

News Messenger

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Blacksburg

Christiansburg

Saturday, September 7, 2024

www.montcova.com

USPS 016-490

\$1.00

Task force releases information on Caldwell Fields case

Marty Gordon
NRVsports@ourvalley.org

Just a week after extra media coverage to the anniversary of the tragic murder of two Virginia Tech students, law enforcement officials have released a statement on the ongoing case.

A federal, state and local task force says they continue to pursue leads on the Aug. 27, 2009, murder of Heidi Childs and David Metzler.

The two were found murdered at Caldwell Fields, a Jefferson National Forest rural recreation area

located within Montgomery County, for which there is concurrent state and federal jurisdiction. Caldwell Fields is located within Montgomery County near the Craig County line on Route 621 – Upper Craig’s Creek Road.

The criminal investigation determined the couple was killed in the evening hours the previous day, Wednesday, Aug. 26, 2009, and that both victims were shot to death.

In a statement, law enforcement said they are working diligently toward a resolution in this case want to reassure the families and friends of Childs and

Metzler, as well as the affected communities, that even after 15 years a robust team is pursuing investigative steps on a weekly, if not daily basis.

That team also is constantly evaluating new and emerging technologies to leverage scientific advances.

“We intend to resolve this case,” said Special Agent Scott Mitchell of the Virginia State Police. “That means that we intend to identify and prosecute the person responsible for these brutal murders.”

“The investigative team believes there are people with relevant knowledge about what happened the night David and Heidi were murdered who have not yet come forward.

“There are relatives or associates of the offender who have learned concerning things in the intervening years or have held onto secrets all this time.”

Mitchell feels the odds are very high that the offender has put his family and friends – through no fault of their own – in the awful position of knowing things about that night.

“We don’t want those individuals to be reluctant to come forward,” he said.

There is a \$100,000 reward for any tips that lead to an arrest. If you have any information you would like to share you can call Virginia State Police at 540-375-9589.

ReNew the New announces 23rd annual fall river cleanup

ReNew The New’s Fall into the New, end-of-summer river cleanup is scheduled for Saturday, Sept. 14, 2024.

Volunteers and participants will gather by 8:30 a.m. at sites in Blacksburg and the City of Radford, as well as in Giles and Pulaski counties.

All interested volunteers and supporters are encouraged to sign up online at renewthenew.org.

Participants will be provided with canoes (first come, first served), trash bags and gloves. Volunteers can bring their own water vessels (kayaks, canoes, or rafts). Those who are bringing their own boats need to call ahead for instructions on drop off and pick up areas. There will be an on-land option as well. Boaters will begin their floats with their captains after the safety meeting. Wear sunblock, river shoes, and be ready to work and get wet!

Lunch and a t-shirt are provided to all volunteers around noon as a thank you.

The continued development of partnerships allows participants along the New River to support this effort. The success

ReNew the New SATURDAY SEPT. 14TH
2024 FALL INTO THE NEW

September 14th, 2024, Volunteers will be cleaning litter and debris from the New River and stream access points.

This year join Giles County, Pulaski County, Montgomery County, Floyd County and the City of Radford for this one day clean-up!

Registration for participation is required and available online. The number of volunteers on the water is limited so register early. A signed waiver is required.

Lunch and t-shirt will be provided to all volunteers after the cleanup.

If bringing your own boat, you MUST say so in the registration form so drop off and pick up can be arranged.

RENEWTHENEW.ORG
ONLINE REGISTRATION REQUIRED

Contact Kathleen Armstrong at karmstrong@nrvc.org

PHOTO COURTESY OF RENEW THE NEW

of ReNew the New over the years is shown by the numbers of volunteers and the expansion throughout the New River Valley. ReNew the New is sponsored by Appalachian

Electric Power (AEP), Celanese, New River’s Edge, Tangent Outfitters, and Wilderness Adventure at Eagle Landing.

Visit the ReNew the New website at: <http://www.renewthenew.org/>

and find them on Facebook and Instagram at @ReNewTheNew.

ReNew the New

New principal named at Falling Branch Elementary School

CHRISTIANSBURG - The Montgomery County School Board has named Domenic Saia as the next principal at Falling Branch Elementary School.

Saia has served as the assistant principal at FBES since 2017.

Prior to his time at FBES, he was the principal at Prices Fork Elementary School, an assistant principal at Auburn Elementary School, and a teacher in Pulaski County Public Schools.

“I am so excited to serve as the next principal at Falling Branch Elementary,” Saia said. “I am inspired every day by our outstanding and passionate teachers and staff and I am energized by our kind and joyful students. The support, commitment, and partnership of our FBE families are foundational to our success. The students, teachers, staff, and families are what make Falling Branch Elementary the strong and supportive school community that we are.”

“Dom has proven to be a strong leader for the FBES community, and I am confident that he will continue as he transitions into this new position,” MCPS Superintendent Dr. Bernard Bragen, Jr. said. “I’m excited to see Mr. Saia flourish as the next principal of the FBES Frogs.”

Saia has a bachelor’s and master’s degree from Cairn University in Pennsylvania. He also holds a Master’s in Educational Leadership & Administration from Radford University.

Saia will begin his new position Sept. 9.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MCPS
Domenic Saia

Grant funding gives Blacksburg bicycle parking a boost



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE TOWN OF BLACKSBURG

A federal grant has provided funds for new bike racks in Blacksburg.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE TOWN OF BLACKSBURG

Grant funds have purchased bike lockers in Blacksburg.

This fall, Blacksburg cyclists will notice some great new features making biking even more convenient for commuters and cycling enthusiasts.

Thanks to a federally funded grant from the Transportation Alternatives initiative, the Town of Blacksburg will install enclosed bike lockers in the Progress Street parking lot and the Armory parking lot, conveniently located downtown. The lockers will provide secure, weather-protected storage for long-term use, ensuring that bikes remain safe and easily accessible. These lockers are available to users for free.

In addition to the lockers, the grant allowed the construction of the College Avenue Bike Corral, which holds ten bikes in the space originally taken up by one car, and the addition of new covered bike racks to be placed in various town parks, such as Municipal Park and Nellies Cave Park.

Town of Blacksburg

Virginia State Police investigating fatal pursuit crash in Christiansburg

RADFORD – The Virginia State Police is investigating the three-vehicle crash that began in Radford with a carjacking and ended with the death of the suspect in Christiansburg after a police pursuit.

“On Aug. 31, 2024, at 9:07 p.m. RCPD responded to 1102 West Main St. [Speedway] for an armed robbery call, where a victim stated their car was stolen,” according to City of Radford Director of Communications Jenni Webb. “The car was located approximately 40 minutes later, and a felony stop was attempted at Sonic on West Main Street. A vehicle pursuit ensued that followed Main Street to Radford Road.”

“Officers attempted to stop the stolen vehicle which then fled north on Route 11 into the Town of Christiansburg,” said VSP Public Information Officer Sgt. Richard Garletts.

“During the pursuit, Montgomery County Sheriff’s Office deployed spike strips before the vehicle made it into the town limits of Christiansburg,” said Webb.

The suspect vehicle continued on Radford Road, struck a 2024 Mitsubishi positioned in the turn lane near Crockett Home Improvement in the rear, then struck a 2006 Volkswagen head-on.

Khasi Nikole Chrisley, 33, of Blacksburg, has been identified as the driver of the stolen car. Chrisley was not wearing her seatbelt and was transported to Carilion New River Valley Medical Center, where she later died.

“One of the occupants from the second vehicle was flown to Roanoke in critical condition,” said Webb. The driver of the stolen vehicle was given first aid and CPR by RCPD officers, but ultimately passed away,” said Webb.

The Virginia State Police Crash Reconstruction Team assisted with the crash, which remains under investigation.

Staff report

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, Sept. 7:

Radford Summer Concert series

The City of Radford Summer Concert features Ryan Perry and Sofie Lynn. Bring a chair or blanket and come out to the fields of Glencoe Mansion, Museum & Gallery at 600 Unruh Dr., Radford. Gates open at 6 p.m. Alcoholic beverages can be purchased through Radford Chamber of Commerce. Food trucks and non-alcoholic beverages are also available. Admission is \$5 per person. Children 12 and under and free.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library kickoff party

At the Radford Public Library, 11 a.m. Register children under five for free books from Dolly Parton's Imagination library courtesy of the Lamplighters. Ribbon cutting ceremony, prizes for the first 50 kids registered, animals visiting from Southwest Virginia Wildlife Center, and cake.

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, Sept. 8:

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, Sept. 9:

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.

Blacksburg smoke testing sewer lines

The Town of Blacksburg and CHA Consulting, Inc., will perform smoke testing in the upper Harding Sewershed during the week of Sept. 9 and Sept. 16. The process blows smoke into the sewer system, which

then escapes through leaks found in the lines. Leaks allow rainwater, creek water, and other stormwater runoff to enter the system. The area within the Harding Sewershed that will be impacted by this work includes the Apperson Park development and Windsor Hills. During this work, citizens may see smoke coming out of the ground, and occasionally, when household plumbing is not in conformance with code, smoke may enter residences. For this reason, CHA will place informational door hangers at residences that may be affected several days in advance of the testing. For questions and more information: Contact Shawn Veltman, Town Engineer at 540.443.1352, sveltman@blacksburg.gov.

Tuesday, Sept. 10:

Radford School Board meeting

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

Blacksburg Town Council meeting

The council meets in regular session the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at 6:30 p.m. in the Roger E. Hedgepeth Chambers of the Blacksburg Municipal Building, 300 S. Main St. These meetings are open to the public and televised live on WTOB Channel 2.

Christiansburg Town Council meeting

Regular town council meetings are held on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month beginning at 7 p.m. in the Council Chambers of Town Hall (100 E. Main 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.

Wednesday, Sept. 11:

Closing ceremony for Field of Honor

Radford Noon Rotary and Glencoe Mansion will host a closing ceremony of the "Field of Honor" at Glencoe Mansion at 5 p.m. with an opening of bagpipe music provided by musician Andrew Meeks. Official ceremony at 5:30 p.m. including remarks from Radford Mayor David Horton, City Council Member Jessie Foster, Rev. Dr. Gina Rhea of Unity Christian Church, and from the leadership of the Radford Noon Rotary and Glencoe Mansion. The ceremony will be followed by a reception on the museum grounds until 7 p.m.

