



Strategic Partners to lead town-gown-region collaboration effort

Area leaders forge partnership to discuss, build shared vision

BLACKSBURG - Leaders from the towns of Blacksburg and Christiansburg, Montgomery County, the New River Valley Regional Commission and Virginia Tech recently met in Blacksburg to discuss strategic opportunities to work together to advance and support the shared interests of the region.

What emerged from that meeting was an agreement to a one-year initiative that will explore opportunities to collaborate in the best interests of the New River Valley. To facilitate this effort, the partners will engage with Strategic Partners, a global

strategic communications and community engagement consulting firm headquartered in Washington, D.C., that helps communities translate challenges into opportunities for success.

In his February State of the University Address, Virginia Tech President Tim Sands highlighted Virginia Tech's ongoing commitment to work with local partners to develop an aligned approach to the region's shared aspirations and obstacles.

"We've made progress and are ready for the university, towns, county, and surrounding region to join and forge a path to

improve our community for all," Sands said. "I look forward to a productive dialogue that helps us better understand our needs and develop a plan to address our shared goals."

"As always, the town's primary concern is for its residents' quality of life," said Blacksburg Mayor Leslie Hager-Smith. "We look forward to any process that will help to advance that priority and that will enhance relations with our partners on the university side."

Quality of life for all residents, especially when

See **Collaboration**, page 8



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE TOWN OF BLACKSBURG

Since 1991, the Summer Arts Festival, a joint effort by Virginia Tech and the Town of Blacksburg, has offered an array of arts and cultural events throughout the summer, including theatre productions, gallery exhibits, outdoor concerts, classic movies, and other special performances.

Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library launches 2024 Summer Reading Program

The Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library (MFRL) is excited to announce the 2024 "Adventure Begins at Your Library" Summer Reading Program, a thrilling journey for all ages beginning June 1 through July 27. This year's program promises a summer filled with captivating reads, exciting events, and engaging activities designed to inspire a lifelong love of reading.

Program Highlights:

Kick-Off Event: Join us June 1 at the Blacksburg Library for our grand kick-off celebration. Festivities will include face painting, bubbles, and a sweet treat.

Hamlet and the Pirates: The Shepherd Shakespeare Company presents the never-before-heard tale of Hamlet's adventures amongst the pirates of the North Sea. Recommended for ages four and up.

Larsens' Amazing World of Reptiles: Reptile experts Scott and Kim Larsen will share stories and interesting facts about their dazzling array of lizards, frogs, turtles, and snakes – then invite you to meet the reptiles up close and

personal. Caution: holding, petting, and greeting reptiles eye-to-eye may occur. For all ages.

Mill Mountain Theatre presents Flat Stanley: The Musical: The Mill Mountain Theater is bringing their traveling production of Flat Stanley: The Musical to our library. Join Stanley, a flat but fearless adventurer, on a whirlwind journey from Hollywood to Paris and beyond.

For adults: There are a variety of programs including "Speed Friending," Summer Foraging Workshops, Pressed Flower Bookmarks, an Author Talk by Rick Van Noy, Paint Your Partner, and more.

Weekly events: Enjoy a variety of weekly events across all MFRL branches. From storytime and craft sessions for kids to book clubs and author talks for adults, there's something for everyone.

Reading challenges: Participants of all ages can join reading challenges tailored to their age group, from toddlers to adults. Complete challenges to earn badges, prizes, and entries into grand prize drawings.

Finale – All ages are invited to join in at the Summer Reading Finale Saturday, July 27 from 2 – 4 p.m. at the Blacksburg Library for a Silent Disco.

How to participate:

Register: Sign up for the Summer Reading Program starting June 1 at any MFRL branch or online at <https://mfri.beanstack.org/>

Read and complete activities: Track your progress using our online platform or by picking up a reading log at your local library.

Engage: Attend events, participate in challenges, and take on Adventures this summer!

Why Join?

Summer reading programs are proven to prevent the "summer slide" in academic skills, provide opportunities for family bonding, and create positive, enjoyable experiences with books and learning. The "Adventure Begins at Your Library" program offers a unique chance to explore the outdoors, read more, and embark on a literary adventure right in your community.

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Radio field day near Audie Murphy site set for Saturday

Marty Gordon
NRVsports@ourvalley.org

3 p.m. Audie Murphy was the most decorated US soldier in World War II and died in a plane crash on Brush Mountain, near New Castle, Va. on May 28, 1971. This field day marks the 53rd year of his passing, and brings awareness to his life as a soldier, actor, and American hero.

The New River Valley Radio Club and other ham radio operators are a link to the world we sometimes seem to forget.

Current estimates are that there are three million amateur radio operator active worldwide.

The whole idea of ham radio is the use of the radio frequency spectrum for purposes of non-commercial exchange of messages, wireless experimentation, self-training, private recreation, radio sport, contesting, and yes, emergency communications.

This Saturday, June 1, the local group, which boasts close to 40 members, will hold a special event in honor of Audie Murphy, 10 a.m. –

According to online records, he received every military combat award for valor available from the United States Army, as well as French and Belgian awards for heroism. Murphy received the Medal of Honor for valor that he demonstrated at the age of 19 for single-handedly holding off a company of German soldiers for an hour at the Colmar Pocket in

See **Murphy**, page 8

Christiansburg Springs into Summer at Huckleberry Park



Adoptable pup Chicken Wing, with a volunteer from Montgomery County Animal Care and Adoption Center, attends Christiansburg's Spring into Summer event.



