



THE ENTERPRISE

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VOICE OF THE PEOPLE SINCE 1876 | Dedicated to serving the communities of Patrick County

County's financial status shows positive trends

By Taylor Boyd

The county's financial status is showing positive trends over the last five or so fiscal years the Patrick County Board of Supervisors learned at a February 26 work session.

"The 2018 time period, just coincidentally, is about five years ago. That was really, in fairness, the low point in terms of fund balance, some challenges in the county, but since that time period we've seen very steady trends of much more financial strength," Kyle Laux, of Davenport & Company, LLC, the county's financial advisor, said during the update.

In the study, Davenport measured Patrick County against a peer group that included Buchanan, Tazewell, Wise, Carroll, Giles, and Floyd Counties and other localities of similar size and budgets that face the same types of challenges as Patrick.

Laux said the county's unemploy-



Kyle Laux, of Davenport & Company LLC, the county's financial advisor, gave an update on the county's financial status.

ment rate is the lowest it's been in a decade.

"We thought this was a very nice, positive trend. Clearly, we had the spike with the pandemic across the

(See County p.3)

School superintendent says a digital communications system is a blessing

By Taylor Boyd

The new digital school and school bus radios recently purchased for the county's school division were used on the first day, according to Superintendent Jason Wood.

A student had a medical emergency on the bus on February 15, Wood said and explained the bus driver "pushed their panic button, which then allowed them to communicate directly with dispatch while the transportation department was able to hear that conversation.

"The high school heard it as well, they called the parent and the parent got there minutes before the transportation director," he said.

The student is okay, Wood said, but the new bus radios streamlined the division's communication in response to that incident. It is reassuring to know that the division puts student safety first and this investment is a blessing for the division.

Rob Martin, vice-chairman of the Patrick County School Board, said the communication exchange was impressive to hear.

"The bus driver was immediately in contact with 911 dispatchers. They were able to ask questions and get EMS (Emergency Medical Services) to the bus to take care of the medical emergency," he said.

In addition to helping with coverage, Wood said the division will eventually be able to turn on the Global Positioning System (GPS) feature in buses.

"To give not only our transportation department, but in the event of an accident, the police department and everyone access to the bus locations so that they can respond to an incident more quickly," he said.

The division received a \$181,984 school security grant for the purchase. Wood said \$176,040.63 in local funds also were used because a local match was required for the grant. The funds were used to outfit every bus in the division's fleet with the new digital system.

"It increases our coverage and even from locations where you do not have cell service" due to the repeaters "that we have on

(See School Superintendent p.3)

Drug Court is now offered locally

By Taylor Boyd

Patrick County began participating in the 21st Judicial District Drug Court Treatment Program on January 1, Commonwealth Attorney Dayna Kendrick Bobbitt said.

She explained that Drug Treatment Courts are specialized court dockets within the existing structure of Virginia's court system that offer judicial monitoring of intensive treatment and strict supervision of addicts in drug and drug-related cases.

"Drug treatment court is designed to help low-risk, non-violent offenders suffering from addiction. Through voluntary admission, eligible defendants are invited to participate in the Drug Treatment Court docket following a specialized screening and assessment," she said.

Piedmont Community Services (PCS) Justice Support Supervisor Quincy Gravely said drug court participants who complete the program can have their underlying criminal offenses dismissed or expunged.

"In treatment court, treatment providers work with law enforcement, probation, defense, prosecution, and the judge to hold participants accountable and provide ongoing support," he said.

Bobbitt said preliminary research demonstrates that drug court graduates tend to have lower rates of criminal activity and increased linkages to treatment services when compared to defendants who go through the traditional court system.

"This specialized docket is also shown to save Virginia taxpayers money compared to traditional case processing. In 2019, Adult Drug Court Treatment dockets saved Virginia nearly \$11 million," she said.

Bobbitt said the discussion to bring drug court to the 21st Judicial District began in 2018, "however, there were only enough funds to start the program in Henry County. Once that was established, they expanded to Martinsville City, and most recently they received grant

(See Drug Court p. 7)



Del. Wren Williams, R-Stuart, spoke against Senate Bill (SB) 392, which requires hospital and emergency departments to have at least one licensed physician on duty at all times.

Proposal would have unintended consequences in rural areas

By Taylor Boyd

Del. Wren Williams, R-Stuart, said as legislators considered Senate Bill (SB) 392.

The bill, which is heading to Gov. Glenn Youngkin's desk, requires every hospital and emergency department to have at least one licensed physician on duty at all times.

Williams said it's difficult for Patrick County to field that 24-hour emergency room and cover the round-the-clock shifts.

It's one thing to have a doctor on call who gets to the ER within the 20-minute window an ambulance is coming in, but "it's another thing to have them standing there all the time being paid by a provider that might not be able to make ends meet and ultimately decides to close again. That's the trouble, it's a vicious circle," he said.

Williams also said the bill is an example of why this type of legislation is poorly decided and applied to rural localities.

"You got these types of bills where there's just this forced expectation of demanding that the private in-

dustry absorbs the costs of these changes and it's just so draining on those folks who are just trying to survive and keep their head above water, and you're throwing more water on top of them, and filling it up and asking them to swim harder," he said.

SB 392 passed the House of Delegates in a 63-36 vote. The Senate agreed to the House's version and passed it with a 36-2 vote.

"So, now it will head to the governor's office. I have no clue if Youngkin will approve it," Williams said.

During a session to discuss the bill, Williams said that many of the other delegates know of the work he's been trying to do for Patrick County's hospital which shut down in 2017.

"By no fault of its own, no fault of the parent company which eventually went bankrupt," he said.

Williams said he entered the House working on that and passed a bill in 2022 that would extend the Certificate of Public Need (COPD) licensure so there could be a shot of

(See Proposal p.3)

Trump rallies his base ahead of Super Tuesday

In advance of Super Tuesday on March 5 in Virginia, former Pres. Donald Trump appeared at a 'Get Out the Vote Rally' in Richmond on Saturday. Del. Wren Williams, R-Stuart,

was among the speakers at the event which attracted thousands, according to reports from the scene. The rally was held in the Greater Richmond Convention Center. (Contributed)



Former Pres. Donald Trump and Del. Wren Williams are pictured Saturday at a rally in Richmond.



Del. Wren Williams addressed the thousands attending a 'Get Out the Vote Rally' held Saturday in Richmond.

Sheriff seeks information about vandalism

The Patrick County Sheriff's Office is seeking information regarding multiple vandalisms that occurred during the nighttime hours of March 2nd and March 3rd.

Vulgar images were spray painted on the roadway on Route 103 in the Dry Pond and Claudville areas of the county. A substantial reward is being offered for information leading to the arrest of the person(s) responsible.

"I am rather territorial when it comes to Patrick County, and anyone who defaces and humiliates our beautiful home shall be dealt with accordingly," Sheriff Dan Smith said in a Sunday news release. "Someone out there knows who did this, have some dignity and respect for where you live and call me," the sheriff added.

Smith can be reached directly and confidentially at (276) 692 7012.



Blue Ridge Parkway license plate now available online

Virginia drivers can now order the Blue Ridge Parkway specialty license plate online and request the plate at DMV offices. The tag depicts a colorful scenic view of the Parkway and is the only specialty plate in the commonwealth solely dedicated to funding projects and programs within the country's most visited national park.

"We are so thrilled that Virginians can now show their support for the Blue Ridge Parkway with this beautiful new tag," said Carolyn Ward, CEO of the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation. "Virginia is my home state, and I know just how much the park means to mountain communities like the one where I was born and raised."

The specialty plate fee is \$25, of which \$15 will go toward

key improvements along the Parkway, including repairs at trails, campgrounds, and picnic areas. Funding will also support projects such as wildlife studies, historic preservation, and educational programs. A personalized plate is available for \$35.

In 2023, the park welcomed more than 16.7 million visitors. Unlike many large national parks, the Parkway does not charge an admission fee, making the scenic route more vulnerable to shortfalls in government funding, maintenance backlogs, and building closures. The nonprofit's current projects include raising funds to provide a new roof for historic Mabry Mill, at milepost 176 near Meadows of Dan.

To order Virginia's Blue Ridge Parkway license plate, visit GetThePlate.org.

Arrests Reported

The Patrick County Sheriff's Office reported the following:

*Logan Bevill, 25, of Stuart, was charged Feb. 23 with three counts each grand larceny and petty larceny, two counts each intentional damage and break & enter building, and one count each attempt grand larceny and trespass. Inv. J.W. Kruse was the arresting officer.

*Sydney Jason Roberts, 35, of Siloam, N.C., was charged Feb. 23 with fail to appear. Senior Deputy J.C. Fortner was the arresting officer.

*Mason Wyatt Wasoski, 22, of Stuart, was charged Feb. 23 with distribute marijuana to minor. Inv. T.E. Jessup was the arresting officer.

*Dewey Hampton Hughes, 43, of Vinton, was charged Feb. 23 with probation violation. Henry County made the arrest for Patrick County.

*Katina R. Viperman, 39, of Stuart, was charged Feb. 25 with fail to appear. Senior Deputy

J.C. Fortner was the arresting officer.

*Cheryl Renee Ramsey, 51, of Patrick Springs, was charged Feb. 25 with false statement made to law enforcement/animal control officer. Senior Deputy A. Kinney was the arresting officer.

*David Wayne Trent, 47, of Stuart, was charged Feb. 25 with violation of protective order. Sgt. Winfred Hill was the arresting officer.

*Kenneth Eugene Coleman, 57, of Martinsville, was charged Feb. 26 with probation violation. Senior Deputy J.S. Kendrick was the arresting officer.

*Vershonda Tamika Lewis, 39, of Bassett, was charged Feb. 26 with obtain money by false pretense. Inv. F.M. Hubbard was the arresting officer.

*Jackie Jermaine Moore, 51, of Martinsville, was charged Feb. 26 with fail to appear. Senior Deputy M. Nester was the arresting officer.

Pets of the Week



This handsome guy was found at Hunters Chapel Road in Ararat. He would love to go home.

These three pups look to be around 3 to 4 months old and scared to death. They need a home as soon as possible. The one in the corner couldn't look any more frightened. They are all females and available for adoption now.

Please visit the Patrick County Public Animal Shelter (PCPAS) or call (276) 694-6259 for more information.

To view available pets, visit the shelter's Facebook page. Adoption fees are \$10 and include spay/neuter and a rabies vaccination.

Closure planned for bridge replacement

Beginning Monday, March 11, a portion of Virginia 672 (The Hollow Road) will be closed to through traffic from 1.0 mile west of Virginia 773 (Ararat Highway) to 1.0 mile east of Virginia 739 (Rabbit Ridge Road) for a bridge replacement over

Ararat River.

Weather permitting, the road will re-open to traffic on Friday, March 22.

A detour will be used, and directional signs will be in place to assist motorists.

Salem VA Health Care System to hold Veteran Town Hall

The Salem VA Health Care System will hold a Town Hall for Veterans Tuesday, March 26 beginning at 2 p.m. in the Bldg. 5 Auditorium. Hospital leadership as well as representatives from the Veterans Benefits Administration will be on hand to provide information and answer questions.

Veterans who cannot attend the Town Hall are encouraged to submit questions by emailing: VHASAM-PUBLICAFFAIRS@VA.GOV.

Vietnam-era Veterans who would have not received a Vietnam 50th Anniversary Commemorative pin and would like to have one presented during the Town Hall, should reach out at the email above to schedule a pin presentation during the event.

Veteran Town Hall meetings are conducted quarterly. Meetings this year will be held March 26 at 2 p.m.; Wednesday June 5, at 2 p.m.; and Tuesday September 24 at 2 p.m.