Blacksburg Farmers Market

At Market Square Park, 100 Draper Rd SW, Blacksburg; 2 - 6 p.m. The 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.

Saturday, Sept. 14:

Fish Fry

Mount Tabor Ruritan Club will hold its September

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 three free), carry-outs-\$12. This month, we welcome the Blue Ridge Vocal Connection to our music tent. Held rain or shine. This is the last fry in 2024. Call or text 540-449-6178 for further information. On Facebook at MtTaborRuritan.

Shred-A-Thon

The Town of Blacksburg will host a Shred-A-Thon 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. at the Blacksburg Community Center. This free event is a great opportunity to recycle unneeded household documents, records, etc. Please plan to bring documents in a box, tote, or paper bag and observe the limit of five containers per vehicle. Items that cannot be shredded include metal, three-ring binders, composition notebooks, hardback books, and non-paper materials. This is a drive-thru event only. Please remain in your vehicle during drop-off. For more information, contact the Town of Blacksburg Recycling office at 540.443.1212.

Thursday, Sept. 19:

Sons of Confederate Veterans meeting

The Sons of Confederate Veterans, Stuart Horse Artillery Camp 1784 will meet at 7 p.m. at Aly's Family Italian Restaurant, 3204 Riner Rd. Members of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) are also invited to attend. For further information, please call 540-320-4315 or 540-239-9864.

Saturday, Sept. 28:

Pilot Community Center Celebration

The Pilot Community Center (former Pilot School) was recently added to the State and National Registers of Historic Places. Celebrate these designations and also honor former teachers and students of the Pilot School, 1 p.m. Pilot Community Center, 4449 Brush Creek Road, Pilot. Unveiling of historical designation plaques, live music, refreshments, prizes, and lots of good memories. This event is free to the public.

Annual Blues, Brews & BBQ

Blacksburg Museum and Cultural Foundation's 9th Annual Blues, Brews & BBQ, noon - 5 p.m., at St. Luke and Odd Fellows Hall. Admission is free, though a \$10 donation is suggested. Seating is limited. Attendees are encouraged to bring chairs. Performance schedule: 12:30-1:30 p.m. The JoJo Stockton Project, 2-3 p.m. McFadden and Friends, 3:30-4:30 p.m. Lady D and Mi\$\$ion. Beer and wine, barbeque, and sweet treats for purchase from Blue Ridge Beverage, Kirk's Famous BBQ, and Next Door Bake Shop. NAACP and The League of Women Voters will provide voter registration information. Free parking at the Gilbert Street Parking Garage. Proceeds go toward the continued preservation of St. Luke and Odd Fellows Hall, which will be open to guests during the event. For more information, visit: <https://blacksburgmuseum.org/>.

Ongoing:

Menagerie, exhibit at Fine Arts Center for the NRV

Fine Arts Center for the New River Valley presents Menagerie, celebrating the diverse talents of artists residing in the NRV. At the Fine Arts Center in Pulaski at 21 West Main St., Pulaski, through Oct. 5, 2024. Some artwork contains mature content and may not be suitable for children.

Radford city manager announces retirement

Heather Bell
editor@ourvalley.org

RADFORD - After 15 years leading Radford and a 40-year career in the City of Radford, Radford City Manager David Ridpath is retiring Jan. 1, 2025.

It was his experience at Student Government Day as a Radford High School senior that led Ridpath to pursue a career in local government. That path led him up through the ranks of the city administration before becoming Radford's chief executive officer in January 2010.

"Ridpath's 15 years as manager have been marked by investment in public safety, commercial investment and revitalization, recreational tourism enhancements, and public education and infrastructure improvements," said City of Radford Director of Communications Jenni Webb. "From the expansion of the fire department to include EMS service to the renovation of the former box factory into a new public safety building, Ridpath's passion for community safety shines. Recreational improvements such as the addition of sports fields and outdoor special events showcase the growth in leisure services. Radford is known for quality, reliable service and that is thanks to Ridpath and his investment in staff and the community."

Radford Mayor David Horton said Ridpath is a big part of the successes the city has seen.

"Radford will forever be indebted to David Ridpath for his lifelong dedication to this community and our citizens," said Horton. "David has been the lynchpin in our success, building opportunities and serving as a steady hand to help guide us through uncharted and rough times. No one has given more time and personal energy to Radford and it shows in every corner of the

community."

Ridpath said he feels honored to have been able to spend his career in his hometown.

"It has been an honor and privilege to serve my hometown for the past 40 years," he said. "It is ironic that I began my career with the development and construction of the Radford Industrial Center in the 1980's and will end it with the ramp up of the West Radford Commerce Park in the 2020's. Radford is a super community with so much opportunity, beauty, and assets, as well as a supportive and engaged city council and excellent staff."

Ridpath spent eight years as Assistant City Manager before becoming city manager. He also served as Community Assistance Coordinator (Public Information), Economic Development Director and Community Development Director. He has served on several city boards and regional agencies, as well as been a member of the International City Management Association and the Virginia Local Government Managers Association.

"I always felt a calling to public service from very early as the City Manager for Youth in Government Day at Radford High School, leading to my Business and Public Administration degree in college, as well as every day throughout my career," Ridpath said. "People are in things together and make a difference together. Our community has been through a lot in my tenure with the closing of the foundry, a pandemic, and financial challenges, as well as economic and infrastructure growth and improvements."

"Radford is unique in many ways, being one of 12 local governments in the state operating a utility system, provides an abundance of quality services,



David Ridpath

FILE PHOTO

general and special functions, as well as enterprise service operations," he continued. "I hope I will have contributed to making Radford prosper economically, as a good place to develop and do business, customer friendly, as well as a great place to work, live, and play."

First Seniors of the Month of the 24-25 school year announced at MCPS school board meeting

Angelica Ramos

Contributing Writer

MONTGOMERY COUNTY- Every month of the school year, four seniors, one from each MCPS high school, are honored and celebrated.

The first seniors of the month for the 24-25 school year have been honored and celebrated at the Sept. 3, 2024 MCPS School Board Meeting. Each month, each school nominates an outstanding senior and their photos as well as their leadership profiles are presented to the school board and displayed in

the lobby at the central office. Each student's leadership profile was shown via slide show to the school board so that they can recognize the students' achievements.

From Auburn High School, this month's outstanding Senior is Shane Riggins. Riggins, according to the leadership profile presented to the board, has a 4.2 GPA, plays varsity basketball and varsity track and field, is on honor roll, is part of the Student Leadership group, Beta Club and National Honor Society. Riggins wants to go to UVA after high school and

major in law and business.

For Blacksburg High School, their senior of the month is Brice Abbott. Abbott has played varsity baseball for four years, has been part of FCA for three years, has been in Pep Club and Sports Analytics Club, was a finalist for the Salem Baseball Hall of Fame Player of the Year, was a Summer Baseball Camp Mentor and has been a member of Vacation Bible School. Abbott wants to play baseball at East Tennessee State University and major in sports management.

Christiansburg High School's

senior of the month is Joshua Cummins. Cummins currently has a 4.16 GPA, has played varsity golf for four years, is part of many clubs like Beta Club and National Honors Society, has his cybersecurity certification, has achieved many honors for his golf career thus far, and has done volunteer work for many local organizations like being a student representative for Parks and Recreation. Cummins wants to attend a four-year college or university, major in cybersecurity and continue to play golf.

The last senior of the month

was Aija McHone, for Eastern Montgomery High School who also serves as the student school board representative for Eastern Montgomery High School. McHone has been on honor roll for three years, is president of FLBA, plays soccer, basketball and cross country, has held leadership positions in many clubs and organizations like being the senior president of Beta Club, and does church choir and mission trips. McHone wants to go to a four-year college, play soccer and major in Pre-Law with a minor in Business.

Student representatives deliver their reports to the MCPS School Board

Angelica Ramos

Contributing Writer

MONTGOMERY COUNTY- The Student Representatives from Christiansburg High School and Eastern Montgomery High School, Disha Talajia and Aija McHone, presented their school reports to the school board on Sept. 3, 2024.

The Montgomery County Public Schools School Board Meeting started with two of the four student representatives providing their reports to the School

Board. First was Christiansburg High School's representative Disha Talajia, who began by reading the MCPS belief statement.

"MCPS is an innovative educational community," Talajia read. "We value diversity and we are committed to equity and inclusion. MCPS empowers learners to realize success in an ever-changing global society through collaboration with communities, families, staff and students. MCPS provides a safe engaging learning environment and an international

exposure to positive social, emotional and academic experiences."

The student representative reports aid in helping the MCPS School Board gain a student perspective on how things are going in the schools and what students need in order to succeed and thrive.

In her report, Talajia discussed the renovations being done to the high school and the significant progress made during the summer break. Talajia said students have handled these changes easily and are excited for the new space. Talajia also reported that despite concerns regarding the new cell phone policy that MCPS put in place over the summer, students have adjusted and received it positively, stating that on the first day 31 phones were confiscated but that number has decreased significantly over the beginning of the school year as students continue to adjust to the policy. Talajia continued her report with updates on the Club Fair, 2nd Annual Festival of the Bands, and September Homecoming Schedule.

The second report was from Aija McHone from Eastern Montgomery High School. McHone reported Eastern Montgomery's Back to School Night had an amazing turnout and showed that students were excited to start a new year.

"We hope to have the same excitement," McHone said, "this Thursday (September 5, 2024) in which parents of juniors and seniors will come to learn more about the college world and hear guidance about how to begin the next chapter in their lives."

McHone highlighted the success of EMHS's sports teams like golf, cross country, volleyball, football and cheerleading.

McHone then reported that students are currently most dissatisfied with the

school lunch options, feeling as though there's not as much variety as they'd like and that the fruit sometimes has a chemical aftertaste. McHone stated that students are "very grateful for the free lunch program that is offered at our school" because it has helped students, families and the community.