Community members enjoy Frozen treats from Aloha Eddie's at the Huckleberry Park event.

Angelica Ramos
Contributing writer

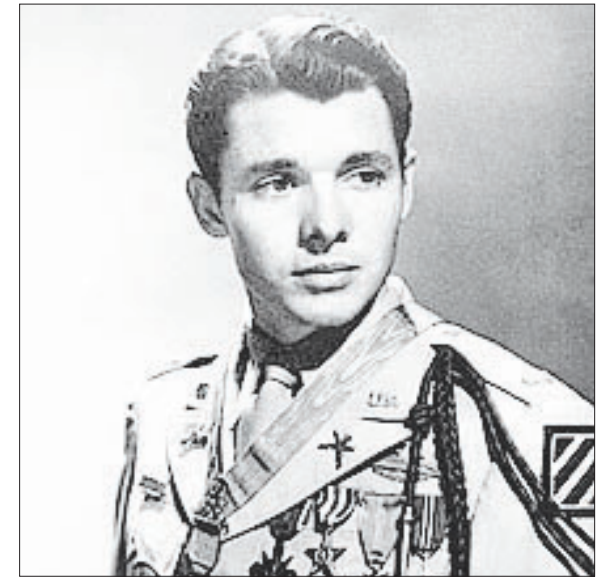
CHRISTIANSBURG- Christiansburg celebrated the beginning of summer with a plaque unveiling and the Spring into Summer event.

Christiansburg Parks and Recreation Department along with Mayor Mike Barber and other community affiliates, hosted the Spring into Summer Event this past Thursday, May 23, 2024 at the new Huckleberry Park. The festivities opened with a speech by Parks and Recreation Director Brad Epperley, a presentation of



PHOTOS BY ANGELICA RAMOS

Hilltop Yoga is enjoyed by attendees of the Spring into Summer event at Huckleberry Park.



Audie Murphy



FILE PHOTOS

Monument at the site of the Virginia plane crash, which killed Audie Murphy.

See **Huckleberry**, page 8

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OBITUARIES

Albert, Clara Gertrude Slusser

Clara Gertrude (Trudy) Slusser Albert was born in Coal Bank Hollow, Blacksburg Oct. 7, 1930. She is preceded in death by her husband, Juel Albert, Sr., of 54 married years; parents Pat and Annie Slusser; brothers Paul, Joe, Erno, Johnny, and Dennis Slusser; and many family members. She is survived by her beloved son, Juel Albert Jr. (Angie); granddaughters Tiffany Albert and Crystal Boyle (Jason); great-grandchildren Justyna, Wyatt, Luke, Tanner, Riley, Dawson, and Layla; and great-great-granddaughter Selene, all of Blacksburg; little sister Maggie, family Terry and Carl Davis, and lifelong friend Lenore. Trudy spent 45 years working downtown as a banker. She never met a stranger and was always known for her friendly wave from the downtown picture bank window. Her ability to make people feel



comfortable and conduct business in all manners was amazing. She was confident in giving student loans as well as start-up business loans, some even honored by a handshake and a promise. Being a coal miner's daughter, she was also heavily involved in the local chapter of The Coal Miners Association. She was also a member of the Heritage Foundation and the American Heart Association. She too, was a familiar face in her retirement years working at Custom Catering

during the Virginia Tech Sportsclub luncheons and many other events. Trudy's greatest accomplishment was by far her family. Growing up in a strong family, her love of life was home and making sure everyone was fed and cared for. Gardening, making Sunday meals, working in her flower beds, crocheting, canning tomatoes, snapping beans, picking wild strawberries up on the hill, and listening to bluegrass were her favorite pastimes. She was also one of the all-time best flat footers in town. The family will honor her with a celebration of life at her favorite place on the New River in late summer. All donations can be considered for the Albert Family Cemetery at her home place. C/O Juel Albert Jr. 4829 Whitethorne Rd. Blacksburg Va, 24060.

Dowdy, Genevia Fisher

Genevia Fisher Dowdy, 58, of Radford, died Friday, May 24, 2024, at her home. She was born in Montgomery County Dec. 3, 1965 to the late Oren Wayne and Ellen Collins Fisher. She worked at Virginia Tech for over 34 years. She is survived by her husband of 41 years, Frankie D. Dowdy; sons Dusty Fisher (Brittany) and Eric Paul Fisher (Paulina);



daughter, Jessica Fisher; adopted son, Bobo; seven grandchildren;

one great-grandson; sister, Geraldine Sawyers (Eddie); and special sister-in-law, Della King. A funeral service will be held Wednesday, May 29, 2024, at 11 a.m. in the McCoy Funeral Home Chapel with Rev. Neal Turner officiating. Interment will follow at Roselawn Memorial Gardens, Christiansburg. The family will receive friends 10- 11 a.m. prior to the service.

Reed, Joseph

Joseph "Joe" Reed, 80, of Christiansburg, died May 23, 2024, at his home. Joe was a lifelong auto mechanic, who owned Cambria Auto Repair. He is preceded in death by his mother and stepfather, Idabell and Roy Richards, father, Claron O. Reed, sister, Lilly Ellen Hinkley, and stepson, Ronnie Farmer. Left to cherish his memory are his wife of 49 years, Carol Reed; daughters and sons-in-law, Sarah and Jason



Egan, and Shelia and Ralph Collins; son and daughter-in-law, Jeff and Tabatha Dulaney; grandchildren, Cody

Egan, Bryanna Egan, Casi Dulaney, Jeffrey Dulaney, and Jarrid (Caitlyn) Dulaney; brother, Kenny Richards and wife Ramona; sister, Bobbie Ogle; numerous nieces and nephews. Funeral services were conducted Tuesday, May 28, 2024 in the McCoy Funeral Home Chapel, with Pastor Doug Reed officiating. Interment followed in Sunset cemetery. The family received friends before the service.