Slam the Scam – Social Security Impostors

One of the most popular ways for criminals to steal money and sensitive information is by impersonating a trusted source – often a government agency. According to the Federal Trade Commission, victims of government impostor scams reported nearly \$509 million stolen from them in 2022.

March 7 is National Slam the Scam Day and the focus this year is stopping Social Security impostor scams. Here are three tips to help you do just that.

Beware of unexpected calls, texts or emails claiming there is a problem with your Social Security number. One example is a warning that your number has been linked

to criminal activity and suspended. The goal of the scammer is to get you in a heightened emotional state, and this is one common way they do that. Second, the Social Security Administration will only call you if you are already engaged in conversations with the agency. Finally, you can access your account securely at ssa.gov/myaccount. This will give you a safe and reliable place to check on your account if you ever have questions.

Report scams to local law enforcement. For help from AARP, call 1-877-908-3360 or visit the AARP Fraud Watch Network at www.aarp.org/fraudwatchnetwork.

Dairy farmers can now enroll in safety net program

Farmers can now enroll in the 2024 Dairy Margin Coverage program, an important safety net offered through the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

DMC is a voluntary risk management program that provides protection to dairy farmers when the difference between the all-milk price and the average feed price falls below a certain dollar amount. This year's signup began Feb. 28 and ends April 29.

In addition to enrolling, farmers may adjust their production history for 2024, making program benefits retroactive to Jan. 1, noted Tony Banks, senior assistant director of agriculture, development and innovation for Virginia Farm Bureau Federation.

For any payments that triggered in January, payments may begin as soon as March 4, according to USDA's Farm Service Agency. Coverage will be available through December.

The American Farm Bureau Federation previously sent a letter to the FSA urging them to open enrollment for the DMC program as soon as possible.

"AFBF is pleased the FSA listened to our concerns," said AFBF President Zippy Duvall. "Dairy farming comes with unique challenges, and vital farm bill programs like Dairy Margin Coverage help farmers weather the storm in tough times."

DMC offers different levels of coverage, even an option that is free to producers, minus a \$100 administrative fee. The fee is waived for dairy producers who are limited resource, beginning, socially disadvantaged or military veterans. To determine the appropriate level of DMC coverage for a specific dairy operation, producers can use the online dairy decision tool.

For more information on DMC, visit the DMC webpage or contact your local USDA Service Center.

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County

(cont. from page 1)

board for everybody and created that anomaly in the 2020 time period. But to be in 3.6 percent in terms of the unemployment rate for the county you are tied with” the United States average and “just a smidge above Virginia” is promising, he said and added the peer group average was 3.7 percent.

The median household income has also grown substantially, roughly 41 percent over the last decade, or about 3.9 percent annually.

Laux said the Compound Average Growth Rate (CAGR), is on average how much that median household income has grown over the last five and 10 years.

“You’ve experienced very nice growth. The five-year has been growing on average five percent, that’s for these numbers both higher than the state and the nation,” he said.

The 10-year CAGR is 3.9 percent, while the state average is 3 percent, and the national average is 3.8 percent.

On a comparative basis, Laux said Patrick County is above the peer group median of \$45,298 at a median household income of \$49,180.

Laux said the county’s assessed value has remained stable over the last decade, “but I think what’s nice to see is we’re almost back to, just a smidge below, the level of the total assessed value where we were 10 years ago.”

However, the county’s total assessed value is a little below the peer group’s median, Laux said, adding the median is just above \$2 million while Patrick County’s is \$1.983 million.

The county’s assessed value per capita is a strong number, of about 116,000, he said.

“Anything above 100,000 is generally viewed as pretty positive, and so you’re about 116,000 or thereabouts, so it’s a strong number. The peer group median was about \$112,000, we’re \$116,000. Take a couple of the outliers out, and we’re right in line with that peer group median. (A) good solid level relative to our neighbors,” he said.

Patrick County’s real estate tax rate is 73 cents per \$100 of assessed value, Laux said, adding that is a little on the higher side relative to the peer group. The neighboring locality median is 60 cents per \$100 of assessed value.

“Personal property tax, you’re below the peer group median. So, at \$1.71 the peers are above

\$2. That’s one (area) where you’re below in terms of the peer comparative,” he said.

Laux said the county’s meals tax is right at 4 percent, which is the peer group median.

“The nice thing about a meals tax is there’s kind of a built-in inflation measure to it, and so as you go out to eat ... it just costs a little bit more every time you go right now, it’s not any fun,” he said.

But the revenue from that tax is discretionary because folks don’t have to go out to eat unless they want to, he said.

“It’s kind of a built-in, inflationary adjustment there. As the price of a Big Mac goes up, so too does the revenue associated with it in terms of the meals tax,” he said.

Like the meals tax, Laux said the county’s 5 percent Transient Occupancy Tax is within the peer group median.

“This is another very nice revenue source for you with the unique situation with Primland, etc. I think this generates about \$140,000 or thereabouts in terms of annual revenue, and so it gives you a nice comparative advantage relative to other folks,” he said.

Laux said the county’s general fund produced a surplus five out of the past six fiscal years.

“There has been some one time, or call it limited time, revenues that have helped,” he said of the federal stimulus act, ARPA dollars, etc. The county has “been able to help bolster the reserves. That’s been a big positive to you.”

Laux noted this budget cycle is the first one in several years where there is no special federal stimulus.

“So, this FY25 budget cycle is very, very important in terms of getting reset with our recurring annual revenues, taking aside the sort of special one-time federal projects relative to our annual reoccurring expenditures,” he said.

Laux said the single biggest revenue of line item is property taxes. It accounts for about \$16 million of the county’s \$24 million generated by recurring revenues. It grows on average about 4.5 percent each year.

Laux said expenses have been growing at a slower pace than revenues, and the county’s unassigned fund balance also has been steadily increasing from fiscal year 2018 to fiscal year 2023.

He recommended the county set a policy going forward to make sure the unassigned fund balance does not drop below the 15-20 percent range of general fund and school expenditures.

“If we get to 20, that’s better,” he said. “The higher the number, the stronger. I think you’ll see many of your peers are in the 15-plus percent range in terms of those policies.”

If Patrick County is about 22 percent in terms of the unassigned fund balance versus the general fund and school expenditures, Laux said the peer group median is about 19.3 percent.

The county currently has about \$29.7 million of outstanding debt that’s at a fixed rate.

“It all looks like a mortgage versus a credit card, meaning it’s paid in fixed annual principal installments,” he said. “It doesn’t grow unless you as a board proactively go out and borrow some dollars and it is only growing to the extent that you’re borrowing to make an investment in capital projects.”

Laux said the payments on the debt are level for about the next 10 to 12 years.

“Right at about \$2.6 to \$2.7 million a year, we’re kind of sitting at that level. We do get some decline out into ’37 and ’38 we’re basically about level here for the foreseeable future,” he said.

The county’s debt service is currently at 4 percent. Laux said this roughly translates to about four pennies out of every dollar in the budget going to make a debt service payment.

“That’s on the low side of things. You could arguably have a policy anywhere in the 8 to 10 percent range and still be viewed very, very strongly,” he said.

Laux said the Public Service Authority’s (PSA) operating revenue has grown over the last five years with the operating expenses growing about 6.6 percent over that same time period.

“Reserve levels have increased, and so a similar theme on water and sewer ... having some of those built-in reserves is critical to the capital planning, the financial planning, also clearly on the water and sewer side,” he said.

Laux said one policy recommendation is for the county to consider adopting reserves relative to the size of the budget.

“Something in the 300 days would be very strong,” he said.

Proposal

(cont. from page 1)

reopening the former Pioneer Community Hospital of Patrick County.

“Shortly after that, new providers purchased it. but the new providers are struggling because of the costs with regards to healthcare and the regulations that state governments and federal governments put in place,” he said.

While he knows SB 392 comes from good intentions, Williams said Patrick County has only one doctor.

“Dr. Richard Cole is one of my best friend’s dads. He’s been practicing for years, he’s in his late 60s, and since I’ve been a delegate we’ve been looking for somebody to take over his prac-

tice,” he said, tearing up.

Williams said Cole’s practice includes Patrick County Family Practice, Patrick County Urgent Care, and over 30,000 patients from Virginia and North Carolina.

“Prior to the hospital shutting down he was making rounds at the ER and at the nursing home (Blue Ridge Therapy Connection). In my district, we have one emergency room over 1,500 square miles, and I’m afraid that one might close too,” he said, crying.

Williams asked legislators to think about unintended consequences when it comes to rural healthcare, “because this might save lives in

other regions, but it’s going to hurt and it’s going to have a real impact on places like mine. It’s going to be even harder to open that hospital if we have to staff an additional doctor,” he said.

Following the session, Williams said people who oppose the bill could possibly reach out to Youngkin’s office, “because at this point, it will just be whether or not it would be vetoed, or it could be amended. The governor could amend the bill, and I’m not certain what kind of amendment could help with the regulatory burden that this well-intended legislation places on places like ours.”

School Superintendent

(cont. from page 1)

Bull Mountain and at the high school, you’ll be able to get bus radio coverage,” he said. “We’ll have much better coverage and fewer dead spots with our bus radios by moving to the digital system.”

Currently, every bus is online, and each school is equipped with their administrator digital radios and day station, Wood said.

As a law enforcement veteran of more than 20 years, Martin said this was an incredible advancement in the safety of students and bus drivers.

“I’ve never heard of a situation where the bus driver needs immediate help, and is instantly connected to that help to be able to get

assistance besides having to call 911 on a cell phone,” he said.

Martin believes the new school bus radios have tremendously increased the safety of students and staff.

“I think it is a huge reassurance to our bus drivers, and should be a huge reassurance to parents of students, that we have the ability now at the touch of a button to be in touch with emergency personnel that can immediately assist instead of everyone having to rely on information to different parties to finally get in contact with that emergency help,” he said.

Wood said the new digital system also interfaces with the intercom system.

“Now, instead of having to run into the office to do” a fire or lockdown drill, “administrators will be able to do that anywhere in the vicinity of the school,” he said.

With this, Wood said one can interact with the intercom system or use a two-button approach that allows an automated message to

go over the intercom.

For example, Wood said if an administrator was out in the parking lot and saw someone coming in and needed to put the school on lockdown, she could do it from her location and not have to call the front office to put the school on lockdown.

“You could do that from your radio,” he said. “It’s much more efficient in communicating on the intercom system. I pray that it never happens, like if we had to do a lockdown drill, you don’t have to be in the front office to do that.”

Wood said the school division always strives to put safety at the forefront of its decision-making.

“This is another way we’ve invested to ensure that Patrick County Schools is ahead of the learning curve academically, and also more importantly with the safety of our students and staff,” he said.

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Rural Health Care & Pharmacies

Since coming to Congress, I have worked to find ways to protect and promote access to health care for rural Americans.

One aspect of rural medicine I have tried to help on a federal level is pharmacies.

For many in rural areas, visiting pharmacies and interacting with pharmacists is one of the most important points of access for health care in small towns and communities. Pharmacists are trusted members of the community, who help provide relief to those in need.

Pharmacies have faced some tough challenges. Not long ago, UnitedHealth Group (a health care group that operates Optum and United Healthcare platforms) was the victim of a cyberattack. This complicated prescription deliveries for six days as many pharmacies were unable to process prescriptions. Pharmacies have also faced challenges as this country continues to deal with chronic drug shortages, ranging from chemotherapy drugs to antibiotics to ADHD medications. Though wanting to help, some pharmacies have been unable to dispense critical, life-saving medications.

