



THE ENTERPRISE

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Olivia's Goodie Shop, a dessert-based home business, will be opening at its East Blue Ridge Street location.

Baked goods shop moves into new location

By Taylor Boyd

Olivia's Goodie Shop, a Stuart-based home business, has found a permanent location across the street from Circle K.

Since she started the business out of her home a couple of years ago, owner Monica Hughes said she's been looking for a commercial space.

"I guess I started getting so much busier that I started running out of room. So, me wanting to have my own commercial space has been a want for a while, it's just I couldn't find anything available," she said.

Once a space became available, Hughes said she was ready to act.

She is considering a grand open-

ing sometime in February.

"I'm going to sell products there as well as have seating available for people if they want to relax. It'll kind of be a comfy vibe, almost like a café vibe. I'm going to be able to have comfy furniture and Wi-Fi in case they want to work off their computers and stuff like that," she said.

In addition to her baked goods, Hughes also plans on selling chocolates and candies and having a coffee bar.

Hughes, who also runs the Patrick County Children Clothing Swap Facebook group, said one idea she wants to implement is a children's (See Baked Goods p. 3)

One charged in a December crash that injured two teens

Oscar Eduardo Vidrio, 30, was charged in connection with the December 16 crash that injured two teens, according to a release from Patrick County Sheriff Dan Smith.

Vidrio, who was born in Mexico, was charged with felony counts of permanent maiming another while driving while intoxicated and driving while intoxicated maiming serious injury, misdemeanor charges of reckless driving, driving while suspended/revoked, driving while intoxicated – first offense and he received two traffic summonses, according to the release.

The case was investigated by Trooper Joe Hylton.

Lauren Worley and Micah Underwood were injured when the vehicle they were traveling in was "struck head-on" in the crash.

Worley, a Patrick County High School student, and Underwood, a Floyd County High School student, were airlifted to a trauma center in Roanoke.

Underwood has since been released, according to reports on social media.

Worley remains hospitalized



Oscar Eduardo Vidrio

and has undergone numerous procedures, including a 5-hour surgery.

A GoFundMe campaign is underway to help with her medical expenses. To donate, visit https://www.gofundme.com/f/lauren-worley-medical-expenses?utm_campaign=p_cp+share-sheet&utm_content=facebook_cta_variant&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.

Council approves revisions to lease agreement

By Taylor Boyd

The Stuart Town Council approved some revisions to the Star Theatre lease at its December 20 meeting.

The town will lease the Theatre to One Family Productions, a non-profit organization, that will operate it.

Councilmember Dave Hoback said one addition to the lease agreement may be to specify the types of events the town will allow the venue to be used for.

"I think in the interest of avoiding headaches and controversies down the road that there probably ought to be some type of policy that may be between Bryce (Simmons, Town Manager), and One Family Productions," he said. "I thought it ought to be tucked in there somewhere."

Councilmember Erica Wade said she was told that the bylaws of One Family state it can't have any affiliation with political events.

"I don't know that that's helpful in this situation like people could still rent" the venue, she said.

Town Attorney Christopher Corbett said the question is whether the council foresees, anticipates, or worries about events that would reflect badly upon the town.

"We don't care if it reflects badly on One Family, but we wouldn't want that to happen. Our concern is the town," he said.

Simmons said he did not believe it would be an issue.

Corbett said it wouldn't hurt to add it to the lease.

"I think I could put something in there that says ... anything that would reflect negatively on the town, we may reserve the right to ask that the event be canceled," Simmons said.

In other matters, the council:

*Approved the meeting minutes as written.

*Discussed the proposed noise ordinance.

*Heard the public works updates.

*Approved giving a donation of \$1,000 each to the Patrick County Food Bank and the Caring Hearts Free Clinic.



Outgoing members of the Patrick County Board of Supervisors, Clyde DeLoach, and Denise Stirewalt, were recognized for their service on December 11.

DeLoach and Stirewalt reflect on tenure

By Taylor Boyd

Clyde DeLoach, of the Blue Ridge District, and Denise Stirewalt, of the Peters Creek District, completed their respective terms as members of the Patrick County Board of Supervisors on Monday, December 11.

DeLoach lost his reelection bid to opponent Steve Marshall.

Stirewalt opted not to seek reelection.

When reflecting on their respective tenures, DeLoach said he en-

joyed and appreciated his four-year tenure on the board.

"The people were good to work with. I think we had a wonderful board and worked well together, and I hope the chemistry continues, and I just wish them the best luck in the world," he said.

Following the election, DeLoach congratulated Marshall, wished him the best, and told him, "If there's anything I can do for him I'll be glad to do it."

(See DeLoach and Stirewalt p. 3)

Lawson honored by school board



Ryan Lawson, of the Peters Creek District, was recognized for his four-year term on the Board of Supervisors with a certificate of achievement.

By Taylor Boyd

The Patrick County School Board recognized Ryan Lawson, of the Peters Creek District, for his tenure on the board with a certificate of achievement at its December 14 meeting.

Lawson served for one term, or four years, on the board.

Rob Martin, of the Dan River District, thanked Lawson for his service and dedication to county schools.

"I appreciate your leadership on this board and helping in the guidance that you've given me. I also

appreciate your family's service in supporting you during your service here with" the board, he said.

Martin said he knows Lawson's family can't get back all the time, family events, and kid's games he missed because of his service, "but I thank them for allowing us to have your service and leadership in those times on this board. I believe your service has made this school's vision a better and brighter one," he said.

"I got a little emotional, so I won't say a lot, but thank you all for everything you've done in help-



Hannah Wood gave a presentation to the board about her mission trip to Gendatesfa, Ethiopia.

ing me along," Lawson said. "We've all done a lot of hard work together, so keep it up and keep moving forward."

In other matters, the board:

*Heard a presentation from Hannah Wood about her mission trip to Gendatesfa, Ethiopia.

*Recognized Martin for serving on the Virginia School Board Association (VSBA) Delegate Assembly.

*Presented Amy Walker, of the Mayo River District, a certificate of achievement for outstanding service. Walker was also elected as the VSBA 2024 regional vice-chair.

*Approved the monthly personnel report.

*Approved the religious exemptions.

*Heard the superintendent's report.

*Approved the consent agenda.

*Approved the 2024 school board meeting schedule.

*Approved the proposed 2024-2025 school calendar as presented.

*Approved the donation of 40 surplus chrome books to the Gendatesfa Primary School.

*Approved the surplus of school bus 14 to be used for EMS training.

A homeowners' guide to ice dams



Snow-covered roofs and landscapes can be beautiful, but also dangerous if conditions that cause ice dams to form are not addressed.

Cold weather contributes to many different conditions that can affect homes. When winds are blowing fiercely, homeowners may soon discover deficits in insulation or in caulking around windows and doors. Icy conditions can cause walkways and stairs to become slick.

One winter condition can cause extensive headaches and damage and could be a mystery to many homeowners. Ice dams occur when warm air in the attic heats up the roof and melts accumulated snow. Water from this melt runs down the roof and re-freezes when it reaches the colder roof edge. A mound of ice forms at the lower edge of the roofline as a result.

Ice dams may help create a picturesque winter vista, with icicles hanging and glinting in the sunlight, but they can cause significant damage. According to experts, ice dams can weigh hundreds of pounds if they get large enough, potentially affecting the structural integrity of roof eaves. In addition, ice dams can cause melted runoff to back up under roof shingles. This water can eventually make its way inside, ruining ceilings and walls. The roof, gutters, insulation, interior dry-wall, and other home surfaces can be damaged if ice dams are left un-

checked.

The following are some conditions that make a home vulnerable to ice dam formation:

1. The presence of snow on the roof.
2. An average outdoor temperature that is 32 F or lower.
3. A roof surface temperature above 32 F at its higher points and below 32 F at the lower end.
4. Indoor heat making its way to the underside of the roof.

Homeowners should take a few steps to address ice dams. The first is preventing future ice dams from forming. According to First American Roofing and Siding, LLC, improving insulation in the ceiling below the attic and addressing any inefficiencies in the home is necessary. A professional can do a blower door test, which works by depressurizing the home and using a thermal camera to find areas where insulation is poor. In addition, adequate ventilation under the roof deck is necessary so cold air can circulate and prevent the attic from getting so warm that it will melt the snow on the roof.

The next step is to remove excess snow from the roof with a roof rake and keeping gutters clear. If ice dams have already formed, hire a professional to remove them, as it can be dangerous to do it oneself.



Tourism Talks

Hi Patrick, I hope you had a wonderful holiday season and that it was filled with joy and blessings. I wanted to share some exciting news with you about the growth of tourism in our county. We've had more visitors to our center and throughout the county and have seen several new faces. Some of these tourists have even decided to become residents.

Our county has some new key players, including a County Administrator, Economic Development Director, and Park and Recreation Director. These individuals are all working together to grow our economy and make our county a better place to live and visit. We would love to hear your thoughts on our lovely home and keep the lines of communication open for the upcoming year.

Tourism aims to see the county flourish with increased outdoor recreation opportunities, seasonal events, music festivals, and heritage festivals. We're also excited to announce that the Star Theater is now online, and we anticipate having more to offer you. Thanks to the support of our various civic

organizations and all the work and events they have, we should be able to provide fun and entertainment throughout the entire year.

As the new year progresses, Tourism is planning a Summit again. The tentative date is April 8th, focusing on strengthening our outdoor recreation. We will highlight our various trails and the trail development and maintenance work.

We also want to give a big shout-out to all lodging entities throughout the county, from primitive camping to the five-star luxury of the Primland Resort. Please check out our website and see the long list of places to stay right here in our backyard. We bring visitors in, and you provide a place for them to stay. Thank you!

