



NRV offers several options for Independence Day festivities

RADFORD – America celebrates its independence tomorrow, Thursday, July 4, and there are several options for fun throughout the New River Valley.

From live music to festivals and, of course, fireworks displays, here are some of the options:

Blacksburg's Fourth of July parade, organized by the Mount Tabor Ruritan Club, "A Child's Fourth of July" parade starts at 2 p.m. on Eheart Street, runs through downtown on Main Street, and ends on Alumni Mall. The Town of Blacksburg will have music and fireworks at the Municipal Park, near the Rec. Center: Live music is 6 - 9:30 p.m. and fireworks at 9:30 p.m. (even if raining).

Christiansburg Fourth of July celebration includes a festival on Main Street from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. There will be live music performances by Lonesome Heart (10 a.m.), Solacousix (noon) and Isaac Hayden (2 p.m.) Food trucks and arts and crafts vendors will be along Main Street and a special kids' zone with Touch-A-Trucks will be available, too. Enjoy this free event with your family and friends all day, and at 9:15 p.m., go to the Uptown Mall or Walmart parking lots to watch the fireworks.

Radford's Spirit of America Celebration will be held at Bisset Park, 49 Berkley Williams Dr., Radford, 1 - 10 p.m. This is a free event. There will be a dog

show, kids' zone, vendors and food trucks, live music, including Cat 5, Motown Revue and The Embers, and fireworks.

Shawsville Ruritan Club's 4th of July Parade will begin at 4 p.m. After the parade, there will be a concert with Big Daddy Ray and special guest Jerry Wimmer before the Independence Day fireworks show. There will also be a car show by E&E Automotive and a cornhole tournament by Shawsville Ruritan Club during the in-field concert festivities. The Shawsville Ruritan's will host the 4th of July Cornhole Tournament, sponsored by First Bank and Trust, on Old Town Fields at 6 p.m.

Staff report



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE SHAWVILLE RURITAN CLUB

Fireworks displays will be offered by several New River Valley localities tomorrow, Thursday, July 4, including Shawsville, whose display is seen here.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MONTGOMERY MUSEUM

The Montgomery Museum Garden is one of the stops on this Saturday's New River Valley Garden Tour.

Annual New River Valley Garden Tour 2024 set for Saturday

The Annual New River Valley Garden Tour showcases innovative, specialty and simply beautiful private gardens in the New River Valley each July.

The event is sponsored by the Friends of the Library with the cooperation of the New River Valley Master Gardeners' Association and will take place this Saturday, July 6, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Tickets are \$15 and can be

purchased at public libraries in Blacksburg, Christiansburg, Floyd, and Shawsville or at any of the gardens on the day of the tour. Tickets are also now available online at mfrlfriends.org/wp/garden-tour/.

If you purchase a ticket online, please bring your receipt and exchange it for tickets at the first garden you visit. A printable map is also available online at mfrlfriends.org/wp/garden-tour/. Online ticket

sales will close at 2 p.m. on Friday July 5.

Gardens on the tour include: The Evans Garden, 8 Park St., Christiansburg. Musicians at the site include: 9 - 10:30 a.m.: Johanna Jones; 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.: Jenni Schoner and Rhea Epstein; and 2 - 4 p.m.: Rick Krajnyak.

The Keating Garden, 140

See Garden, page 8

Christiansburg, Montgomery County launch program to address new federal regulations from EPA

CHRISTIANSBURG – The Town of Christiansburg has launched a new initiative called the Service Line Discovery Program to proactively address the Lead and Copper Rule Revisions (LCRR) released by the U.S. Environmental

See EPA, page 8

Two arrested in death of child in Christiansburg



Heather Renee Bentley



Eric Raymond Thad Callis

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE TOWN OF CHRISTIANSBURG

CHRISTIANSBURG – Christiansburg Police have arrested two people in connection with the death of a young child on June 13.

On June 28, police arrested Heather Renee Bentley, 37, of Christiansburg and Eric Raymond Thad Callis, 39, of Christiansburg.

On Thursday, June 13, 2024, Christiansburg Police responded to a call for an unresponsive child on the 100 block of First St. SW. Upon arrival, officers found a two-

year-old girl dead. After an investigation into the death, Christiansburg Police charged both Bentley and Callis with felony child neglect. Callis is being held at Montgomery County Jail without bond. Bentley is being held at Western Virginia Regional Jail without bond. The investigation is ongoing and additional charges may be pending.

Town of Christiansburg

How to crush your summer reading goals

Summer reading lists. Poolside favorites. Best beach reads.

Reading often takes on a sunny spotlight during the summer months. School is out and some work and personal schedules may lend themselves to sitting down with a good book. So, what's the best way to tackle those reading lists?

First, remember that reading is like exercising a muscle, said Jared Gibbs, senior instructor and assistant chair of the English Department at Virginia Tech. It may take time to build a reading habit.

"If you are out of the habit of reading, don't start with 'Moby Dick,'" Gibbs said. "Instead, choose books that keep you reading. Don't worry about reading the right type of book, just read what interests you, what

keeps you coming back. And if you just can't get into a book, put it down and find a new one. There's no shame in leaving a book unread."

Gibbs offers more tips for sticking to a summer reading routine.

Do summer reading lists motivate people to read more?

Summer book lists are one way to organize that reading, though one doesn't have to be organized about it at all. I like going to the public library and wandering the fiction stacks, stumbling upon authors I'd meant to read but forgotten about or seeing what jumps out at me from the new arrivals shelves. You don't always have to approach reading methodically.

What are your best tips for crushing summer reading goals?



PHOTO BY PETER MEANS FOR VIRGINIA TECH

Summer is the perfect time to tackle the books on your reading list.

I don't set a goal for a specific number of books to read. Instead, I keep track of the books I have read, noting the title, author, and what I thought about each one. I don't always have much to say about a book, but sometimes I do. When the summer is over, I can look back on the list of books I have read and feel a sense of

accomplishment, no matter the number. If I start with a specific goal in mind — say, 15 books — that goal is likely to be too ambitious and it just sets me up for disappointment.

I also like looking back over a book list and seeing patterns, which helps me see more clearly

See Reading, page 8

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday, July 3:

Blacksburg Farmers Market

At Market Square Park, 100 Draper Rd SW, Blacksburg; 2 – 6 p.m. The Blacksburg Farmers Market is a local, family-friendly gathering place in downtown Blacksburg featuring farmers of locally grown produce and meats, alongside artisans of baked goods and handmade crafts. For more information, visit <http://blacksburgfarmersmarket.com>.

Market Square Jam

Blacksburg's Market Square Jam is an official Crooked Road affiliated venue that provides fun and entertainment on Wednesday evenings, June through September. The Jam takes place at Market Square Park from 7-9 p.m. For more information and a list of hosts, please visit blacksburg.gov/marketsquarejam.