Over the years, I have looked for ways on a federal level to assist pharmacies, while also helping Americans get better access to health care. Below is a summary of bills I recently introduced or co-sponsored that are related to pharmacies.

H.R.5393 - Transparency and Fairness for Pharmacies Act

Pharmacists, including rural pharmacists, have been increasingly charged retroactive fees, known as Direct and Indirect Remuneration (DIR) fees, after prescriptions are filled. These fees hurt, and sometimes destroy, the pharmacists' business. Imagine you bought a product for resale for \$1 and sold it for \$1.03. You find out later that without telling you, the company changed the price several months after you sold the product and now has the right to come back and say, "Oh, we really should have charged you \$1.20." You have now lost 17 cents on the transaction. That's how DIR fees work. Believe it or not, this happens to pharmacists routinely.

To make matters worse, a majority of these pharmacists say they receive no clear information about when and why these DIR fees will be collected. Many also noted that DIR fees can total tens of thousands of dollars each month. In response to this, I introduced the Transparency and Fairness for Pharmacies Act, which takes steps to help rein in and bring more transparency to these DIR fees and all pharmacy fees by Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs).

My bill would require the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to create standardized quality metrics for health plans and PBMs to use when determining payments to pharmacies.



Morgan Griffith

Representative

H.R.5400 - Neighborhood Options for Patients Buying Medicines Act

PBMs act as an intermediary between pharmacies, insurance companies, drug manufacturers, etc. whose purpose is to negotiate drug prices. We have seen that PBMs can manipulate drug prices through various ways to enhance their own profits, hurting Americans' bottom line and the pharmacies who deal with them.

I co-sponsored H.R. 5400, which would modernize Medicare and enhance PBM accountability by preventing them from discriminating against pharmacies that are willing to contract with them, helping seniors seek care closer to home. This will ensure that PBMs do not provide unfair contracts to independent pharmacies where that independent pharmacy wouldn't accept the contract because the reimbursement rate for medications is so low their patients would lose access to that drug.

H.R.1770 - Equitable Community Access to Pharmacist Services Act

Pharmacies have the ability to provide a variety of services beyond just filling prescriptions. Currently, certain tests and vaccines administered by pharmacies are not reimbursable by Medicare.

I co-sponsored legislation, Equitable Community Access to Pharmacist Services Act, to establish a federal reimbursement mechanism for pharmacists' services under Medicare and ensure patients can continue to access essential care and services provided by pharmacists. This will now allow for Virginia pharmacists to test and treat for strep, flu, and COVID-19 and get reimbursed by Medicare for it.

H.R.5526 - Seniors' Access to Critical Medications Act

Many seniors living in the Ninth District and in other rural areas are not physically able to travel to pick up their much-needed prescriptions, whether it be from pharmacies, doctor's offices, etc.

I co-sponsored legislation, Seniors' Access to Critical Medications Act, that would allow for patients to have their caregivers/loved ones pick up the prescription on their behalf, making life easier for seniors.

These bills are just some ways I am currently helping pharmacies and rural Americans. I will continue to explore other ways to promote and protect access to health care.

If you have questions, concerns, or comments, call my Abingdon office (276) 525-1405, Christiansburg office (540) 381-5671, or via email at <https://morgangriffith.house.gov/>.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Avoid the dangers fanned by fear, misunderstanding

The January 31 and February 14 editions of The Enterprise included letters from a writer who states that "... It is not possible to have a civil society without foundational law based on some higher moral order. In the case of Western civilization, including the United States, the higher moral order has been Christianity."

It is true that the folks who wrote the founding documents (such as the Declaration of Independence, the US Constitution and the Bill of Rights) were all men of European decent and/or education. They were all wealthy. Many were slave owners. They shared a general European Christian worldview. However, what was revolutionary is that they worked together to develop government and law based on critical reason instead of divine will. There is no mention of any specific religion in any of these founding documents. The concepts of democracy and representative government were also based on models of government from classical Greece and the Iroquois.

By the late 1700's, Europe had experienced hundreds of years of brutal conflict based partly on religion. People were weary of government tied to a specific religion. As a result, the higher moral order which forms a basis for law in the United States is informed by the philosophy of the "age of reason" also called the "philosophy of Enlightenment." This new philosophy coincided with the practice of Scientific investigation; -the observable logic of cause and effect - which gained credibility in 17th and 18th century Europe.

It is what it is

I want to applaud the sentiments of a letter in the Feb. 28 edition titled "Concerns with SB517." I hope that Virginia residents will contact their representatives, state senators, and the governor to defeat this bill. I do not understand why some want to erase or re-write our

Of course, there are contradictions. We are human. Our ideals can be flawed in practice. In the US equality before the law took hundreds of years to achieve. Examples of in-equality and injustice still exist. But the higher moral ideal of justice and equality - Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness - is our shared goal.

The February 14 letter referenced Nazi ideology as an example where human morality can justify atrocity. I totally agree that societies when under stress can follow the ideas of hateful authoritarian leaders. Leaders may try to claim divine authority in order to maintain control. Parts of the Christian church in Germany before and during WWII aligned itself with Nazi ideals. They viewed Adolf Hitler as a leader sent by God in Germany's hour of crisis and a statesman who would defend "Christendom" against the forces of Communism and modernity, (aka - Jews, immigrants, intellectuals, etc.). Democracy, and citizen participation in representative government is how our founding fathers intended for us to find common operating consensus and avoid the dangers fanned by fear and misunderstanding used by demagogues throughout history.

Anyway, I appreciate the opportunity to think about these ideas. It is so important that we are able to discuss our different points of view in the spirit of mutual respect and hope for a better future. Meanwhile, in the spirit of The Golden Rule - love your neighbors, kiss your family and hug your dog!

Laura Rosenfeld,
Stuart

history. Even when mistakes are made over the years, if we fail to remember our history, then we are doomed to repeat it. We should all learn from history, not erase it. It is what it is.

William S. Rodgers,
Brentwood, TN

Continuing Hospital Saga

I am aghast at continuing incredulous information from articles in Cardinal News on Foresight and the old Patrick County Hospital. If you have not read this February 28, 2024, article (cardinalnews.com). I recommend it to interested citizens. If the \$22,000 in consulting fees Foresight gave to our former EDA Director per the article was not illegal, it certainly appears to be a conflict of interest when the county was paying him to represent us in these dealings. According to the article, Foresight is requesting Patrick County reimburse \$815,000 in expenses including almost half a million dollars for luxury private jet travel and accommodations at Primland and other resorts, \$168,572 to JLK Consulting, a Republican consulting firm per Cardinal News, and \$140,688 to Interdependence Public Relations. While this request could be amusing to some, not so funny is their questionable competence in estimating costs to adequately renovate this facility, implications of involvement and possible culpability in unresolved fraudulent schemes at a Chicago health care facility, and unethical financial arrangements with our EDA Director. It appears that Patrick County should not consider further actions with Foresight beyond taking steps to collect overdue and ongoing taxes on this property. Certainly, the County Govern-

ment does not and would not be expected to have the expertise or funds to undertake this challenge, and even if this were the case, Foresight does not appear to be an appealing partner. If the property can be obtained and renovated for a suitable purpose, let a reliable and willing health care firm come forth to pursue this. A prospective new owner should and likely would want to obtain their own environmental assessment to protect themselves and it is not apparent why the county needs to undertake this at this time. It may be appropriate down the road to provide financial incentives and inducements but the county needs to carefully evaluate potential purchasers and expectations. Our taxpayers should not assume significant financial risk and ongoing liability for what could be a colossal mistake by local government. While the county desperately needs appropriate and adequate health care, other models I understand are under evaluation which, after careful evaluation by experts in the field, may be deemed economically feasible and more in line with the needs of our citizens. I, like many other seniors, remember our parents sacrificing to donate money to enable this hospital to be built many years ago, but sentimental memories and modern requirements are not the same.

Steve Terry,
Meadows of Dan

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.

If you enjoyed the recent columns by Ben Williams and Holly Kozelsky, they are available weekly in the Henry County Enterprise

Get your print or digital subscription today by calling (276) 694-3101 or visiting henrycountyenterprise.com

CHECK US OUT

Patrick Pioneers

Mayo River Tragedy, Part One, Larkin and Alexander Austin

By Beverly Belcher Woody

When one travels across the Mayo River at the T. J. George bridge in downtown Stuart, it is hard to imagine all the pain and heartache that has taken place near there. In the 1980's, Patrick attorney Lawrence R. Burton wrote about the spot, which he called the "Twenty Foot Hole." Burton describes the spot as follows, "If one stands on the south side of the river, and looks northward toward that spot in the stream, the view is a pleasant one. The hole is at the base of a precipitous cliff strewn with ivy, post oaks, grape vines and a variety of wildflowers. The stream moves slowly past that point, lending credence to the adage that "still water runs deep" and is the epitome of tranquility. There is nothing, from that vantage point, to suggest anything of a forbidding nature; just a beautiful, placid stream challenging some aspiring artist to capture it for posterity on canvas. But for anyone, except the very agile, to attempt to negotiate the narrow path that spans the cliff on the other side of the river, the change of scenery is dramatic and frightening! The path rises some twenty feet above the river, is slick and extremely narrow. Gaining a safe foothold tempts the impossible, and with each tentative step one wonders if it may be his last! Below are jagged rocks, and, at the water's edge, a large boulder extends four or five feet into the river; silently suggesting disaster if one's foothold should fail along the path. Just above the hole, the water is swift and fairly shallow. That's where most of us, as youngsters, learned to swim; later gravitating to the more exciting, though hazardous, waters of the hole."

We have no idea how many victims the Twenty Foot Hole claimed before the turn of the 20th

Stuart Council Forbid Bathing In Mill Pond

Danville, June 13.—The treacherous undercurrent in George's Mill Pond at Stuart where Larkin and Alec Austin, two young Stuart men lost their lives while bathing a few days ago, has been condemned by the Stuart council and a special ordinance has been adopted forbidding bathing in the pool because of the number of fatalities which have taken place there. The town authorities have announced that persons found trespassing on the property or found bathing in the pool will be prosecuted. Larkin Austin was the first to get whirled out of his depth. His brother, who could not swim, jumped to his rescue. Both men went down for the last time grasping one another and in the presence of a group of boys who vainly tried to reach them with a pole. Although withdrawn from the water within thirty minutes artificial resuscitation failed.

century, but we do know that the river has taken at least eight victims, between the years 1925 and 1993.

The first victims that we know about are brothers, 22-year-old Joseph Larkin Austin and 20-year-old Alexander F. Austin. The brothers were the sixth and seventh children of John William Austin of Russell County, Virginia and Martha Ellen Carter of Floyd County.

It has always been a mystery as to why the Austin brothers were in downtown Stuart in 1925, unless they were possibly visiting relatives. In the 1910 census, the family was living in Stuart but by the time the father, a mill worker, died in 1919, they were living in Leaksville in Rockingham County, North Carolina. John William Austin was buried in the Plasters Cemetery in Vesta, Virginia.

In the 1920 census, 17-year-old Joseph Larkin and 15-year-old Alexander were both working as doffers at a cotton mill in Leaksville. The two brothers lived on Mill Street with their mother, their older brother, Robert Hannibal, who was an oiler at the mill, and their 11-year-old brother, Lewis Henry Austin.

The fifth of June 1925 was Alexander Austin's 20th birthday. Apparently, Alexander, his older brother, Larkin, and several more young men decided to go swimming in the T. J. George Mill pond. According to an article in the June 14th edition of the Lynchburg News and Advance and the two young men's death certificates, Larkin was the first one to need help. Alexander went to his brother to try to save him, but he too, was dragged under by the "swirl."