Well, that's enough said for now. I pray for peace, prosperity, and love for you, Patrick. Happy New Year! We have much to celebrate. As always, "Come get lost and find yourself here."

Take care,
James Houchins, Director of Tourism (jhouchins@co.patrick.va.us)

Sales campaign underway for award-winning PC Magazine

The Patrick County Magazine won the "Best Magazine Guide" award at the 2023 Southwest Virginia Tourism Awards, and you have the opportunity to participate in the next volume.

The Patrick County Chamber and Tourism department are now gearing up for Volume 3, Spring 2024 edition. Like the 2023 editions, the magazine will feature articles about well-known and best kept secret spots. Residents and visitors will continue to enjoy reading about Patrick County. The

magazine is circulated across the region at events, regional visitor centers and local businesses.

The chamber is responsible for selling the advertisement spaces in this magazine. Don't miss the opportunity to market your business, event or organization to current residents, new residents and visitors.

Contact the chamber for more information at (276) 694-6012 or email director@patrickchamber.com. Ads must be reserved by January 20.

Funding boost on the way for VA child care centers

Edwin J. Viera
Virginia News Connection

In the new year, a new plan will put \$448 million toward early childhood education in Virginia.

Known as "Building Blocks for Virginia Families," Gov. Glenn Youngkin's plan provides funds to help child care centers address staff shortages and help families struggling to pay for care.

A Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission report found about three in four Virginia families cannot afford child care.

Allison Gilbreath, senior policy and progress director at Voices for Virginia's Children, said the money fills the gap left when federal pandemic funding ended.

"When those dollars stopped back in June, many child care centers in Virginia were facing hard decisions of whether they were going to be able to stay open," Gilbreath recounted. "Because their families could not afford to pay the subsidy that they were receiving from the federal government."

The Economic Policy Institute reported infant care in Virginia costs more than \$14,000 a year. While the money remedies certain problems, Gilbreath noted child care is still in short supply. The plan is expected to bolster parents' choice of home providers, church programs and private day care centers.

Some \$25 million of the funding will go toward eliminating child care deserts, which are a big problem in Virginia, according to the Center for American Progress.

Gilbreath stressed the conversation about how lack of care affects families in rural areas must be more inclusive.

"There are a lot of grandparents raising grandchildren, especially in our more rural parts of the community, and they need access to child care, but affordable," Gilbreath explained. "It really helps lessen the stress within a household, and it helps children develop those social and emotional skills they really need to thrive."

Facilities known as "early learning hubs" will be launched to help fill the gaps. If Youngkin's plan is successful, Virginia can buck long-standing trends in early childhood education. The Annie E. Casey Kids Count Data Book finds more than half of Virginia



3-year-olds and 4-year-olds are not enrolled in preschool programs, reflecting a national trend.

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Baked Goods

(cont. from page 1)

clothing swap area. She wants to set up bins and shelves for parents to turn in unwanted or outgrown children's clothing, and allow other parents to be able to peruse the items collected.

"They can just get it if they need it. So, it's kind of like a take if you need, leave something if you don't kind of thing. I just want it to be like a safe space for parents if they do need something," she said.

Hughes will also donate five percent of her quarterly sales to an establishment of her choosing that is involved with autism.

"My daughter is autistic. Last quarter we donated to PHS Autism Center in Martinsville," she said.

While she'll be selling her baked goods at the Stuart location, Hughes

said she will continue to bake them at the Spencer Penn Centre.

"There's a kitchen set up in the space at Stuart, but it's not a huge commercial kitchen like Spencer Penn has. Everything will be baked every other day. I'll go down there after the shop closes and bake in their kitchen, and then just transport it to Stuart," she said.

Hughes began partnering with Spencer Penn in October to offer baking classes in exchange for letting her use their commercial kitchen.

So far, Hughes has held an adult charcuterie board class and a cupcake and cuties class for children. She is considering doing a couples class for Valentine's Day.

"Sometimes we can have any-

where from four students to 15," she added.

Since starting, Hughes said her business has been great.

"When I first started here, I guess people didn't know who I was or what I was doing," she said. "I think positive reviews that I've gotten and word of mouth in a small town travels far because business has been really good."

Hughes said she also enjoys preparing every order she's received, especially the custom cake orders.

"I give my customers credit, sometimes they come up with really unique ideas for me to do stuff, and I just love it. I have fun with it," she said.

Her most popular items include cupcakes, gourmet cookies, pas-

tries, and layered cakes. She also makes parfaits, fruit and cheese-cake trays, cinnamon buns, and other items for purchase.

Hughes started her business when she moved to Patrick County from Roanoke as a stay-at-home mom.

"I knew I had a passion for baking, I just didn't know the business aspect of it. It took me a while to learn because I'm a self-taught baker. Everything I learned, I learned from Google and reading books, and watching TikTok," she said.

For more information, go to Facebook.com/Olivia'sGoodieShop, or www.oliviagoodieshop.com.

To contact Hughes call (276) 692-8745 or email her at monica@oliviagoodieshop.com.

DeLoach and Stirewalt

(cont. from page 1)

Along with the people he worked with while on the board, DeLoach said he will miss being able to make a difference for the county.

"I'll especially miss the work I did with VACO (Virginia Association of Counties) and getting to know people across the state," he said.

DeLoach said his favorite memory and one of his biggest accomplishments of being on the board is the first year he, Stirewalt, and Clayton Kendrick, came onto the board, they were able to balance the budget and turn the county's finances around a little bit.

Additionally, "I think the connections I made across the state were helpful, and I think they could be followed up and some good things done," he said. "I think we became more professional, and I hope it keeps going, it should."

DeLoach also believes Beth Simms,

the new County Administrator, has the skills and the ideas to make a real difference "if people will work with her."

One thing he wishes he could have accomplished was bringing 24-hour medical care to Patrick County.

"From the first, I said we really probably couldn't get a hospital, and then it seemed to fall in our lap, and now it's not going to work. So, I'm disappointed in that. I wish in a sense we had pushed harder to just get just the emergency room and maybe two or three beds, and not be pulled in other directions," he said.

DeLoach said he hopes the encouragement to take more classes and learn more about the job continues for other board members.

"I hope they work hard to learn more. There's more to it than just sitting there and saying yes or no," he said.

DeLoach said he is leaving the board with his head held high, and noted there is no disgrace in losing.

"I think the disgrace is in thinking you can do something for people and not trying," he said. "I hold no ill will toward anybody. Somebody asked me about my opponent, and I said, 'You know, he was just trying to do the same thing, win the election.' Which he did, so more power to him."

For her part, Stirewalt said she felt she had accomplished the three main goals that prompted her to run for office, including a strong change in leadership, a stable financial status for the county, and restoring the board's reputation.

In addition to meeting the goals that led her to run, Stirewalt also feels she aided in getting more paid Emergency Medical Services (EMS).

Stirewalt said she wishes she could have accomplished getting "full paid

EMS staff, EMS building to house ambulances, recruitment of a health-care provider" during her tenure on the board, but those tasks will fall to the current leadership.

"My family needs me more now," she said, adding that she will miss brainstorming with county staff, former staff, and other board members to see how they can make things better.

She expressed gratitude to her employers - Felecia Shelor, Terri Birkett, and Vicki Bennett - for their understanding and cooperation in allowing her to do her job as a supervisor during working hours.

"It shows their dedication to the county as well," she said. "And I'd like to thank all of the county staff and elected officials for their dedication, and for working tirelessly to improve the quality of life in our beautiful county."

Food service, accommodation employees lead initial unemployment claims

Employees in the accommodation and food services sectors were the leading industries reported among those filing initial unemployment insurance claims, according to the Virginia Department of Workforce Development and Advancement (DWDVA).

The number of initial claims increased in the latest filing week to 2,019 but remained slightly below typical pre-pandemic volumes experienced in 2019, the agency added.

For the filing week ending December 23, seasonally unadjusted initial claims for unemployment insurance in Virginia were 2,019, which was an increase of 302 claimants from the previous week. Continued weeks claimed totaled 12,341, which was little changed from the previous week but an increase of 33 percent from

the 9,286 continued claims from the comparable week last year. An industry was reported for ninety-three percent of continued claims. Of those, over half (58 percent) of continued claims were from administrative and support and waste management (1,769), professional, scientific, and technical services (1,741), manufacturing (1,205), and health care and social assistance (1,087) and construction (894). Eligibility for benefits is determined on a weekly basis, and so not all weekly claims filed result in a benefit payment. This is because the initial claims numbers represent claim applications; claims are then reviewed for eligibility and legitimacy.

In the week ending December 23, the advance figure for seasonally adjusted initial claims was 218,000, an increase of 12,000 from the previ-

ous week's revised level. The previous week's level was revised up by 1,000 from 205,000 to 206,000. The advance number of actual initial claims under state programs, unadjusted, totaled 272,610 in the week ending December 23, an increase of 31,570 (or 13.1 percent) from the previous week. There were 269,877 initial claims in the comparable week in 2022.

Looking at preliminary data, most U.S. states reported increases on a seasonally unadjusted basis. California's preliminary weekly change (+5,594) was the largest increase. Missouri's preliminary weekly change (+4,556) was the second largest increase. New Jersey's preliminary weekly change (+4,554) was the third largest increase. Ohio's preliminary weekly change (+2,593) was the fourth largest increase. Virginia had the 24th largest increase (+252).

Recycle your live Christmas tree

Patrick County High School's Fishing Team and the Patrick County High School's FFA Club, in partnership with Fairy Stone State Park and the Patrick County Soil and Water Conservation District, are collecting live Christmas trees to help

with the fish habitat at Fairy Stone Lake.

The two drop off locations are the Patrick County SWCD office, located at 104 Via Avenue in Stuart, (look for signs), or the office at Fairy Stone State Park, which can be reached at (276) 930-2424.