Quackenbush, Connie Marie

Connie Marie Quackenbush, 77, of Elliston, passed Friday, May 24, 2024, at Lewis Gale Medical Center. She was born in New York Nov. 18, 1946, to the late Robert Stanton and Veronica Dunkley Batease. Connie loved

traveling all over the country with her husband Fred on their motorcycle. She was a talented artist and loved spending her time with family and friends. She is survived by her husband Frederick B. Quackenbush;

daughter, Michelle Higgins; son, Richard Quackenbush; and grandchildren, Amber, Owen, Makayla, and Layla. Graveside services will be conducted Friday, May 31, 2024, at 11 a.m. in the Sunset Cemetery, Christiansburg.

McConnell, Jr., Harry Willis

Harry Willis "Chopper" McConnell, Jr., 77, of Fairlawn, was surrounded by family members as he departed this earth and entered Heaven's gates the evening of May 21, 2024. Chopper was born in Saltville, Va. Aug. 17, 1946 to Ruby McConnell and the late Harry Willis McConnell. He graduated from Damascus High School and went on to serve as a Radioman in the United States Navy. While stationed in Norfolk, Virginia Chopper met his beautiful bride, Linda. In 1976, they settled in Fairlawn, where they raised their two children and enjoyed life together in the New River Valley. In southwest Virginia, he loved sharing meals, desserts and movies with his beloved Linda, fishing with Jeff and his grandchildren, gardening with Terri, and golfing or hunting with friends. Chopper worked 31 years for RDAISA at The Radford Army Ammunition Plant and retired from the workforce in 2001. Multiple people have referred to Chopper as the most intelligent man they have ever met. His family members know him as the nicest, most considerate man they have ever known. The old saying of "he'll give you the shirt right off of his back" was coined for Chopper. For the next 23 years he basked in retirement, spoiled his grandbabies, enjoyed



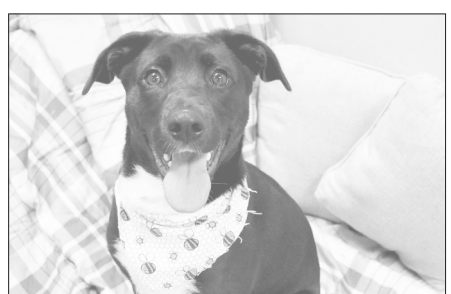
traveling the world, relished trips to visit his mother and family in both Richmond and Damascus, evenings on the carport with his hummingbirds, sneaking snacks to his granddads and neighborhood pets, talks with his neighbors, listening to music, and most of all just spending time with family. He is survived by his wife of 57 years Linda, of Oceana, W.Va.; mother "Granny Ruby," 104

years old, of Damascus, Va., daughter and son-in-law: Terri and Shannon Wohlford of Radford, Va., son and daughter-in-law Jeff and Susan McConnell of Richmond; sister and brother-in-law Brenda and Curt Smith of Damascus; brother and sister-in-law Tommy and Audrey McConnell of Damascus; grandchildren Grace Wohlford of Richmond, Michael, William and Hampton Wohlford of Radford, and Reilly and Tyler McConnell of Richmond. Funeral services will be conducted at noon Friday, May 31, 2024 at the Virginia Southwest Veterans Cemetery in Dublin, Virginia. Donations can be made to the American Liver Foundation to help find a cure for NASH.

PETS OF THE WEEK

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.

Twiddlebug is a young, energetic pup who's ready to find her forever home. She enjoys romping around and happily playing with squeaky toys. She can be a little nervous at times, but some human love and guidance would help her gain confidence.



Whisper seems to live up to her name. She's a generally quiet calm dog who needs a future home without other pets. Whisper tends to prefer human interaction. She also does well on leash walks. Stop by the Animal Care and Adoption Center to meet her.

Events from page 2

Red Cross blood drive
At St. Thomas Episcopal Church, 103 E. Main St., Christiansburg; 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Appointments: <https://www.redcrossblood.org>.

Fish Fry
Mount Tabor Ruritan Club will hold its June Fish Fry, 5 - 7 p.m. at Slusser's Chapel Picnic Shelter, 1543 Mount Tabor Rd, Blacksburg. Serving fish, fries and slaw; homemade desserts; and beverages. Adults-\$12, children under 12-\$6, children under three-free and carry-outs-\$12. This month, the Blacksburg Community Band will be playing. Held rain or shine. Call or text 540-449-6178 for further information. On Facebook at MtTaborRuritan.

Sunday, June 9:

Vintage Market
At Market Square Park, 100 Draper Rd SW, Blacksburg; 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. The market is made up of a carefully chosen group of vendors selling a wide selection of quality vintage items, upcycled crafts, and occasional antiques. For more information, visit blacksburgfarmersmarket.com/vintage-market/.

Monday, June 10:

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. Citizens are invited to attend and allowed to speak at each meeting. See the agenda at www.radfordva.gov.