Thursday, July 4:

Blacksburg Fourth of July

Fourth of July parade, organized by the Mount Tabor Ruritan Club, "A Child's Fourth of July" parade starts at 2 p.m. on Eheart Street, runs through downtown on Main Street, and ends on Alumni Mall. The Town of Blacksburg will have music and fireworks at the Municipal Park, near the Rec. Center: Live music 6 -9:30 p.m. and fireworks at 9:30 p.m. (even if raining).

Christiansburg Fourth of July Celebration

Come out and celebrate our nation's Independence Day by attending the festival on Main Street from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. There will be live music performances by Lonesome Heart (10 a.m.), Solacousix (noon) and Isaac Hayden (2 p.m.) Food trucks and arts and crafts vendors will be along Main Street and a special kids' zone with Touch-A-Trucks will be available, too. Enjoy this free event with your family and friends all day, and at 9:15 p.m., go to the Uptown Mall or Walmart parking lots to watch the fireworks!

Radford's Spirit of America Celebration

At Bisset Park, 49 Berkley Williams Dr., Radford, 1 – 10 p.m. This is a free event. Dog show, kids' zone, vendors and food trucks, live music, including Cat 5, Motown Revue and The Embers, and fireworks.

Shawsville 4th of July Parade and festival

Shawsville Ruritan Club's 4th of July Parade will begin at 4 p.m. After the parade, there will be a concert with Big Daddy Ray and special guest Jerry Wimmer before the Independence Day fireworks show. There will also be a car show by E&E Automotive and a cornhole tournament by Shawsville Ruritan Club during the in-field concert festivities. The Shawsville Ruritan's will host the 4th of July Cornhole Tournament, sponsored by First Bank and Trust, on Old Town Fields at 6 p.m.

Saturday, July 6:

Blacksburg Farmers Market

At Market Square Park, 100 Draper Rd SW, Blacksburg; 8 a.m. - 2 p.m. The Blacksburg Farmers

Market is a local, family-friendly gathering place in downtown Blacksburg featuring farmers of locally grown produce and meats, alongside artisans of baked goods and handmade crafts. For more information, visit <http://blacksburgfarmersmarket.com>.

Radford Farmer's Market

Every Saturday through October; 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. on the grounds of Glencoe Mansion, 600 Unruh Dr. Visit weekly for an ever-changing supply of homemade goodies, crafts, plants, meats, produce, and more.

Sunday, July 7:

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/.

Books & Brews: Tinkers

Join the Radford Public Library at Long Way Brewing, 1-2 p.m., for a book discussion on the Pulitzer Prize-winning book titled "Tinkers" by Paul Harding. Copies for future meetings are distributed at the prior meeting. Check out the book and join us for discussion at LWB, Second St., Radford. (Getting a free copy is not required to attend this event.) Book club participants receive 10% off their brews during this event.

Monday, July 8:

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.

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.

Tuesday, July 9:

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.

Gardening with Snow Ferrerica

Snow Ferrerica, a professional horticulturist from England, moved to the U.S. in the 1970s. She has led horticulture at top gardens and taught gardening courses throughout her career. Now retired in Abingdon, VA; she continues to share her expertise by teaching and planting. Come to Warm Hearth Village for talks on: 10:30 a.m. Plants for Birds, Butterflies and Pollinators; and 1:30 p.m. Garden Screens. Warm Hearth Village Center, 2387 Warm Hearth Dr., Blacksburg.

Thursday, July 11:

Thursday night indoor concerts

Two indoor concerts will be offered, including one community sing event. Concerts will be held at the Blacksburg Presbyterian Church, 701 Church St. SE. "Shakespeare's Music," July 11 - A concert of music inspired by Shakespeare. "A Treasury of English Music," July 25 - Music by Handel, Purcell, and others. This event is a community sing. Rehearsals began on July 1. Contact the Blacksburg Presbyterian Church to get involved.

Saturday, July 13:

Fish Fry

Mount Tabor Ruritan Club will hold its July Fish Fry, 5 to 7 p.m. at Slusser's Chapel Picnic Shelter, 1543 Mount Tabor Rd, Blacksburg. Serving fish, fries and slaw; homemade desserts; and beverages. Adults- \$12, children under 12- \$6, under 3-free, carry-outs- \$12. This month, the Panjammers Steel Drum Orchestra will be playing. Held rain or shine. Call or text 540-449-6178 for further information. On Facebook at MrTaborRuritan.

On-going:

Applications open for healthcare workshop for people with disabilities

Individuals with disabilities who live in Radford City and Floyd County can apply for a program presented by the New River Valley Disability Resource Center. "Improving Health Literacy Through Technology" is a program help people with disabilities gain better access to healthcare. Participants receive a free iPad after completing six weekly, one-hour workshops exploring how to use technology to take better control of health and social support needs. Workshops run Aug. 1 through Sept. 5. Applications available at www.nrvdc.org or by calling 540-266-1435 or email at outreach@nrvc.org, and at the Radford and Floyd libraries. The application deadline is Fri., July 12.

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.

Midnight is in search of a furever home with her BFF (Best Feline Friend) Haus. She and Haus enjoy sharing space together and currently do so at the Animal Care and Adoption Center. Both cats are FIV-positive.



Karen C is a pawsome dog! She's sweet and has a fun personality. She knows some basic commands but a little more training would be beneficial. She would likely do very well learning, given how treat-motivated she is.

OBITUARIES

Rummell, Geneva Valdine

Geneva Valdine Rummell, 76, of Radford, passed away Thursday, June 20, 2024. She was preceded in death by her parents, James Ray and Elizabeth Furrow Reed; son-in-law, Troy Shane Godsey; sister, Sylvia "Frankie" Odham; brother, Dower "Aubrey" Furrow; and her longtime companion, Walter Smith.

Survivors include her son, Tommy Rummell; daughter, Megan Godsey; grandchildren, Mikayla Jones, Brittany Francis



(Brian), Kenneth "Bubba" Rummell, and Hannah Jones; brothers and sister-in-law, Clyde C, Reed, and James S. Reed (Daphne);

and many other nieces, nephews, relatives and special friends.

The family received friends Tuesday, July 2, 2024, at the Mullins Funeral Home in Radford. Funeral services followed with Pastor Danny Newman officiating. Entombment will follow in Highland Memory Gardens Mausoleum in Dublin.

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

Holmes, Steven Daryl

Steven Daryl Holmes, 64, of Christiansburg passed away June 25, 2024.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Sandra Holmes; parents, Richard Taylor and Jenny Lee Brown; and son, Alex Holmes.