Overall, both student representatives report the school year is off to a great start and students are happy to be back.

Hickok St. drainage improvement project underway

CHRISTIANSBURG - The Town of Christiansburg has begun drainage improvements on Hickok St., Commerce St. and W. Main St.

The work takes place from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays, and is expected to last several months to more than a year. Phase I of the project will begin on Commerce St. before moving to additional areas listed above. The Town will continue to post updates as the project progresses.

Throughout the duration of the work, there will be lane and road closures. Detours will be clearly marked and flaggers will be on-site to guide traffic. Parking along Commerce St. will be limited, and parking will not be allowed in the construction zones, which will be blocked off for safety. Trash collection and mail service will continue, though routes may be adjusted as needed. Any changes will be communicated with the customer.

Town of Christiansburg



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ABC NOTICE

SHREE MAHAVEER, LLC trading as D&D SPEEDY MART, 1225 Roanoke Street, Christiansburg, VA 24073.

The above establishment is applying to the VIRGINIA ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) AUTHORITY for a Wine and Beer, OFF Premises license to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages.

CHIRAG PATEL, OWNER.

NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 days from the publishing date of the first of two required newspaper legal notices. Objections should be registered at

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www.abc.virginia.gov or 800-552-3200.

LEGAL NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING OF THE TOWN OF CHRISTIANSBURG PLANNING COMMISSION

The Town of Christiansburg Planning Commission will hold a Public Hearing on Monday, September 16, 2024, at 7:00 PM in the Council Chambers of the Christiansburg Town Hall, 100 E. Main Street, Christiansburg, Virginia 24073, pursuant to Sections 15.2-2204 and 15.2-2285 of the Code of Virginia, as amended. The purpose of the public hearing is to receive public comments concerning:

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A. Rezoning request by Robert P. Fralin, Registered Agent for F & B Land, L.P., Applicant and Property Owner, to rezone property located on the west side of Moose Dr. NW at the College St. NW, intersection, identified as Tax Parcel 556-(A)-9; (Parcel ID 008095), and consisting of approximately 16.330 acres, from Agricultural District (A) and General Business District (B-3) to Multi-Family Residential District (R-3). The property is designated as Residential on the Future Land Use Map of the 2013 Christiansburg Comprehensive Plan.

B. Conditional Use Permit request by Robert P. Fralin, Registered Agent for F & B Land, L.P., Applicant and Property Owner, to allow a

Legals - Montgomery County

development for a multi-family project of a maximum of 162 apartments in the proposed Multi-Family Residential District (R-3) zoning district on property located on the west side of Moose Dr. NW at the College St. NW, intersection, identified as Tax Parcel 556-(A)-9; (Parcel ID 008095), and consisting of approximately 16.330 acres. The property is designated as Residential on the Future Land Use Map of the 2013 Christiansburg Comprehensive Plan.

C. Rezoning request by Roger Woody, Registered Agent for RWW 34 LLC, Applicant and Property Owner, to rezone property located on the southeast corner of Sherwood Dr. NE and Maid Marian Ln., and adjacent to the US Rt. 460

Legals - Montgomery County

adjacent to the US Rt. 460 Bypass, identified as approximately 2.31 acres of a 10.227 acre parcel; identified as Tax Parcel 499-(A)-12; (Parcel ID 018085), from Single-Family Residential District (R-1) to General Business District (B-3). The property is designated as Residential on the Future Land Use Map of the 2013 Christiansburg Comprehensive Plan.

D. Conditional Use Permit request by Roger Woody, Registered Agent for RWW 34 LLC, Applicant and Property Owner, to allow a 90-unit Townhome Residential Development in the General Business District (B-3) zoning district on property located on the southeast corner of Sherwood Dr. NE and Maid Marian Ln., and adjacent to

Legals - Montgomery County

the US Rt. 460 Bypass, identified as Tax Parcel 499-(A)-12; (Parcel ID 018085), and consisting of approximately of 10.227 acres. The property is designated as Residential on the Future Land Use Map of the 2013 Christiansburg Comprehensive Plan.

A copy of the applications, the Town's Zoning Map, Zoning Ordinance, and Future Land Use Map may be viewed in the Planning Department Office, 100 E. Main Street, Christiansburg, VA 24073, during normal office hours of 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Contact Retta Jackson, Planning Director, at (540) 382-6128, ext. 1120 or by email at rjackson@christiansburg.org, with any questions or if you require reasonable accommodations.



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News Messenger

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Virginia Tech wraps up competition in \$10 million XPRIZE Rainforest

On a scorching morning in early July, Julie Allen and her all-woman genetic sampling team of early career scientists and undergraduate students were ferried up the Rio Negro in Brazil. A pod of dolphins served as escort.

Allen's group was a part of Limelight Rainforest, a multinational team from 10 institutions that traveled deep into the Amazon Rainforest to compete in the final round of XPRIZE Rainforest. Each of the six teams in the finals had 24 hours to autonomously survey the biodiversity of a patch of rainforest.

Automated technologies offer a gentler, more hands-off approach to biodiversity surveying that can help keep rainforests intact while significantly increasing the number of species surveyed, said Allen, a Virginia Tech biologist in the College of Science.

"Rainforest species are disappearing faster than we can survey them," Allen said. "If we don't have a fast way to survey forests, there won't be forests left to survey."

At the stroke of noon on July 8

In the shadow of a giant clock counting down the hours, Allen's team successfully released a squad of drones equipped with traps to collect images, acoustics, insects, and other data streams across the rainforest canopy to survey biodiversity.

A major leg of the team's strategy relied on environmental DNA, also known as eDNA, trace bits of DNA that organisms shed in soil, water, and even air. By simply brushing a leaf or sampling a scoop of water, scientists can assemble a snapshot of all the organisms in a given place.

As soon as it was deployed, the drone team run by Outreach Robotics began scouting for an on-site body of water, where eDNA can be found in high densities. The plan was to lower a water sampler through the canopy. But

carefully. Dropping a sampler or losing a drone would violate the no-contact rule of the competition.

"It's all about risk. How much do we trust this hole in the canopy to get our sampler down there and back up again?" Allen said. "Fortunately, we had remote sensing models that identified the most likely places to find water to reduce our search area."

Growing urgency in the afternoon

But team members didn't see water in the early afternoon. Or the late afternoon. Allen recalled her growing sense of urgency as the light lengthened.

"Please, please, please let us find water, and be able to collect water," Allen said. "But there was none."

"Like none at all," said Isabella Burgos, Virginia Tech lead DNA operations manager.

Evening win

Finally, as the sun sank low into the sky, an angled sunbeam sparked up the tiniest reflection through the canopy. What was it? A pool? A spring?

Allen never knew for sure, but it was big enough for a few samples, and team members got a good long pull. By the end of the day, they had located several sources of water and filtered enough for eDNA extraction.

Meanwhile, besides biting their nails off hoping for water, Burgos, Allen, and the rest of the sequencing team had been setting up a thick-walled, windowless eDNA tent to prevent sample contamination.

Brutal night

By the time the water and other samples got back, it was well after dark.

The eDNA team members, led by Virginia Tech postdoctoral fellow Niyomi House, worked in the enclosed tents through the night, wearing lab coats, masks, and gloves in the 95-degree



PHOTO COURTESY OF TAYLOR SCHMITZ

The Virginia Tech-led genetic sampling team of all-female early-career scientists and undergraduate students.

heat, pipetting feverishly until dawn — all while being monitored by judges.

"It was brutal," Allen said.

After it was all over, Burgos did the math: She slept 15 hours in six days, but it was "the best time."

"Even if we sweated more than we had ever sweated in our lives and were beyond exhausted, we were still laughing, we were doing it together," Burgos said.

Final sprint

Data collection wrapped up before noon the next day, followed by a 48-hour sprint to process the samples and match them up against a huge database of organisms known to exist in Brazil. The team generated more than 27 million DNA sequencing reads in 48 hours and identified hundreds of species, including a jaguar and several other elusive creatures via eDNA.

But everything team members found stayed in the rainforest.

"We brought nothing back with us. The sequences are being registered with Brazil's National System of Genetic Resource Management and Associated

Traditional Knowledge system," Allen said. "This way, they know what we found, and the data stays in the country where it was produced."

Because, Allen said, the competition is not so much about what they found as how they found it: a rapid big-picture survey of the rainforest that leaves no trace.

Limelight Rainforest is committed to abiding by Brazilian laws related to genetic heritage, associated traditional knowledge, and benefit sharing. XPRIZE collaborated with the National Institute of Amazonian Research to obtain necessary permits for collecting eDNA/DNA sampling activities during the testing days. All eDNA/DNA sequencing data will be registered through SISGEN, ensuring transparency and adherence to regulations, and no genetic data will be published without clearance from XPRIZE and its government partners, ensuring compliance with all relevant regulations.