The June 14th, 1925, article in the Lynchburg News and Advance shown above recounts the Austin tragedy, but also mentions that there have been numerous fatalities (misspelled fatalities) at the mill pond. I have been unable to find out the names of these victims, as death certificates were only required to be filed in Virginia, beginning in 1912. Next week, we will look at the next tragedy that occurred at the twenty-foot hole, only three years after the Austin brother's deaths.

Woody may be reached at rockcastlecreek1@gmail.com or (276) 692-9626.

Social Security Matters

By Russell Gloor, National Social Security Advisor at the AMAC Foundation, the non-profit arm of the Association of Mature American Citizens

Ask Rusty - Why Must I Pay Into Social Security when I'm Collecting Benefits?

Dear Rusty: I am collecting full Social Security benefits at age 72 and also working full time. Why is the Federal Government still taking money from my paycheck? I have written to Social Security experts on this issue, and they tell me "It's the law." That is not a good answer for me. Approximately \$4,400 was taken from my pay in 2023 for Social Security and, yes, I get a pittance of a COLA increase, but not equal to what I pay. No one has been able to fully explain the Federal Government's thought process on taxing me for Social Security when I am getting full Social Security benefits. Can you? Signed: Working Senior

Dear Working Senior: Far be it from me to try to explain the federal government's thought process on anything, but I can explain why those already collecting Social Security benefits must continue to pay Social Security payroll taxes while working.

It actually goes back to 1935 and the panel commissioned by President Roosevelt to create America's Social Security program. Said panel determined how the program would be financed, Congress approved it, and FDR signed it. That methodology was essentially this:

Workers who earn (and their employers) must contribute to Social Security via payroll taxes to fund the program (we now know this as "FICA" for employees and "SECA" for the self-employed). When the program first started, certain employees and their employers were required to each contribute 1% of the employee's first \$3000 of earnings. Obviously, those amounts have risen over the decades. And, for clarity, only certain workers originally participated in Social Security, which has also changed over the decades so that now nearly everyone who works must pay Social Security payroll taxes.

Starting in 1937 and still today, SS payroll taxes paid by those now working are used by the federal government to pay benefits to those who are currently receiving. Said another way, Social Security is a "pay as you go" program where income from those working (and their employer) is used to pay benefits to those receiving. Payroll taxes collected aren't put into a personal account for the worker; rather they are used to meet current SS payment obligations. Any excess money collected is invested in special issue government bonds as reserves for future use (although current annual SS income is less than annual program costs - an entirely different topic).

So, the financing method enacted in 1935 and started in 1937 still applies - those who work and earn (and their employers) must pay into the system to fund benefit payments to those

who are now receiving - and that includes those workers who are already collecting their Social Security. FYI, there was a time when, if someone worked after starting their SS benefits, they lost all of their benefits. Fortunately, that rule no longer exists, so those who are collecting SS benefits can now continue to get benefits if they work, but they must also still pay into the program from their work earnings to help pay benefits to SS recipients.

I hope this provides some insight for why you must continue to contribute to Social Security even after you have started collecting your benefits. It is a result of how the program is financed - predominantly by workers through payroll taxes on their earnings (and to a lesser extent from interest on Trust Fund reserves and income tax on Social Security benefits). With very few exceptions, everyone who works helps pay benefits to those now receiving.

This article is intended for information purposes only and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the AMAC Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association (NSSA). NSSA and the AMAC Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity. To submit a question, visit our website (amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory) or email us at ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org.

How Epigenetics Can Change Your Health Destiny - Part 1

Does the thought of living a healthy lifestyle ever seem overwhelming to you? There are so many things to remember, so many new habits to form. Have you ever wanted a simple solution? Wouldn't it be great if you could just flip a switch to turn health on or to turn disease off, just like you turn on and off the light?

Believe it or not, you can. Inside your genetic makeup are thousands of health switches and disease switches. You have the power to turn them on or off.

It's not science fiction, it's fact... and it's called epigenetics.

Epigenetics comes from the Greek word "epi," which means over or outside of, and genetics. It refers to the factors that influence gene expression, independent of the genes themselves.

You may have learned in biology class that your genes will determine your destiny. You inherit 23 chromosomes from your father and 23 from your mother. They might be good genes and they might be bad genes, but there's nothing you can do about it.

Well, it turns out, that's not really true. Al-

though we can't alter our DNA, we can change the way it expresses itself. To put it simply, we can turn good genes on and bad genes off.

For example:

Each year, almost 30,000 American men die of prostate cancer. 1 out of every 6 men will develop this disease. Prostate cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in men. This devastating illness can teach us an important lesson about epigenetics.

Dean Ornish, a highly respected physician and researcher, was curious to see if healthy lifestyle habits could influence gene expression in prostate cancer.

He spearheaded a study that followed 31 men with low-grade prostate cancer for 3 months. These men had opted out of traditional treatment methods such as chemo and radiation. Dr. Ornish's plan was simple. For three months the men did four things:

- Ate a healthy, plant-based diet
- Exercised for 30 minutes, 6 days per week
- Practiced stress management techniques
- Attended weekly support groups

The participants underwent genetic testing before the study began and after it was

over. The results were astounding! In addition to losing weight, lowering cholesterol and blood lipids, and improving blood sugars, the participants experienced major epigenetic changes. Over 500 genes were affected. 453 disease-promoting genes that were active before the study were now deactivated and 48 cancer-fighting genes that were inactive were now activated. Just three months of healthy habits had turned the good genes on and the bad genes off.

Is it possible for diabetic patients to experience similar results? Dr. Ornish believes so. "It's an exciting finding," he reported, "because so often people say, 'Oh, it's all in my genes, what can I do?' Well, it turns out you may be able to do a lot. In just three months, I can change hundreds of my genes simply by changing what I eat and how I live. That's pretty exciting! The implications of our study are not limited to men with prostate cancer."

(Submitted by Betty Dean. Written by Dr. Wes Youngberg. Used by permission from www.lifeandhealth.org. Courtesy of LifeSpring - Resources for Hope and Healing Stuart, VA)

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Athletes celebrated at banquet

By Ashlee Mullis

Patrick County High School held its Winter Sports Banquet on Monday, February 26. Award winners are as follows:



Wrestling- Coach Bradley Pell, Ben Knight and Mason Spencer- Tied for Most Improved, Coach Tim Lawson, Logan Rakes- Coaches Award, Ethan Cobbler- Iron Man Award, Stephen Spencer- Most Valuable, Coach Scott Lawson



Cheerleading- Coach Payton Errichetti, Bryley Pike- Outstanding Leadership Award, Coach Angela Rose, Bobbijo Roberts- Most Dedicated Cheerleader.



Boys Basketball- Coach Willie Greene, Easton Harris- Best Defensive Player, Noah Jessup- Most Valuable, Cameron Collins- Most Improved, Nate Large- Coaches Award, Coach Brian Chitwood.



Girls Basketball- Coach Essie Conner, Lilly Hazelwood- Lady Cougar Most Improved, Kimora Wimbush- Lady Cougar Best Defensive Player, Coach Tony Mosley, Aniya Penn- Lady Cougar Most Valuable Player, Shaunteil Hill- Lady Cougar Award, Coach Grace Helms.

PCHS Fishing Team to compete in qualifier



Best of luck to members of the Patrick County High School Fishing Team as they compete against other high school teams in the B.A.S.S. Nation of Virginia State Qualifier tournament at Smith Mountain Lake this upcoming weekend. Thank you to all the boat captains and sponsors who make this experience possible for the students. Good luck to all the youth anglers. (Contributed)

PCHS Sports Schedule

The Patrick County High School Cougars Sports Schedule for the week of March 9-15:

3/11	5pm	Baseball vs Dan River
	5pm	Softball vs Dan River
	5:30p	Girls Soccer vs Dan River
3/13	7pm	Boys Soccer vs Dan River
	4:30p	Boys Tennis at Bassett (Jaycee Park)
3/15	4:30p	Girls Tennis at Bassett
	5pm	Softball vs Bassett
	5pm	Baseball at Martinsville (Hooker Field)
	7pm	Girls Soccer vs Martinsville
	7pm	Boys Soccer at Martinsville

Pediatric dentists find online appointments growing

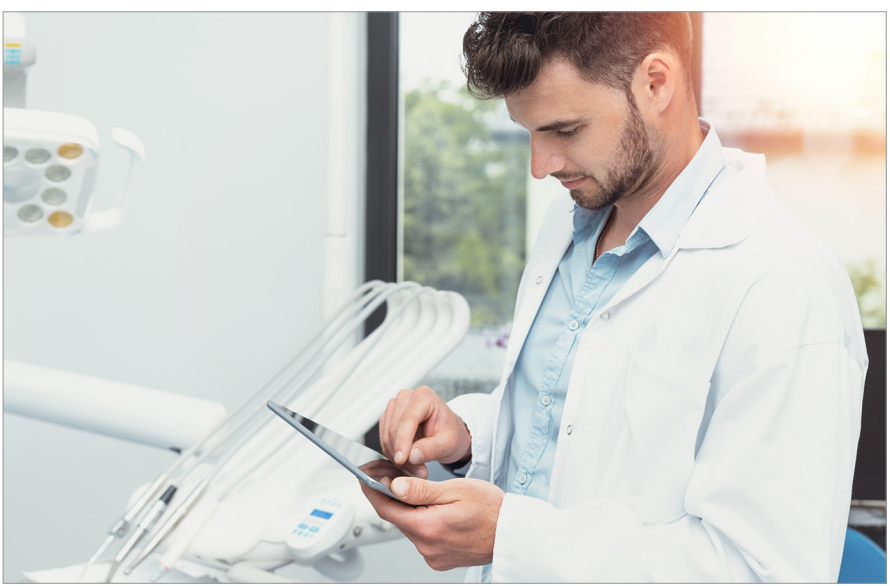
Edwin J. Viera
Virginia News Connection

As part of Children's Dental Health Month, Virginia pediatric dentists are working to improve kids' dental health habits.

Recent surveys indicated more than 80% of kids in Virginia had no oral health problems, which may be in part because other studies show Medicaid has bolstered the number of children getting preventive dentist visits.

Dr. Robert 'Bobby' Lunka, a pediatric dentist in Charlottesville who has been practicing for 30 years, said since the pandemic, he has noticed more parents are interested in tele-dentistry.

"Speaking to parents over the phone and looking at photos, or like, even real-time videos, you know, like FaceTime and doing more appointments over the phone like that," Lunka explained. "Because it was tougher to bring their



children in." Some studies reported tele-dentistry is beneficial since it expands coverage to people who might otherwise struggle to get dental care. But lacking access to technology can make the option challenging.

Lunka predicts newer technologies and even artificial intelligence can make children's dental health better in the future.

Some dentists focus on kids developing good oral-health habits early on.

Dr. Paul McConnell with UnitedHealthcare said parents usually start kids' dental-care routines ages 6-8. His advice is to start much earlier -- by age one or two -- to build lifelong habits. He noted poor dental habits can lead to a common trend later in life: periodontal disease.

"Nearly half of adults 30 and older have some form of gum disease and this increases to 70% of people 65 years and older," McConnell reported. "Daily flossing is key for avoiding the development or progression of periodontal disease."

He noted a water flosser or electric toothbrush can help people avoid gum disease. To build good dental habits, McConnell advised parents to try setting a time when kids brush their teeth, in the morning and at night. He added adults should model their own good dental health habits for kids to see and emulate.

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Drug Court

(cont. from page 1)

funding that allowed the program to extend into Patrick County.”

Established in 2021, the Piedmont Adult Drug Treatment Court admitted its first participants in April 2022. It’s one of more than 4,000 drug treatment courts in the United States that treat around 150,000 people.