Montgomery County Board of Supervisors meeting

Public meetings are normally held 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, June 11:

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 St.). 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, June 15:

Pilot Community yard sale
At the Pilot Community Center, 4449 Brush Creek Rd., Pilot, Va.; 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. Event is free and open to the public. Renting a space is \$10. Bring your own tables and canopy. To reserve your space: 540-257-3336 or ali5jn@aol.com.

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2024 Real Estate Taxes Due: June 5, 2024

TOWN OF Blacksburg

Town of Blacksburg Real Estate Tax invoices for the first installment of 2024 have been mailed and are due by Wednesday, June 5, 2024. If you have not yet received a tax statement, call the Department of Financial Services at 540.961.1105.

Payment may be mailed, made in person or placed in the drop box at 300 South Main Street, Blacksburg, paid by phone with a credit card or paid online at www.Blacksburg.gov/payments. Visa, MasterCard and Discover are accepted.

A 10% penalty will be charged if not paid by June 5, 2024. Interest will be charged at the rate of 10% per year beginning July 1, 2024.

OPINION

Lessons from summer jobs stick for a lifetime

It's that time of year when high school and college kids begin summer jobs - or at least they did when I was that age. Like everything else, this has probably changed quite a bit since then. My daughters, for instance, had infinitely more glamorous and interesting jobs while they were in college a few years ago - such as working summer camps for the National Cheerleader Association and trolling the Gulf Coast for hammerhead sharks for a marine lab. Summers in Sarasota or on various college campuses somehow sound better than my summers on the banks of Crab Creek.

I worked six summers during my high school and college years - the first two as a school janitor, washing windows and scrubbing floors, and the last four for C.W. Poff and Son, doing maintenance and unskilled (extremely unskilled - I took the term to a new level) construction. I am sure there are floors in townhouses in Blacksburg that still squeak because I had trouble finding the studs when I was putting down sub-flooring. Thankfully, Mr. Poff and my great (seriously) boss Elmer Underwood were patient and found ways to use me in a manner that maximized my skills - I did a lot of toting of stuff in other words. Blocks, lumber, carpet, appliances, tools, etc. I wasn't much help with these things when I got them where they were supposed to go, but I was darn good at getting them there.

During my college years I think my father would have preferred that I find jobs that might have meshed better with my future career plans - becoming a lawyer or a writer. In fact, I am sure he would have helped me find jobs around Christiansburg where I would have had that type of experience - plus air-conditioning! But there were a couple of problems - first, it being the 70s, I didn't cut my hair, so I looked more the part of stage crew for the Grateful Dead than an office clerk or mail room kid. Secondly, I more or less craved physical activity then and did not see myself as wearing a tie or nice clothes to work. I look back at my pictures from that time and I am grateful (and lucky not to be dead) that my folks let me stay in their house. It was a true sign of how wonderful they were as parents.

To say my summer jobs were not educational or beneficial to my future would be a grave misstatement, however. I learned the benefit of hard work and dependability. Despite my heavy summertime "social"



Evans "Buddy" King
Columnist

and softball schedules I showed up every day and on time (right Elmer?). I also learned that the value of each person's life is the same. Whether you are the president of the bank or the guy who cleans the toilets, your hopes and feelings are essentially the same. Some may do more with what they are given and some may do less, and some may not be given enough, but the value of each life is the same. Except for the grace of God (or some other cosmic force if you prefer), I could just as easily have been born into the body of a Haitian child with a nine-month life expectancy as where I was born - into a great family and in a wonderful community in almost certainly the greatest country in the history of civilization and arguably in its greatest era. Damn lucky. One of my favorite quotes (Barry Switzer) sums this thought up - "lots of folks are born on third base and go through life thinking they have hit a triple." I know I was born on third base.

So, my summer jobs were extremely beneficial in molding my character - I learned a strong work ethic (reinforced by my father) and I learned to respect people, regardless of status. Plus, and to get back to my bent, which is to tell funny stories, I learned many great "lines" from my co-workers (term my girls and other young folks use - we said "people we work with").

To give a little more context, during my college summers, I got to work with two of my best friends ever - Greg, who worked on the same job sites with me every day and also resembled stage crew for the Dead, and Bob, who worked at a higher level since his dad and brother owned the company, learning the family business (someday I'll tell the story of when Bob and I managed to "clip" the overhanging roof of the Dari-Delite with a cement mixer).

One of the first things I learned from our crew - most

of whom were 20-30 years older than Greg and me - was the importance of finding a "good hiding place". This was a spot where Junior or Elmer or whomever you were working for that day couldn't find you for a few minutes - this allowed us to "give Charlie (Mr. Poff) a little time." This would give you time to "collect yourself," i.e., doze for five minutes. As I recall the backstairs of Building 6 were good for this.

I also remember that Greg and I learned things about domestic life and marriage that have carried us far. We often heard our co-workers utter sayings like, "being married makes a man work many a day when he don't feel like it." This helped lay the foundation for our futures.

I also remember falling for the same line every Saturday morning - we got overtime on Saturdays if we came in and helped the carpet layers unload and carry the big rolls of carpet into the townhouses we were building. Often, we came in at 7 a.m. with two or three hours of sleep, tops, looking for the extra dollars. Our crew would be sitting around, recovering from the night before, waiting for the carpet guys. Then Glen would say, "I feel so much better since I quit drinking." Every time I would ask, being one of the few conversational guys there and recognizing that Glen needed a straight man, "when did you quit drinking Glen?" and every time Glen would look at his watch and say "oh, about two hours ago." This proved our co-worker Dewey's point that "people are stranger than anybody."

