at 1236 West Main Street (Tax Map # 141 - 1 - 4) from HBD Highway Business District to CBD Community Business District.

2. Consider the request of Helm Building Enterprises, LTD, property owner, for the issuance of a Special

Legals - City of Salem

Exception Permit to allow a two family dwelling on the property located at 301 Carey Avenue, (Tax Map # 74-2-6.1).

3. Consider the request of Helm Building Enterprises, LTD, property owner, for rezoning the property located at 416 Electric Road (Tax Map # 150-3-1) from HBD Highway Business District to HM Heavy Manufacturing District.

4. Consider the request of Virginia Baptist Children's Home (dba HopeTree Family Services), property owner, for rezoning the properties located at 1000 block Red Lane and a portion of 860 Mount Vernon Lane (Tax Map #'s 41-1-1, 41-1-2, 41-1-3, 41-1-4, 41-1-5, 41-1-6, and a portion of 44-3-10) from RSF Residential Single Family to PUD Planned Unit District.

Copies of the proposed plans, ordinances or amendments may be examined in the Office of Community Development, 21 South Bruffey Street, Salem, Virginia.

At said hearing, parties in interest and citizens shall have an opportunity to be heard relative to the said requests.

THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF SALEM, VIRGINIA
BY: H. Robert Light
Deputy Executive Secretary

Legals - Montgomery County

TOWN OF BLACKSBURG - NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS BLACKSBURG TOWN COUNCIL will hold public hearings on Tuesday, January 9, 2024

beginning at 6:30 p.m. in the Roger E. Hedgepeth Chambers of the Blacksburg Municipal Building, 300 South Main Street, Blacksburg, regarding the following items:

Ordinance 2045: An Ordinance to Amend the FY 2023/2024 Operating Budget to Appropriate \$927,000 of Bond Proceeds to the Water/Sewer Capital Improvement Fund and \$800,000 of Bond Proceeds to the Stormwater Capital Improvement Fund.

The proposed ordinance will allow the Town's two previously approved agreements with Glade Spring Crossing, LLC for the Glade Spring Crossing housing development. One will be used for the sewer cost sharing of \$927,000 and another for \$800,000 for a regional Stormwater project.

These projects will be funded by an upcoming bond offering.

Ordinance 2046: An Ordinance Granting a Lease of Office Space in Town Property Located at 141 Jackson Street, N.E.

Legals - Montgomery County

The proposed ordinance will grant space in the town owned property located at 141 Jackson Street NE to New River Land Trust for storage.

All persons affected by or interested in the proposed items above may appear and present their views. After each public hearing, Town Council will consider action on the item. Copies of materials related to the above items are on file and can be obtained in the Office of the Town Clerk, 300 South Main Street, Blacksburg, weekdays between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. For land use matters, copies of applications and all related items may also be found online at www.blacksburg.gov/public hearings or reviewed in person at the Blacksburg Planning and Building Department, 400 South Main Street, Blacksburg, Virginia. Individuals with disabilities who require special assistance to attend and participate in this meeting should contact Lorraine Spaulding, Town Clerk at (540) 443-1025 or 443-1000 (voice or TDD).

Montgomery Regional Solid Waste Authority Summary Statement of Financial Condition For the Year Ended June 30, 2023

Assets	\$5,942,205
Deferred Out Flows of Resources	\$33,031
Liabilities	\$1,993,477
Deferred Inflows of Resources	\$164,858
Net Position	\$3,816,901
Revenues	\$4,756,465
Expenses	\$5,207,667
Net Change in Net Position	\$(451,202)

Detailed financial statements may be obtained by writing to: MRSWA, P.O. Box 2130, Christiansburg, VA 24068

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Marty Gordon
NRVsports@ourvalley.org

Landon Clark led Radford High School to the school's first state title in 51 years and is ready to continue his playing career at Elon University. The 6-0, 205 quarterback passed and rushed for over 4,700 total yards and accounted for or was a part of 70 touchdowns. Clark finished 207 for 339 on the season through the air for 3,402 yards, but it was his legs that might have made the difference this past season as rushed 136 times for 1,312 yards. For his effort, Clark is the 2023 All-County, All-City football team player of the year. His favorite target, Max Kanipe, is the offensive player of the year.

Kanipe finished with 74 receptions for 1,598 yards with 17

touchdowns. He had nine catches in the state championship contest for 218 yards, pulling in 80 percent of Clark's passes for the title.

Tanner Evans is the all-purpose offensive player of the year. He led Christiansburg to a 6-1 record this past season as QB1.