“I am absolutely thrilled that additional grant funding finally made it possible to expand this program,” Bobbitt said. “I believe this specialized docket will provide much-needed services and supervision to people who so desperately need it, which will hopefully reduce recidivism and help these offenders become productive members of society.”

Because the program is therapeutic in nature, Bobbitt said it lasts as long as necessary to treat addiction, “however, the average length of participation is 12-18 months,” she said.

In Martinsville-Henry County, Gravely said the Piedmont Adult Drug Court meets every other Friday on the third floor of the

Henry County Court House with Judge Carter Greer presiding.

Thus far, there are a total of 15 participants in the program, “with two graduates and other participants are scheduled to graduate March 7,” he said.

There are pending referrals in Patrick County, but no participants at this point, Gravely said.

Those eligible to join the drug court must be at least 18 years old at the time of sentencing or adjudicated as an adult, be a resident of the 21st Judicial District, have a reliable smartphone or landline, and choose to join voluntarily.

Gravely said eligible participants may have a brief history of misdemeanor assault and be clinically evaluated to meet the DSM 5 criteria for moderate or severe Substance Use Disorder Diagnoses.

Offenders with a co-occurring diagnosis of mental illness are reviewed for admission on an individual basis (excluding unsuccessfully managed psychotic disorders).

At the Commonwealth’s Attorney discre-

tion, offenses include primarily drug-driven, possession, forgery and uttering, larceny, embezzlement, most property crimes, fraud, accommodation, distribution, and conspiracy to sell drugs.

Those who are ineligible to join the drug court have a violent offender history, prior weapons or sex offender, offenders with unsuccessfully managed psychotic disorders, offenders with chronic medical problems being treated with addictive medications, and offenders with medical problems that would preclude them from actively and regularly participating in all parts of the program.

Those with misdemeanors, violent offenses, weapons offenses, burglary of an occupied dwelling, sex offenses, DUI third offense, and offenses considered category I and II offenses as defined by the Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission will be excluded from the program.

For more information, contact Gravely at ggravely@piedmontcsb.org.

AARP Foundation Tax-Aide Opens in Virginia Program Provides Free Tax Prep Help to All

AARP Foundation Tax-Aide is providing free in-person and virtual tax assistance and preparation now through April 15 throughout Virginia. The nation’s largest free, volunteer-based tax assistance and preparation program helped secure more than \$1.1 billion in refunds for more than 1.5 million taxpayers last year. Tax-Aide is offered in conjunction with the IRS, and AARP membership is not required.

Tax-Aide volunteers provide free tax preparation and filing services to adults with low to moderate income in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Volunteers are trained and IRS-certified every year to ensure they understand the latest changes to the U.S. Tax Code. Since the pandemic, AARP Foundation has seen a significant increase in volunteer applications nationwide, with over 20,000 people applying to help older adults file their tax returns in 2023.

AARP Foundation Tax-Aide offers several options for taxpayer assistance:

In-Person Service: In Tax-Aide’s traditional in-person service, taxes are prepared and filed by IRS-certified tax counselors.

One-Visit Scan (Internet access required): Tax documents are scanned at

the Tax-Aide site and then Tax-Aide volunteers prepare the return remotely.

Two-Visit Scan: Tax documents are scanned at the Tax-Aide site and then volunteers prepare the return remotely. During a second visit, taxpayers work with a volunteer to finalize their return and obtain a printed copy for their records.

Drop Off Service: Tax documents are left at the Tax-Aide site with an IRS-certified volunteer and the return is prepared remotely. During a second visit, taxpayers work with a volunteer to file their return and obtain a printed copy and their original documents.

No Site Visit Required (Internet access required): Taxpayers upload tax documents to the IRS-provided software. Tax-Aide volunteers prepare the return remotely and work with the taxpayer to file the return electronically.

Online Coaching: The taxpayer prepares their own return and receives online support from an IRS-certified volunteer to help them along the way.

Facilitated Self-Assistance: Taxpayers schedule an appointment at a Tax-Aide site to work with a volunteer to complete and file their own return.

Self-Preparation: The taxpayer prepares their own return using a software product made available through our website.

Access to the different types of taxpayer assistance varies by location.

“AARP Foundation Tax-Aide helps anyone secure tax credits and much-needed refunds they’ve earned while saving on tax preparation costs,” said Mioshi Moses, Vice President of AARP Foundation Volunteer Programs. “Millions of people, especially older adults living on fixed incomes, depend on their refund to pay for monthly expenses like food and utilities. Last year, older adults with low income saved over \$564 million in total with the help of Tax-Aide.”

Users can find the nearest Tax-Aide location in their area and assistance options by visiting the Tax-Aide site locator. The site locator features a Tax-Aide chat bot that can help book an appointment, answer questions about the program and transfer the conversation to a live agent if needed or requested. For more information, including which documents to bring to the tax site, visit aarpfoundation.org/taxaide or call 1-888-AARPNOW (1-888-227-7669).

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VDOT Virginia Department of Transportation

PUBLIC NOTICE

PROPOSED SIX-YEAR HIGHWAY PLAN (2024/25 - 2029/30)

PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION BUDGET 2024/25

PATRICK COUNTY

The Virginia Department of Transportation and the Board of Supervisors of Patrick County, in accordance with Section 33.2-331 of the Code of Virginia, will conduct a joint public hearing on the Third Floor of the Veteran's Memorial Building located in Stuart, Virginia at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, March 11, 2024.

The purpose of this public hearing is to receive public comment on the proposed Secondary Six-Year Plan for Fiscal Years 2024/25 through 2029/30 in Patrick County, and the Secondary System Construction budget for Fiscal year 2024/25. Copies of the proposed Plan and Budget may be reviewed at the Martinsville Residency Office of the Virginia Department of Transportation, located at 309 Weeping Willow Lane in Bassett, Virginia or at the office of the Patrick County Administrator located in Stuart, Virginia.

All projects in the Secondary Six-Year Plan that are eligible for federal funds will be included in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Programs (STIP), which documents how Virginia will obligate federal transportation funds.

Persons requiring special assistance to attend and participate in this hearing should contact the Virginia Department of Transportation at (276) 629-2582.

Oral comments, written comments or other exhibits relative to the proposed plan may be presented at this hearing.

Wavie Marie Rorrer Hubbard

Mrs. Wavie Marie Rorrer Hubbard, age 85, of Meadows of Dan, Virginia passed away at her home on Friday, March 1, 2024. She was born in Patrick County on March 6, 1938, to the late William Kelcie Rorrer and Monnie Jane Belcher Rorrer.



In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband, Billy Lee Hubbard; and one brother, Leonard Drewery Rorrer. Mrs. Hubbard was a teacher for Patrick County Public Schools for 35 years. Wavie had a very special love for children. She was a phenomenal gardener, and tulips were her favorite flower. Above all, she was the center of her family, and was affectionately known as "Grandma Wavie." Mrs. Hubbard was a loving wife, mother, grandmother, sister, and friend. She will be

dearly missed by all who knew and loved her. Mrs. Hubbard is survived by four children, Shelby Hubbard Puckett and husband, John of Kernersville, NC, Alan Lee Hubbard and wife, Cathy of Meadows of Dan, VA, Laura Hubbard Rager and husband, Joel of Forest, OH, Sharon Hubbard Harrell and husband, Mike of Vonore, TN; six grandchildren, Aaron Hubbard and wife Faith, Caleb Hubbard, John Puckett and wife Shelby, Mackenzie Dillon and husband Gunner, Alexander

Puckett, Clay Rager; four great-grandchildren, Kinley, Emma, Easton, Elsie; a sister, Claudine Harmon of Woolwine, VA; beloved sister-in-law, Hope Harris of Meadows of Dan, VA; and several nieces and nephews.

A funeral service for Mrs. Hubbard will be held on Tuesday, March 5, 2024, at 11:00 A.M. at Moody Funeral Home Chapel in Stuart, VA with Pastor Marcus Wood officiating. The burial will immediately follow the service in the Hubbard Family Cemetery. The family will receive friends one hour prior to the service on Tuesday morning at the funeral home. Moody Funeral Home in Stuart is serving the Hubbard family, and online condolences may be sent by visiting www.moodyfuneralservices.com.

Monroe "Pete" Edward Haynes, Jr.

Mr. Monroe "Pete" Edward Haynes, Jr., age 80 of Stuart, passed away peacefully Tuesday, February 27, 2024. He was born on December 15, 1943, in Patrick County to the late Monroe Edward Haynes, Sr. and Virginia Foley Haynes. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his brother, Walter Haynes. Ed was a member of New Hope Church of the Brethren. He enjoyed NASCAR racing and bluegrass music. The greatest joy of his life was his family, he especially loved being a Papa to his grandchildren and watching them play in their activities.



Surviving Mr. Haynes are his loving wife of 58 years, Peggy Lou Martin Haynes; a son and daughter-in-law, Bradley and Angie Haynes of Bassett, VA; a daughter and son-in-law, Lori Ann and J.D. Morse of Stuart, VA; three grandchildren, Madison Haynes Webb and husband, Andrew, Monroe Morse, and Martin Morse and fiancé, Julianna Overby, two brothers and sisters-in-law, Ronnie Haynes and Anita Foley of Stuart, VA, Kenzie and Sandy Haynes of Stuart, VA; two sisters and a brother-in-law, Betty Cannaday of Floyd, VA, and Carolyn and Gaylon Moran

of King, NC; sister-in-law, Marilyn Haynes of Christiansburg; special caregiver, Bonnie Goad and several nieces and nephews.

A funeral service for Mr. Haynes will be held Friday, March 1, 2024, at 2:00 p.m. at New Hope Church of the Brethren with Pastor Rick Randall and Pastor Mike Varner officiating. Burial will follow in Ross Harbour Church Cemetery. The family will receive friends one hour prior to the service at the church on Friday afternoon. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to Smith River Rescue Squad, P.O. Box 122, Woolwine, VA 24185, or to Alzheimer's Association, Patrick County Chapter, P.O. Box 1301, Stuart, VA 24171. Online condolences may be sent to www.moodyfuneralservices.com.

What Are YOU Living For? Youth Rally Comes to PCHS

By J. L. Nickelston

There is one question to ask yourself? What are you living for? It's a simple question, with a lot of thought behind it I'm sure of. I want to know, What Are YOU Truly Living For? Yourself, family, friends, pleasing others, the fear of rejection, the fear of not knowing, or simply fear itself? Are you trying to please everyone else, without pleasing The One who made you? Do you feel anxious or lost in this world? Do you feel like you can't go on? Do you feel like something is missing in YOUR life? YOU have a decision to make. Accept Jesus in your heart and truly follow Him. Not anyone else, just Him. People will always talk and start rumors, that is nothing but ignorance, however you have to realize there is someone out there in this big ole world waiting for you to step out in faith and live for Him. Someone is waiting on you to move, for you to take a stand for Jesus Christ, for you to lead others to Christ, for you to truly live for Him.

I want to talk about ways you can truly live for Him. First off, read your bible daily. Pray daily. Go to church as many times as possible throughout the week. Be a servant of The Lord's, ask the pastor what you can do for the church and the church body. Living for God is

a true selfless act. Some say it is a sacrifice. We must live this way, to be like Jesus! He knows exactly how we feel and what we experience because he once walked this earth. He knows you. He loves you. He just wants your heart.

I want to encourage YOU to step out in faith and come to an event that will be life changing.