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From our sister paper, the Henry County Enterprise

Regarding Mabry Mill

When I was a kid, one of my favorite cartoons was "A Pup Named Scooby Doo." It was a Scooby Doo spin-off where Scooby was still a puppy and the gang was in elementary school.

This show contains what is to this day one of my favorite running gags in television history. In every single episode, when the gang would learn that some variety of ghost or goblin was terrorizing somebody, team leader Fred would always announce that he knew the true identity of the spook: it was none other than neighborhood bully Red Herring.

Of course, it was never Red Herring, except for the one time that Fred didn't accuse him of the crime. It was a few years before I understood the joke behind the bully's name, but I was endlessly amused by Fred continually accusing this poor kid of crimes he did not — and in many cases could not — commit.

I think about this gag a lot, usually in the context of Barack Obama and Joe Biden.

During his tenure as President, Obama was blamed for so many things that "Thanks, Obama" became a running joke I still hear quoted to this day. Joe Biden has picked up the mantle since becoming President and is routinely blamed for everything from gas prices to county-level political decisions to, in all likelihood, particularly bad hangnails.

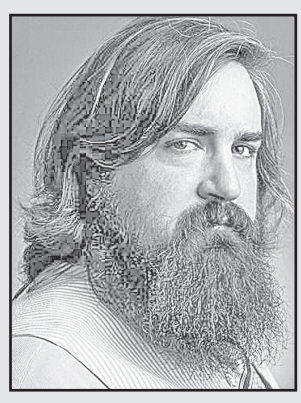
Most recently, I've heard him blamed for the situation at Mabry Mill.

For those who haven't heard the sad news about this 100+ year old institution located on the Blue Ridge Parkway in Meadows of Dan, the folks who run Mabry Mill have reached the end of their ten year operating contract and will not be renewing in 2024. The National Park Service is going to begin seeking a new operator for the restaurant portion in 2024 with hope that the restaurant will reopen in 2025. In the meantime, a company called America's National Parks will maintain operation of the gift shop and the mill itself when the site reopens in the spring.

Let me be the first to say that I'm very disappointed I won't be able to eat any Mabry Mill buckwheat pancakes in the coming year. I've been a regular visitor to Mabry Mill since I was a tiny child. I'll admit that I felt some charm was lost when they got rid of the lunch counter and the old-timers who used to sit there, but it's still a cherished landmark.

No one knows why the operators decided not to renew their contract. The operators have declined to comment publicly and the National Park Service has not issued an explanation either. With no answers forthcoming, I've seen many social media users point their fingers squarely at the one evil mastermind who would surely delight in a rural restaurant depriving the public of pancakes for a year: Joe Biden!

The theory is that when Biden set the federal minimum wage at \$15 an hour in 2022, it made it unprofitable to operate the restaurant. I doubt that's the case, and it would



By Ben R. Williams

also require us to ignore the fact that unions have been fighting for a \$15 minimum wage for so long that after inflation, minimum wage should now be \$24 per hour.

I've also heard social media users comment that the National Park Service should take over the restaurant, but unfortunately, they're simply not set up to do that. It would be like the Henry County Board of Supervisors deciding to open a taxpayer-funded sports bar, an idea I mention only because I literally heard a dude make that suggestion during the public comment segment of a Board of Supervisors meeting some years ago. Additionally, the National Park Service can't just make the restaurant stay open. A federal agency compelling someone to operate a restaurant against their will would, at the very least, be an example of government overreach, not to mention a pretty entertaining Supreme Court case.

I want to preface what comes next by saying that I have absolutely no idea why the Mabry Mill operators have chosen not to renew their contract, nor do I even know who the operators are. However, I can tell you why I personally would not renew that contract.

The first reason is that it's a seasonal business and only operates between late spring and fall. It's hard to make a steady income when your business is shuttered for nearly half the year.

Secondly, the dining area at Mabry Mill only seats 65 people. It's consistently busy when it's open — I can't remember a time when I haven't had to wait for a table — but if you can only seat 65 people, you NEED to be running full-tilt. That's a very small number of seats for a restaurant that isn't offering fine dining and the associated high prices.

But the final reason is the biggest one. If I decided to go into the restaurant business, I would never want to operate a restaurant within the confines of the National Park Service or any other federal agency.

That's because if the federal government shuts down, your restaurant shuts down too, and there isn't a thing you can do about it.

But have there been any recent politicians who seem untroubled by the prospect of a government shutdown, or perhaps even seem eager for it?

I can think of a few, and they ain't Red Herring or Joe Biden.

Betwixt and between the old and new

We are in the no-man's-land of time.

Between Christmas and New Year's, life is just different. We float along easily, cheerfully, lightly in this period of rest or fun. There are no obligations and very little markers of time.

Oh yes, we may go to work, but for many jobs, the days are easier. There aren't a whole lot of expectations for the last week of December.

Even if there were hopes of accomplishing something in the office, there's hardly a leg to stand on to do so, since so many employees are out on vacation anyway, or juggling their schedules to accommodate their kids off school.

We do the bare minimum to get by. A lot of what there is to do was done ahead anyway, and for the rest, customers aren't so picky this week. They can wait until next week, or even the week after, for what they need. Customers and clients far more cheerfully accept the excuse that it can't be done this week than they would at any other time of the year.

Of course, this ease doesn't apply to those who work in retail. Working in a store must feel like being in a madhouse at this time. First, there's the mad rush to get rid of the Christmas merchandise, whether by storing it away somewhere else, throwing it away ('tis the season for dumpster-diving behind stores - just don't get caught! That would be embarrassing) or, perhaps more commonly, immediately rushing out with the 50% off and 75% off stickers.

And our sympathies are extended to those who work taking customer returns on those gifts that weren't what they were hoping for.

But even if your job is quite busy this time of year, your nights are more than likely free.

No organization dares schedule



Holly Kozelsky

an after-work meeting this time of year. For once, we can go straight home to our families each week-night and make a proper dinner without rushing about.

For those with kids, blissfully, there are no dance classes, no band practices, no music lessons, no club meetings to rush off to. Your nights that normally end at 9 p.m. (perhaps with hungry kids still demanding a hot dinner) are both a mere memory, and a burden being more and more dreaded as we get used to this rare free time, knowing we'll lose this comparable comfort in the second week of January.

And unlike Christmas, New Year's is fairly free of obligation. Sure, there may be a party to go to, and you may even be hosting that party.

But it is not nearly as involved as everything Christmas demands — a constant whirlwind of shopping and wrapping and decorating and cooking and hosting and serving.

Of course, all that decorating needs to be undone and stored away, but whether you waste the glory of a three-day empty weekend on that or not is up to you!

Hats off to the three-day weekend that stretches ahead, our last taste of the otherworldliness that marks the holiday season.

(Holly is the executive director of the Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society. She welcomes visitors to the Society's Heritage Center & Museum, at 1 E. Main St., from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays.)

TRRC Grant tapped to expand healthcare training at P&HCC



Pictured: Certified Nurse Aide (CNA) students practice skills such as feeding patients to prepare them for the work they will do upon receiving credentials.

Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC) has been awarded \$149,140 from the Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission to expand healthcare training capacity in Nurse Aide, Clinical Medical Assistant, Medication Aide, and Phlebotomy Technician programs. These programs lead to short-term credentials that quickly allow students to enter high-demand health careers in the region.

"We are grateful for the continued support of the Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission. Their partnership and support of P&HCC ensures our students have access to programs and training that lead to high demand careers in our area," said P&HCC Foundation executive director Tiffani Underwood.

The expansion of programming both on P&HCC's main campus and in partnership with programming at The Franklin Center in Rocky

Mount will increase credentials and help place medical professionals in jobs in the area.

"Career opportunities in the healthcare industry are abundant and pay well, providing economic mobility for our graduates and their families. Patrick & Henry Community College has a strong history of preparing students for these careers, and we are excited to partner with Franklin County and the Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission to offer healthcare certification programs at The Franklin Center. Once a faculty member is hired, P&HCC plans to offer healthcare programming that meets both the interests of students and needs of employers," said P&HCC vice president for workforce, economic and community development Rhonda Hodges.

P&HCC Foundation will provide a dollar for dollar match to supplement TRRC funding.

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Letters to the Editor/Viewpoints Policy

The Enterprise welcomes letters to the editor and/or reader viewpoints of 500 words or less. Submissions may be edited for clarity, length, legal ramifications or general taste at the editor's discretion. We reserve the right to refuse to publish submitted letters for the same reasons. All letters must be signed by an individual and include community. Verifiable sources for information cited must be forwarded to the editor. Letters that do not meet these guidelines will not be considered for publication.

Disclaimer: Viewpoints and opinions expressed in letters selected for publication are the opinions of the writers, and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Enterprise.

Conner recognized for service



The Patrick County Farm Bureau Board of Directors recently recognized and presented Betsy W. Conner with an appreciation plaque for her 22 years of dedicated and devoted service as County Administrative Assistant for Patrick County Farm Bureau. The Patrick County Farm Bureau Board and members extend their congratulations and wish Betsy a wonderful retirement. Pictured is Betsy W. Conner and Jonathan Wood, Patrick County Farm Bureau Board President. (Photo by Sandra W. Heath)

Talk Fraud This Holiday Season

The holidays are a time when friends and family of all ages gather together, share updates on their lives and recount cherished memories. One thing to add to that list this year: a conversation on how to stay safe from fraud.

We know that scammers target people of all ages. Last year 40% of all scams reported to the Federal Trade Commission were from people under the age of 40, and victims over the age of 60 lose the most money to scams on average. So we are all vulnerable to these criminals, and we could all use a little help and guidance. Here are two fraud topics to talk about with your family this holiday season.