Evans suffered a season-ending knee injury in week 7, bringing a screeching halt to what was starting to be a memorable year. He finished the season with 117 rushes for 1,208 yards with 22 touchdowns and passed 50 of 84 for 782 yards with 12 touchdowns and just one interception.

The senior plans to continue his baseball career at the University of Charleston.

The All-County, All-City coach of the year is no surprise. Michael Crist

led Radford to a state title and a 15-0 record in only his third season.

An unofficial coach of the year award is given to Scott Mikowicz, who took over an Auburn program, which had only played 15 games in the past four years. The Eagles were 0-5 in 2022 before shutting it down, 0-4 in 2021 because of similar situations and COVID knocked them out of entire season before that. The last season, the school played a full schedule was 2019 when they finished 6-7 and did have an appearance in the Single-A playoffs.

Mikowicz directed an Auburn program, which had questions for most of the year on whether it would have enough players to finish the season. Not only did they finish the season, they're



Landon Clark

preparing for next year after a successful junior varsity season.

Radford's Charlie Davis was named the all-county/all-city defensive player of the year. He tallied 157 tackles this

season with 62 solos.

The 2023 all-county/all-city offense stacked up like this:

Player of the year- Landon Clark, Radford
Offensive player of the year- Max Kanipe,

Radford.
QB- Landon Clark
RB- J.D. Grubb, Radford
Matt Annis, Christiansburg

See Football, page 8



Charlie Davis



Max Kanipe



Tanner Evans

FILE PHOTOS

What we learned from the bowl win

From the Sidelines
Marty Gordon
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The Virginia Tech football team easily won this past week's Military Bowl, and with it comes questions on what we have learned about this team. For the most part, most of it is positive.

The current players support Pry as 19 of 22 starters were still in action for the Military Bowl. Kudos for the coaching staff, keeping everyone together. In addition, the staff also convinced several players from not only opting out but hitting the transfer portal. This is a credit to Pry and his coaching staff.

Kyron Drones is definitely a great player. He has proven himself not only for the last six games of the season but also in

the bowl game itself.

Drones ran for 176 yards and a touchdown. He also threw for two TDs as Virginia Tech withstood a second-half downpour to beat No. 23 Tulane 41-20 in the Military Bowl.

His feet is the key for how the Hokie defense moves. For the season, Drones has 818 yards rushing and another 2,085 through the air.

For once, the team will know who their QB1 will be before spring workouts.

Brayshul Tuten finished with 136 yards and two touchdowns on 18 carries to help Virginia Tech win its first bowl game since 2016. Thus, he was another good portal pickup from this past year. He is returning and that spells trouble for opposing defenses.

Again, the word "returning" is

big in Blacksburg. Over a dozen players have announced plans to return to the team this coming year, another great testimonial to Pry and his staff.

Speaking of the coaching staff, they have also proven to be able to recruit the 757 and the Commonwealth. Something that was lacking from the previous staff. Several of those new recruits were even present for the bowl win.

The Hokies definitely have a weapon in redshirt-Freshman kicker Jordan Love. He consistently hit from downtown including several from beyond 50 yards. He was rated a five-star kicking prospect by Kohl's kicking prospect coming to Blacksburg out of high school and was ranked as the No. 14 high school kicker in the country by 247Sports Composite.

Dr. Love knows how to kick.

The defense is also a bright spot, and with almost the entire secondary returning, they should be a force for next season. Add the return of a very experienced Front Four and the defense will be solid.

Fans showed up in groves to support the Hokies as the bowl location was a sea of Maroon. One thing for sure is that Hokie fans travel well.

Pry and several of his players should also be commended for giving words of encouragement to the Tulane QB, following a first half injury. Definitely respect here.

This football program is moving the needle and scaling the mountain once again. There still is a long way to go, but the coaching staff has already reached new heights in just two

years.

Next year's schedule now lays in front of the Hokies. The season opens at Vanderbilt, a SEC school. Then returns home for Marshall before a trip to ODU in Norfolk.

Rutgers than slides into Blacksburg for the fourth game of the season.

Conference games for 2024 include UVA, Duke, Miami, at Stanford, Syracuse, Boston College, Clemson and Ga. Tech. The Hokies could easily be 4-0 heading into conference play and six more wins could await after that.

Fans will should just hold their breath on what the future holds for this squad. The nucleus is returning and barring injuries, should give the team something to look forward to.

Go Hokies.