On Saturday, March 23 at 6 p.m., Xperience Youth Rally will be held in the PCHS Auditorium located at 215 Cougar Lane Stuart. The line-up includes Evangelist Corey Ball, Worship by Nameless Faceless & The PCHS Praise & Worship Team, and a Drama performed by Redemption Point Church.

This is your chance to come out and see what everyone is talking about ... Jesus!

Let's open a Bible and read Joel 2:28 "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions."

We are living in the last days, The Bible has already had many prophecies fulfilled and there are only a few left to go. The Bible also speaks about an end time revival, and the last great awakening. We see evidence of more and

more revivals breaking out for Jesus. NOW is the time for prayer, now is the time for repentance, now is the time for salvation, now is the time!

We are praying to get as many souls saved in the last days as possible. We must pray 2 Chronicles 7:14 "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

As you read this article in your local paper, I invite you to come and experience Jesus. I invite you to be a part of an awakening of young and old to truly experience God! Come and witness young and old praise His Holy name, Jesus! Only Jesus knows your whole life story, he knows your burdens, he knows your grief and unbearable pain, he knows how you got on the wrong path with the wrong friends, and he knows how you got in the position you are in at this very moment, BUT JESUS is The Only One that can save YOU! See my God forgave me of my sins, and He can forgive you of yours, you just have to ask Him in your heart.

I invite you to come, just come and see Jesus move.

SCC and WCU Offer BSN in Nursing

Surry Community College has entered a new collaborative partnership with Western Carolina University. Beginning with the Fall 2024 semester, Surry Community College and Western Carolina University are joining forces to offer nursing students the opportunity to obtain a baccalaureate degree in nursing on the Dobson campus of SCC through the Regionally Increasing Baccalaureate Nurses (RIBN) program.

Prospective students wishing to take advantage of this opportunity must have their applications submitted by April 15, 2024. To be admitted to the program, students must meet all prerequisite course criteria and pass the Test of Essential Academic Skills, or TEAS test, which will be offered April 24, 25, and 26, 2024 at SCC. The TEAS test is a standardized exam used by nursing programs to assess student readiness for nursing school. Applications for the Fall 2024 Associate Degree Nursing program are also due April 15.

The RIBN collaborative program between

SCC and WCU provides nursing students with an affordable and accessible opportunity to attain a four-year baccalaureate degree in nursing while attending classes on the campus of SCC with online classes through WCU.

Students are dually enrolled at SCC and WCU, and take in-person classes at SCC, along with certain online classes at WCU, during the first three years of the program. At the end of the third-year, students take the licensure examination for registered nurses (NCLEX-RN) and are then eligible to work as a Registered Nurse (RN) while completing their final year of nursing, which is offered online through WCU.

The opportunity to be employed as RNs after the third year in the RIBN program engages nurses in the workforce a year earlier. In traditional four-year baccalaureate programs, students cannot begin their nursing employment until they complete the fourth year of nursing school.

Graduates of the RIBN program will be pre-

pared for employment in various fields of nursing in the hospital or the outpatient setting. They will quickly be able to advance into leadership roles as well as roles in nursing education. The advanced degree through the RIBN program positions the graduate to obtain board certification or pursue further education at the master's or doctoral level.

If you are interested in applying to SCC's Associate Degree Nursing or RIBN program for Fall 2024, please contact Leona Childress, SCC Coordinator of Special Admissions, at childressl@surry.edu or (336) 386-3358, in addition to contacting Carol Roberts, Instructional Assistant for Health Sciences, at robertscd@surry.edu to complete the Intent to Apply form. If you have questions about SCC's nursing program in general, feel free to contact Dr. Yvonne Johnson, Dean of Health Sciences, at johnsonyv@surry.edu or (336) 386-3368. More information is available on surry.edu. Follow Surry's nursing students on Facebook @surrynursing.

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THANK YOU FOR READING THE ENTERPRISE

PATRICK PULPITS

Mingling Truth with Grace

Alan Dean, retired Seventh-day Adventist pastor

John 1:17 states "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ". John is telling us Jesus combined truth with grace. In John 1:14 John tells us that Jesus, the Word made flesh, was "full of grace and truth." That's a combination each of us should aspire toward - truth with grace.

We may justify our spreading bad news about someone or the church by saying "Well, it's the truth, isn't it?" We feel that because we have the facts straight, we can make whatever use of them we please. It may hurt someone, but we'll contend that the truth must be heard.

Not so with Jesus. Truth alone was not sufficient reason to be a bearer of it to others. He combined truth with grace. Someone has said that before we pass information on, we need to ask ourselves 1) Is it true? 2) Is it kind? and 3) Is it necessary? This, many times, may help us hold our tongue and save a lot of damage.

Think of how much Jesus knew about people. He could discern the motives, desires, and inward thoughts of people. And He could have exposed them publicly. He could have embarrassed His critics or disarmed any opponent. But He didn't. He mingled truth with grace.

One day a woman caught in adultery was brought before Jesus by

some religious leaders in the presence of a large group of people. The woman cringed before her accusers, awaiting the death sentence. Jesus said to the accusers "He that is without sin cast the first stone." But before they could answer, He began writing in the dust of the ground the sins of each of the accusers. The religious leaders read them and silently slipped away.

I'm sure Jesus brushed over the dust as they were leaving. He could have publicly condemned each one of them, but the truth was mixed with grace. He desired not to condemn or embarrass them, but rather He hoped and prayed for their repentance instead. He didn't condemn the adulterous woman either, but instead told her to "go and sin no more."

Almost every day we are confronted with apparent truth about people, events, and circumstances. We need to remember the 3 requirements to consider before passing on the information. This is practicing grace. Too often we want to feel better about our sinful life by exposing the sins of others.

Lastly, when we have learned Bible truth that we feel needs to be shared with others, let's do it with humility without putting the person down who believes differently. People would have a better view of Christianity if we were less forward and more tactful with "our truth." Let's mix truth with grace.

Taylor honored for service



On behalf of the Patrick County Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Directors, E. Wayne Clark, Joseph Sparks, George Stovall, Richard Kreh, Sr., John Wood and staff members Sandra Heath and Tony Collins; Mr. Clark, District Chairman, presented Christian Taylor with a plaque of appreciation for dedicated and devoted service as District Director on the Patrick County Soil and Water Conservation District Board. We appreciate Mr. Taylor and wish him well in his future endeavors. Patrick SWCD represents one of 47 Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts and delivers voluntary, locally led conservation solutions to the agriculture community. Patrick SWCD provides technical assistance for natural resource conservation to land users, farmers and foresters in Patrick County.

For more information or to schedule a field visit, please contact the Patrick County Soil and Water Conservation District office at 276-694-2911 or feel free to visit the office located at 104 Via Avenue, Stuart, Virginia 24171. (Photo by Sandra Heath)

Personal Property Returns due May 1

Personal property tax returns have been mailed to all residents of the county. Ownership of personal property and business equipment owned on January 1, 2024, should be verified and returned to the Commissioner of the Revenue office by May 1.

Please review all vehicles and mark personal or business use. To qualify for business use, a vehicle must be used more than 50% in a business.

Any vehicles, utility trailers, boats, campers or mobile homes not listed need to be noted on the form.

Business owners must attach a depreciation schedule or itemized listing of property owned on January 1st, 2024.

Please contact the Commissioner of the Revenue office located in the Patrick County Veterans Memorial Building Room, 106 Rucker St, Room 220 or call (276) 694-7131.

BIBLE TRIVIA

BY WILSON CASEY

1. Is the book of 3 Kings (KJV) in the Old or New Testament or neither?
2. Who said, "I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit"? Matthew, Mark, John the Baptist, Luke
3. From Leviticus 14, how long was a "clean" person required to remain outside his tent? One night, Two nights, Four days, Seven days
4. What town or city was Saul of Tarsus near when he converted to Christianity? Damascus, Assos, Corinth, Gaza

Corinth, Gaza

5. Jesus says that you have to do what to see the kingdom of God? Love one another, Be born again, Do what's right, Tithe

6. Which apostle's mother-in-law is mentioned in the Bible? Peter, Judas, James, Andrew
ANSWERS: 1) Neither, 2) John the Baptist, 3) Seven days, 4) Damascus, 5) Be born again, 6) Peter

Sharpen your understanding of scripture with Wilson's Casey's latest book, "Test Your Bible Knowledge," now available in bookstores and online.

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Rev. Tommy Gosnell
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Sunday School for all ages 9:45 am
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276-694-3440 11:00 Worship Service
www.stuartbaptist.org office@stuartbaptist.org

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Stuart
(actually in Patrick Springs)
276.236.7814
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Reconciliation
Sundays 7:45 - 8:15 a.m.

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- ACROSS**
- 1 Not suitable
 - 6 "Sorry to intrude ..."
 - 10 Capricious ideas
 - 15 Cartoonist Addams, informally
 - 19 Payments to the IRS
 - 20 Oscar winner Robert De —
 - 21 Capital of Vietnam
 - 22 Sword handle
 - 23 Fifth Avenue skyscraper
 - 26 Other, in Acapulco
 - 27 Identity hider
 - 28 Altitudes: Abbr.
 - 29 —C (PC copy command)
 - 30 What a groom may toss
 - 32 "Uh-huh"
 - 34 Pioneer Boone, informally
 - 35 Orthodox Jewish movement
 - 37 Rapper — Rida
 - 40 Technique for viewing a slow process quickly
 - 43 Cattle farm
 - 45 Prefix with nourished
 - 46 In a daze
 - 47 First first lady of the U.S.
 - 51 Gets close to
 - 55 Sesame seed paste
 - 56 Pucksters' org. with the Calder Cup
 - 57 Newspaper think piece
 - 60 Born as
 - 61 Toon sheet
 - 62 Hedy of "Ecstasy"
 - 66 Rome's — Fountain
 - 67 Dollar bill
 - 68 Advance inquiry into a crime, e.g.
 - 72 Israeli city close to Ben Gurion Airport
 - 73 Big name in life
 - 74 Decrease
 - 75 Doc for the neck up
 - 76 D-H linkup
 - 77 FDR or HST
 - 78 Former "Idol" judge
 - 79 Bob of play-by-play
 - 82 Wolfed down
 - 84 Launching of people into orbit
 - 88 Insurance payment
 - 92 "The Simpsons" shopkeeper
 - 93 Was overlong
 - 94 Dual-focus course about bodily structures
 - 100 Some kitchen appliances, for short
 - 101 From a northwest Italian port
 - 102 Certain South African
 - 103 Arena level
 - 105 "Hallelujah Chorus" composer
 - 106 Rough- — wood
 - 107 City vehicle
 - 108 Gas brand
 - 112 Water, in Acapulco
 - 113 What love is, per a Four Aces #1 tune, with "a"
 - 118 Crate piece
 - 119 Capital of South Korea
 - 120 Actress Best
 - 121 Really mad
 - 122 The "T" of 66-Down
 - 123 Day divisions
 - 124 Bargain
 - 125 Restaurant notice that's applicable to this puzzle's seven longest answers?
 - 18 Tempestuous
 - 24 Spicy cuisine
 - 25 — Reader (magazine)
 - 31 Carrier based in New Delhi
 - 33 Hawke of film
 - 34 Salvador of surreal art
 - 35 Spicy
 - 36 From — Z
 - 37 Sig Nu, e.g.
 - 38 Video game tomb raider
 - 39 Teetering
 - 41 — di-dah
 - 42 Attila follower
 - 43 Allies' rival
 - 44 Refrigerate
 - 48 More artful
 - 49 — a soul
 - 50 "— in Manila" (Ali-Frazier fight)
 - 52 Consecrating
 - 53 Nevada airport
 - 54 In view
 - 57 Mining finds
 - 58 Sampras of the court
 - 59 Show plainly
 - 63 Poker cost
 - 64 Supplies with personnel
 - 65 Coach Parseghian
 - 66 LG or RCA products
 - 68 Petition
 - 69 "Thumbs-up!"
 - 70 Gas in signs
 - 71 Gasless car
 - 78 Tipoffs in hoops, e.g.
 - 80 Christie's "A Pocket Full —"
 - 81 Depots: Abbr.
 - 83 Not old-fashioned
 - 84 Cabinet dept. since 1965
 - 85 Twosome
 - 86 Abbr. on military mail
 - 87 Societal
 - 89 It might have mascara on it
 - 90 Pas' mates
 - 91 Opal ending
 - 94 Horror-struck
 - 95 All-Star pitcher Denny
 - 96 Yearly
 - 97 Gordie of hockey
 - 98 Itched (for)
 - 99 Seine feeder
 - 104 Trendy again
 - 106 Stimulate
 - 107 — fide
 - 109 Phony
 - 110 Creates a lap
 - 111 Blood type, for short
 - 114 Prefix with pagan
 - 115 Part of TTYL
 - 116 HST follower
 - 117 Loud noise