Steve is survived by his son, Eric Holmes and fiancée Crystal Brunner; grandchildren, Jeremiah Holmes and Madison Holmes; siblings, Charles Holmes (Missy), Nelson Taylor, Brenda Hall (Ronald),

Deborah Starkey; his dog Coco; special friend, Walter Hall; as well as many nieces and nephews.

Visitation was Monday, July 1, 2024 at Horne Funeral Home. Funeral Services followed in the chapel, with Pastor Marlin Reeves officiating. Interment followed in Roselawn Memorial Gardens. Arrangements with Horne Funeral Home.

Business REVIEW

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FISH DAY

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July Fourth celebrations coincide with troubling traffic safety statistics

RICHMOND—The first week of July is typically one of the busiest American travel periods of the year. It's also one of the deadliest.

Seven individuals lost their lives in Virginia traffic crashes during the two-day statistical counting period over last year's July Fourth holiday, according to data from the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles Highway Safety Office.

Virginia State Police urge motorists to practice safe, sober and distraction-free driving to avoid becoming a statistic in 2024.

"We are in the height of the summer travel season, so traffic safety should be of the utmost importance for all Virginians," said Col. Gary T. Settle, state police superintendent. "Excessive speeding, drivers and passengers failing to buckle up, and distracted driving continue to put all at risk traveling on our highways. We need Virginians to put forth the extra effort and comply with speed limits, buckle up and put the phone down, and avoid distractions."

During 2023's holiday period, state police investigated 377 total traffic crashes statewide. Troopers cited 2,051 speeders and 980 reckless drivers. They also issued 254 citations to individuals for failing to buckle up, and another 74 citations for improperly secured children.

Virginia troopers cited 124 drivers for being in violation of Virginia's "hands-free" law that took effect in July 2021. To limit distractions, motorists are advised

to program GPS and hands-free devices before departure.

"Pull over to a safe place when you are doing something that will take your eyes or mind off the road," said Virginia Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Co. senior actuarial manager David Tenenbaum. He serves as treasurer for DRIVE SMART Virginia, a nonprofit partner charged with raising awareness and changing behavior to improve roadway safety.

"When free of distractions, a driver can be prepared for the unpredictability of other motorists who may be distracted themselves," he said.

Arranging sober transportation is another preventable action motorists can take to keep themselves and others safe during the celebratory weekend.

Troopers arrested 36 drivers for operating under the influence of alcohol or drugs during the July Fourth holiday period last year. DRIVE SMART reported that 4,400 people were injured and 293 were killed as the result of alcohol-related traffic crashes in Virginia during all of 2023.

"With just a few drinks you could be too impaired to safely drive," Tenenbaum noted. "So, designate before you celebrate! Plan to use a rideshare app or designate a sober driver before kicking off the holiday weekend."

Virginia Farm Bureau

Gas prices up slightly over last week

Average gasoline prices in Virginia have risen 0.8 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$3.31/g today, according to GasBuddy's survey of 4,081 stations in Virginia. Prices in Virginia are 10.9 cents per gallon lower than a month ago and stand 0.7 cents per gallon higher than a year ago. The national average price of diesel has risen 1.4 cents in the last week and stands at \$3.77 per gallon.

According to GasBuddy price reports, the cheapest station in Virginia was priced at \$2.92/g yesterday while the most expensive was \$3.99/g, a difference of \$1.07/g. The lowest price in the state yesterday was \$2.92/g while the highest was \$3.99/g, a difference of \$1.07/g.

The national average price of gasoline has risen 5.0 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$3.46/g today. The national average is down 6.0 cents per gallon from a month ago and stands 5.4 cents per gallon lower than a year ago, according to GasBuddy data compiled from more than 11 million weekly price reports covering over 150,000 gas stations across the country.

Historical gasoline prices in Virginia and the national average going back ten years:

July 1, 2023: \$3.31/g (U.S. Average: \$3.52/g)
 July 1, 2022: \$4.64/g (U.S. Average: \$4.83/g)
 July 1, 2021: \$2.94/g (U.S. Average: \$3.12/g)
 July 1, 2020: \$1.99/g (U.S. Average: \$2.18/g)
 July 1, 2019: \$2.48/g (U.S. Average: \$2.72/g)
 July 1, 2018: \$2.61/g (U.S. Average:

\$2.84/g)
 July 1, 2017: \$2.04/g (U.S. Average: \$2.23/g)
 July 1, 2016: \$2.10/g (U.S. Average: \$2.27/g)
 July 1, 2015: \$2.57/g (U.S. Average: \$2.76/g)
 July 1, 2014: \$3.48/g (U.S. Average: \$3.67/g)

Neighboring areas and their current gas prices:

Roanoke- \$3.23/g, up 0.9 cents per gallon from last week's \$3.22/g.

Richmond- \$3.31/g, down 1.2 cents per gallon from last week's \$3.32/g.

West Virginia- \$3.37/g, up 3.0 cents per gallon from last week's \$3.34/g.

"As we approach July 4 later this week, motorists have seen the national average price of gasoline inch up ever so slightly for the third straight week," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy. "While the increases have been fairly tame, with oil continuing to hold above \$80 per barrel, we could continue to see the national average climb slightly. Other areas that see price cycling saw prices shoot up early in the week, but those areas are now starting to see prices fall back down. For many Americans hitting the road for the July 4 holiday, prices in most areas are very comparable to what we saw last July 4. However, with Hurricane Beryl now formed in the Caribbean, we're reminded that gas prices could experience some jolts in the second half of the summer should a storm threaten refining capacity in Texas or Louisiana."

GasBuddy

New traffic laws in effect as of July 1 DMV shares what you need to know

RICHMOND — Laws passed by the Virginia General Assembly set into motion changes for DMV customers effective July 1, 2024.

These changes and updates include the uninsured motor vehicle fee, permanent DMV-issued farm use placards, disabled parking placard duration and conversions of manufactured homes. Below are details on what is new and what customers need to do to prepare.

Uninsured Motor Vehicle Fee
 Effective July 1, 2024, the option to pay a fee rather than maintain insurance coverage for your vehicle will be eliminated, and DMV will no longer collect the Uninsured Motor Vehicle (UMV) fee. All vehicles registered in Virginia will be required to obtain an insurance policy that meets Virginia's liability limits. If Virginia DMV cannot verify the insurance information provided with the insurer, customers should be prepared to show proof of insurance when requested by the Virginia DMV. If you previously paid the UMV fee, you will need to obtain an insurance policy that meets or exceeds Virginia's liability limits.