The stories about Elmer are legion. He was a Christian man and exceedingly kind. In fact, too kind at times. Our primary worksite was at Golden Gate Apartments and Carriage Hill Townhouses, and Elmer managed the units that had been completed and were being rented. His kindness was often on display when a couple of co-eds from Tech (one of the few job perks we had, perhaps the only), who lived in Unit 321, say, had avocado appliances and would want copper tone which were always 10 units away. To this day I can hear Elmer say, "no problem, I'll have Greg and Buddy make that switch." This involved refrigerator, dishwasher, stove and occasionally washer and dryer. It would have been easier for Greg and me to move the girls' entire apartment contents than to make

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News Messenger

Established 1869
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P.O. Box 1125 • Salem, VA 24153

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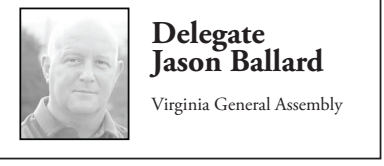
The News Messenger (USPS 016-490) is published twice a week for \$46 a year in Montgomery County, \$55 elsewhere in Virginia, and \$59 out of state by Virginia Media Inc., P.O. Box 429, Lewisburg, WV 24901. Periodical postage paid at Christiansburg, VA. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to NEWS MESSENGER 1633 W. Main St., Salem, VA 24153.

Delegate makes his case for his party's platform, candidates

Every year brings a new election season in Virginia, and 2024 is no different. Soon, Virginia Democrats and Republicans will be holding primary elections to determine party nominees for the House of Representatives, with Republicans also holding a primary election for the United States Senate seat currently held by Senator Tim Kaine. This is in addition to November's general election, in which we will choose not only our members of Congress, but also the President of the United States. It seems like with each election, we're told that "it's the most important one in recent memory." While each election is certainly important in its own right, the 2024 election will no doubt have a large impact on domestic policies - especially as it relates to the economy - in the years to come.

Despite the rhetoric from the White House and congressional Democrats, inflation really hasn't gone anywhere. Recent reports show prices for commodities have risen - on average -

20% since February of 2020, according to the bureau of labor statistics. What it amounts to is a decade-worth of inflation in just three years. The March inflation



Delegate Jason Ballard
Virginia General Assembly

report showed overall inflation at 3.5%, up from 3.2% in February of this year. Grocery prices climbed 1% month over month, and gasoline increased 1.3% month over month. Even as inflation slows, it is not the same thing as deflation. Prices remain high - they are simply rising at a slower rate. Anyone who buys groceries, gas, or pays their electric bill knows what a large problem this has become. And unfortunately, national Democrats have no plan or sense of urgency to solve it.

The Presidential primaries appear to be heading toward a straightforward general election rematch between President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump. In Virginia, we must also decide whether to continue with President Biden's economic policies in the U.S. Senate through Senator Tim Kaine. Considering that - according to FiveThirtyEight politics - Senator Kaine votes with President Biden 97% of the time, we can assume that a vote for Tim

Kaine is a vote for the continuation of economic policies that are putting the average American family in debt. As such, I would encourage you to learn more about the five Republicans who are vying to defeat Senator Kaine and return a Republican to the U.S. Senate for the first time since 2009. These candidates are: Hung Cao, Jonathan Emord, Eddie Garcia, Scott Parkinson, and Chuck Smith.

I believe any of these candidates would fight for common sense policies that would bring inflation under control, and I hope you'll take the time to learn more about each in advance of the U.S. Senate primary election on June 18. We can't afford more of the same Biden-omics, and the road back to sound fiscal policy starts in Virginia.

As the Delegate representing the 42nd House District in the Virginia General Assembly, 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.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11		
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CLUES ACROSS

1. Orator's podium	39. Mimic	3. Broad volcanic crater	35. Stop standing
5. UK-Netherlands gas pipeline	42. Fur-lined cloak	4. Not for	36. Utilize
8. Partner to "oohs"	44. Ancient foreigner	5. Blur	37. Sign language
12. African antelope	46. In an angry way	6. Tots	38. Famed ESPN broadcaster Bob
15. Indigenous Thai person	47. Ill-intentioned	7. Acted leisurely	40. Being of central importance
16. Becomes less intense	49. Monetary unit of Serbia	8. About the Alps	41. Ruin environment
18. Insurance mascot	50. S. American plant	9. Gets out of bed	42. Dessert dish
19. Tech hub _ Alto	51. One or the other	10. Town in "The Iliad"	43. Sea eagles
20. Actress Tomei	56. An alias for Thor	11. Welsh given name	44. Fertilized
21. Airborne (abbr.)	57. GRATUITY	13. Remove salt	45. Jerry's friend Benes
22. Type of smart watch	58. In a painful way	17. Calvary sword	47. Indian river
23. Natives	59. French commune	24. Mental disorder concerning body odor (abbr.)	48. Pass into a specified state or condition
26. Incompetent person	60. Promotional materials	25. Keeps a house cozy	49. Nocturnal rodent
30. Rare Hawaiian geese	61. Greek city	26. Ballplayer's accessory	52. A way to travel
31. Unspoken relationships	62. Assistant	27. Southwestern Russian city	53. Iron-containing compound
32. Passports and licenses are two	63. Confederate general	28. Pro sports league	54. Ancient Greek City
33. Claw	64. Former NJ governor	29. Congress investigative body (abbr.)	55. NFL signal caller Matt
34. Status quo	CLUES DOWN		
	1. Used by gymnasts		
	2. "Luther" actor Idris		

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MONTGOMERY SPORTS

RU begins search for new softball coach

Marty Gordon
NRVsports@ourvalley.org

Radford University will need a new softball coach this coming season after the school announced on Saturday they would not renew the contract of head softball coach Alisa Tasler.