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ESTATE SALE

HUGE Estate/Yard sale March 9th at Ross Harbour Church at 6260 Elamsville Road, Stuart. 5 partial estates including furniture, organ, garden, yard, and hand tools, fishing, hotwheels etc, lego sets retired, dish sets, glassware, home interior, small appliances, box lots, and so much more. Outside sales at 7am, Inside at 8AM sharp, Basement will be packed! Great prices for a good cause. Rain or Shine. We have canopies and picnic shelter outside. **DON'T MISS THIS ONE!!!**



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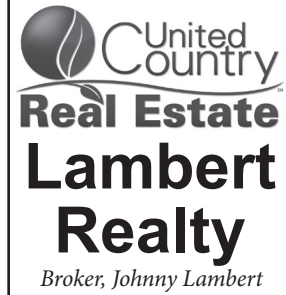
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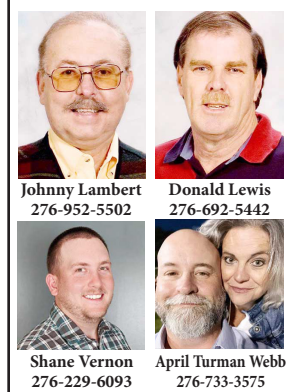
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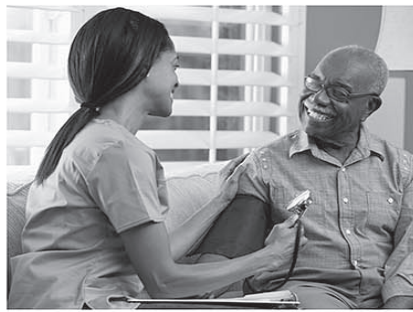
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Land Transfers in January

The following land transfers were recorded in January, according to records in the Patrick County Circuit Court Clerk's Office:

Dorothy Wickert Barrett to Danette McDuffie Johnson and husband, 10.005 acres, no district given.

Connie Blackwell to Sean M. McNiff and other, 1.3546 and 0.87730 acres, Smith River District.

Edwin Lincoln Bland and other to David John Lesko, 20 and 40 acres, Peters Creek District.

Catherine Lynn Boles to Mary Ann Brannock, 5.197 acres, Peters Creek District.

Rita E. Bowman, executor to Ross M. Hiatt and wife, 5.881 acres, Dan River District.

C.L. Martin Family LLC to Gwen W. Elf, lots, Mayo River District.

William Gary Carmichael Sr. to Howard Plemons Jr. and wife, 12.8867, 1.949 and 40.969 acres, no district given.

William Gary Carmichael Sr. to Howard Plemons Jr. and wife, 49.430 and 25.7147 acres, Patrick and Floyd counties.

Wilma A. Drinkard to Mark Anthony Godfrey, 0.3971, 0.0477, 0.6151 and 0.700 acres, Peters Creek District.

Bettie S. Epperson, executor to Bettie S. Epperson and other, 1.6 acres, Dan River District.

Lloyd M. Higgins to Groundhog Mountain Property, lot, Dan River District.

Melvin Elmo Hubbard Sr. and other to Heatquest LLC, 1.1094 acres, Blue Ridge District.

Edward Nelson Hunt Jr., executor to Floyd D. Edwards, lots, Mayo River District/Town of Stuart.

James W. Ingle and others to Andrew Wilson Nickelston and wife, 28.9419 and 1.605 acres, Peters Creek District.

Cheryl Steele Kiefer to Stagecoach Leasing Company LLC, 6.9571 and 0.6509 acres, Mayo River District.

James E. King and wife to Robert C. Springer IV and wife, 10 acres, Dan River District.

Linda M. Kreidler to Brenda P. Burne, 3.6 acres, Smith River District.

Geneva Nolen Martin, executor to Anthony C. Brown, lots, Smith River District.

William Paul Mattox and wife to Ronnie S. Quesenberry and wife, unit, Blue Ridge District.

Marshall Kirk McGhee to Chad Everett McGhee, 7.274 and 4.599 acres, Smith River Dis-

trict.

Roy Lassiter Parrish and other to William Paul Mattox and wife, unit, Dan River District.

Charles Ray Reaves to Kimberly Huff Spencer, .310 acres, Dan River District.

Shipley Real Estate 1, LLC to Keith Allen Hoffman, 13.8408, 13.9160, 19.4092 and 18.5297 acres, Peters Creek District.

Roger Lewis Spencer to Lori Koltiska, 7.4326, 7.3 and 6.8 acres, Blue Ridge District.

The Bank of New York Mellon and other to JR Collaborative LLC, 7.769 acres, Mayo River District.

Trustee Services of Virginia LLC to Planet Home Lending LLC, 0.478 acres, Mayo River District.

Deena Handy Whitlow to Paul E. Goddard and wife, 4.000 acres, Blue Ridge District.

Wintrust Mortgage to Secretary of Veterans Affairs, 2.332 acres, Blue Ridge District.

Mohammad A. Zaghab and other to Coleman Guy Dehart and other, 10.7396 acres, Peters Creek District.

Zoo Land Florida Partners LLC and others to Circle B LLC, 111.407 acres, Smith River Dis-

Lawmakers signal more support for electric vehicles, charging network

By Sam Bradley
Capital News Service

Lawmakers advanced legislation to expand electric vehicle infrastructure throughout the state, which could help meet a looming mandate that sales of new gas-powered vehicles be phased out by 2035.

More infrastructure, such as electric chargers, is needed to meet the deadline and growing EV demand.

Del. Richard "Rip" Sullivan, D-Fairfax, introduced House Bill 107, which creates the Electric Vehicle Rural Infrastructure Program and Fund. The measure financially assists developers in bringing EV chargers to rural areas that meet established conditions. Areas qualify based on population density, annual unemployment and poverty rates.

Funds would be used to offset nonutility costs, which include construction and some needed parts like breakers, conduits and cables. Developer grants would be capped at 70% of the cost to construct public charging stations.

The bill passed the House with bipartisan support, on a 71-27 vote. Sullivan requested \$50 million over the next two years for the fund. An employee would need to help manage the fund, on an estimated \$50,000 annual salary.

The House budget presented earlier this week reduced the amount to \$2 million in the current fiscal year.

"I look at it very positively, and I am hopeful about the bill's chances," Sullivan said about the budget. "Virginia is a very big place. We need a lot of EV charging stations around it, so I view this as a good start."

The number of public EV chargers in Virginia increased by approximately 75% since 2020, per a study recently released by the Southern Environmental Law Center. Senior attorney Trip Pollard is the land and community program leader with the nonprofit advocacy group.

There are still big gaps in EV charger coverage. The state's transition to modern, more sustainable transportation will not happen overnight and the public needs to be prepared for it, according to Pollard.

A fund to help rural development is important to bridge the gap between EV ownership and its practicality in rural or lower-income communities. Legislation can help ensure no communities are left behind in the transition, Pollard said.

There has been a federal push to increase the spread of publicly available chargers through the Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Pollard said. The federal funding appropriates \$106 million over five years to support the expansion of an EV charging network. Virginia can also apply for the \$2.5 billion dedicated to grants for EV charging.

There is a gap in rural coverage, since most charging infrastructure is centered around major interstates and highways. Many rural areas in Virginia are without the type of public ports needed to charge EVs quickly, according to a study from the Southern Environmental Law Center.

Private charging is the dominant option for EV owners. Roughly 90% of EV owners can install private chargers at their home, according to the study.

"That's one of the biggest areas that we need to address," Pollard said. "The majority of EV owners charge at home, but if you're in a multi-family that can often be very difficult to do."

EV charging standards for new development

Del. Adele McClure, D-Arlington, introduced HB 405, which tasks the Commission on Electric Utility Regulation to oversee the design standards and requirements to safely bring charging capabilities into new housing developments.

The commission would determine what type of electrical distribution infrastructure is needed to support EV charging facilities in new single-family and multifamily residential units.

When McClure canvassed during campaign season, she heard from constituents who said they wanted to see more EV infrastructure.

"I started thinking about ways where we can ensure that there are more charging stations, especially when it comes to new builds," McClure said.

The bill stems from conversations between home builders and environmentalists on the best way to remove barriers and lower the costs to build "easy-ready and EV-capable residential communities," McClure said.

All new vehicles sold must be electric models, starting in 2035. The mandate stems from the state's Clean Car law passed in 2021, which adopts California's standard. But 35% of all new cars and trucks sold in Virginia with a 2026 model year must be electric. Lawmakers have attempted to overturn the law, questioning if the state's infrastructure will be ready and if the vehicles are affordable enough.

Both of the bills are now waiting to be heard in committees, after crossing over to the Senate.

Capital News Service is a program of Virginia Commonwealth University's Robertson School of Media and Culture. Students in the program provide state government coverage for a variety of media outlets in Virginia.

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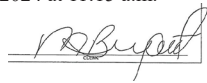
Patrick County Public Schools is seeking bids for Cellular Security Cameras. Bids must be submitted by March 22, 2024 at 4:30 p.m. Please see our website, www.patrick.k12.va.us for more information.

LEGAL

Patrick County Public Schools is seeking bids for Door Intercoms. Bids must be submitted by March 22, 2024 at 4:30 p.m. Please see our website, www.patrick.k12.va.us for more information.

LEGAL

ORDER OF PUBLICATION Case No. JJ004866-07-00
Commonwealth of Virginia CODE §8.01-316
PATRICK J & DR - JUVENILE
Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court
Commonwealth of Virginia, *in re* NEFF, ANIYA ELLYSE
The object of this suit is to:
TERMINATE THE RESIDUAL PARENTAL RIGHTS OF JOHN NEFF "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 JOHN NEFF appear at the above-named court and protect his interests on or before 04/04/2024 at 11:15 a.m.
2/29/2024



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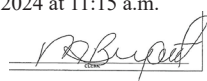
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
PUBLIC HEARING: The Patrick County Board of Supervisors will hold a Public Hearing, Monday, March 11, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. in the third-floor courtroom of the Patrick County Veteran's Memorial Building located at 106 Rucker Street in Stuart, Virginia, to discuss the Fairy Stone Solar Siting Agreement. The hearing will begin at 6:00 p.m. in the 3rd floor Courtroom in the Patrick County Veterans Memorial building, 106 Rucker Street, Stuart, Virginia. Action will be taken at the meeting. If you would like to review the Fairy Stone Solar Siting Agreement, you may do so at the County Administration Office, Suite 218.
If you plan to attend and have any special needs requirements, please contact the County Administration Office at 276-694-6094.