Farm Use Placards
 Permanent DMV-issued farm placards are required for unregistered farm use panel trucks, pickup trucks and sport utility vehicles beginning July 1, 2024. This requirement is a result of legislation passed by the 2023 General Assembly. The DMV-issued placards replace, in most cases, the unofficial farm use tags typically purchased at a local store for use on these three types of unregistered farm vehicles. Placards cost \$15 and are good for the lifetime of the vehicle but are not transferable. An additional \$15 may be required if the owner does not already hold a title for the vehicle. Placard transactions

are not available online. Please bring the completed application to your local vehicle-only DMV Select or make an appointment to come to your local full-service customer service center. Use this chart to determine which farm use plates or placards are right for your vehicle or for more details on placards for unregistered farm vehicles, please visit our website.

Disabled Parking Placards
 As of July 1, 2024, there will not be a fee for disabled parking placards. Previously applicants paid a \$5 fee for a disabled parking placard. In addition, temporary placards now have a validity period of up to 12 months, if a medical provider certifies the temporary placard will be needed that long. This is double the previous maximum of 6 months. To apply for a disabled parking placard or license plate, you must submit a completed Disabled Parking Plates or Placard Application by mail or return it to your local vehicle-only DMV Select.

Manufactured Home Conversion
 Effective July 1, 2024, manufactured homeowners who are not listed on the title as the owner of the manufactured home will be able to submit a deed, court order or decree, or other legal document or record establishing that the manufactured home was transferred by the owner listed on the title to the current manufactured homeowner. If the owner listed on the title did not transfer ownership directly to the current owner, the current owner will need to provide records establishing a chain of successive ownership of the manufactured home. Owners will also need to submit documentation proving that any existing lien on the manufactured home has been released.

Department of Motor Vehicles

AARP Virginia fraud alert: Summertime door-to-door scams

Summer is officially here, which means door-to-door sales crews are too. But buyer beware because what they're selling isn't always legit.

These scams can show up in a variety of forms. Sometimes it's solar panels for your home at a can't-be-beaten price or it's a student selling magazine subscriptions to help fund their school program. Other times it's a construction worker who say they stopped by because they just happened to be working in the neighborhood. One

thing they all have in common is pressure to sign up or pay upfront.

Any "deal" that you have to sign up for right away or that you have to pay for in advance is likely no deal at all. Your best bet is to proactively seek out the services you need. And consider making a deal with yourself to never do a deal with someone before you've had time to do your research.

Be a fraud fighter! If you can spot a scam, you can stop a scam.

AARP Virginia

Leveling up cybersecurity through AI games

Playing games is a universal human experience. Every country and culture plays games unique and ubiquitous to its people, from the ancient Chinese game Go to modern computer games such as SimCity.

But games are more than a human hobby. They're a training ground for artificial intelligence (AI) to learn fundamental decision-making skills, handle uncertainty, and tackle complex interactions. AI's ability to tirelessly explore thousands of possibilities makes it the perfect tool for finding strategies humans might overlook.

Angelos Stavrou, professor in the Bradley Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering and founder of mobile security startup A2 Labs, plans to take AI training to the next level with a multi-agent training exerciser (MATrEx). Through this "matrix," AI faces a new opponent — other AI — but the implications go beyond a fun game.

"What we want to do is take a network, like the Virginia Tech network, copy it into a virtual environment, and then run simulations of attacks and defenses with logic generated by AI agents," said Stavrou, who's also entrepreneurship lead for the Virginia Tech Innovation Campus. "AI can play billions of game variations so they can actually characterize the cybersecurity start of the system, and decide which attacks or defenses are superior."

Playing the game
 In a world plagued by persistent and never-ending cyber threats, improving the security of computer networks by minimizing vulnerabilities is essential for protecting cell phones, the 5G wireless system, and the thousands of data centers in the United States. The process is called "network hardening." It's like adding strong locks to a home and reinforcing its walls.

MATrEx is a \$16 million project funded by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency as part of Cyber Agents for Testing and Learning Environments. It's a trailblazing way to train AI in a three-tiered gaming system — simulations, emulations, and a real network. Within the MATrEx, AI agents are grouped into two categories:

Red agents, that need to learn the gaming network and how best to break through system defenses for attacks

Blue agents that understand the network fully, including defense capabilities

The "games" are scenarios red and blue agents run against each other. Researchers will study what attacks break through, which defenses stop the attacks, what happens during a specific attack, and more.

"The idea is that we'll create a loop, so the AI can

play in a network that will start from a real network, then emulate it and simulate it," said Stavrou. "The real system is accurate, but it's slow. The simulation is fast, but it's not as accurate. So you need to play the game across all these environments, transferring knowledge from the real network to the simulated. Then you transfer strategies from the simulated back to the real network."

The distinctive combination of real, simulated, and emulated networks sets MATrEx apart from any other AI training system in the world. Each network provides a training ground — and researcher data set — for the AI.

Real network: This is the physical computer or wireless network used by people every day. It has actual switches, routers, cables and devices that connect together to transmit data. In MATrEx, this is a copy of a company's real network, provided and hosted by the company themselves.

Emulated network: This "digital twin" of the real network is a collection of virtual machines that run the actual operating system from the real network, and also mirrors its network configuration.

Simulated network: Also called a "state machine," this network captures the behaviors of the computers within a network, without having to utilize the network's real operating system. Because of that, actions can run much faster than in real time.

As the AI agents run games through each of these networks, the agents grow smarter and the networks increase in complexity, providing clients the ability to bulk up or re-strategize their real, non-MATrEx networks.

Securing the future

Security is an arms race, and the "good guys," like researchers in cybersecurity, aren't the only ones with access to AI agents.

"The work hackers do opens up many more possibilities for attack than it does defense, because attackers only have to succeed once, even if they fail 1,000 times," said Stavrou. "We're opening Pandora's box, but we're trying to understand the effects of AI in cybersecurity."

The end for MATrEx is to scientifically assess the red agent capabilities — what new strategies will they develop — and to teach the blue agents to outsmart their attackers. MATrEx will be designed for companies to run the program internally, so their protected data never leaves and all developed agent strategies stay contained. It's the first training environment that will not only test on traditional network-connected servers, but also 5G.

"There has never been a 5G system connected to a cybersecurity testbed with this level of emulation," said Stavrou. "5G networks are fairly new, and



PHOTO BY CRAIG NEWCOMB FOR VIRGINIA TECH

As a professor in the Bradley Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering and faculty at the Innovation Campus, Angelos Stavrou is changing the face of cybersecurity with AI training games.

they're usually enclosed within big companies. This will allow us to see what will happen when AI agents attack or defend that type of network and connectivity."