"I'd like to thank Coach Tasler for all the time and effort she put into the Radford softball program," said Director of Athletics Robert Lineburg. "We wish her the best in her future endeavors."

Tasler has been RU's head coach the past three seasons tallying a 59-86 overall record.

She was initially hired in 2021 and became the 10th coach in RU's history and came to the New River Valley with a lot of clout.

Previously, she had coached at Concord University

for 10 seasons, where she had an overall record of 247-228. Her accomplishments at Concord include: 18 players earning all-conference honors, 5 all-region selections, An All-American in 2015, and Second place in the MEC South in 2019.

In 2019, she led the team to its most successful season in program history. The Mountain Lions made their first NCAA tournament appearance and finished second in the MEC South with a program-record 38 wins. The program also made the NCAA Tournament in 2015 where they would record their first-ever win in the national tournament with a 3-0 victory over West Chester.

Tasler also previously spent time as the head coach at Neosho Community College in Chanute, Kansas for six seasons before joining Concord. The Panthers won 54 percent of their games in the

demanding Jayhawk Conference in her final two seasons, including a 2011 squad loaded with 14 freshmen. Tasler's program also experienced excellence in the classroom, earning several Academic All-American honors.

Tasler also spent time as an assistant at Pittsburgh State for three seasons, increasing the team's win total every year from 18, to 28, then 44. Pittsburgh State ranked second in the nation in team GPA over that span as well.

A native of Newcastle, Oklahoma, Tasler played softball and basketball at Northern Oklahoma College. She set several school pitching records while helping the Northern Oklahoma College basketball team win back-to-back conference championships.

A national search for Radford's next softball coach will begin immediately.

Blacksburg baseball advances to region finals



In a Region 4D semifinal game, Blacksburg pitcher Mason Underwood faced off with E.C. Glass' Tyler Ruhl in a pitchers' duel. Blacksburg would win 3-2 on a walk-off RBI hit in the bottom of the Seventh inning.



Blacksburg third baseman Avan Morris makes the tag against an E.C. Glass base runner.



Blacksburg's Major Marshall rounds third to score the game winning run on an RBI hit by Brice Abbott against E.C. Glass.



After hitting a game winning RBI in the bottom of the 7th, Blacksburg's Brice Abbott (center) and his teammates celebrate a 3-2 win over E.C. Glass to advance to the Region 4D final and also secure a spot in the state tournament.

PHOTOS BY JON FLEMING

SMU transfer brings talent to RU



COURTESY IMAGE

Marty Gordon
NRVsports@ourvalley.org

Radford University has added another player via the transfer portal.

Basketball coach Darris Nichols has announced the addition of forward Xavier Foster. He will join the Highlanders for the 2024-25 season after attending Southern Methodist University.

"Xavier is a player with a lot of talent and we are excited to give him an opportunity to showcase it," said Nichols.

The Oskaloosa, Iowa native appeared

in four games with the Mustangs during the 2023-24 season. During his sophomore season at SMU, he played in 10 games, totaling four points and four rebounds.

Foster was named First Team All-State and was the 67th ranked player in the country by ESPN. Additionally, he was ranked 70th by 247sports and 64th by Rivals, making him a 4-star recruit.

Foster will be joined by fellow newcomers Jonas Sirtautas, Jarvis Moss, David Early, Zion Walker, Tony Felder, Brandon Maclin, Chace Davis and Isaiah Gaines.



PHOTO COURTESY OF RADFORD HIGH SCHOOL

Lydia Pratt (left) and Claire Fender are Region 2C Champions. The Radford pair beat Floyd 6-0 6-1.

Weekly reports: Radford duo region doubles champs

The Radford High School domination in state girls' tennis play continued this past week.

In individual play, Lydia Pratt won the regional individual title and then teamed with Claire Fender to take the doubles championship.

Meanwhile both the girls and boys took team titles to advance to the state semi-finals.

Christiansburg softball advances in region

Top-seeded Christiansburg defeated Pulaski 3-0 on Friday as they continue to play in the Class 3 softball post-season.

To start things off Kady Camper went yard and then did it again later to finish with two homeruns.

Tyleigh Dillard would follow suit and knock one over the fence. Freshman Aubrey Davis had a triple and the other hit came from Addison Reasor. On the mound, Camper had 14 strikeouts with no walks and just two hits.

Blacksburg soccer splits

One Blacksburg High School fell in the region playoffs this past week, while one moves on. The Blacksburg boys' is out, while the girls' advanced.

The Lady Bruins defeated Jefferson Forest in the first sudden death overtime period 1-0 on Friday night. With the win, Blacksburg advances to the regional final on Tuesday, where they will host James Wood High

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Radford girls advance in regional play



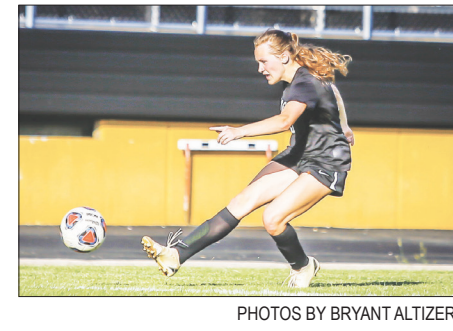
Reagan Bryant takes a shot on goal in Thursday's win over Liberty.