Virginia Tech

News Messenger

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

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PHOTO COURTESY OF CAT KUTZ AND XPRIZE

Daniela Campos, a senior biological sciences major, served as lab and field DNA technician for Team Limelight.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

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| <p>CLUES ACROSS</p> <p>1. Google certification</p> <p>4. Cloths spread over coffins</p> <p>9. Disorderly</p> <p>14. "Star Wars" hero Solo</p> <p>15. Toward the rear</p> <p>16. The order of frogs</p> <p>17. Alternative pain treatment (abbr.)</p> <p>18. "Wolf of Wall Street" star</p> <p>20. Evoke</p> <p>22. Units of metrical time</p> <p>23. Helps to predict eclipses</p> <p>24. Some say they attract</p> <p>28. Pitching statistic</p> <p>29. Baseball box score (abbr.)</p> <p>30. Force unit</p> <p>31. Repaired shoe</p> <p>33. English theologian</p> <p>37. Commercial</p> <p>38. Exchange money for goods or services</p> <p>39. Give off</p> | <p>41. One from Utah</p> <p>42. Computer department</p> <p>43. Begets</p> <p>44. English navigator</p> <p>46. C C C</p> <p>49. Of I</p> <p>50. Pouch</p> <p>51. Add notes to</p> <p>55. A way to fall into ruin</p> <p>58. Cunning intelligence</p> <p>59. Blood disorder</p> <p>60. Disgraced CBS newsman</p> <p>64. Tax collector</p> <p>65. Type of grass common to the Orient</p> <p>66. Cosmic intelligence</p> <p>67. No (Scottish)</p> <p>68. People who rely on things</p> <p>69. Stairs have them</p> <p>70. Mathematical term (abbr.)</p> | <p>CLUES DOWN</p> <p>1. Clarified butters</p> <p>2. Primitive Himalayan people</p> <p>3. Completely</p> <p>4. Steep cliffs along the Hudson River</p> <p>5. Assist</p> <p>6. Language spoken in Laos</p> <p>7. Type of screen</p> <p>8. An attempt to economize</p> <p>9. Volcanic craters</p> <p>10. Still outstanding</p> <p>11. Takes responsibility for another</p> <p>12. California think tank</p> <p>13. Former Rocket Mng</p> <p>19. A pigeon noise</p> <p>21. Central part of</p> <p>24. Academy Award statue</p> <p>25. Distinct unit of sound</p> <p>26. Relative on the female side of the family</p> <p>27. Passover feast and ceremony</p> | <p>31. The brightest star in Virgo</p> <p>32. Made with oats</p> <p>34. Subjects to laser light</p> <p>35. Beloved Hollywood alien</p> <p>36. Neatly brief</p> <p>40. The Great Lakes State (abbr.)</p> <p>41. Soon to be released</p> <p>45. Swiss river</p> <p>47. Become involved in</p> <p>48. More dour</p> <p>52. They're on floors</p> <p>53. Boxing's GOAT</p> <p>54. Swarms with</p> <p>56. Quantum mechanics pioneer</p> <p>57. Facilitated</p> <p>59. As fast as can be done (abbr.)</p> <p>60. Regional French wine Grand ___</p> <p>61. ___</p> <p>62. Tell on</p> <p>63. Precedes two</p> |
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OBITUARIES

Haynes, Mary Ruth Mannon

Mary Ruth Mannon Haynes, 89, of Fairlawn, was surrounded by her loved ones when she went home to be with her Lord and received her wings Saturday, Aug. 31, 2024. She was a member of the New River Baptist Temple.



Dawn (Dino) Orgetas, Stacy Stull, Derek Turpin, and Hunter (Yamile) Haynes; nine great grandchildren; sister, Blanche “Tenny” Jones; brother, Tommy (Margie) Mannon; many nieces, nephews and cousins; and her lap companion, Zoey.

The family would like to thank Janina and Sherri for their excellent care of Mom when we had appointments.

Mary was preceded in death by her parents, Roy and Blanche Mannon; daughters, Elizabeth Ann Haynes and Christina D. Haynes Turpin; her former husband and friend, and his wife, James and Peggy Haynes; sister, Opal Pannel; and brothers, William Moore Mannon, Jr., Rolly Curtis “Rollo” Mannon, and Paul David “Bunk” Mannon.

The family received friends Thursday, Sept. 5, 2024, at the Mullins Funeral Home in Radford. Funeral services followed with Rev. Frankie Graham officiating. Interment followed in Highland Memory Gardens in Dublin.

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

Those left to cherish her memory are her son, Joey (Theresa) Haynes; grandchildren, Shawn (Melissa) Turpin,

Vaught, Larry Snow

Larry Snow Vaught, 76, of Pilot, died Monday, Sept. 2, 2024.

He was born in Christiansburg Feb. 22, 1948, to the late Willard Snow and Mary Emma Caldwell Vaught. He was also preceded in death by a son Paul Vaught; daughter Rebecca Vaught; brother Danny Vaught; brother-in-law Leon Linkous; and daughter-in-law Stephanie Cain.



Sarah, Tyler Vaught and fiancé Holly; Dylan Vaught, Adam Morrison and Lindsey, and great-grandchildren Cai and Cayden Vaught. He is also survived by special family members and friends.

Funeral services will be conducted Monday, Sept. 9, 2024, at 11 a.m. in the Good Shepherd Baptist Church with George Bulson and Michael Bartlett officiating. Interment will follow in the Vaught Family Cemetery. The family will receive friends from 3 – 5 p.m. on Sunday, Sept. 8, 2024, at McCoy Funeral Home in Blacksburg.

He is survived by his wife Debbie Vaught; son W. Larry Vaught; sister Bonnie Linkous; brother Bobby Vaught; grandchildren Byron Vaught and wife

Hayes, Betty McGuyer

Betty McGuyer Hayes, 71, of Dublin, passed away unexpectedly Tuesday, Sept. 3, 2024. Born Nov. 12, 1952, she was a member of the Pulaski Seventh Day Adventist Church.

Survivors include her husband, Harry Hayes; son, Rodney Allen Hayes; daughter, Mandi Funkhouser (David); grandchildren, Justin David-Michael Funkhouser, Susan Elizabeth Funkhouser (Kyle Draper), and Courtney Ariann

Funkhouser (Xander Sheppard); sister, Patsy Sowers (Alvin Sanders); fur baby, Toby; sisters-in-law, Imajean Barker and Brenda McGuyer; brother-in-law, Jerry Hayes (Mae); special family friend, Tim Williams; and many nieces and nephews. Services will be announced at a later date.

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

News Messenger

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ANGLICAN CATHOLIC

St. Peter the Apostle Anglican Church, 230 W. First St., Christiansburg, VA. Fr Peter Geromel OHI Th.M., Vicar. Fr. Alex Darby, “Associate”, 540-382-0432/540-270-9166. Sundays: 8:00 am & 10:00 am Holy Eucharist followed by Christian Education and refreshments. Holy Communion most Thursdays at 12Noon, other Holy Days as announced. Traditional services use the 1928 Book of Common Prayer and 1940 Hymnal. Handicapped accessible. All are welcome. Come worship with us! Website: www.stpetersacc.org. Follow us on Facebook

St. Philip’s Anglican Church, 306 Progress Street, NE, Blacksburg, Virginia 24060, (540) 552-1771, www.stphilipsblacksburg.org. Reverend Fr. Wade Miller, Priest. Eucharist Sundays at 11am and Wednesday’s at 12pm.

St. Thomas Anglican Church - located at 4910 Hubert Rd, NW Roanoke, Va. Traditional Liturgical Lenten Services, Sunday at 10:30 am. Call (540) 589-1299 or visit www.sttofc.org for midweek masses and events. (In Roanoke, go E on Hershberger, L on Hubert to 4910).

BAPTIST

First Baptist Church on 3rd Ave., 215 Third Ave at the corner with Downey St. We nurture meaningful connections to God and others through worship, spiritual growth, and community ministry. We celebrate the dignity and worth of all persons, created in the image of God. Sunday Bible Study Groups - 9:45, Sunday Worship - 11:00. Website: fbradford.org 540-639-4419. Worship is in-person and live-streamed on Facebook and on our YouTube channel: First Baptist Church Radford.

Trinity Community Church, 1505 N. Franklin Street, C’burg. John Altizer, Lead Pastor, Brian Cockram, Associate Pastor, 382-8121. Worship at 10:45 a.m., Outreach Ministries - 6:00p.m. Wednesday, Growth Groups - 5:00p.m. Sunday, Youth and Children’s Ministry - 5:00p.m. Sunday, www.trinitycburg.org

CHURCH OF CHRIST

Blacksburg Church of Christ, 315 Eakin St., 552-1331. Sun. Bible Classes 9:30 a.m., Sun. Worship 10:30 a.m. & 6 p.m., Wed. Bible classes, 7 p.m., Outreach Minister Curt Seright, Dean Meadows, Campus Minister.

Faith Christian Church of Christ, 305 3rd Street, Christiansburg, David Rhudy, Minister, 382-4628, Sunday School 10 am; Worship 11 am; Evening Worship 6:30 pm; Wednesday night Bible Study for Women and Men 6:30 pm. We welcome you to any and all of our services.

CHURCH OF GOD

New Hope Church of God, 1404 Mud Pike Rd., C’burg. Rev. T. Michael Bond, pastor, 731-3178. Sun. School 10 a.m., Worship 10:50 a.m., 6 p.m. Thurs., 7:00 p.m.

West Radford Church of God, 1824 West Main Street, Radford, VA 24141, Sunday School–10:00A.M. Morning Worship– 11:00A.M., Children’s Church 11:00A.M. Sunday Evening – 6:00P.M., Wednesday Night – 7:00P.M., Pastor Danny Newman, Church Office – 540-639-6562 or 804- 921-0828.

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

Christiansburg Church of the Brethren, 310 South Franklin Street. Pastor: Hal Sonafank, 1-336-583-4822. Morning Worship 11 a.m.; Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Wednesdays. Website: www.christiansburgcob.org. A loving family, fueled by the Holy Spirit, grounded in God’s Word, and delivering Jesus forgiveness and love to all people. Come as you are... you are welcomed!

(DOC - DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)

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

EPISCOPAL

Grace Episcopal Church, 210 Fourth Street Radford. Welcoming and accepting, we have been a part of the Radford community for more than 130 years. ALL ARE WELCOME. Grace offers an 8:00am Contemplative Eucharist and a 10:30am Eucharist with organ music and a choir, with refreshments served afterwards. The 10:30am service is also available on YouTube for those unable to leave their house. Find us on Facebook and www.graceradford.org.

St Thomas Episcopal Church, 103 East Main Street, Christiansburg VA, 24073. Worship and communion at 10:00 a.m., each Sunday, followed by hospitality coffee and Adult Sunday Adult Seminar. Our service is also streamed. Contact for more info:

Montgomery County

WORSHIP DIRECTORY

Holy or Common

Read Ezekiel 44:1 through 46:24

At a church harvest festival, rain chased the activities into the building. Games, food, and a petting zoo found new locations throughout the church’s hallways and rooms. During the evening, some of the animals soiled the floor.

Training the animals to respect the church property takes time and effort. For a believer, growing in holiness takes time and effort as well.