Adam Gorski installs CCI xG Testbed components while Virginia Tech provides scientific infrastructure and a connection to the Commonwealth Cyber Initiative xG testbed in Arlington, four additional partners will support the MATrEx through large-scale network simulation and emulation, cyber range setup, agent learning optimization, management, and more:

A2 Labs, formerly Kryptowire Labs
 Scientific Research Corporation
 Raytheon Technologies
 PUNCH Cyber Analytics Group

Over the next four years of the project, Stavrou is looking for more than AI to play games; MATrEx will serve as a cyber training ground where humans can play, train, and learn about cybersecurity with a trained red agent built to win the game.

He also wants to build out an educational component that will support hands-on student learning and the future of the Innovation Campus.

"The goal of this project isn't just to create a company, but to develop a company-university collaboration," said Stavrou. "On the Innovation Campus, we'd like to have a space where we can showcase our work, a one-of-a-kind teaching lab for AI, for students to create projects. Really, we want it to be anything you can imagine."

Virginia Tech

OPINION

Recalling the July 4th celebrations of my youth

With Independence Day upon us tomorrow, I decided to reflect on the 4ths of my youth growing up in Christiansburg. I don't remember parades or speeches or community gatherings or fireworks displays, except in our backyard. Perhaps these events took place somewhere in Christiansburg or surrounds, but in my memory the 4th was quiet in the 1960's, exciting in small spurts, but more of a family day that mainly stood out to me because my dad didn't go to work. And this just didn't happen. Ever.

During this time, my dad was allotted two weeks of vacation as Superintendent of Schools. He usually took three days, at most four, depending on how long our trip to Myrtle Beach was. As I said in a recent column, my dad took his responsibilities seriously, particularly the functioning of the Montgomery County schools. I never remember him home during the week unless it was a holiday and even then he worked some of those. And he never left work early. On call, available to respond to emergencies, parents, teachers, bus drivers.

But he was always home on the 4th. The day for him sometimes included early golf with his pals but he was usually home by noon. Some years he might paint a room in the house during the morning if needed. The "big event" of the day involved an afternoon trip by my dad and me to the icehouse located next to Jabe Thomas' Gulf Station near the high school, where we would buy the biggest watermelon we could find. I have great memories of that trip because it provided time with my dad alone and a brief respite from the heat.

At that time most houses in Christiansburg, including ours, were not air-conditioned, and air-conditioned cars were unheard of. Only rich people up north had those. You used a hand crank to roll down your windows and let the "air" in. So going in this icehouse to look for the biggest watermelon we could find was needed relief from what was often the hottest day of the year.

We would eventually chill to the point that we were ready to pick out our prize and lug it to the car and drive home. We would then sit on the back porch and spit seeds into the yard, sometimes with my aunts and cousins around, sometimes just my parents and me. I wasn't even all that fond of watermelon but always looked forward to the tradition of the icehouse trip.

Another good memory of the day was of several of the fathers in our wonderful neighborhood sitting in the



Evans "Buddy" King

Columnist

yard next door and drinking Old Milwaukee, listening to the NASCAR race on the radio. The Firecracker 400 from Daytona I recall. I can still hear the broadcast - "Is that lap 166 or 167 they just completed Bob?"

My father might go over for a visit, but he was neither a beer drinker nor a NASCAR fan, so his visit was usually short. I still have trouble imagining anything less enticing to me in the world of sports than NASCAR on the radio, unless it would be being forced to watch soccer in any fashion.

The evening was what my dad lived for on the 4th - for the sun to drop. It was a 4th of July Griswold moment for him. He would go to his special hiding spot and drag out the stash of Roman Candles and other firecrackers that we had bought the year before at Myrtle Beach (you couldn't buy them in Virginia). He was convinced that I loved the "display" he would put on. He thought that 4th of July fireworks were second only to Christmas morning in my life. He was wrong.

I have had two distinct periods of my life with fireworks. Those very early years, when I was terrified that my dad was going to blow himself (and perhaps my Mom and me as well) to smithereens, when I would close my eyes and pray for a happy ending, and then the rest of my life, indifference and even dread because of the terrifying effect on my pets. Not a big fan in other words. I hope my dad went to his grave without ever realizing what a wimp I was when it came to fireworks. Just never thought sticking a match to something containing gun powder that you were holding in your hand was a good idea.

There are a few highlights that stand out in my memories of those early 4ths though. One year cousin Bobby, a good athlete and an excellent diver, and then a lifeguard at Round Meadow Country Club, entered the diving competition at the Club. He completed a beautiful flip, came down sitting on the front of the board, and then completed his dive into the pool. But the judges awarded first prize to some five-year-old twit from Radford who did a cannonball. A cannonball! It was the height of unfairness, but if the kid had been

from Christiansburg my family would have thought it was cute.

I also remember a special 4th when the summer league baseball team I played on was scheduled for a double-header at a park in Radford as the featured event of a day-long celebration. We played in something called the Southwest League with teams in Christiansburg, Radford, Wyrtheville and other towns around the New River Valley. We were 15-17 years of age and competed against many of the same guys we were playing football against in the fall. Spirited contests in other words. Particularly between Christiansburg and Radford.

I think I was 15. I was our second baseman and NOT a good hitter but was a decent fielder and a great base runner. At least in my mind. About the third or fourth inning of the first game, I decided to try to score from second base when Radford tried an around the horn (third to second to first) double play. I made it into home safely, but, shamefully looking back, I had my Pete Rose/Ray Fosse moment (for non-baseball fans Pete blind-sided Ray at home plate in the All-Star game one year, effectively ruining Ray's career). The Radford catcher was waiting for the throw, blocking the plate (which you are no longer allowed to do), not looking up the baseline at all towards me. I confused my sports and decided to put my shoulder into him going full speed, not making either of us feel very good afterwards, but successfully removing him from the plate. The benches emptied, the players swore at each other, and the coaches exchanged snarls.

An inning or two later, one of our guys tried to reach third on a close play. Guys on that team with me will probably remember who our guy was. Suffice it to say that he had "anger issues." The Radford third baseman was applying the tag when our guy came up out of his slide with a solid punch to the third baseman's jaw. Again, the benches emptied, the players swore and the coaches exchanged snarls. And the coaches decided that nothing good would come from continuing the game or playing two or having the two teams in the same town. So, we loaded in our cars and headed home, ending by 2 p.m. the featured event of the day.

The Radford baseball game was the rarity of my 4ths as a youth growing up in C'burg in the 60's. It was a big-time event, a 4th of July double-header just like the major leaguers played back then. Unfortunately I played a pivotal role in ruining the day. I vaguely remember my dad not being happy about the fighting, but he did say I "took a good shot at the guy" and "he didn't have the ball and shouldn't have been blocking the plate".

But most of my 4th's back then were quiet, uneventful, boring.