Looking ahead to world of sports in 2024

From the Sidelines
Marty Gordon
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The year 2023 has come to a screeching halt with the top headline being a bowl win by Virginia Tech. Thus, the New Year will keep the Hokies football program at the top the list.

Let's be honest, there is plenty of optimism to what is happening in Blacksburg. Brent Pry has the team doing a 180 degrees and trending in the right direction. The Hokies had gotten used to winning eight-plus games every year during the Frank Beamer era. When that changed, fans got a little harder to live with.

The Year 2024 should bring Pry and the Hokies at least an eight-win season. If the chips fall like they

could, then they could win the ninth one in the third year of the Pry era.

Other predictions to look forward to in the New Year:

The L.A. Dodgers will not win the World Series despite the fact they are going to pass the Yankees in a payroll loaded with too much talent.

The new 12-team college football playoff will cause more problems than everyone expected with as many as four SEC teams being including in the first year.

Both Blacksburg and Auburn high school's football teams will win their first five games of the season to create a lot of buzz. 5-0 sounds great for these two schools that have found it difficult to find wins the past three years.

Radford University's men's basketball team will win two games in

the NCAA tournament.

The next Cornhole National Champion will be from southwest Virginia.

Auburn High School will win both the baseball and softball state championships.

Alabama and Florida State will be declared co-national champions after January games.

The Super Bowl will be between the Baltimore Ravens and Detroit Lions with the Ravens taking the win.

A major soccer tournament will be held in Christiansburg with over 1,000 people from around the world in attendance.

The Harlem Globetrotters will make a comeback with a stop in Salem.

Another 10 football bowl games will be added to the overall schedule

with at least four being held outside the United States and a discussion will take place to pay players to participate in the bowl games themselves.

Flag football will become one of the most popular sports leading into the Olympics.

The USA men's soccer team will post a winning record and finally take the next step on the national stage.

Major League Baseball will announce plans for spring training in several countries other than the United States.

Tiger Woods will finally win another golf major.

Remember most of these predictions are just a guess with some knowledge of sports. Hopefully, they have taken your mind off the everyday activities of life for at least a moment. Enjoy sports in the New Year.



Over 290 runners took part in the Christmas Eve race. The event also included a Frosty run for youngsters.

Frosty 5K in Blacksburg brings out the runners

BLACKSBURG – The Frosty 5K was held Saturday, Dec. 23 in Blacksburg. The Top 40 runners include: Owen Stover, 16:55.9; 2) Andrew Parkins, 3) Dereck Scheidt; 4) Kevin McGuire; 5) Alisha Ebert; 6) Ignacio Moore; 7) Nate Lehman; 8) Glen McGuire; 9) Louis Semtner; 10) Alex Watty; 11) Aaron Paynter; 12) Aden Clark; 13) Lauren Childs; 14) Daniel Pruden; 15) Brayden Galbraith; 16) Michelle Lowry; 17) Leif Anderson; 18) Daniel Gathright;

19) Angela Anderson; 20) Elinor Wade; 21) Levi Bartley; 22) Erik Olsen; 23) Jean-Francois Gout; 24) Jason Losh; 25) Matthew Conner; 26) Becca Halm; 27) Shannon Atkins; 28) Scot Harrison; 29) Helena Smith; 30) Eleanor Buskill; 31) Nick Clarke; 32) Bryce Paynter; 33) Logan Howland; 34) Grayson Clark; 35) James Miller; 36) Jackson Livanec; 37) Jared Smith; 38) Easton Holt; 39) Henry Kazaks; 40) Bowie Galbraith.

Staff report



Owen Stover was the overall race individual with a time of 16:55.9.



Andrew Parkins was the second-place overall runner in the Blacksburg event.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF RUN-ABOUT SPORTS

Football

from page 7

Gage Akers, Eastern Montgomery
Austin Stump, Auburn
Xavier Brown, Eastern Montgomery
Receivers- Max Kanipe, Radford
Luke Poff, Blacksburg
Javier Waldron, Blacksburg
Sinere Taylor, Radford
Tight end- Donovan Richardson, Christiansburg
All Purpose offensive player of the year- Tanner Evans, Christiansburg
Kicker- Spencer Conner, Christiansburg.
Punt returner- Izaiah Cotto, Christiansburg.
Kick returner- Xavier Joplin, Christiansburg.
The defense included Charlie Davis from Radford as the defensive player of

the year.
The 2023 defensive unit were:
Defensive lineman- Ricky Bailey, Radford
Dawson Martin, Radford
Jaiden Edwards, Christiansburg
Carter Stallard, Christiansburg
Linebacker- Charlie Davis, Radford
Gage Akers, Eastern Montgomery
Josiah Ratley, Christiansburg
Matthew Wheeler, Auburn
Defensive back- Izaiah Cotto, Christiansburg
Landon Clark, Radford
Luke Poff, Blacksburg
Brody Blount, Christiansburg
Punter- Matt Annis, Christiansburg
Defensive specialist- Landon Clark, Radford