What is a question, story or phrase that no one other than your close family would know? Scams targeting parents and grandparents are only becoming more believable with the adoption of Arti-

ficial Intelligence, but no matter how realistic a voice may sound it won't know this private memory or password. Passwords are another critical topic. We all have so many passwords that it's hard to keep straight. This leads many to choose simple passwords or use the same one repeatedly. A quick chat about how you choose and protect your passwords could save someone you love a lot of money.

Lastly, be willing to share. Too many victims of fraud suffer in silence because they are ashamed to admit what happened to them. The truth is that scammers are sophisticated criminals and for victims sharing their story is the best way to protect others and get the support they need.

Visit the AARP Fraud Watch Network at aarp.org/fraudwatch-network or call the AARP Fraud Watch Helpline at 1-877-908-3360.

New filings for initial unemployment claims increase

The number of initial unemployment insurance claims increased in the latest filing week to 1,717, with manufacturing the leading industry for claims, according to the Virginia Department of Workforce Development and Advancement (DWDA).

Initial claim levels remained slightly below typical pre-pandemic volumes experienced in 2019, the DWDA noted.

For the filing week ending December 16, the figure for seasonally unadjusted initial claims for unemployment insurance in Virginia was 1,717, which was an increase of 48 claimants from the previous week. Continued weeks claimed totaled 12,258, which was little changed from the previ-

ous week but an increase of 36% from the 9,027 continued claims from the comparable week last year. An industry was reported for ninety-three percent of continued claims. Of those, over half (59 percent) of continued claims were from professional, scientific, and technical services (1,785), administrative and support and waste management (1,760), manufacturing (1,139), and health care and social assistance (1,097) and retail trade (877). Eligibility for benefits is determined on a weekly basis, and so not all weekly claims filed result in a benefit payment. This is because the initial claims numbers represent claim applications; claims are then reviewed for eligibility and legitimacy.

PCHS Sports Schedule

Patrick County High School Cougars Sports Schedule for the week of Jan. 5-11:

1/5	12pm Boys Basketball at Fort Chiswell HS (Tournament)
1/6	9am Indoor Track Meet at Virginia Military Institute TBA Wrestling Tournament at South Stokes
1/9	7pm Girls Basketball at Floyd
1/10	5pm Wrestling Quad at Carroll County HS 7pm Boys Basketball at Alleghany 7pm Girls Basketball vs Alleghany

Highway Safety Grant Fund Applications Accepted Through February 28

Each year, the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) provides vital federal grant funds to organizations making a difference in their communities through a passion for safety. If your organization is dedicated to helping save lives on Virginia's roadways, please consider applying for a highway safety grant from DMV. Grants empower Virginia-based organizations like nonprofits, colleges and universities, law-enforcement agencies and state and local government agencies to implement campaigns and programs aimed at preventing traffic fatalities, injuries and crashes.

Grant-funded programs strive to prevent impaired driving; decrease speeding; increase seat belt use; or promote pedestrian, motorcyclist, bicyclist, teen or senior driver safety in local communities. Here are some examples of grant-funded projects:

Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety: The National Organization of Youth Safety's Vision Zero for Youth initiative is focused on eliminating pedestrian and bicycle crashes, injuries, and fatalities through safety improvements for children and youth. Grant funding has helped spread awareness by working with community and city leaders to improve safety for youth in areas like school zones, making progress toward the goal of zero crashes.

Motorcycle Safety: The Richmond Ambulance Authority (RAA) is an

organization with a mission to deliver patient-centered care. With help from grant funds the RAA launched the Rider Alert motorcycle safety program to save lives by providing free identification cards to help first responders provide accurate medical assistance to motorcyclists involved in serious collisions.

Drunk Driving Prevention: DRIVE SMART Virginia is an organization dedicated to raising awareness of traffic safety issues to save lives and reduce injuries on Virginia roads. DRIVE SMART used grant funding to create outreach targeted at drunk driving prevention and promote planning for a sober ride home with video advertisement, "Slow Clap," and social media initiatives "What's Your Game Plan?" and "Who's Your Driver?"

Interested applicants are required to complete a grant application training workshop. Workshops begin in January 2024. Applications must be submitted between February 1-28, 2024. Objectives to measure initiative effectiveness are required and funding is determined by the potential impact on the performance objectives. Examples of program evaluation measures and more information on funding areas can be found on our website. For more information about training courses, guidelines and access to applications, contact the DMV program manager in your area.

National average price of gas projected to see yearly decline in 2024 for second straight year

GasBuddy, a PDI company, today released its annual Fuel Price Outlook with some good news for drivers: expect lower gasoline and diesel prices in 2024. The outlook highlights key trends in gasoline and diesel prices, forecasting that, after two years of above average gas prices, 2024 will bring relief at the pump for consumers as several factors contribute to less of a pinch at the pump. GasBuddy expects the yearly national average will drop from \$3.51 per gallon this year to \$3.38 in 2024.

Highlights from GasBuddy's 2024 Fuel Outlook:

- Gas prices still could fall below a national average of \$3 per gallon this winter before starting to rise in late-February, getting close to \$4 per gallon as summer approaches, then mildly declining into summer, with hurricane season presenting uncertainty in late summer.
- Drivers in some California cities could again briefly see prices above \$6 per gallon if major refinery issues develop during the summer, although most major U.S. cities will see prices peak at or slightly below \$4 per gallon in 2024.
- Americans are expected to spend a combined \$446.9 billion on gasoline in 2024. Average yearly spending per household will fall to an estimated \$2,407, down 2% from 2023, and over 12% less compared to 2022.
- Electric vehicles (EVs) and the 2024 presidential election have the potential to impact fuel prices

in the year ahead, with a potential slowdown in the EV transition at stake.

- Memorial Day will be the priciest 2024 holiday at the pump, with the national average price of gasoline expected to be \$3.56-\$4.04 per gallon on the holiday.

"As 2023 fades away, I'm hopeful those \$5 and \$6 prices for gasoline and diesel will also fade into memory," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis for GasBuddy. "The global refining picture continues to improve, providing more capacity and peace of mind that record-setting prices will stay away from the pump in 2024. I anticipate that we'll still have some volatility, unexpected outages and disruptions, and potentially weather-related issues, but I do not expect it to lead to record prices. Offsetting OPEC+'s production cuts is contributing to the rise of U.S. oil production, which now stands at record levels. Combined with Canada, North American oil production could further stabilize countries that have decided to curb oil production."

The outlook forecasts the highest prices will be seen at the peak of the summer driving season in May, with the national average potentially rising as high as \$3.89 per gallon. More uncertainty is expected with hurricane season in late summer. Diesel prices are also predicted to fall incrementally from 2023, peaking at \$4.13 per gallon in March 2024.

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Labor market shows continued strength with moderate job growth in November

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Local Area Unemployment Statistics (“LAUS”, or “the household survey”), the labor force in Virginia continued growing in November by 9,331 to 4,624,846, the number of employed Virginians increased by 47 to 4,492,761 while the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate increased 0.2% to 2.9%.

“While more Virginians are working than ever before and participation in the labor force continues to climb, this month’s flat jobs report suggests the cautious approach we’ve taken in our economic outlook remains appropriate,” said Gov. Glenn Youngkin. “Since day one our economic agenda has resulted in aggressive growth in labor participation and job creation, and we must take bolder steps, as my budget laid out this week, to unleash opportunity for all Virginians.”

The labor force participation rate, which measures the proportion of the civilian population age 16 and older that is employed or actively looking for work, increased to 66.9 percent in November, which is the highest labor force participation rate experienced in Virginia since March 2012.

According to BLS LAUS, Virginia’s seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in November increased by 0.2 percentage points to 2.9 percent, which is 0.3 percentage points below the rate from a year ago. The labor force increased by 9,331 to 4,624,846; and the number of employed Virginians increased by 47 to 4,492,761 as the number of unemployed residents increased by 9,284 to 132,085.

“Over the last year, all regions of the Commonwealth have seen employment growth,” said Secretary of Labor Bryan Slater. “However, with 254,000 job openings in the Commonwealth, our commitment remains with providing the tools Virginians need to improve their job situation and our employers with employees to fill these jobs.”

“Through our innovative framework, we are driving Virginia’s economy for the jobs of today leading to the future,” said Secretary of Com-

	Employment - LAUS		Labor Force - LAUS		Unemployment - LAUS			Non-farm Payroll Employment - CES	
	Level	Δ	Level	Δ	Level	Δ	Rate %	Level	Δ
Jan 2022-Dec 2022*	4,261.6	69.0	4,390.5	79.8	128.9	10.8	2.9	4012.7	99.2
January 2023	4,342.7	12.1	4,487.6	17.3	144.9	5.2	3.2	4128.0	16.1
February 2023	4,359.5	16.9	4,505.4	17.8	145.9	1.0	3.2	4133.1	5.1
March 2023	4,385.5	26.0	4,529.1	23.7	143.6	-2.3	3.2	4136.7	3.6
April 2023	4,410.6	25.1	4,550.8	21.8	140.3	-3.3	3.1	4140.0	3.3
May 2023	4,439.9	29.4	4,574.3	23.5	134.4	-5.9	2.9	4143.5	3.5
June 2023	4,463.1	23.2	4,588.3	13.9	125.2	-9.2	2.7	4145.7	2.2
July 2023	4,481.2	18.1	4,597.5	9.3	116.3	-8.8	2.5	4150.1	4.4
August 2023	4,488.5	7.4	4,601.6	4.1	113.1	-3.2	2.5	4157.8	7.7
September 2023	4,494.5	5.9	4,610.9	9.3	116.5	3.4	2.5	4164.5	6.7
October 2023	4,492.7	-1.7	4,615.5	4.6	122.8	6.3	2.7	4166.2	1.7
November 2023	4,492.8	0.0	4,624.8	9.3	132.1	9.3	2.9	4172.4	6.2
EoP	4,492.8	231.2	4,624.8	234.4	132.1	3.2	2.9	4172.4	159.7

*Levels reflect the January 2022 level. Deltas refer to change in each statistic over the January 2022 – December 2022 period. End of period (“EOP”) deltas reflect the cumulative change in economic indicators from January 2022.

merce Caren Merrick. “We are encouraged by the number of Virginians continuing to seek job opportunities and to be an active participant in strengthening the vitality of the Commonwealth.”