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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 supports risk-limiting audits of elections

One of the important roles Virginia's Department of Elections conducts - in concert with local registrars - is risk-limiting audits of election results. A risk-limiting audit involves the selection of a random number of random ballots from precincts all over Virginia, and comparing them with the reported result. The audit is not a full recount or manual verification of all ballots. It is a hand verification of ballots until there is strong statistical evidence that the reported outcome is the actual outcome. Even though Virginia conducted a risk limiting audit in the wake of the 2020 presidential election, General Assembly democrats have forced language into the state budget blocking such an audit from taking place after the 2024 election.

The supposed reason for the lack of a risk-limiting audit after this year's presidential election is that the potential for legal disputes over presidential electors could prevent Virginia's electoral votes from being counted. Federal law requires the



Delegate Jason Ballard

Virginia General Assembly

courts to move as quickly as possible to adjudicate disputes over electors; nonetheless, missing the December 11 deadline for reporting Virginia's chosen electors could prevent Virginia's 13 electoral votes from being counted and reported to the Archivist of the United States. Regardless of the practicalities of timing, this budget language inserted by House Democrats does nothing to help instill a sense of trust in the electoral process. If they are serious about restoring this trust, democrats should work to expedite the audit process, not cut it out entirely.

Closer elections require the examination of more ballots - such that in some cases, it is simpler to conduct a full manual recount of the election. Generally, Virginia

elections are among the best run in the nation. Also, fraud typically occurs in terms of single votes, not large numbers of election-swaying ballots, but it certainly can occur. Fortunately, we employ a system in which both partisan and unaffiliated observers are allowed access to polling locations to ensure elections are conducted in a fair manner. Nonetheless, trust and public confidence are the foundation of our system of governance. Republicans have been working continuously to restore that trust, and we will continue to do so.

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

Grid for a crossword puzzle with numbered squares from 1 to 70.

- CLUES ACROSS
1. Plant of the mint family
7. Hand tool
13. Made of the color of gold
14. A volume of several novels
16. Type of degree
17. Good job!
19. Seventh tone in major scale
20. Fevers
22. One's mother
23. Fertile desert spots
25. Large integers
26. Plate for Eucharist
28. Tennis matches have them
29. Peyton's little brother
30. Monetary unit of N. Korea
31. Head movement
33. Twelve
34. Renaissance musical instrument
36. Behavior showing high moral standards
38. Letter of the Hebrew alphabet
40. Notes to be sung
41. Women's garment
43. Coarsely ground corn
44. One point south of due east
45. A way to deplete
47. Rough, prickly covering of a seed
48. LA hoopster, but not a Laker
51. Hindquarters
53. Franz van __, German diplomat
55. Liquid body substances
56. Rhythmic patterns
58. A beaver might build one
59. Police officer's tool
60. Indicates who you are
61. Pinwheel
64. Exist
65. Ornamental molding
67. Closes again
69. Verses
70. Come into view
CLUES DOWN
1. Short stick used as a weapon
2. An alternative
3. Laws
4. Sense organs
5. One from Utah
6. Mariner
7. People in charge of cattle
8. Health insurance organization
9. Ornamental box
10. Forest-dwelling deer
11. One quintillion bytes (abbr.)
12. Atomic #71
13. Become less intense
15. Towards
18. Body ornament (slang)
21. Applicable to all cases
24. Multiplied by 6
26. Afghanistan monetary unit
27. Calendar month
30. Cena and Lennon are two
32. Monetary unit of Serbia
35. First time on the market
37. Georgia rockers
38. Free from contamination
39. Coastal region of Canada
42. Clothing retailer
43. It rises and sets
46. Fathers
47. Stain with mud
49. Suitable for crops
50. Feels concern for
52. Orange-brown
54. Buddy
55. Late sportscaster Craig
57. Used to align parts
59. Wake up
62. Solid water
63. Semiprecious stone
66. Atomic #45
68. Top lawyer



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MONTGOMERY SPORTS

Hagan nominated for ESPY award

Reigning NHRA Funny Car world champion Matt Hagan has been nominated for the 2024 ESPYS Best Driver Award for his stellar performance during a standout 2023 NHRA championship season.

Reigning NHRA Funny Car world champion Matt Hagan has been nominated for the 2024 ESPYS Best Driver Award for his stellar performance during a standout 2023 NHRA championship season.

Hagan picked up his fourth career title and the first-ever NHRA world championship for Tony Stewart Racing in his 11,000-horsepower TSR Direct Connection Dodge//SRT Hellcat.

This is the first time Hagan has been nominated for the illustrious Best Driver Award, as Hagan entered select Funny Car company in 2023 with his fourth world title. With the championship, Hagan joined legends John Force, Kenny Bernstein, and Don Prudhomme as the only Funny Car drivers in NHRA history with four or more world titles.

"I'm blown away to be nominated for the ESPYS,"

Hagan said. "It just goes to show what you can do when you're surrounded by a great group of guys who are motivated and work hard. It takes a small army to do what we do, and it does take everyone. It's a huge opportunity, but it's not just me, it's the entire team."

"It's a humbling sport, and it's a humbling car to drive, and this is a group that just works hard. We're thankful for all the fans who support us, and hopefully, they'll go out and vote for us, but at the end of the day, I'm just very honored to be nominated."

Voting is open until 5 p.m. ET Thursday, July 11, three hours before the ESPYS will air at 8 p.m. ET on ABC.

Hagan enjoyed an incredible 2023 season in the Funny Car ranks, picking up six victories and advancing to eight final rounds in the loaded category. He held the points lead for the bulk of the regular season and then got hot at a key time in the Countdown to the Championship, winning back-to-back playoff races in St. Louis and Dallas to take

the points lead for good. Other highlights of his banner title season included victories in Gainesville, Pomona 1, and Denver, as well as qualifying No. 1 at Bandimere Speedway. This year, Hagan recorded another milestone, earning his 50th career Funny Car win at the four-wide race in Charlotte, joining Force, Ron Capps, and Robert Hight as the only drivers in Funny Car history with 50 or more wins. Hagan and Force are the only Funny Car drivers with four or more world titles and 50 or more wins. Hagan also earned his 51st career victory last month in Chicago and is currently third in points.

Joining Hagan on the ESPY Best Driver ballot is NASCAR's Ryan Blaney, IndyCar's Alex Palou, and Formula One's Max Verstappen.

To vote for Hagan go to: https://www.espn.com/espys/story/_/page/voting/caitlin-clark-shoheitani-more-vote-2024-espys-winners.