Lauren Owens passes to a teammate in Radford's 4-1 victory.



Camille Hidalgo boots the ball downfield to get the Bobcats' offense going.



Kendall Carpenter fires the ball toward the goal in the Bobcats' regional playoff win.

PHOTOS BY BRYANT ALTIZER

Radford

from page 7

School.

Claire Langlinais headed home a cross from Bella Garza for the win. Paige Miller recorded five saves to gather her 17th shutout of the season.

Blacksburg improves to 17-0-2 on the season and Jefferson Forest ends their season 17-2.

Meanwhile Jefferson Forest (18-0) took a 1-0 win over the Blacksburg boys.

The lone goal came on a scramble in the penalty area in the 49th minute by Maxwell Reed.

Tyler Beck had four saves for Jefferson Forest, and Blacksburg's Simon Pratt

had five saves. Blacksburg finishes 16-2-1 on the season.

Auburn rolls in baseball

Auburn (20-1) defeated Craig Co. 19-0 in the opening round of the Region C baseball tournament. Four pitchers combined to throw a five-inning no-hitter with Josh Givens picking up the win throwing two innings with four strikeouts. The Eagles scored 11 runs in the first and six in the second to put the game away.

Jared Lavergne had three hits and scored three runs, Zac McGlothlin had two hits and four RBIs and Matthew

Lessons

from page 4

these switches. Often Greg and I would say "Elmer, can't you make them learn to love avocado." But kind Elmer would always say he wanted "happy renters."

My all-time favorite story from these summers involved one of my first weeks at work. I was working in the "yard" at the main office site in Christiansburg (Bob was probably watching this activity from the AIR-CONDITIONED office - not that I was envious, Bob). It was unseasonably warm for mid-June then - 150 degrees (actually, probably only 90). I was asked to go to Blacksburg with a regular yard laborer - a pine knot of a man as they used to say. He was probably 60 and weighed 130 pounds, strong but wearied by many years of hard physical work. We were tasked with driving to Blacksburg and picking up a flatbed truck with about 30 large picture window frames on the back. Somehow my co-worker decided that I should be the one to drive the flatbed (tractor trailer size) back from Blacksburg. This truck had something called a split-shift axle (surely the work of the devil himself). I never got the truck out of first gear, not knowing that

you should start out in second gear. A trip that should have taken about 20 minutes became a day and a half. It was the Lewis and Clark Expedition of its time. Women with babies in strollers passed us. I think the foreman in the yard sent out a search party.

But the real fun began when we got back to the yard. My friend to this point had said only two words to me all day - "you drive" - despite my constant chatter. We then spent the next four or five hours climbing on the back of the truck, edging the frames to the edge of the bed and then jumping down and coaxing the things off the truck. We would then carry them about 30 yards into a warehouse for storage. I continued to try to engage my friend in conversation about the topics of the day - but nary a word from him until we got down to one last frame on the back of the truck.

Excited by this prospect, I cleverly said "well, there's the last one." My friend looked at me and said, "wish we'd found that son of a [gun] earlier."

Great life lessons.

Huckleberry

from page 1

the new water-resistant wheelchairs, and a plaque unveiling by Barber. Residents and community members were offered plenty of activities and recreational fun from 11 a.m. into the evening hours with the sun setting as residents played ultimate frisbee.

Huckleberry Park was built in the fall of 2023. The park sits on approximately 50 acres of land, including the popular Splash Pad where residents can be seen enjoying the water works all day long and the field complex where local sports groups come out to play and practice sports like soccer, frisbee, lacrosse, and hopefully a kickball team.

The water-resistant wheelchairs presented are part of Huckleberry Park's mission to provide an inclusive space for citizens to enjoy, giving everyone the opportunity to play and recreate regardless of ability. Epperley said accessibility and inclusivity are important, and the water-resistant wheelchairs are meant to be used in the splash pad area so that residents with disabilities do not have to risk water damage to their devices.

"In designing the park, we wanted a splash pad and the popularity of it has grown since the first day we opened," Epperley said. "With the splash pad, we also wanted to make sure we could provide the opportunity of enjoyment to individuals in mobility devices. Obviously, everyone deserves the opportunity to play in the splash pad and now, with these water-resistant devices, we are able to provide that opportunity to people for free. My hope is that with this inclusive play opportunity and equipment, it will allow everyone to enjoy this wonderful splash pad without

worry of water destruction to their own devices."

The Spring into Summer event had so much for residents to enjoy, from food trucks like Wang's Food, Bull n Bones and Aloha Eddies to yoga atop the hill and bingo in the pavilion. There was sliced watermelon for all to enjoy and dogs from the Montgomery County Animal Care and Adoption Center for the community to meet and play with. Later in the evening, the fields were open for ultimate frisbee, soccer and kickball. If those events were not speaking to you, the splash pad, the green spaces, the playground and so much more were abuzz with activity and opportunities to play. With this being the first Spring into Summer event, Epperley said the department cannot wait to see how it grows over the years. There are hopes for a petting zoo next year, and they hope to continue to provide a mix of structured recreational events as well as passive recreation during Spring into Summer events in the future.