The BLS publishes an additional employment figure from its Current Employment Statistics Survey (“CES” or “establishment survey”). The CES survey uses payroll records of establishment employers and is designed to provide a count of jobs under which the employer pays unemployment insurance. The LAUS survey is based on household interviews conducted each month for the Bureau of Labor Statistics and provides

comprehensive data on the labor force, including those who are employed and unemployed. Establishment survey data reflects changes for updated seasonal adjustment factors, and industry classification conversions (NAICS), as part of the annual benchmarking process.

The household survey only distinguishes between whether a person is employed or unemployed, whereas CES counts each employee that is on an employer’s payroll. CES excludes business owners, self-employed persons, unpaid volunteers and private household workers, and those on unpaid leave or not working because of a labor dispute.

Russell Co. farm leverages success of skincare line to build new manufacturing facility

Bates Family Farm, LLC will create 12 new jobs and invest nearly \$1 million to relocate its manufacturing facility to a 40,000 square foot building that is owned by Russell County to meet growing consumer demand for its skincare products. This space will allow for the development of new products, additional production capacity, and warehouse space, according to Gov. Glenn Youngkin, who made the announcement.

In addition, Bates Family Farm, LLC will construct a new creamery to produce food products, bottled goat milk and artisan cheeses, for wholesale and retail distribution. Bates Family Farm, LLC is committed to purchasing 100% of all expected agricultural products from Virginia, an increase of more than \$2 million over the

next three years as a result of this expansion.

Shannon and Joseph Bates established Bates Family Farm in Russell County in 2013. The company produces a full line of goat milk-based skincare products to include soap, lotion, lip balm, and body cream, that are sold in over 1,000 retail stores and specialty shops across the U.S.

“This AFID grant award and the support we have received from Russell County are critical factors in our decision to move forward with this project. We are honored to grow our business in the county we call home and be part of Virginia’s agricultural community,” said Bates Family Farm CEO Joseph Bates.

The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services worked with Russell Coun-

ty and the Russell County Industrial Development Authority to secure the project for the Commonwealth. Governor Youngkin approved a \$70,000 grant from the Governor’s Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development (AFID) Fund, which Russell County will match with local funds.

“I am pleased to see this AFID award assist in the relocation and expansion of Bates Family Farm, a Virginia home-grown, agricultural business, founded by one of our country’s veterans,” said Youngkin. “This project increases economic development activity in Russell County, provides new jobs in a rural area, and demonstrates our support of the Commonwealth’s dairy industry and to Virginia’s entire agricultural community.”

Youngkin Unveils budget and reforms Tax Code

Gov. Glenn Youngkin unveiled his proposed “Unleashing Opportunity” budget last week during a presentation to the General Assembly’s Joint Money Committee. The budget proposal modernizes Virginia’s tax code and bolsters investments in job growth, workforce development, needed behavioral and mental health support for Virginians, safe communities, good governance measures, and ushers in the largest education budget in Virginia’s history.

“I am proud to present our ‘Unleashing Opportunity’ budget as part of a bold, necessary path forward. Virginia is on the verge of winning the fierce competition among our peer states for jobs, innovation, residents, and opportunity,” said Youngkin. “Unleashing Opportunity means allowing Virginians to keep more of their hard-earned money, being prepared to take good jobs with a great education, in safe communities, where they can find the resources they need when they need them, in a state that understands what taking care of God’s natural resources means, with a government that works efficiently for all Virginians.”

Youngkin’s proposed budget supports critical initiatives, including:

Tax Reform

- *Provides Virginians an additional \$1 billion in tax relief over the biennium
- Cuts income tax rates for all Virginians by 12%
- *Enables low-income Virginians to claim an enhanced Virginia Earned Income Tax Credit, equal to 25% of the federal EITC on top of their 12% individual tax rate cut
- *Modernizes Virginia’s tax code and diversifies the tax base by closing the big tech tax loophole and increasing the sales and use tax

Unleashing Opportunity

- *Invites and challenges our General Assembly members to eliminate the personal

property tax on vehicles

*Unleashes \$100 million to grow high-wage high-tech jobs in Virginia’s emerging “Research Triangle” focused on biotechnology, life science and pharmaceutical manufacturing industries.

*Provides \$150 million to bring state IT systems into the 21st century

Further Drive Excellence in Education

*Proposes the largest education budget in the history of the Commonwealth, with a record \$24 billion investment in our public schools with a nearly \$1 billion increase to support our teachers, students, and parents compared to the previous budget

*Provides \$60 million in ongoing support for Lab Schools to help the operating costs of new and innovative schools throughout the Commonwealth

*Allocates \$40 million to establish the “Diploma Plus” program, to help ensure that every student can obtain an industry-recognized credential in a high-demand field

*Appropriates \$17 million for campus safety and security in coordination with the State Police’s Fusion Center

*Provides a one percent bonus for K-12 for state funded instructional and support positions.

*Supports reading specialists with \$61 million over the biennium; a \$53 million teacher bonus, on top of the 2% early raise in teacher salaries, starting next month that carries into 2025, and another \$122 million supporting a 2% raise in 2026

Ensuring a Quality Environment for Our Children and Empowering Working Parents

*Provides over \$448 million for the “Building Blocks for Virginia Families” initiative to provide high quality early childhood programs for low income families

*Ensures that the families of the 27,000

children, currently at risk of following the discontinuation of federal pandemic relief funds, will have alternatives available for their childcare needs

*Provides \$25 million in funding for an incentive grant program to create early learning hubs in partnership with our institution of higher education and localities

*Allows greater capacity at our childcare centers by continuing the successful use of greater flexibility relating to child-to-staff ratios

Right Help, Right Now

*Delivers more than \$335 million to help meet the Governor’s promise to eliminate the Priority 1 wait list for Developmental Disability Waiver slots

*Allocates more than \$138 million dollars as part of the Right Help, Right Now initiative, allowing more money for start-up expenses of additional new crisis centers, increasing the number of mobile crisis units, offering student mental health services, and increasing the pay for hard-to-fill roles in our state mental health facilities

*Improves the safety, security, and quality of our long-neglected state mental health facilities with nearly \$60 million in repairs and upgrades at the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services

Safe Communities and Bold Blue Line Plan

*Advancing the Bold Blue Line Initiative, the Governor’s budget provides nearly \$26 million to address compression for law enforcement, \$18 million for law enforcement recruitment and wellness, and allocates \$33 million for increased salaries for deputy sheriffs and regional jail officers

*Appropriates \$25 million in FY 25 and \$18 million in FY 26 for return the Lawrenceville Correctional Center to state management

Make a fire prevention list, and check it twice

While everyone is busy cooking, decorating and shopping this holiday season, it's important not to let fire safety sit on the back burner.

Cozy fireplaces, evergreen-scented candles and lights adorning the tree all make for a festive, warm home. But within these holiday season hallmarks lurks the danger of house fires.

"Take the time to ensure that the necessary precautions are in place to prevent fire, and keep your home and family safe during the holidays," advised Scott DeNoon, vice president of underwriting and policy services for Virginia Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Co. "This includes testing smoke alarms and practicing your home fire escape plan."

According to the National Fire Protection Association, heating is one of the leading causes of home fires and home fire injuries, and the third-leading cause of home fire deaths. December, January and February are peak months for heating-related fires.

To help prevent fires, perform regular maintenance and inspections of home heating systems. Homeowners with fireplaces and woodstoves should have their chimneys inspected and cleaned annually by certified technicians to ensure there's no creosote buildup, which can cause chimney fires.

Space heaters account for one-third of heating-related fires and should always be plugged

directly into an outlet—don't use an extension cord—with three feet of room around them.

The NFPA also urges homeowners to be careful when adorning their homes with flickering candles and twinkling lights during the holidays. Almost half of all home decoration fires are caused by candles, with Christmas being the peak day for candle fires.

Always use sturdy candle holders, place candles at least 12 inches from anything that can burn, and be sure to blow them out when leaving the room or going to bed. Consider using battery-operated flameless candles as a safer alternative.

Replace strings of lights that have worn or broken cords or have loose bulb connections. Follow the manufacturer's guidelines for the number of light strands to connect, and don't exceed the limit, NFPA warned.

As for the stately tree in the living room, ensure it's at least 3 feet away from heat sources like fireplaces, radiators, candles, heat vents and space heaters. Almost one-third of home Christmas tree fires are caused by electrical problems, so turn off tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.

Some people leave their Christmas trees up longer than others, and it's important to remember that trees become more flammable as they dry out. While Christmas tree fires aren't common, they can grow fast and are likely to be serious.

Create your native plant garden

Gardening is a worthwhile endeavor that not only passes the time, but can be a form of exercise and relief from the daily grind. Gardens also provide ample opportunity to experiment, as individuals can produce everything from vegetables to bountiful blooms.

Recent years have witnessed a growing emphasis on eco-friendly gardening that aims to reduce reliance on chemical fertilizers and pesticides in an effort to protect the planet. One way to do so is to rely on native plants.

What are native plants?