NHRA

Duo wins bocce ball tournament



PHOTO COURTESY OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY CHAMBER

The Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce Foundation held its annual Bocce Ball tournament this past week. Movement Mortgage took first place. Pictured are the winners: Sean Allen (left) Loan Officer with Movement Mortgage, and James Craighead (right) a Realtor at RE/Max8. The three other finalist teams were New River Radio Group, First Community Bank and The Hughes Educational Center. The event raises money for the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce Foundation, which provides opportunities for scholarships to various professional development opportunities, and a Teacher of the Year fund through the Foundation provides a \$1,000 check to the Montgomery County Public Schools annual Teacher of the Year recipient.

Sports news: Local radio station out as flagship

With changes to the sports marketing program at Virginia Tech, the New River Valley radio group seems to be out as the flagship station for Virginia Tech athletics.

The 105.3 FM station has been the flagship for football and men's basketball for the past 15 years, but as of this past week, management says they have been told they would not be when the fall hits this year.

Former Hokie signs with Cavs

Virginia Tech's Hunter Cattoor signed an NBA Summer League deal with the Cleveland Cavaliers Friday, creating an opportunity for him to continue playing professionally.

Cattoor cemented his legacy as one of the Hokie greats by guiding Tech to its first-ever ACC title in 2022, earning ACC Tournament MVP honors following a 31-point outburst in the championship game against Duke.

The Orlando, Fla., native was an elite sharpshooter in his time in Blacksburg, drilling a program-record 332 career threes, which also ranks seventh in ACC history. He averaged a career-best 13.5 points per game in his fifth year in the maroon and orange, eclipsing the 1,500 career point plateau.

Cattoor also played in a program-record 151 career games while knocking down 41.5% from beyond the arc.

The NBA 2K25 Summer League starts July 12.

Stangle joins volleyball team

Virginia Tech volleyball head coach Marci Byers tabbed Haley Stangle as the program's director of operations Tuesday. Stangle has spent the last two years at the University of Arkansas as a graduate assistant – operations for their volleyball program.

She will be involved in the day-to-day operations of the program, including management of the program's budget and coordination of team travel.

At Arkansas she orchestrated travel logistics, facilitated practice schedules, collaborated with the staff on team budget, provided administrative support and liaised with groups such as nutrition to help fuel the student-athletes.

Stangle also has experience as a marketing and communications intern at Texas A&M where she worked in the 12th Man Foundation. There, she was responsible for the creation and execution of HTML emails through Eloqua while also producing content for social media platforms.

She holds a bachelor's degree in sport management from Texas Tech and a master's degree in recreation and sports management from Arkansas.

Staff report



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROANOKE COLLEGE ATHLETICS

Hand joins Roanoke wrestling program

The Roanoke College wrestling team announced three coaching moves Friday afternoon.

Assistant coach Blake Rosenbaum was elevated to Associate Head Coach and Recruiting Coordinator and two new additions joined the staff. Collin Gerardi is the new assistant coach and director of training and Matt Hand will serve as Head Regional Training Center Coach.

Rosenbaum has been with the program since the start, serving as a volunteer assistant in 2020-2021 and then as head assistant coach from 2021-24. He has coached three Maroon All Americans and was named the Southeast Regional Assistant Coach of the Year this winter.

"Blake has been here since the beginning and helped shape our culture and program," said head coach Nate Yetzer. "I can't think of a more deserving person being elevated to this position. From his days as an athlete to his time as a coach at Ferrum College and now here at Roanoke, I am so proud to call Blake a friend and colleague. He has proven himself as one of the top recruiters in the country the last few years and has continued to be someone that I lean on heavily. I'm very happy for Blake."

Gerardi, a former wrestler at Virginia Tech, is a two-time Division 1 National Qualifier. Gerardi was a U23 USA Wrestling Freestyle All American and a two-time VHSL State Champion. Also, a NHSCA Senior National Champion,

he is a former assistant at Machine Shed Wrestling Club.

"I have known Collin for a number of years and one thing that has always stood out to me is his positive attitude and work ethic," said Yetzer. "These two things really stood out during the interview process. When we look at bringing people into our program, we always look what kind of person are they. You won't find many as genuine as Collin. His experience, knowledge, and passion for the sport of wrestling will help him mold our young men and I'm excited to work with him."

Hand of Christiansburg is a former wrestler at the University of Iowa and was part of the 1996-2000 National Championship Teams. He was also an Iowa State Champion. Hand served as the head coach at VA Elite from 2017-2022 and at Machine Shed from 2022-24. He guided his squads to VAWA Team Titles in 2021, 2023 & 2024 and coached several VAWA and VHSL Champs.

"I am so fired up to add coach Matt Hand onto the staff to head up our Regional Training Center," said Yetzer. "The club deserves someone that will invest themselves fully and Matt is that guy. I was bummed we did not get him last year, but finally glad to have him guide our RTC program. The RTC has been growing the last few years and is ready to take off to the next level. Matt will be the guy to do it."

Roanoke College Wrestling

Area swimmers make a splash at SVSL competition



Jasmine Leighton swims in the girls 11-12 50-yard backstroke for Blacksburg Country Club during a Southwest Virginia Swim League week four meet.



PHOTOS BY JON FLEMING

NRV Stingrays' Crosby Grigg leads the field in the boys 11-12 50-yard backstroke during Thursday's SVSL meet.

SVSL from page 7



Mia Taylor takes a peek at the competition as she swims in the girls 7-8 25-yard butterfly for the NRV Stingrays.



PHOTOS BY JON FLEMING

NRV Stingrays' Wynslow Grigg swims in the girls 9-10 50-yard butterfly at Thursday's meet at the Blacksburg Country Club.

VT Helmet Lab expands beyond sports



PHOTO BY AMBER YOST FOR VIRGINIA TECH

Barry Miller, director of business and outreach development in the Virginia Tech Helmet Lab, adjusts a safety helmet on a test rig.

Thirteen years after releasing the first independent safety ratings for varsity football helmets, the Virginia Tech Helmet Lab is expanding beyond the field of athletics.

This summer, researchers will begin an 18-month study to develop the first ratings system for safety helmets, also commonly referred to as hard hats or construction helmets.

The lab has conducted injury biomechanics research outside sports before, including its research on toy product safety and work with the Virginia Tech Mid-Atlantic Aviation Partnership on drone impact testing for operations over people.

"Of all industries, construction has the most workplace fatalities," said Steve Rowson, the lab's director. "Identifying, improving, and implementing better head protection could be the difference between life and death for some of these accidents."

From 2000-08, the construction industry was responsible for more traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) than any other industry, according to an article published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine. These injury scenarios cause high head injury risk from the high speeds involved.

In this project, researchers will study head impact and concussion risk in a work site environment with the following objectives:

Characterize the conditions associated with head impacts in construction through analysis of accident reports and surveillance video.

Generalize the real-world loading conditions observed in the reconstructions to controlled laboratory test systems.