"We are building something that is much deeper than just recreation," Epperley said. "We are building an environment that is inclusive and one that we can strive to make it an everyday occurrence to provide opportunities for individuals of all abilities. When we started this journey of developing the park, we had a vision of what we wanted. We wanted a balance of active and passive recreation. We wanted inclusive play. We wanted a balance of athletic events and games. We wanted locations that families and organizations could come and fellowship."

Altizer had two hits and two RBIs. Graham Alley, Landen Marrs, Talan Mower and Brady Hale also added two runs batted in each.

Auburn boys setup EM matchup

The Auburn boys soccer team was slated to play county-rival Eastern Montgomery Monday night with a trip to the state semis on the line. Auburn advanced after a 8-0 win over Narrows.

Jared Bradley scored three goals and had an assist in the match. The third and final goal set the AHS boys soccer single season goals record with 25 goals scored.

Goalkeeper Coahan Gordon picked up another shutout as Auburn is now 12-4-1 on the season.

EM alive in softball

Late last week, Eastern Montgomery defeated George Wythe Softball in a close game 3-2. The Mustangs took the lead for good when Alexis Artrip hit a three-run homer in the bottom of the fifth inning. Mary Miller was the winning pitcher.

With the win, Eastern Montgomery advances in region play.

Staff report

Murphy

from page 1

France in January 1945, before leading a successful counterattack while wounded and out of ammunition.

He died along with four others in heavy fog as his plane cut through the mountainous area of southwest Virginia. His plane crashed 14 nautical miles northwest of Roanoke at a spot now marked by a memorial along Brush Mountain near New Castle.

Organizers of the radio field day thought it fitting the two events could be linked together.

The hillside of Brush Mountain also presents itself as a great location for transmitting the radio frequencies where temporary antennas

will be set up along with several broadcast stations.

The idea of Ham radio is booming, spurred by COVID lockdowns. In the past three years, thousands of new ham operators were licensed to take to the airwaves.

The National Association for Amateur Radio (NAAR) says Amateur Radio is a popular hobby and service that brings people, electronics and communication together. People use ham radio to talk across town and even around the globe.

Typically, any ham operator must have a federal license to operate on public airwaves. Field days are held throughout the United States and Canada each year for a 24-hour period, where operators try to make contact with as many others as possible usually in remote locations.

In this case, the remote area of Brush Mountain. The local group hopes people can learn both about ham radio but also Audre Murphy.

Murphy will embark on a 21-year acting career

following his return from War. This included many business ventures including the trip that brought his plane to our area.

Reports were simple on that day in 1971, his private plane was dealing with rain, clouds, fog and zero visibility.

The twin engine Aero Commander 680 struck the side of the mountain. No one survived.

Three years after the crash, the Veterans of Foreign Wars placed a stone monument near the site of the crash, which can be approached by a short walk.

Directions: From Blacksburg: Take Main Street to Mount Tabor road (Rt. 624). Go 12 miles just past Rt. 650 turn left onto a gravel road (FS p188.1). Turn right at the top of Brush Mountain and continue for three miles.

The public can also observe the ham radio field day just down from the monument. For more information on the NRV Amateur Radio Club go to: <https://www.n4nr.org/>



The Christiansburg Parks and Recreation team next to new Huckleberry Park Plaque.



PHOTOS BY ANGELICA RAMOS

Brad Epperley and Parks and Recreation Team enjoying playing kickball with the community at Spring into Summer.

Library

from page 1

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Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library

Collaboration

from page 1

addressing pressing challenges as the region continues to grow and evolve, is at the forefront of working together. Virginia Tech and surrounding communities collaborate on a variety of local infrastructure interests, from transportation to solid waste. As a land-grant institution, the university is interconnected with the communities that it serves and partners in local efforts to enhance the region, such as passenger rail.

"The New River Valley Regional Commission is focused on the physical, social, and economic elements that create opportunities for our region, so I'm excited to be part of this joint visioning that reaches beyond infrastructure," said Executive Director Kevin Byrd of the New River Valley Regional Commission. "We have an opportunity to focus on our shared interests and the people in our communities at a time when the region is experiencing great momentum."

"The Town of Christiansburg welcomes the opportunity to engage in dialogue with Virginia Tech and our surrounding municipalities in order to help plan for our future needs in housing, retail, and transportation," said Christiansburg Mayor Mike Barber. "We recognize the economic impact of Virginia Tech as many students, staff, and faculty continue to shop, dine, and live within Christiansburg. As the university grows, so do the demands on infrastructure, transportation, schools, and housing. This partnership affords us the opportunity to plan and grow our future together. Virginia Tech is a major piece of our two towns and county economy. This partnership

will encourage collaboration and partnership as an independent and collective benefit."

As the initiative progresses, there will be opportunities for university and community leaders and residents of the New River Valley to reflect and provide feedback on ways the region is already thriving and identify ways to move forward together.

"The New River Valley has a proven track record of coming together to productively address and solve issues our community faces," said Montgomery County Board of Supervisors Chair Mary Biggs. "The county welcomes this new strategic initiative and values the community partnerships necessary to identify opportunities for collaboration as we address our needs and celebrate our successes."

Sands also noted that joining forces and collaborating where it makes sense is a win for the region.

"Together we can identify shared challenges and develop solutions based on the unique strengths and perspectives we each bring to the table," said Sands. "We can also explore opportunities where our aspirations align and develop a shared vision to support mutually beneficial outcomes."

With support from LINK Strategic Partners, the initiative will seek to establish a robust and sustainable community outreach process, including facilitation and stakeholder engagement. The work with LINK is anticipated to take one year and be completed in spring 2025.

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