“They are to teach my people the difference between the holy and the common and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and

the clean” (Ezekiel 44:23).

The Holy Spirit gives Christians the ability to determine what is holy. This is a process. God does not download every life situation and its proper response into a believer’s mind. Through godly teaching and a searching of the Word, understanding grows. An important step in this process is identity. A believer must recognize that he or she is Christ’s holy dwelling place and live accordingly.

Thought for Today: Discern what is holy. Send the common out to the barn.

Quicklook: Ezekiel 44:15–23

If your church is not listed and if you are interested, call Wendi Craig at 276-340-2445 or email at advertise@mainstreetnewspapers.com

mysthomasoffice@yahoo.com. http://www.stthomaschristiansburg.dioswva.org

LUTHERAN

Luther Memorial Lutheran Church ELCA, 600 Prices Fork Rd, Blacksburg. Weekly Online Worship at www.lmlc.org. We are a Reconciling in Christ congregation that welcomes and affirms all people just as they are. For information on Bible studies and Wednesday Vespers, email luthermemorialblacksburg@gmail.com, or contact the church office, (540) 951-1000. Rev. Monica Weber, pastor.

Our Saviour Lutheran Church ELCA, 1845 Cambria St NE, Christiansburg. Celebrate Word and Sacrament as we worship with varied liturgy, hymns and music. Join our inclusive community in person or online Sundays at 10:00 am (youtube.com/@OSLCCburg), followed by refreshments and fellowship. Ministries include Bible study, choir, food ministry, and crafters. Little Free Pantry and Library available 24-7 by the parking lot. Parent’s Morning Out offers faith-based activities and play for children 16 month - 5 years select weekdays. Wheelchair accessible. Learn how you may contribute to our ministries at www.oslc-cburg.org. 540-382-2223.

St. Michael Lutheran Church, 2308 Merrimac Road, Blacksburg, VA 24060. Worship service each Sunday at 10 AM, Sunday School 9 AM. We are a community of God’s people where we gather for worship, learning and service. Visitors and new members are always WELCOME! Google comments: “Wonderful, welcoming congregation.” A place where all are truly welcome.” You’ll love our minister, The Rev. Dr. Wes Jamison, who engages us in God’s word. St. Michael started and administers Micah’s Caring Initiative which includes Micah’s Backpack, Soup

for Seniors, Garden, Closet, and Mini Pantry, with tremendous community impact. Partnering with Rainbow Riders and Total Action for Progress, we opened the first Early Childhood Head Start in our community (6 weeks to age 3). We sponsor an awesome Scouting program of Scouts Boy & Girl Troop, Venture Scouts for older youth, and a Cub Pack for girls & boys kindergarten - 5th grade, amongst many other programs. Directions: From Price’s Fork Road, turn onto Merrimac Road. St. Michael is ~quarter mile on the left. For more information: Phone 540.951.8951; Email hope@stmlc.us; Website www.st-michael-lutheran-church.org

MULTI-CULTURAL NON-DENOMINATIONAL

Central Church, 803 Wadsworth Street, Radford. 639-3529. 8:30 a.m. Sunday Services: 8:30am; 9:45am Sunday School; and 11:00a.m. Child care is provided. www.centralmethodistchurch.com.

Christian Growth Center, 1850 Electic Way, Christiansburg, VA 24073 (beside Hubbell Lighting). Sunday Worship: 9:30am Prayer, 10:00am Service *Nursery Available. Lead Pastor: Todd Hallinan. Founding Pastor: Rob Sowell. Mission: Sow, Grow, & Go Sow Faith! Grow in Righteousness! Go into all the world in the authority of the believer! 540-382-2908.

PENTECOSTAL HOLINESS

Compassion Church, 1820 Second Street, Radford, 639-6287, Our music is passionate, our worship is real, and Pastor Chandler Jones brings relevant messages for everyone at any place on their journey, Sunday Worship Experience at 9:30 AM & 11:00 AM, Wednesday Family Night at 7 PM, Children Ministry provided for all services. Our vision is to see all Saved. Freed. Restored. Fulfilled. Find us on facebook and Instagram

Merrimac Pentecostal Holiness Church, Rev. Richard Hall (540) 552-7194. pastorhall29@gmail.com. Sunday School at 10 a.m. and morning worship is 11 a.m. Evening service at 6 p.m. and Wednesday at 7 p.m.

Piedmont Pentecostal Holiness Church, 5007 Jewell Dr., Shawsville Va. Sunday morning service 11am. Pastor Tim Clyburn. 8 miles from Shawsville Rt 460, on Alleghany Spring Rd.

Walton Pentecostal Holiness Church, 4003 Morning Glory Rd., off Walton Rd. on Rt. 114. 731-1755. Lee Sarver, pastor. Sun. School 9:30 a.m., Worship 10:30 a.m. & 6: p.m., Wed., 7 p.m.

UNITED METHODIST

Asbury United Methodist Church, 500 Stuart Street, Christiansburg. 540-382-0743. Rev. G. Lance Presley. Sunday School, 9:45 a.m., Sunday Worship, 11:00 a.m. All are welcome.

St. Paul United Methodist Church, 220 West Main Street, Christiansburg. Rev. Mike Derflinger (540) 382-2410. Sunday Worship at 10a.m. with Children’s Church at the same time, Sunday School at 9 a.m. Worship is in-person and Live-streamed on our YouTube Channel: StPaulUMCChristiansburgVA. All are welcome. Website: www.stpaulvaumc.org

WESLEYAN

Christ Wesleyan Church, 525 Harkrader Street, Christiansburg. Sunday Worship at 11 AM with Nursery available. Sunday School at 10 AM with Adult and Children classes. Adult Midweek Refuel and Youth Group on Wednesdays from 6-7:30 PM. Mission: Seeking to exalt Christ by sacrificially caring for one another and our community. Pastor: Colby Callaway. Office Phone: 540-250-3864. Website: cwc4u.org. We Also Livestream on Youtube Every Sunday at 11AM!”

OBITUARIES

Murray, Dr. Thomas Michael

Dr. Thomas Michael Murray passed away Aug. 29, 2024 at the age of 84, in Durham, N.C., surrounded by his family. He was born May 22, 1940, in Dubuque, Iowa, as the only child to Raymond and Laura Murray.

Shortly after birth, his family moved to Waterloo, Iowa, where he developed a passion for trains from his father, a railroad conductor. During his formative years, he would often ride his bike to meet his father at the rail yard. His family had little means, so he delivered newspapers and groceries, learning the value of hard work as a child. He attended St. Mary's Catholic School, where, as a high school student, the nuns asked Tom to teach a physics class to his fellow students. He graduated in 1958.

He started his engineering career by paying his own way through college at Iowa State University. Following graduation in 1962, he worked as an Engineering trainee at Pittsburgh-Des Moines Steel Company in Des Moines, Iowa. While in Des Moines, he met his first wife, Margaret. He received a master's in civil engineering at Lehigh University in 1966, where he developed a passion for teaching and research. This motivated him to pursue a Ph.D. in engineering mechanics at the University of Kansas, graduating in 1970. With three young children, he began his academic career at the University of Oklahoma where he worked for 16 years. After spending a year at the United States Air Force Academy as a Distinguished Visiting Professor, he moved to Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University as the Montague-Betts Professor of Structural Steel Design in 1987. At Virginia Tech, he developed an experimental research laboratory. Tom built the lab from scratch into the fifth-largest structural engineering research laboratory in the nation. From the success of his company, Structural Engineers, Inc., he became known as the 'floor vibration guru.' As an expert in structural steel design, he authored or co-authored over 200 books, design guides, papers, and 200 research reports; supervised approximately 150 graduate student theses and dissertations; and made over 250 presentations to structural engineering groups around the world. His work resulted in significant improvements in the safety of steel-framed buildings and meaningful contributions



to American Institute of Steel Construction, American Iron Institute Specification Committee, and AISC Committee on manuals and textbooks. In 2002, he was inducted into the prestigious National Academy of Engineering, the ultimate engineering honor. He also received numerous awards and recognition in teaching and research including the T.R. Higgins Lectureship Award,

the American Institute of Construction Geerhard Haaijer Award for Excellence in Education, the Outstanding Faculty Award from the Virginia State Council of Higher Education, and the Distinguished American Society of Civil Engineers Award. In 2021, Tom was inducted into the Iowa State University CCEE Hall of Fame. He retired from Virginia Tech in 2008 as an Emeritus Professor. Even in retirement, he continued to consult, work with students, and give presentations. He had an enormous impact on colleagues, students, and the field of civil engineering, so much so that in 2009, Virginia Tech officially named the lab he started as the Thomas M Murray Structural Engineering Laboratory.

Tom was affectionally known as Dad, Pop, Grandpa, Grom, and 'The Real Tom Murray.' He had a wry sense of humor and a love for travel, built model trains and started a model train club, built many family decks, playsets, dollhouses, and skillfully upgraded closets, and was the best husband, father, grandfather, and friend.

Tom is survived by his wife, Nancy, his children and their spouses; Matt and Barbara, Libby and Mark, Nick and Missy; his nine grandchildren; Max, Patrick, Jessica, Laura, Sarah, Keith, Hannah, Samantha, and Olivia; Nancy's children, Becky, Andy, and Stefani; and his step-grandchildren; Talan, Madison, and Tyler.

The funeral services will be at St. Jude Catholic Church, Radford, on Oct. 5th at 11 a.m. Visitation begins at 10 a.m. and interment and reception are to follow.

In lieu of flowers, please donate to MPN Research Foundation <https://mpnresearchfoundation.org/>.

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



GRAPHIC COURTESY OF GLENCOE MANSION

Glencoe Mansion, Museum & Gallery is hosting "Do You Dream In Color," an art exhibition by artist Sidra Kaluszka.

Glencoe Mansion announces new art exhibit by Sidra Kaluszka

RADFORD - Glencoe Mansion, Museum & Gallery will host "Do You Dream In Color," an art exhibition by artist Sidra Kaluszka for September and October.