Test commercially available safety

helmets and publicly release data on the Virginia Tech Helmet Ratings website.

The lab will also use its Summation of Tests for the Analysis of Risk (STAR) model to combine data from multiple test sites and compute an overall performance score representative of expected real-world injury rates. The STAR score is calculated based on a helmet's performance in a series of impact tests and assigned a number of stars between one and five to categorize impact performance.

This innovative work has been propelled forward by a joint commitment of funding and guidance from the John R. Gentile Foundation, ELECTRI International, the American Society of Concrete Contractors, and the Association of Union Constructors. "We are honored to support research that will improve the safety of the men and women building our nation by focusing on the industry-specific factors that contribute to head injuries," Raffi Elchemmas of the Mechanical Contractors Association of America, said on behalf of the four construction organizations.

The lab is scheduled to complete the project by August 2025.

"We hope this work leads to fewer disabling or fatal head injuries resulting from accidents by providing stakeholders with data to make informed decisions on equipping the workers with the most effective personal protective equipment," Rowson said.

Lexi Clatterbuck, Virginia Tech

Reading from page 1

my own reading habits. When did I read many books quickly? When did I take longer to finish a book? What was happening to allow me to read faster or that forced me to read at a slower pace? My experience has been that this approach helps me to both read more and feel more satisfied with the reading that I do.

How should reading plans be adjusted while on vacation?

A vacation period can be a great time to do a lot of reading all at once. The key is to set realistic expectations. Is your vacation's purpose to read or are you traveling or taking time off work to do other things? A family trip to France is probably not the type of vacation that will include much reading time.

If you are set on reading a certain number of books while on vacation,

then reading should be the main purpose of that vacation — something like a reading retreat. Such a vacation may not appeal to everyone, but it's a great way to read many books in a short time. It also helps to choose a location with poor internet and cell service, cutting down on potential distractions.

Some people are in the middle of reading several books at one time, while others may only read one at a time. What is the best strategy?

There's no one way to be a reader. And one's reading habits are likely to change throughout the year. There are times when I'm working on three or four books at once. More often, though, I'm just reading two at a time — a more serious or challenging book during the day, and something lighter that I read to relax before bed.

Virginia Tech

Garden from page 1

Morning Mist Dr., Christiansburg. Musicians: 10 – 11 a.m.: Rene Rippe; 12 – 2 p.m.: Lynn Margheim and Beth Caba; and 2:30 – 3:30 p.m. Leigh Powell.

The Knowlton Garden, 3257 Mudpike Rd., Christiansburg. Musicians: 9 – 11 a.m.: Bud Bennett; and 12 – 1:30 p.m.: Michelle King and Phillip Hernandez.

The McEwen Garden, 425 Diamond Crest, Christiansburg. Musicians: 9 – 11:30 a.m.: Students of Justin Craig; 12 – 1:30 p.m.: Simple Gifts of the Blue Ridge; and 2:30 – 4 p.m.: Grandin Village Strings

The Montgomery Museum Garden, 300 Pepper St., Christiansburg.

Musicians: 9 – 9:45 a.m.: Eric Midkiff and Mary Louise Hallauer; 9:45 – 10:30 a.m.: Midkiff Trio (Eric Midkiff, Luke Lester, Paul Deck); 10:30 a.m. -12:30 p.m.: Paul Deck and Alan Munshower; and 2:30 – 4:30 p.m.: Julia Fallon and Cyndy Graham.

The Moore Garden, 840 Murray St., Christiansburg. Musicians: 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.: Aline de Souza

The Vincenti Garden, 208 South Franklin St., Christiansburg. Musicians: 9:30 – 11 a.m.: Dogwood Recorders and 11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.: Renate Kehlenbeke.

Staff report

EPA from page 1

Protection Agency (EPA).

The LCRR requires all utilities with water distribution systems in the U.S. to develop a service line material inventory and make it publicly available. The deadline for the inventory submission is Oct. 16, 2024.

There are currently no known lead service lines in the town's distribution system. Virginia plumbing code prohibited the use of lead as a water service line material in 1979, making the likelihood of finding lead piping low.

While records do not show any known lead service lines in the town's system, there are some service lines that have unknown materials. The town is actively working to verify unknown service lines through a thorough records review and field verifications for inclusion in the inventory.

Also, according to information released by the county, Montgomery County's water quality continuously exceeds federal and state standards and lead levels are well below regulatory requirements per consistent and ongoing water sample testing.

Montgomery County PSA customers is safe to drink. The water is also safe bathe in.

At this time, service line inventory records show there are no known lead service lines in the towns' or county's water system. Lead service lines have been prohibited in Virginia plumbing code since 1979. As of July 1, 2024, Montgomery County has 3,398 active PSA water customers. PSA staff members are currently compiling an inventory of lines and have verified 1,466 lead-free lines (as of July 1, 2024).

The PSA has 1,932 lines left to be confirmed as lead-free. On the inventory list, these remaining 1,932 water lines are referred to as "unknowns." Staff is working to assess these remaining lines and anticipate completion of this project by the October 16, 2024, deadline.

A service line is the underground pipe that connects a home to the public water main, delivering water to faucets, taps, bathtubs, and other water fixtures. It can typically be seen where it enters a home in the basement or crawl space. The service line is divided into two portions: the utility-owned side up to the water meter and the customer-owned section from the water meter to the home.

"Our commitment to water quality and public safety underlies our commitment to the Service Line Discovery Program and complying with these new federal regulations," said Christiansburg Public Works Director Jim Lancianese. "While we

don't anticipate finding lead service lines in our distribution system, we are carrying out a thorough verification process to confirm the absence of lead."

Customers will generally not be impacted by the Service Line Discovery Program; however, property owners with an unknown service line may receive communications notifying them of a service line verification taking place on their property, outside near the water meter. Customers do not have to be home for the inspection, and there will be minimal disturbance to private property.

"The Service Line Discovery Program is a proactive step to address the EPA revisions to the Lead and Copper Rule," said Lancianese. "The town's goal is to ensure transparency and maintain our water quality by developing a comprehensive service line material inventory."

The Service Line Discovery Program webpage includes resources for Christiansburg customers who want to learn more, including frequently asked questions and information about the LCRR. Results of the service line inventory will be posted on the webpage as the program progresses.

The program webpage can be found at www.Christiansburg.org/SLDiscovery. For further questions, customers can email Justin Shepherd at jshepherd@christiansburg.org, or call at 540-382-1151 ex.6017.

Town of Christiansburg/Montgomery County

Advertisement for Anderson Audiology Hearing Aid Sales & Service, Inc. featuring photos of staff and hearing aid technology.

Crossword Answers grid with solutions for various words.