Native plants are indigenous to particular regions. The National Wildlife Federation says native plants grow in habitats without human introduction or intervention. Native plants have formed symbiotic relationships with local wildlife over thousands of years, which the NWF notes makes them the most sustainable options. Native plants help the environment and thrive with little supplemental watering or chemical nutrients.

Natives vary by region

Native plants vary by region. In

arid climates, certain succulents may be native because they don't need much rainfall to thrive. In lush wetlands, succulents might be out of place.

Start native planting

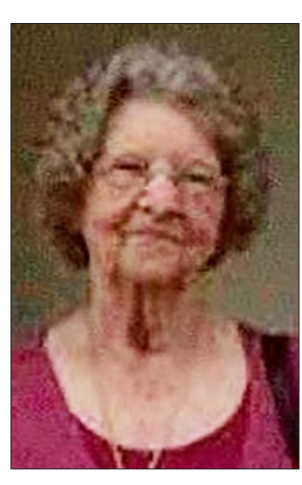
The NWF offers native plants for 36 different states that can be shipped right to customers' doors to help replenish native varieties. In addition, gardeners can visit local gardening centers to select native plants. Small and independently owned centers often feature knowledgeable local staff whose expertise can prove invaluable to individuals seeking native varieties.

It's important to keep in mind that native varieties may look less cultivated than more exotic blooms and foliage designed to sell for their unique appearances. Wildflowers and native grasses may be the types of native plants found in abundance, which may grow up and out quickly. These other tips can help the process.

Plan and prepare the site by removing weeds and turning over the soil. This will give seedlings an opportunity to take root without competition from weeds. Seedlings

Rosie Lee Wolfe Turner

Mrs. Rosie Lee Wolfe Turner, age 99 of Stuart, went to her Heavenly home on Sunday, December 24, 2023. She was born in Abingdon on August 27, 1924, to the late Marvin S. Wolfe and Mary Elizabeth Blackwell Wolfe. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by three husbands, five brothers, and three sisters. Rosie was a member of True Gospel Baptist Church. She enjoyed taking care



of the elderly and she will be greatly missed by her family. Surviving are one

daughter and son-in-law, Rebecca and Walter Spence of Stuart; four grandchildren; five great grandchildren; three great great grandchildren; and several nieces and nephews.

A graveside service will be held Thursday, December 28, 2023, at 11:00 AM at Patrick Memorial Gardens with Pastor David Heath officiating. Online condolences may be sent to www.moodyfuneralservices.com.

Darrell McCumbers

Darrell McCumbers, 84, of Woolwine, VA was welcomed into Heaven on December 24, 2023. He was born on July 21, 1939, in Calhoun County, WV, the eldest of seven children of Bernard and Pearl (Cottrell) McCumbers.



Darrell discovered a love for bluegrass music at a very early age and started playing when he was 3 years old. While Darrell was best known for his banjo playing, he could play any stringed instrument and taught many of his siblings how to play. The family recorded two albums and played for many years throughout the Midwest and Eastern United States. After high school, Darrell enlisted in the Army and spent time in Korea and Texas. After his service, he returned home and met and married "the woman he couldn't live without," his beloved wife, Juanita (Fulks) on September 14, 1963. They settled in Parkersburg, WV where they raised one child, their daughter Colleen. Darrell had a long career at General Electric, and along with Juanita, built a successful vintage musical instrument business called Darrell's Banjo Shop. After retiring from GE, Darrell and Juanita moved from their beloved West Virginia to Southwest Virginia to be closer to their

daughter and grandchildren.

Darrell was a loving husband, father, Pap Paw, brother, uncle, Christian who regularly attended Fairway Baptist Church in Bassett, VA, friend, and proud veteran. He lived life to the fullest every day with a positive attitude. He never lost his love for bluegrass music and played his entire life. Darrell will be greatly missed, and his passing leaves a big void in the hearts of many. However, there is comfort knowing he is in Heaven and having a joyous family reunion.

Darrell leaves behind his devoted wife of over 60 years, Juanita of Woolwine, VA; daughter and son-in-law, Colleen and Rick Lantzy of Cary, NC; grandchildren Zack Lantzy and Sarah Lantzy of Cary, NC; 4 brothers and sisters-in-law; Dare McCumbers of Spencer, WV, Denzil and Marlane McCumbers of Rosedale, WV, Robert (Buck) and Patty McCumbers of Eliza-

beth, WV, Dwayne and Barbara McCumbers of Duck, WV; two sisters Connie Hardman of Navarre, OH and Sandra McCumbers of Parkersburg, WV and numerous nieces, nephews, relatives and friends. Darrell was preceded in death by his parents, Bernard and Pearl McCumbers; sister-in-law, Mava McCumbers and brother-in-law, Bill Hardman.

Funeral services will be held Saturday, December 30, 2023, at 11:00 AM at Fairway Baptist Church (9427 Fairystone Park Hwy, Bassett, VA 24055). The family will receive friends one hour prior to the service at the church. Military rites will be provided by the Patrick County Veterans Memorial Honor Guard. In addition, the family will host a funeral service Tuesday, January 2, 2024, at 11:00 AM at Stump Funeral Home (1440 Arnoldsburg Road, P.O. Box 579 Arnoldsburg, WV 25234). Burial will follow in the Conley Cemetery. The family will receive friends one hour prior to the service at the funeral home. In lieu of flowers, please consider making a donation to the Amedisys Hospice, 5221 Valley Park Drive, Suite 2, Roanoke, VA 24019. Online condolences may be sent to www.moodyfuneralservices.com.

will give gardens a faster head-start than waiting around for seeds to germinate. However, gardeners can start seeds indoors and then move them outside once they are seedlings.

Avoid planting native plants in rows, as that's not how they're likely to grow naturally. Vary the placement so the plants look like they sprouted up haphazardly.

Gardeners can still exert some control over native gardens prone to growing a little wild. Borders and

paths can better define the growing areas.

Grow Native!, an initiative from the Missouri Prairie Foundation, suggests planting two to four species in broad sweeping masses or drifts. Mix grasses with flowering plants. The grasses produce dense, fibrous roots that can prevent weed growth.

Native plants should require minimal care. Keep an eye on them and supplement with water if conditions have been especially dry.

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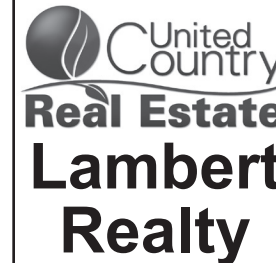
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When to test your home water supply

Water quality is not something people think about all that much, especially in developed nations. Though it can be easy to take water quality for granted in countries with ample regulation and sophisticated filtering systems, there are times when anyone, regardless of where they live, should take stock of the water in their homes.

Frequency of testing

One of the variables for individuals to consider is how long it's been since they last tested the water quality in their homes. For those who have never done so, those who have done it but can't recall precisely when or those who know it's been more than a year since the last test, then it's a good time to test the water. In fact, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recommends annual testing for coliform bacteria, nitrates, total dissolved solids, and pH levels. The EPA notes this testing is especially important for anyone who is using a new well or has replaced or repaired pipes, pumps or the well casing.

What about public water supply systems?

Testing may not be necessary for individuals who get their water from public water supplies. The EPA notes that anyone who pays a water bill gets their water from a public supply system, which is responsible for monitoring and testing water and reporting the results of those tests to the appropriate agencies as well as the individuals who use the water. Homeowners and tenants who pay a water bill should receive an annual water quality report from their water supply utility, while renters can request a copy of that report from their landlords if they do not pay the bill themselves.

What about private water supply systems?

Individuals who receive their water from a private system, such as a household well, are responsible for conducting their own water supply testing. These tests should be conducted annually and in the aftermath of a spill or other incident that could taint the water supply.

Are there any special circumstances to test the water?

The EPA notes that certain situations may call for testing the water supply, even if it's provided by a public supply system. For example, the EPA recommends that expecting parents test their water supply for nitrates in the early months of a pregnancy. Testing should then be conducted again prior to bringing an infant home and once more during the first six months of the baby's life. The EPA notes nitrate tests are best conducted in spring or summer after periods of rain.

An eye, taste and/or smell test also can indicate if the water supply should be tested. Water that stains, has an unusual taste and/or a conspicuous odor should be tested. In these instances, test for sulfate, chloride, iron, manganese, hardness, and corrosion.

A local chemical or fuel spill also should trigger a test of the water supply. The EPA notes that these tests can be expensive and recommends individuals contact a local expert to determine which contaminants to test for.

Water quality is easily taken for granted. However, various scenarios may necessitate testing the water supply. A local health department office can be a useful resource for individuals who want to confirm that their water supply is safe.



A recent survey from the National Association of Home Builders found that energy-efficient features are among the most sought-after 'must-haves' among homebuyers.

The benefits of energy-efficient homes

Consumer efforts to be more eco-conscious are more and more noticeable. For proof of that, one need look no further than the increase in vehicle charging stations. Such stations are more accessible than ever and illustrate that consumer preference is increasingly leaning toward products that leave as small a carbon footprint as possible.

Another indicator of a growing interest in eco-friendly products is the popularity in energy-efficient homes. In fact, a recent survey from the National Association of Home Builders found that energy-efficient features are among the most sought-after 'must-haves' among homebuyers. Among those surveyed, 83 percent desired Energy Star-rated windows, 81 percent wanted Energy Star-rated appliances and 80 percent preferred energy-efficient lighting.

Though eco-conscious sensibilities compel millions of homeowners to make their homes more energy-efficient, that's not the only reason to upgrade your home. The following are a handful of the many benefits of energy-efficient homes.

- **Save money:** Inflation was one of the biggest stories of 2022, as the cost of living rose dramatically in the wake of world events. According to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, inflation led to an overall 6.5 percent increase in prices. But that increase was dwarfed by the cost of electricity, which increased by 14.3 percent in 2022. Energy-efficient appliances can help homeowners overcome that spike, as the U.S. Department of Energy indicates upgrading to such products can help

homeowners reduce their energy costs by as much as 30 percent.