The public is invited to the opening reception Friday, Sept. 13, 5:30 - 7 p.m. at Glencoe Mansion, located at 600 Unruh Dr. in Radford, to view the works on display and meet the artist. The reception is free to attend and open to all; the exhibition will be on display from now until Oct. 27.

Sidra Kaluszka is a multifaceted artist and a graduate of Virginia Tech with a Bachelors of Fine Arts degree in 2007 and later graduated from Radford University with a double concentration Masters of Fine Arts degree in both watercolor and ceramics, in 2010. Heavily influenced by her appreciation for nature and natural light, her formal training was in watercolor and ceramics. But she has recently branched out to working with cyanotypes, gelli printing, and eco dying and is working on weaving these mediums together. This style can be seen in her "Do You Dream In Color" show. "Do You Dream In Color" is a compilation of several of Kaluszka series,

including "Dreams of Home," "American Dream," and "Sweet Home Appalachia." Kaluszka says narrative elements are prominent in her work.

"I have long included narrative elements in my work," she said. "Even when there isn't a clear story, the sense that something has happened, or the presence of an otherness, has been important to me. With the cyanotypes in particular I have had the opportunity to have a more direct narrative."

Kaluszka's show is also rooted in family history, storytelling and identity. She touches on topics such as her generational trauma from her Japanese grandparents who were subject to internment camps after they moved to Canada in the 1920s-30s as well as discovering her own identity and voice alongside her multiracial cultural heritage. "Do You Dream In Color" is a web of emotional storytelling that explores history, celebrates nature, and documents the region.

For more information, please find Glencoe Mansion, Museum and Gallery on Facebook, visit www.glencoemansion.org or call 540-731-5031.

Glencoe Mansion

Carilion Clinic Foundation invests in Radford's future healthcare professionals

As the fall 2024 semester begins at Radford University, the Carilion Clinic Foundation has invested in the education of 52 Highlanders studying to become healthcare professionals.

The healthcare organization committed \$100,000 in scholarship support earmarked specifically for students in the nursing, respiratory therapy and emergency services programs, as well as other majors that meet the pre-health requirements to enter a graduate program in occupational therapy or physical therapy with plans to enter one of those programs upon graduation.

Additionally, recipients were required

to be full-time students and enrolled at the Radford University Carilion (RUC) location in downtown Roanoke, with a preference for students from areas within Carilion Clinic's geographic footprint. That footprint stretches from far Southwest Virginia to the Shenandoah Valley, covering much of the state.

The average award for each student was approximately \$1,962.

"Students are our future workforce, and we want to support and encourage them as they pursue their careers in healthcare," said Nancy Howell Agee, Carilion Clinic's chief executive officer.

The goal of the support is to increase

and retain healthcare students in the Roanoke area, which is evident in the fall student population numbers at RUC. This fall, 1,018 students are enrolled at RUC.

RUC, where most of Radford University's healthcare-focused programs are based, was formed as a partnership between Radford University and Carilion Clinic in 2019, when Carilion's Jefferson College of Health Sciences merged into the Radford University family of colleges and departments. Since its inception, RUC has graduated hundreds of professionals, many of whom treat patients within Carilion Clinic.

"We are deeply appreciative of our partnership with Carilion Clinic, and these important gifts will enhance the experience of Radford University's health sciences and nursing students," said Bret Danilowicz, president of Radford University. "Throughout her time as Carilion's CEO, Nancy has demonstrated a keen understanding of how to help make healthcare education more accessible and affordable. Carilion Clinic clearly values how Radford prepares students for the healthcare workforce, and in turn, we will continue to strengthen our communities by providing Southwest Virginia with skilled graduates."

Scientists ID cause, potential treatments for persistent COVID-19 lung problems

Existing arthritis drugs could halt harmful inflammation, research suggests

CHARLOTTESVILLE - Arthritis drugs already available for prescription have the potential to halt lingering lung problems that can last months or years after COVID-19 infections, new research from the University of Virginia School of Medicine and Cedars-Sinai suggests.

By examining damaged human lungs and developing an innovative new lab model, the scientists identified faulty immune processes responsible for the ongoing lung issues that plague an increasing number of people after they've otherwise recovered from COVID-19. These lasting harms of COVID infection, known as "post-infection lung fibrosis," have no good treatments. The new research, however, suggests that existing drugs such as baricitinib and anakinra can disrupt the malfunctioning immune response and finally allow damaged lungs to heal.

"Our collaboration with doctors and computer biologists at UVA and Cedars-Sinai, including Drs. Chen and Zang, led us to uncover the root cause of persistent lung inflammation and scarring after severe acute

COVID-19 and possibly other respiratory infections like the flu," said researcher Jie Sun, PhD, of UVA's Carter Center for Immunology Research and UVA's Division of Infectious Diseases and International Health. "Using advanced technologies like spatial transcriptomics and sophisticated microscopy, we compared lung tissues from patients and animal models we developed in the lab. We found that malfunctioning immune cells disrupt the proper healing process in the lungs after viral damage. Importantly, we also identified the molecules responsible for this issue and potential therapeutic options for patients with ongoing lung damage."

"Spatial-omics' are state-of-the-art technologies that can measure the molecular features with spatial location information within a sample," explained researcher Chongzhi Zang, PhD, of UVA's Department of Genome Sciences. "This work demonstrates the power of spatial transcriptomics combined with data science approaches in unraveling the molecular etiology of long COVID."

The researchers note that the findings could prove beneficial not just for lung scarring from COVID but for lung fibrosis stemming from other sources as well.

"This study shows that treatments used for the acute COVID-19 disease may also reduce the development of chronic sequelae, including lung scarring," said Peter Chen, MD, the Medallion Chair in Molecular Medicine and interim chair of the Department of Medicine at Cedars-Sinai. "Our work will be foundational in developing therapies for lung fibrosis caused from viruses or other conditions."

Understanding COVID-19 lung damage

The researchers - led by Sun, Chen and Zang - to better understand the cellular and molecular causes of the lingering lung problems that can follow COVID infections. These problems can include ongoing lung damage and harmful inflammation that persists well after the COVID-19 virus has been cleared from the body.

The researchers began by examining severely damaged lungs from transplant patients

at both UVA and Cedars-Sinai. None of the patients had a lung disease that would have required a transplant prior to contracting COVID-19, so the scientists were hopeful that the lungs would provide vital clues as to why the patients suffered such severe lung damage and persistent fibrosis. Using the insights they obtained, the scientists then developed a new mouse model to understand how normally beneficial immune responses were going awry.

The researchers found that immune cells known as CD8+ T cells were having faulty interactions with another type of immune cell, macrophages. These interactions were causing the macrophages to drive damaging inflammation even after the initial COVID-19 infection had resolved, when the immune system would normally stand down.

The scientists remain uncertain about the underlying trigger for the immune malfunction - the immune system may be responding to lingering remnants of the COVID-19 virus, for example, or there could be some other cause, they say.

The new research suggests that this harmful cycle of inflammation, injury and fibrosis can be broken using drugs such as baricitinib and anakinra, both of which have already been approved by the federal Food and Drug Administration to treat the harmful inflammation seen in rheumatoid arthritis and alopecia, a form of hair loss.

While more study is needed to verify the drugs' effectiveness for this new purpose, the researchers hope their findings will eventually offer patients with persistent post-COVID lung problems much-needed treatment options.

"Tens of millions of people around the world are dealing with complications from long COVID or other post-infection syndromes," Sun said. "We are just beginning to understand the long-term health effects caused by acute infections. There is a strong need for more basic, translational and clinical research, along with multi-disciplinary collaborations, to address these unmet needs of patients."

University of Virginia School of Medicine

MONTGOMERY SPORTS

Thomas strives to keep Virginia Tech track programs in stride

After a whirlwind 12 months that included one of his athletes winning a gold medal at the Olympics, Virginia Tech alumnus Thomas is ready to start his tenure as the director of the Hokies' track and field programs.

After watching Cole Hocker stunningly win the men's 1,500-meter race the U.S. Olympic Trials and then seeing him cruise through the semifinal heat at the Summer Olympics in Paris, Ben Thomas started wondering if maybe his standout pupil was on pace for a medal.

"Everyone was talking about everybody else," Thomas said. "He likes that, and I like that. It lets you stay outside the hype and lets you just focus on you."

In the final, most competitors became winded because of the blistering pace. But Hocker's performance was the breath taker, as he sprinted the final 30 meters to a gold medal in an Olympic record time of three minutes, 27.65 seconds.

In doing so, Hocker became Thomas' first Olympic medalist and capped a rather hectic 12 months for Virginia

Tech's new director of track and field, who recruited and coached Hocker while an associate head coach at the University of Oregon before he returned to Blacksburg last year.

Thomas '92, a Lynchburg native who was a distance runner at Virginia Tech and graduated with an English degree from the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, was named the director-in-waiting of Virginia Tech's track and field programs in August 2023, when longtime director Dave Cianelli announced his intention to retire at the conclusion of the season. Then in February, the Virginia Tech women's team won a third consecutive ACC indoor championship. Thomas officially took over the program in July after Cianelli crossed the finish line of his illustrious career, then put together a staff and wrapped up a year of craziness watching Hocker do what many thought was unattainable.

Now, the starter's gun is set to launch the first event of the Thomas era, starting Friday afternoon with the Virginia Tech

Invitational cross-country meet held on the Hokies' home course. Things get real at that point, as Thomas attempts to sustain the legacy built by a man who led the Hokies to 22 ACC team championships and 20 NCAA individual championships in 23 seasons.

"The big reason any of this happened was because of Dave Cianelli," Thomas said. "He gave me my first big opportunity. ... I'll probably never match his record – it's historically good. He had sustained success, and I just hope I can maintain that because everything is changing, with the NCAA and the ACC going to 18 teams and all that stuff."

"But I'm excited and ready for it. At least I've had the best mentor that I could have hoped for and the best person. I grew to respect Dave even more and more through the years."

Thomas joined Cianelli's original staff in 2001 and spent 17 years working under Cianelli, playing a major role in all those championships during Cianelli's tenure. He has been a national assistant coach of the year and coached national champions, including in 2018 when the Virginia Tech men's distance medley relay team of Vince Ciattei, Greg Chiles, Patrick Joseph, and Neil Gourley won the national title.