Budget

from page 4

\$100 million will go toward Virginia's Biotech and Life Sciences industry, which includes Virginia Tech, and \$70 million will accelerate infrastructure projects in the I-81 corridor.
This is but a fraction of the spending identified in

the Governor's FY 2024-2026 budget. Unlike in Washington, DC, Virginia's constitution requires a budget that does not carry-over a deficit. This means that the Democrat-controlled House and Senate money committees will have to "spend within their means" when considering their competing budget proposals. When I return to Richmond, you can be sure that I'll review the budget with a critical eye toward fiscal responsibility and meeting the needs of Virginia citizens.
It is my honor to represent you in Richmond, and I want you to be fully informed what your

government is doing for you. As the Delegate representing the 12th District (soon to be the 42nd District due to redistricting), your concerns are my greatest priority. If ever I may be of assistance to you and your family, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at DelJBallard@House.Virginia.Gov. You can also follow me on Twitter @JasonBallardVA or like my Facebook page, Jason Ballard for Delegate, to keep up to date with what I am doing in Richmond and in our community on your behalf. Best wishes for a happy new year!
Del. Jason Ballard
Virginia General Assembly

ESPNU tabs Radford at Longwood as its Jan. 11 Big South wildcard selection

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – ESPNU has selected the Radford at Longwood men's basketball contest as its first Big South Wildcard broadcast of the 2023-24 season, it was announced today by the Big South Conference office. The game will move from its current Wednesday, Jan. 10 date to Thursday, Jan. 11 and will tip at 9 p.m. inside the new Joan Perry Brock Center in Farmville, Va.
The match-up will mark the second meeting between the squads on ESPNU. It will be Radford's 14th appearance in the Big South's ESPNU Wildcard series, and seventh for Longwood. The teams are currently 1-2 in the Big South standings, as the Lancers currently have the league's best record at 12-2 -- including an 8-0 record at the JPB, while the Highlanders are tied for second at 10-4.
Longwood had the nation's longest winning

streak at 12 games from Nov. 11-Dec. 20. The Lancers are ranked No. 109 in the NET and their non-conference wins include Maryland-Eastern Shore, N.C. Central, Delaware State (twice), Bethune-Cookman, Morgan State, Milwaukee and VMI. Picked fifth in the conference preseason poll, the Lancers currently rank first in the Big South in scoring defense (61.6), scoring margin (+17.6), field goal defense (39.3) and rebounding margin (+13.6). Longwood is led by Walyn Napper (14.4 points, 4.9 assists, 1.9 steals).
Radford enters this week on a five-game win streak with wins over Elon, N.C. Central, VMI, Bucknell and West Virginia during that span. The Highlanders, with a NET rating of 139, have also knocked off Marshall, Morgan State and Northern Colorado, while two of their four losses have

been by one possession. Radford is tops in the Big South in three-point percentage (38.0) and three-point defense (28.3), while ranking second in scoring defense (66.9), free throw percentage (74.7) and field goal defense (39.9). The Highlanders have three players averaging double-figures, led by Kenyon Giles (14.6).
This is the 11th year of the Big South's ESPNU Wildcard series, which again features six Thursday broadcasts -- Jan. 11 (Radford at Longwood), Jan. 18, Feb. 1, Feb. 15, Feb. 22 and Feb. 29 -- that are selected 14-21 days in advance. A total of 47 games have been played in the series that began in 2013-14, and while the home teams are 31-16, the 47 contests have been decided by an average of 9.30 points, with 28 59.6 percent) of those being decided by single-digits.
Radford University Athletics

Donate

from page 1

Lake" and also recycle old Christmas trees.
"Donated trees will be incorporated into reef structures to enhance habitat for game fish," announced Friends of Claytor Lake, Inc. "You can also observe similar habitat currently in use at Claytor Lake on the underwater webcam."
Trees will be accepted from Christmas until Jan. 14 at the marina parking lot. All trees must be real and free of lights, tinsel, and other ornaments. Those making a tree donation will receive free park admission on the day of donation.