- **Improve resale value:** As the NAHB survey indicates, modern homebuyers want energy-efficient homes. They're also willing to pay more for such homes. Research from the mortgage lender Freddie Mac found that homes with energy-efficient ratings sold for nearly 3 percent more on average than homes without such ratings.
- **Live healthier:** The benefits of energy-efficient homes aren't just economic, though health-related benefits certainly produce an economic incentive as well. According to the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy, insulation and air sealing protect individuals from heat waves and other ripple effects of climate change. The ACEEE notes that weatherization can improve indoor air quality and comfort, a notable benefit for asthma sufferers and seniors. In fact, the ACEEE estimates that integrating energy efficiency programs in homes could reduce seniors' risk for falls in their homes, potentially saving \$2 billion in fall-related health care costs over the next decade, and improve asthma outcomes, which could reduce health care costs by as much as half a billion dollars.

Energy-efficient products and practices pay numerous dividends, making them a worthy expenditure for any homeowners looking to upgrade their homes.



There are times when anyone, regardless of where they live, should take stock of the water in their homes.

LEGAL

Notice - Committees

We need you! Interested in serving Patrick County on a board, commission, committee, or authority? Openings are available on the Department of Social Services Board (Peters Creek District) and Planning Commission (Peter's Creek District & Blue Ridge District).

For more information, please contact Ms. Amy Walker, Board Clerk - awalker@co.patrick.va.us or 276-693-2006 or you can visit the website - www.co.patrick.va.us to complete the Citizen Interest Form.

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Request for Qualifications Web Design Services for STEP, Inc.

STEP, Inc. is seeking a qualified Web Development Consultant to work collaboratively with organization board, staff, and stakeholders to redesign and refresh the STEP, Inc. website. For the full scope of services and proposal instructions, please visit www.stepincva.com.

Deadline for submittal of proposals is on or before 4:30 p.m. on January 12, 2024.

Minority- and/or female-owned businesses and local Franklin and Patrick County businesses are encouraged to apply. STEP, Inc. is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

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ORDER OF PUBLICATION Case No. JJ004870-07-00

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
VA. CODE §8.01-316
PATRICK J & DR - JUVENILE

Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court
Commonwealth of Virginia, *in re* CUNNINGHAM-FIELDS, ISAAC C
The object of this suit is to:

TERMINATE THE RESIDUAL PARENTAL RIGHTS OF BENJAMIN FIELDS, JR. "RESIDUAL PARENTAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES" MEAN ALL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES REMAINING WITH THE PARENT AFTER THE TRANSFER OF LEGAL CUSTODY OR GUARDIANSHIP OF THE PERSON, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO THE RIGHT OF VISITATION, CONSENT TO ADOPTION, THE RIGHT TO DETERMINE RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION AND THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR SUPPORT.

It is ORDERED that BENJAMIN FIELDS, JR. appear at the above-named court and protect his or her interests on or before 01/25/2024 at 2:30 p.m.

12/20/2023

[Signature]
CLERK [] JUDGE

Tradition of breeding and showing pigeons maintained in Virginia since WWII era

The gray-toned common pigeons seen scavenging crumbs on city streets have some fancy cousins in the country.

Spiral-feathered frill backs, stunning white saints, robust fantails and multi-color ringnecks live in comfortable lofts managed by breeders and showers statewide.

At Wildbriar Lofts in Powhatan County, the Kerns family raises 150 to 200 babies, or squeakers, annually. The birds with the most unique characteristics are shown at competitions, some are sold internationally, and others make docile family pets.

This subculture of pigeon and dove breeding, showing and training was established in Virginia by WWII veterans returning from service. Their first meeting was held in the back of a feed store in downtown Richmond, eventually becoming the Virginia Pigeon and Dove Association. Since then, the VPDA has been an integral component of the State Fair of Virginia's live exhibits.

When young Andrew Kerns walked into the VPDA exhibit tent at the 1985 State Fair and saw his first fantail pigeon, "I fell in love," he recalled.

"The VPDA has been a staple here for a long time, with a dedicated membership to keep it going," said Glenn Martin, who oversees livestock exhibits at the State Fair's home at The Meadow Event Park. "Other exhibits have come and gone, but they have staying power. People find it so

interesting, and they're great about getting kids started in it."

Now a renowned master breeder and judge, Kerns attends shows worldwide—particularly in the Middle East, where the pigeon culture thrives.

Kerns has bred fantails for 36 years now. His family converted a singlewide trailer into an immaculate indoor-outdoor pigeon loft, safe from predators. Pigeon pairs are carefully matched for breeding season.

"If you know what you're doing in inheritance of color genes, you can transfer new colors to breeds," Kerns explained. "In the fantail world, that's what I'm known for—introducing new color patterns like stenciling, which didn't previously exist."

Sharp lines of black appear stenciled around each tail feather's stark white outer fan, or vice versa. The breed's striking outcome was years in the making, and Kerns owns the naming rights. His records trace pedigrees back 20 generations.

"Now I'm trying to get the curl on the frill back's wing into the saint," Kerns added. "It would be completely new. I've been working on it 10 years now, and still in progress."

But when a breeding project pays off, he said, seeing the desired feathers come in "is just like Christmas."

See more in Cultivate magazine at shorturl.at/fjMZ6.

Meetings

Wednesday, Jan. 24
The Patrick County Economic Development Authority (EDA) will meet at 6 p.m. in the second-floor conference room of the Patrick County Administration Building.

Tuesday, Feb. 13
The Economic Development Authority of Patrick County will have a Special Meeting at 7 p.m. in the Second Floor Conference Room of the Patrick County Administration Building.

Events

Friday, Jan. 5
The Community Food Truck will be at the Woolwine VFD from 3-4:30 p.m.

Saturday, Jan. 6
Community Breakfast at Jeb Stuart Rescue Squad, 7 - 10 a.m., 1258 American Legion Road, Stuart. Plates are \$8. Dine in, carryout, and curb service options are available. Orders can be placed by calling (276) 694-6171.

Thursday, Jan. 11
The Patrick County Senior Citizens Group will hold its next monthly meeting at 11 a.m. in the Hooker Building at Rotary Field in Stuart. Entertainment will be provided by Mary Jo and Charlie Leake. A variety of soups, crackers, and

beverages will be provided to all attendees. Attendees are requested to bring sandwiches and desserts to share with the group.

The Patrick County Recreation Department is offering a free Tai Chi Flow for Seniors program on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3-4 p.m. in the Hooker Building, Rotary Field, Stuart. No experience needed, just wear comfortable clothing and sneakers to try this gentle, standing exercise for twelve weeks to improve your balance, coordination, and core strength. There is no registration for the program. Classes start on Thursday, January 11. Call the Park Office at (276) 694-3917 for more information.

Friday, Jan. 19
The Community food truck will be at the Fairy Stone VFD from 3-4:30 p.m.

Ongoing

The Coffee Break Café hosts live music on Tuesdays from 9 to 11 a.m. Bring an instrument, or just come and listen.

The Patrick County Library hosts Story Time with Ms. Sam at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesdays, with books, songs, finger plays, and more. For more information, call (276) 694-3352.

The Patrick County Library will hold the LEGO Club with Ms. Sam on Mondays from

4:30-5:30 p.m. This program is mainly intended for school age children. For more information, call the library at (276) 694-3352.

The Patrick County Quilters' Sit-N-Sew is held on Saturdays from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Quilted Colors. For more information, call 276-694-3020 or email patrickcountyquilters@gmail.com.

The Ararat Ruritan Club will hold Rook games every Monday night from 6:30-8 p.m.

The Patrick County Veterans Memorial Honor Guard meets the first Tuesday of every month at the American Legion Post 105 at 7 p.m. Interested veterans are welcome to attend.

Introduction to Zen Meditation and Zen Buddhism at the Blue Ridge Regional Library Stuart site, 1:30-2:30 p.m. on the second and fourth Tuesdays.

Messianic Bible Study, Fridays from 6-7:30 p.m. at The Honey Pot, 106 N. Main St., Stuart (across from The Coffee Break). Call (276) 694-2356 for more information.

Last Tuesday of each month, Golden Oldies, Open Jam at Willis Gap Community Center, 144 The Hollow Road, Ararat, with 50s, 60s, 70s Rock and Roll. Doors open at 6 p.m. Music gets underway at 7. Food is available.

100 Years Ago This Month: Historical events from January 1924

The month of January has been home to many historical events over the years. Here's a look at some that helped to shape the world in January 1924.

- Millionaire oil broker Courtland S. Dines is shot in the abdomen at his home on January 1. When police arrived on the scene, they found alcohol on the premises, causing a scandal during the Prohibition era.

- Flooding causes the water level of the Seine to rise in Paris, forcing the closure of railway stations on January 2.

- The exiled King Ferdinand is granted permission to return to Sofia by the Bulgarian government on January 2, prompting an immediate objection to the move by the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

- On January 3, the governor of the Mexican state of Yucatán, Felipe Carrillo Puerto, is executed by rebels fighting for General Adolfo de la Huerta. de la Huerta was attempting to overthrow the government of President Alvaro Obregón, and Carrillo and three of his brothers were among 11 people killed by the rebels.

- The automobile manufacturer Walter P. Chrysler introduces his first car, the Chrysler Six Model B-70 sedan, on January 5 at the 24th Annual New York Automobile Show.

- Turkish President Mustafa Kernal Atakürk survives a bomb attack at his home on January 6.

A visitor to the president's home asked to see him and then threw the bomb when Atakürk appeared.