Several months after that event, Thomas left to be the associate men's head coach at the University of Oregon, taking advantage of an opportunity to coach at arguably the nation's preeminent distance program.

For those without knowledge of the distance running world, coaching the distance runners at Oregon is the football equivalent of coaching at Alabama or Texas.

"It was such a hard decision to leave" Virginia Tech, Thomas said. "You've been at one place for 17 years, and I loved the coaches and athletes here. I'm not a guy who likes change, but I knew it was an opportunity that would make me better, and it would challenge me in ways that I had never been challenged."

"At Oregon, there's just an expectation and a huge spotlight. I needed to get out of my comfort zone – and I certainly did that. It was hard on me and my family, but extremely rewarding."

While at Oregon, six of his runners claimed national championships. A coaching change at the top at Oregon led to Thomas leaving and returning to Blacksburg midway through last year, with Cianelli hinting of plans to retire and creating a potential opportunity for Thomas to oversee the program. Cianelli made those plans official in August 2023, and Virginia Tech Athletics' leadership



PHOTO COURTESY OF VT ATHLETICS

Ben Thomas '92, a Lynchburg native who was a distance runner at Virginia Tech and graduated with an English degree, coached an Olympic gold medalist this summer and now oversees Virginia Tech's track and field programs.

put Thomas in charge.

"I'm really happy that the administration decided on him, because I felt like he was the best fit for the program moving forward," Cianelli said. "He's an alum of Virginia Tech, he's been a part of this program, and he's had a lot of success. I felt like the transition would be smooth with him, and I'm happy that's how it ended up."

Cianelli admitted that the recent changes in college athletics played a role in his decision to retire. He said he knows that Thomas will have to do things differently to enjoy continued success.

Thomas understands this, too. Name, image, and likeness (NIL) rules now allow for college athletes to profit from their name, image, and likeness and allow universities to provide those NIL opportunities. Universities unwilling to invest in their top athletes in all sports run the risk of losing them.

In addition, the NCAA is increasing scholarship limits for certain individual sports. In women's track, the scholarship limit will go from 18 to 45, and in men's track, from 12.5 to 45. The increases are scheduled to take effect for the 2025-26 season.

Conference and individual university administrators continue to meet to decide how to navigate through these changes. An increase in scholarships

See **THOMAS**, Page 8



PHOTO COURTESY OF VT ATHLETICS

Virginia Tech's new director of track and field Ben Thomas was overcome with emotion after one of his athletes, Cole Hocker, won the gold medal in the men's 1,500-meter race at the Olympics held in Paris in late August.

Offensive spotlight: Bhayshul Tuten

As the Hokies' season has now begun, Tech running back Bhayshul Tuten looks to put the ACC on notice with his play this year.

After a 2023 campaign resulting in 863 rushing yards and Second Team All-ACC All-Purpose recognition, the intrigue surrounding the senior is palpable beyond Blacksburg.

Standing at 5-foot-11 and weighing 209 pounds, Tuten combines a unique mix of downhill ferocity and precise tempo into his running game. The Paulsboro, New Jersey native led Tech in rushing yards last year and totaled 1,633 all-purpose yards over 13 starts. A staggering 654 of his rushing yards were found after contact, a total that makes up more than 75% of his total running yardage. Tuten also eclipsed 100 yards in four different outings last season (Tulane, Virginia, Syracuse, Pittsburgh), his most impressive performance being his 136-yard affair in a rainy Military Bowl.

Additionally, Tuten caught 27 passes for 239 yards and a pair of touchdowns last season, often finding himself outside of a pure running scheme in the Tech offense. Heading into the season, Tuten's potential was recognized with preseason watch list mentions from the Maxwell Award, Doak Walker Award and Paul Hornung Award.

One of Tuten's strongest aspects of his running game is his patience behind the offensive line. Behind experienced offensive linemen Bob Schick and Parker Clements, Tuten utilized their space-

creating abilities to burst through gaps and make big plays on offense.

Against SEC foe Vanderbilt last weekend, Tuten shined brightest when he recorded a 24-yard rushing touchdown to open the Hokies' offense in the second half, finding a crease created by the leaders on the offensive line. Signs point to Tuten having yet another impressive season after becoming the lead back of Tech's top 25 ranked rushing offense in 2023. Against a Marshall defense that allowed 182.4 rushing yards per game last season, look for offensive coordinator Tyler Bowen to involve the tailback early and often.

Tuten doesn't find success exclusively in the running back department. One of the largest motivators behind his All-ACC All-Purpose recognition last season was his ability to return kicks. Tuten's speed was demonstrated last year when he returned 19 kickoffs for 550 yards and two touchdowns.

As one of five FBS players to record two or more kickoff return touchdowns, Tuten showcased his explosiveness with a 99-yard kickoff return touchdown against Florida State and a 94-yarder against Virginia. Ranking 20th overall for accrued kickoff yards amongst FBS players, Tuten's ability to survey incoming defenders when returning kicks is an ability that special teams coordinator Stu Holt appreciates. The Thundering Herd allowed 17.6 yards per kickoff last season, so look for Tuten to challenge the odds and build his return yardage total this Saturday.

Virginia Tech Athletics



PHOTO COURTESY OF VT ATHLETICS

Senior Bhayshul Tuten looks to grow from explosive first season as a Hokie.

Know the foe: Marshall Thundering Herd

Virginia Tech football is set for its first home game of the season with a familiar foe, Marshall, marking the eleventh meeting in their series history.

Last season, the Hokies traveled to Huntington, West Virginia, where they came up short against the Thundering Herd. Now, the matchup shifts to Lane Stadium/Worsham Field, where Tech aims to bounce back from last year's road matchup. Kickoff is scheduled for Saturday, Sept. 7 at 4:30 p.m., and fans can catch the action on CW Sports. Let's dive into this week's edition of Know the Foe, presented by AAA to see what Marshall has in store.

The Sun Belt Conference team will step into one of the toughest atmospheres in college football when they visit Blacksburg, following a 6-7 overall finish. In response to their inconsistent season, Marshall head coach Charles Hugg made several strategic additions to his coaching staff for the 2024 season. Notable promotions include former analysts Aaron Dobson and Bob Shoop. Dobson, who previously served as an offensive analyst, is now coaching wide receivers alongside Cody Crill, who transitions from the XFL's D.C. Defenders as a tight ends coach to Marshall's

offensive line coach. Shoop has taken over as defensive coordinator, with added responsibility for the safeties.

Under new direction, Marshall dominated their season opener, defeating Stony Brook 45-3. The Thundering Herd racked up 549 yards of total offense, including 21 fourth-quarter points. Key players to watch include quarterback transfers Stone Earle and Braylon Braxton, who each threw for two touchdowns. Earle, who transferred from North Texas, started the game and played into the third quarter, while Braxton, a Tulsa transfer, took over early in the second half. Cole Pennington also contributed, throwing a touchdown pass. Together, the trio completed 21 of 32 passes for 290 yards.

Other offensive standouts include running back A.J. Turner, who rushed for 119 yards on just eight carries, highlighted by an 80-yard touchdown run. Wide receiver Christian Fitzpatrick, a recent transfer from Michigan State and Louisville, had four catches for 97 yards and a touchdown, making him a key player for the Hokies' secondary to watch. Another threat is wide receiver Elijah Metcalf, a transfer from Middle Tennessee,

who contributed two touchdowns and 50 receiving yards.

On the defensive side of the ball, Marshall has retained key talent, including defensive lineman Mike Green, who is coming off a strong 2023 season with 43 tackles, 9.0 tackles for loss, 4.5 sacks and six QB hurries. Green started the year strong in the season opener, recording a career-high nine tackles and 1.5 sacks. Florida transfer Chris Thomas also made an impact on the defensive line with a career-best six tackles and two pass breakups. In the secondary, cornerback Jordan Reagan added to the Herd's defensive prowess with an interception.

These defensive standouts, combined with their offensive weapons, make Marshall a formidable opponent for the Hokies as they head into their second matchup of the season.

Virginia Tech Athletics

CROSSWORD ANSWERS

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MONTGOMERY SPORTS

Sports notes: ACC Football Championship Game

Marty Gordon

NRVsports@ourvalley.org

Tickets for the 2024 Atlantic Coast Conference Football Championship Game are on sale now at Ticketmaster.com and through the ACC's official website at theACC.com.

The 20th ACC Football Championship Game will kick off at 8 p.m. on ABC Saturday, Dec. 7, at Bank of America Stadium in Charlotte, North Carolina. This is the 15th time in the last 16 years that the game will be held in primetime.

In addition to the 2024 ACC Football Championship Game, ACC fans of all ages can take part in weekend festivities including Fan Fest, which will take place in uptown Charlotte at Romare Bearden Park Friday, Dec. 6, 3-9 p.m., and Saturday, Dec. 7, 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Free and open to the public, fans can enjoy pre-game fun with appearances by ACC Mascots, tailgate games, giveaways, and more.

The 2024 ACC Football Championship Game will be the first under the ACC's new seven-year scheduling model with 17 teams and the top two teams based on the highest winning percentage in regular-season conference play participating in the championship game. If necessary, the league's tiebreaker policy will be used to

determine the participants.

Sohrabi's 300th win

The Radford University women's soccer program picked up their first road win of the season 2-0 over Mount St. Mary's Saturday afternoon thanks to a pair of goals from Helena Willson and Lilly Short. The victory marked a historic milestone for head coach Ben Sohrabi as it was his 300th with the Highlanders.

Sohrabi is entering his 28th season as the head coach of the Radford women's soccer program.

Coach Sohrabi has proven to be the most successful coach in the history of the Big South. He ranks first in overall wins, conference wins, winning percentage, tournament victories, tournament championships and NCAA Tournament appearances in league history. He also sits first in overall winning percentage (min. 50 games), longest tenured and third in Big South Tournament percentage (min. 10 games).