Please follow the tree tag directions located at the drop site at the marina for proof of donation and parking pass receipt. Please note that the park will be closed Jan. 5-6, for natural resource management.
Interested in volunteering to help prep trees leading up to or helping on drop day? For more details and to sign up to volunteer go to www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks. If inclement weather is in the forecast, please email claytorlake@dcr.virginia.gov or call 540-643-2500.
Staff report

Restaurants

from page 4

restaurant featuring veal and seafood dishes and pasta. Lol. One tradition that thankfully was ended by Frank's grandchildren is that there is now a printed menu - in Frank's day and until recently, the menu was "oral" and your bill "spiral".
Oliverio's Ristorante, Bridgeport, West Virginia. Yet another iconic Italian restaurant in my area. Originally "Sonny's", a burger and pizza place, the establishment burned to the ground early during my years in West Virginia and was rebuilt and reopened by Sonny and Shirley Oliverio as an upscale Italian eatery and eventually taken over by their sons Patrick and Phillip. Popular enough that it is open for lunch and dinner 7 days a week and is rarely not crowded. My favorite dish by far is the chicken piccata, but there are many features, and the breadsticks and fresh tomato salad are outstanding. The bar in the front is a gathering spot.
Hart Kitchen, Clarksburg, West Virginia. Owned and operated by Anne Hart, a professionally trained chef, and her significant other Michael, retired after many years as a chemical and electrical engineer working in the glass industry in Europe. Sort of a retirement gig, but definitely a passion for Anne and Michael. Originally, they ran a restaurant called Provence Market in Bridgeport until it sadly burned a few years ago. Anne wouldn't let Michael retire and they are now open Thursday-Saturday in an old storefront in downtown Clarksburg and feature one beef, one seafood and one pasta dish every night, plus a few standard dishes. The roasted red pepper soup is to die for as they say. My lady friend

Joanne and I try to go there whenever she's in town. I recommend the poutine as a starter, but it will fill you up.
Stone's Cafeteria, Christiansburg. Closed in the last few years, this restaurant was opened in the late 1950's or early 1960's by Wendell Stone and run for many years by his son Jerry, my first school bus driver. Bus 13. I have to list Stone's because it's the first restaurant I remember going to. It was originally a diner, with booths and a lunch counter as I recall, and was later converted to a cafeteria. There were not many "eating establishments" in Christiansburg in those days, and the Palace and Bartlett's served beer, so there was no way my parents would go to these places in downtown Christiansburg. There was also Grant's Tavern way down Roanoke Road, frequented by VPI cadets when I was young. In addition to serving alcohol which attracted the college crowd, it suffered the additional "disadvantages" of being fancy and expensive, things my parents didn't like. I do remember going there a few times for Sunday lunch with the folks, however, because it was owned by Zenie Grant, a close friend of my Aunt Mary Alma. I also remember going there with my childhood friend Nigel Hinshelwood for birthday lunches hosted by his grandmother Mrs. Mary Word. But Stones is pretty much where my parents went when we "dined" out. My mother and I and our great neighbors the Sheltons also went to Stones every other Tuesday night for several years while the dads were at Lions Club. It was also the first place I ever had pizza and it

had trampolines in back, which I loved until the plaintiffs' lawyers took those sorts of things away.
Shoney's Big Boy, Bridgeport, West Virginia. When my oldest daughter Beth was very young, 4 or 5 probably, and while my other daughter Laura was an infant, I used to take Beth early on Saturday mornings to the breakfast buffet at the local Shoney's and she would have French toast or pancakes and I would take advantage of the AYCE bacon and sausage and hash browns. I was undefeated. Beth and I would have great conversations bonding over the breakfast buffet and Beth's four-year-old thoughts.
Bonanza (or maybe Ponderosa, who knows the difference), also Bridgeport, West Virginia. This was Laura's place, at the time when salad bars were just becoming popular, and Laura loved to load her plate with black olives, lots of black olives. Much to our delight and amazement, Laura's 3 year old daughter Virginia has a similar affinity for them, uncoached and unprompted. The building now hosts Brickside, where I gather with a bunch of friends every Wednesday.
Twin Oaks, Bridgeport, West Virginia. Near my old house in Bridgeport when the girls were young. Gathering spot for pizza after swim meets and softball games and soccer for my daughters and other Bridgeporters after other sporting events. It had a jukebox in the knotty pine "side room" that my kids loved to drop quarters in. Beth's husband claims not to like the pizza when we order from there. He didn't grow up in Bridgeport. We tell him it tastes like victory.

NEW RIVER

Community College

Spring Classes Begin

January 22

Registration Now Open!

www.nr.edu/registernow