- The British submarine HMS L24 sinks during a training exercise on January 10. The sub collided with the battleship HMS Resolution, and all 43 crew members aboard perished in the accident.

- Bengali activist for Indian independence Gopinath Saha shoots



and kills Englishman Ernest Day, a civilian, in Calcutta on January 12. Saha believed he was shooting Calcutta police commissioner Charles Tegart, who was helping to lead the fight against the independence movement. Saha is arrested and subsequently tried and sentenced to death.

- The SMS Berlin embarks on a two-month tour of the North Atlantic Ocean on January 15. It is the first German Navy warship since the end of World War One to depart on an overseas voyage.

- On January 16, Argentine engineer Raúl Pateras Pescara

breaks his own record for helicopter flight. Pescara keeps his model 2F aloft in the air for eight minutes and 13.8 seconds at an altitude of around 15 feet near Paris.

- Ailing Russian leader Leon Trotsky is rumored to have been arrested on January 18. Despite the rumors, Trotsky is ultimately revealed to have been traveling to the Black Sea in an effort to overcome his illness.

- Richard Connell's short story "The Most Dangerous Game" appears in the weekly magazine Collier's on January 19. The story's theme of the hunter who becomes the hunted has since been adapted for countless stories.

- Following a stroke, semi-retired leader and founder of the Soviet Union Vladimir Lenin dies on January 21 at his estate in Gorki.

- On January 23, Britain and the United States sign a treaty that allows American authorities to search British ships suspected of rum running.

- Oil tycoon Edward L. Doheny

testifies on January 24 that he lent Senator Albert B. Fall \$100,000. Doheny's admission exacerbates the Teapot Dome Scandal that enveloped the administration of United States President Warren G. Harding.

- The first Winter Olympics open in Chamonix, France, on January 25.

- Prince Regent Hirohito marries Princess Nagako in an elaborate royal wedding in Tokyo on January 26. Within two years, Hirohito would become the 124th Emperor of Japan, a position he would retain, despite controversy, until his death in 1989.

- Lenin is laid to rest in a state funeral in Moscow's Red Square on January 27. Mourners brave frigid conditions, as the temperature drops to -35 F during the funeral.

- Benito Mussolini addresses 10,000 Blackshirts in the Palazzo Venezia in Rome on January 28. Mussolini predicts complete victory for the Fascists as he campaigns for a general election in Italy.

- On January 31, within weeks of his wife's death, Prussian state executioner Paul Spaethe dresses in formal evening wear and lights 45 candles. Each candle signifies a person Spaethe had beheaded, and once each candle is lit, Spaethe takes his own life with a revolver.

Weekly SUDOKU
by Linda Thistle

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Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ◆

◆ Moderate ◆◆ Challenging
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Ten Graduate from SCC's Truck Driver Training Program

Ten students graduated from Surry Community College's Truck Driver Training Program at the Yadkin Center on Dec. 12.

The graduates include Dylan Ball of Jonesville, Andrew Booth of Yadkinville, Cornelius Chandler of Jonesville, Kendell Cook of Statesville, John Daley of Pinnacle, Eric Hernandez of Dobson, April Hicks of North Wilkesboro, Trenton Ryan of Millers Creek, Andrew Walls of Mount Airy, Jayce Weston of North Wilkesboro, and Jeffrey White of Elkin.

Median pay for truck drivers is \$47,100 per year, according to the United States Department of Labor. Drivers with experience can make more than \$50,000.

With a shortage of up to 12,000 truck drivers in North Carolina and as many as 200,000 nationally, CDL-certified drivers will easily be able to find jobs. The U.S. Department of Labor says the profession is expected to keep growing – by 6 percent during 2020-2030.

“There are currently job openings for truck drivers locally and nationally. We developed this program as a direct response to the requests from local truck driving representatives who need skilled applicants to fill job vacancies,” said SCC President Dr. David Shockley.

The next Truck Driver Training class begins Wednesday, March 13, 2024, and will be offered at SCC's Yadkin Center, 1001 College Drive, Yadkinville. This class will run through Thursday, May 16, meeting Monday through Wednesday from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Thursday from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., with online meetings each Friday. A mandatory orientation session is scheduled for Tuesday, February 13, at 10 a.m., also at the Yadkin Center.

To register for this class, visit surry.edu/truck.



Ten students graduated from Surry Community College's Truck Driver Training Program on Dec. 12. Front row, left to right: Instructor Jake Rhodes, John Daley of Pinnacle, Cornelius Chandler of Jonesville, Kendell Cook of Statesville, Jayce Weston of North Wilkesboro, April Hicks of North Wilkesboro, and Jeffrey White of Elkin; Back row (left to right) Instructor Charles Jester, Andrew Walls of Mount Airy, Eric Hernandez of Dobson, Dylan Ball of Jonesville, Trenton Ryan of Millers Creek, Instructor Dale Myers, and Instructor Jamie Brown. Not Pictured is Andrew Booth of Yadkinville.

The SCC Truck Driver Training Program teaches proper driving procedures, safe driver responsibility, commercial motor vehicle laws and regulations, and the basic principles and practices for operating commercial vehicles. The coursework includes motor vehicle laws and regulations, map reading, vehicle maintenance, safety procedures, daily logs, defensive driving, freight handling, security and fire protection.

Highway driving training exercises and classroom lectures are used to develop the students' knowledge and skills. Graduates are qualified to take the Commercial

Driver's License Test and are employable by commercial trucking firms. They may also become owner-operators and work as private contract haulers.

Special admission requirements include official driving record; physical examination; reading placement test score of 40 or higher; disclosure form; high school transcript; and drug testing.

For more information about SCC's Truck Driver Training Program, contact the Yadkin Center at (336) 386-3580. The tuition is \$1,999. You may qualify for a tuition scholarship. To see if you are eligible, please visit www.surry.edu/funding.

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Sounds of the Mountains concert series kicks off with Michael Cleveland on Jan. 13 in Yadkinville, N.C.

The Blue Ridge Music Center and Yadkin Arts Council announce the eighth annual Sounds of the Mountains concert series. The performances will be held the last three Saturday evenings in January in the Willingham Theater at Yadkin Cultural Arts Center in Yadkinville. Artists include award-winning bluegrass fiddler Michael Cleveland & Flamekeeper and folk and roots music performers from the Piedmont Triad's vibrant contemporary Americana music scene: Maia Kamil, The Queen Bees, His & Hers, and Molly McGinn and the Woodshed Experience

Award-winning artist Michael Cleveland & Flamekeeper kick off the series at 7:30 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 13. Tickets are \$35.

Michael Cleveland & Flamekeeper always present high energy bluegrass shows. Cleveland is the most awarded International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) Fiddle Player of the Year, with 13 wins to his name. He is a six-time winner of the IBMA Instrumental Performance of the Year. His band, Flamekeeper, has won Instrumental Group of the Year seven

times. Cleveland was inducted into the National Fiddler Hall of Fame in 2018 and received the prestigious National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellowship in 2022.

Cleveland's most recent album, *Lovin' Of the Game*, featuring guest appearances by Billy Strings, Bela Fleck, Jeff White, Vince Gill, Dan Tyminski and The Travelin' McCourys, is nominated for a 2024 Grammy Award for Best Bluegrass Album. This nomination follows his Grammy Award win in 2022 for the album *Tall Fiddler*.

Cleveland and the band garnered four nominations at the 2023 IBMA Awards for Instrumental Group and Album of the Year for *Lovin' of the Game*, Instrumental Recording of the Year for the song *Contact* with Cody Kilby, Barry Bales, and Bela Fleck, and Collaborative Recording of the Year for the song *For Your Love* with Billy Strings and Jeff White. The title track was just named one of the Top 20 songs of 2023 by the music streaming service Folk Alley.

Cleveland has also been featured as one of the members

of Fleck's band, My Bluegrass Heart, for the current tour, along with Sam Bush, Sierra Hull, Justin Moses, Chris Thile, and Bryan Sutton.

The next show in the series features singer-songwriter Maia Kamil with special guest The Queen Bees at 7:30 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 20. Tickets are \$20.

Kamil has spent years refining a musical style that weaves eclectic influences, vocal dexterity, and complex lyrics. The North Carolina transplant is a magnificent vocalist whose neo-soul, folk, and blues blend has been compared to Norah Jones. She has worked closely with critically acclaimed jazz-rock fusion guitarist Charlie Hunter.

Opening the show will be The Queen Bees, a musical collaboration between three musicians from Greensboro, N.C. The group is comprised of award-winning musician and journalist, Molly McGinn; renowned electronic music producer and songwriter, Quilla; and esteemed musician and creative producer Kate Musselwhite Tobey. The group's uplifting blend of traditional acoustic

instruments, modern electronic loops, and folk style story songs made their performance at the latest NC Folk Fest a highlight of the event.

Rounding out the series is His & Hers with special guests Molly McGinn and the Woodshed Experience at 7:30 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 27. Tickets are \$20.

His & Hers is an Americana folk band from Mocksville, N.C., fronted by husband and wife Caleb and Sara Davis. They've performed at MerleFest, Carolina in the Fall, and the Blue Ridge Music Center, and shared the stage with Scythian, The Steeldrivers, Zoe and Cloyd, and many others.

Opening the concert will be Molly McGinn and the Woodshed Experience featuring sacred steel guitarist DaShawn Hickman, songwriter and guitarist Dave Willis, bassist Jared Church, and drummer Nate Turner. Willis, Church, and Turner are members of the popular roots rock band Possum Jenkins.

For tickets and more information, visit BlueRidgeMusicCenter.org or call the Yadkin Arts Council at (336) 679-2941.



Mia Kamil



HisHers



Michael Cleveland + Flamekeeper



Queen Bees



Molly McGinn and Woodshed Project