His personal accolades include 2002, 2011, 2013 and 2018 Big South Coach of the Year honors and a pair of VaSID Coach of the Year nods (1997, 2008).

Sohrabi, who has been at the helm since 1996, stands as the only coach in Radford women's soccer history to post 100 or more wins and 10 seasons of 10 or more victories, including four of 15 or more. Among current Radford

head coaches, Sohrabi has the most Big South tournament titles and holds the record across all athletics program's overall mark with eight. Of the program's 130 Big South wins since 1993, the most among conference schools all-time, 120 have come on Sohrabi's watch.

In his 27 seasons on the sidelines, Sohrabi has guided 143 All-Big South performers, 13 players of the year, five freshmen of the year, 46 state team selections and 25 academic all-conference honorees.

Georgia Tech game sold out

Homecoming week just got a little better, as Virginia Tech Athletics announced Monday that the Virginia Tech football game against Georgia Tech on Oct. 26 is now sold out.

With now four of the Hokies' home games sold out (Clemson, Georgia Tech, Marshall, Rutgers), limited inventory remains so fans are encouraged to act quickly by purchasing single-game tickets to guarantee their seat in Lane Stadium for the remaining contests (Boston College, Virginia), which are expected to sell out.

New Hokie text

Virginia Tech Athletics is thrilled to announce its partnership with Vozzi, a leading SMS service provider, to launch a brand-new text alerts program designed to bring Hokies fans closer to the action

than ever before.

This exciting collaboration allows us to deliver personalized, timely and engaging content directly to our loyal supporters' phones. With the introduction of Vozzi's advanced text messaging platform, Tech Athletics can now offer fans a more tailored experience. Text message subscribers will receive customized messages, exclusive ticket offers, up-to-the-minute gameday information, and access to exciting giveaways, ensuring that they never miss a moment.

Key benefits for fans who opt-in:

Personalized Messages: Receive content that matches your interests, from insider team news to special announcements.

Exclusive Ticket Offers: Get access to ticket deals and promotions, ensuring you never miss a game.

Gameday Information: Stay informed with real-time updates on weather, parking, and event schedules.

Giveaways and Merch: Participate in exclusive contests and giveaways, be in the know for unique merchandise and more.

It's encouraged that all fans opt-in to SMS and set their preferences to ensure they receive the most relevant updates. By personalizing your experience, fans can stay more connected and enjoy the benefits of being the first to know about special offers and news.

Representing Bobcat Nation on a Swiss mountaintop

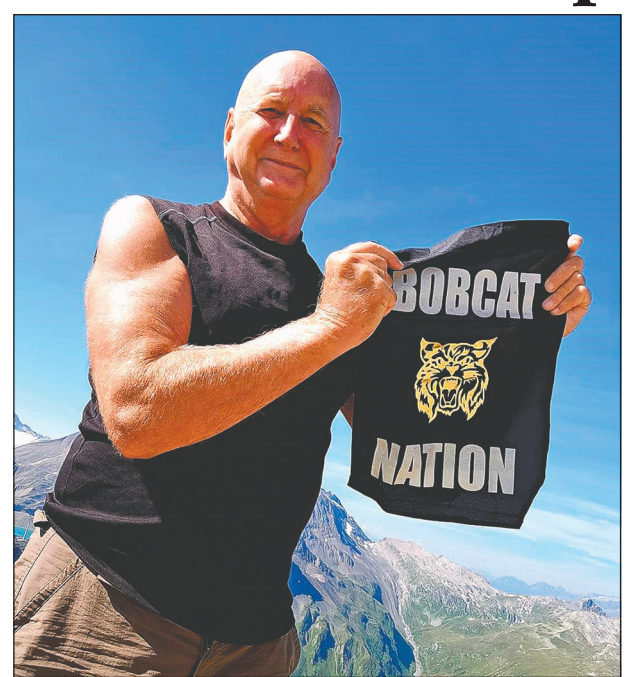


PHOTO COURTESY OF FRANK TAYLOR

Former assistant Radford High School wrestling coach Frank Taylor and two-time wrestling state champion Julian Minter represent Radford Wrestling while mountain-climbing in Switzerland. Taylor, an avid mountain climber, says he "raise[s] a Bobcat Nation flag at the summit of every mountain I climb."

Outdoor report

Virginia Gray Fox Project needs landowner participation

Virginia Tech has initiated its Virginia Gray Fox Project (VGFP), led by Dr. Marcella Kelly and Ph.D. student Victoria Monette of the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife Conservation. Funded by the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR), the project's objective is to ascertain the status of the gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*) that, anecdotally, appears to have decreased in the Old Dominion. To accomplish that goal, Tech researchers will be positioning trail cameras across the Commonwealth in a wide variety of public and private land habitats.

In 2024, researchers will focus on Virginia's western counties and will have gained data on the entire state by the time the three-year project ends. Leah Card, furbearer project leader for DWR, gave an overview of the fox's status and the study.

"Over the past 20 years, gray fox populations have been reported to be in decline in many states, including those in the Midwest and along the East Coast," she said. "Sightings of gray fox in Virginia have also been in decline, with fewer observations reported by Virginia bow hunters over the past 20 years—a decrease of 66.1 percent.

"The number of gray fox pelts sold by trappers to Virginia fur dealers also declined 97.2 percent over this time. Despite this anecdotal evidence of decline, there haven't been any published studies in Virginia on the gray fox population status, and little is known about the current distribution and status of them in the state. Given this lack of information, the VGFP is very important for us to have a better understanding of the population in Virginia."

Card relates that a few potential reasons for the species' regression have been suggested, including the loss of early successional habitat, increased urbanization, and increased competition with coyotes. Gray foxes don't tend to do as well in urban areas, as compared to other mesocarnivores—such as the red fox and coyote—as studies suggest grays may require forest cover. In addition, coyotes may impact this canid either through direct predation or through competition over the same prey resources. Gray foxes, the biologist continued, may avoid areas used by coyotes for these reasons.

Monette says that some people do not know that the term "mesocarnivores" refers to small- to medium-

sized carnivores that consume primarily meat, but also insects and vegetation make up 20-30 percent of their diet. Gray foxes have a relatively generalist diet, consuming primarily small mammals and birds and eggs, but will also eat frogs, insects, berries and fruits. Grays also require forest cover and can climb trees. There is only one other canid species in the world known to have the ability to climb.

"Something else that may be worth noting is that gray foxes are historically a native canid species to Virginia, while red foxes (another competitor) and coyotes are not historically native to the East Coast," she said.

Wildlife disease has also been suggested as a contributing factor, as these creatures are susceptible to diseases and parasites such as canine distemper virus, parvovirus, heartworm, and, in rare instances, rabies.

Card admits that surveying an elusive creature such as the fox is a challenge, and that's where state sportsmen and sportswomen as well as wildlife enthusiasts can contribute. "We can use the help of interested landowners to increase the number and spatial range of

game cameras used for the project," Card said. "We are inviting landowners who own camera traps/trail cameras (or who would like to purchase one) to set the cameras out on their lands to survey for gray foxes and other wildlife."

"For the 2025 and 2026 summer seasons, we also are interested in gaining access to private lands to set up project cameras. Victoria Monette has created a form for interested individuals and there is a set protocol for how the camera(s) should be set up, so that the data can be compared with the other cameras in the study. The cameras should be set along a wildlife trail, stream, road, or any existing pathway where wildlife including foxes are likely to travel."

Even if gray foxes are not observed by the camera, continues Card, this is still useful data as it may suggest that they are not using the area. Other ways that the public can help is by being good wildlife stewards. Removing attractants such as human or pet food, securing trash, and protecting chicken coops or rabbit pens with proper fencing, can prevent conflicts with wildlife such as foxes and keep them from associating humans with

food.

Lastly, the public can help collect data on wildlife and plants by taking photos, with location and date information, and sharing this information with other citizen science programs.

Summer 2024 the focus is on the Appalachian Mountain region (Appalachian Plateau, Valley and Ridge, and Blue Ridge combined); 2025 will be the Piedmont, and 2026 will be the Coastal Plain.

If you are interested in participating in the Virginia Gray Fox Project, submit a form.

Card emphasizes that other species also are of concern. "We rely on the public to gain sighting information on rare mammals in the state, including fishers, spotted skunks, porcupines, armadillos, and Alleghany woodrats," she said. "If anyone observes these animals, either in-person or by capturing a photo with a camera trap, it would be great if they could report it. "Helpful information includes location data where the animal was observed, the date of the observation, and any photos or videos that were taken of the animal."

Bruce Ingram for the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources

Thomas

from page 7

means a substantial increase in costs, something that needs to be absorbed to remain competitive.

"I think our leadership is going to do their best to continue to support track and field here," Thomas said. "We will be successful. It's just how you do it. It's a bit murky right now.

"We'll still be broad based. We'll still be strong in the throws and the pole vault. I'd like to get

the distance area going strong and not just because that's my specialty. Alan Dunson, our sprints coach, has done a great job of recruiting the sprints, so we'll be broad based. That's the way Coach [Cianelli] always did it, and I don't intend on changing that. I'm a distance coach, but I love all the events."

Thomas plans on remaining involved in coaching—a contrast to Cianelli, who handled the

daily administrative tasks of running a program. That only makes sense considering Thomas' record of success.

It also makes sense considering Thomas' growing reputation after Hocker's gold-medal performance at the Olympics. Hocker lives and trains in Blacksburg with Thomas, along with several other former Oregon runners, and that will only enhance Virginia Tech's visibility in the

distance world.

Thomas wants Virginia Tech's programs to be in the top 10 nationally and on a consistent basis. He plans to tweak a few things and implement his own strategies and philosophies to accomplish that goal.

But the foundation of the Virginia Tech track and field programs will remain the same.

"We are what we are, and we're proud of what we are," Thomas said. "Truth, transparency, and

integrity up front always works in the long run.

"Yes, we've got to get the best athletes, but we've got to get the best personalities for this department, this program, and this town, and we can appeal to a lot of people that way. With the support we have and the facilities, I think it's an excellent time. I'm excited about where we're headed."

Jimmy Robertson,
Virginia Tech Athletic