LEGAL

REQUEST FOR ASO PROPOSAL
Patrick County Public Schools, Stuart, VA, is seeking sealed proposals to establish and Administrative Services Only contract for Health plans only. To obtain a copy of the Request for Proposal, contact:
Sam Irby / Karen Hawks
Innovative Insurance Group
P.O. Box 440
820 East Avenue
Kenbridge, VA 23944
(434) 676-9496
karen@thinkinnovative.net
Proposals are due no later than 10:00 a.m.,
Monday, March 11, 2024

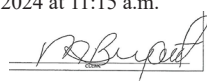
LEGAL

ORDER OF PUBLICATION Case No. JJ004867-07-00
Commonwealth of Virginia CODE §8.01-316
PATRICK J & DR - JUVENILE
Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court
Commonwealth of Virginia, *in re* NEFF, CONNOR AIDEN
The object of this suit is to:
TERMINATE THE RESIDUAL PARENTAL RIGHTS OF JOHN NEFF "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 JOHN NEFF appear at the above-named court and protect his interests on or before 04/04/2024 at 11:15 a.m.
2/29/2024



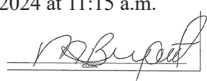
LEGAL

ORDER OF PUBLICATION Case No. JJ004868-07-00
Commonwealth of Virginia CODE §8.01-316
PATRICK J & DR - JUVENILE
Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court
Commonwealth of Virginia, *in re* NEFF, MICHAEL WILLIAM
The object of this suit is to:
TERMINATE THE RESIDUAL PARENTAL RIGHTS OF JOHN NEFF "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 JOHN NEFF appear at the above-named court and protect his interests on or before 04/04/2024 at 11:15 a.m.
2/29/2024



LEGAL

ORDER OF PUBLICATION Case No. JJ004869-07-00
Commonwealth of Virginia CODE §8.01-316
PATRICK J & DR - JUVENILE
Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court
Commonwealth of Virginia, *in re* NEFF, CYAN RAYNE
The object of this suit is to:
TERMINATE THE RESIDUAL PARENTAL RIGHTS OF JOHN NEFF "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 JOHN NEFF appear at the above-named court and protect his interests on or before 04/04/2024 at 11:15 a.m.
2/29/2024



Meetings

Monday, March 11

The Patrick County Board of Supervisors will meet at 6 p.m. in the third-floor court room of the Patrick County Administration Building.

Thursday, March 14

The Patrick County School Board will meet at 5:30 p.m. in the school board administration building.

Monday, March 18

The Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC) Board Academic & Student Affairs Committee will meet at 11:30 a.m. in Room 145 in the Frith Economic Development Center.

The P&HCC Board will meet at 12:30 p.m. in the Hooker Exhibit Hall in the Frith Economic Development Center.

Tuesday, March 19

The Patrick County Planning Commission will hold a sub-committee work session meeting at 4 p.m. in the Community Room at the Patrick & Henry Community College, Stuart site.

Wednesday, March 20

The Stuart Town Council will meet at 7 p.m. in the Town Office.

Wednesday, March 27

The Patrick County EDA will meet at 7 p.m. in the second floor conference room of the Patrick County Administration Building.

Events

Friday, March 8

A Moonshine Hollow Hike will be held at 10 a.m. at the Fairystone State Park Visitor Center.

A Fayerdale Missing Town hike will be held at 2:30 p.m. at the Fairystone State Park Shelter 4.

Saturday, March 9

A Hunters Education Class will be held at 10 Via Ave in Stuart from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. It is for hunters 12 and up to be able to obtain a hunting license. Lunch will be provided. Register at dwr.Virginia.gov. For questions, call Jonathan Scott at (276) 229-1700.

The Patrick County Master Gardeners Association will host its 15th annual Gardening Symposium at the Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC) from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. The cost is \$10, and is payable at the door.

Mayo Mountain Church will hold a free community meal, a fish fry, starting at 6 p.m.

A Little Mountain Falls hike will be held at 9 a.m. at the Fairystone State Park Amphitheater Trailhead Parking Lot.

Lakeshore Trail hike will be held at 1:30 p.m. at the Fairystone State Park Amphitheater Trailhead Parking Lot.

Huge Estate/Yard sale fundraiser for Scholarships for kids in need at Ross Harbour Church on Elamsville Road. Inside doors open at 8 a.m. Outside by 7 a.m. The women's group will have biscuits, coffee, drinks, etc., for sale.

Sunday, March 10

Mountain View/Horse Camp Trail hike will be held at 9 a.m. at Fairystone State Park Amphitheater Trailhead Parking Lot.

Iron Mine hike will be held at 1:30 p.m. at Fairystone State Park Iron Mine Parking Lot.

Wednesday, March 13

The Patrick County Food Bank will hold distribution at the Stuart site from 8:30-11 a.m. and from 5-6: 30 p.m., at Ararat starting at 8:30 a.m., and at Meadows of Dan starting at 5:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 14

The Patrick County Senior Citizens Group will meet at 11 a.m. in the Hooker Building at Rotary Field in Stuart. Entertainment will be provided by Herbert and Tina Conner. Pizza, tossed salad, and beverages will be provided to all attendees. Attendees are requested to bring desserts to share with the group.

Friday, March 15

The Woolwine Community Food Pantry will be at the Fairystone Volunteer Fire Department from 3-4:30 p.m.

A Moonshine Hollow Hike will be held at 10 a.m. at the Fairystone State Park Visitor Center.

A Fayerdale Missing Town hike will be held at 2:30 p.m. at the Fairystone State Park Shelter 4.

Saturday, March 16

Fairystone Volunteer Fire Department will hold a country breakfast from 6:30-10 a.m. Adult plates are \$10 each with child plates being \$8 each. All take out plates are \$10 each. Call in orders can be made by calling (276) 930-2113.

A Spring-Oh Bingo will be held at the Francisco Community Center in Westfield, NC.

Hotdogs will be available at 6 p.m. and games start at 7 p.m. A \$20 donation includes 20 games with 3 per card and four door prize tickets. \$3 for one card or \$5 for two. All proceeds go toward Francisco VFD Auxiliary projects.

The second annual Patrick County's Got Talent & Bake Sale featuring Michael Ray Fain will be held at 7 p.m. at the Patrick County High School (PCHS). Admission is free, though the Patrick County Alzheimer's Group, LLC, will gladly accept donations.

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 Alzheimer's Group LLC meets at 7 p.m. the first Monday of every month at the Alzheimer's office at 109 Buena Vista Ave in Stuart. New members or volunteers are welcome. For more information, call (276) 693-6018.

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.

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.

Willis Gap Community Center will hold an Open Jam Acoustic every Friday night with doors opening at 6 p.m. for hotdogs, chips, candies, popcorn, coffee, and assorted sodas. From 7-10 p.m. there will be old time country, bluegrass, and gospel music. A 50/50 drawing will be held at about 8:15 p.m.

VADOC launches tipline to stop flow of drugs, contraband

The Virginia Department of Corrections (VADOC) is continuing its efforts to halt the attempted stream of drugs and contraband into its facilities by urging individuals to anonymously call its recently created Drug and Contraband Tipline at (540) 830-9280.

Callers can speak directly to a member of the Department's Drug Intelligence Unit of the VADOC Special Operations Group or leave a detailed voicemail. The information provided is vetted before it goes to the VADOC's Drug Task Force, if warranted. The tipline is monitored 24 hours a day, seven

days a week. Callers can choose to remain anonymous when calling the tipline.

"The safety and security of our employees, inmates, and supervisees is our top priority," said VADOC Director Chad Dotson. "We know that safety and security is a crucial concern for loved ones as well. That is why I am urging anyone who has any information about an attempt to smuggle drugs or contraband into our facilities to call this tipline. One call can save lives – and help the Virginia Department of Corrections in its mission to provide long-term public safety in the Commonwealth."

The VADOC will continue to examine ways to prevent the entry of drugs and contraband into all facilities, fostering a safe and secure environment for both employees and inmates.

NOTICE

All announcements to be included in the Community Calendar must be received by 5 p.m. on Friday the week before publish date. Items are published as space permits. Email to: dhall@theenterprise.net

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
- ♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

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9 marriage-related measures in the state known for its lovers

By Parker Barnes
Capital News Service

Only a few bills out of the thousands introduced this General Assembly session tackle love.

Lawmakers resumed the long-standing effort to codify same-sex marriage protection, but there are a handful of other bills that address marriage in the commonwealth.

Marriage for the "mature"

Del. Karen Keys-Gamarra, D-Fairfax, introduced House Bill 994, which passed the House 55-42. The bill reaffirms the legal age of marriage to be 18 years old. It will remove an exception that allows minors to become emancipated if they intend to get married.

"I believe that marriage ... it should be a lifetime commitment," Keys-Gamarra said. "It is a decision that should be made by people who are mature."

The delegate cited higher divorce and poverty rates among those who marry young, as well as an increase in pregnancy complications, as reasons the bill was introduced.

"It increases dropout rates and things of that nature that really suggests that marrying young is not the healthiest thing for most people," Keys-Gamarra said.

The bill was amended to include a reenactment clause, which means it needs to pass this session and next.

"Essentially this is what we call a speedbump," said Del. Marcus Simon, D-Fairfax, in committee, but it helped the bill advance.

Simon voiced concerns about a potential loophole in which minors could seek emancipation for an unrelated reason, but then still marry.

The bill



Love mural on the southeast corner of Grove Ave. and Strawberry St. in Richmond, Virginia. "Virginia is for Lovers" is a famous state advertising slogan. Several bills regulating love in the form of marriage are making their way through the 2024 General Assembly session. Photo by Parker Barnes/Capital News Service

was placed in the Senate Committee for Courts of Justice.

Advance directive null with divorce or custody dispute

Del. Jed Arnold, R-Marion, introduced HB 436.

The bill allows a person to revoke an advance directive upon the filing for divorce or annulment of their marriage. An advance directive, or a living will, is a written document that determines a patient's medical care in the case that they are unable to speak for themselves.

The bill also amends the Health Care Decisions Act to include divorce actions and custody visitation disputes as grounds for revocation.

"You could get a petition for custody of visitation prior to a divorce being entered," Simon said. "Under this bill that sort of is the red flag that says 'hey, they're fighting over the kids, they probably don't want to have each other making each other's medical

decisions."

Arnold encountered this issue in his legal practice. Someone without an advance directive can be their partner's medical representative unless there is a divorce action pending between them.

"I thought that if it's good enough for somebody that doesn't have an advance directive or hasn't executed one, it should be grounds for revocation if somebody has executed an advance directive," Arnold said.

The bill passed both chambers of the General Assembly unanimously.

Marriage rites performed by people other than ministers

Del. Betsy Carr, D-Richmond, introduced HB 1126, which adds Virginia congressional representatives to the list of those who can perform rites of marriage without court authorization. Also on the list are current legislators, the governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general -- and of course, a minister.

Others not included in this list can officiate a marriage if they pay fees and sign paperwork.

The bill saw bipartisan engagement in both chambers.

A similar measure introduced by Sen. Bill DeSteph, R-Virginia Beach, Senate Bill 175, would add court clerks and former state legislators to this list, but not congressional members. The bill will have its final vote soon.

Licensure portability for couples therapists

Del. Mark Sickles, D-Fairfax, introduced HB 329, to increase patient access to individuals qualified for therapy. It eases the pro-

cess of licensure by endorsement for marriage and family therapists.

"It's not a secret that we have a dearth of mental health professionals," said Arnold Woodruff, executive director of the Virginia Association for Marriage and Family Therapy.

The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy also spoke in support of the measure and said it is part of an effort they are spearheading across nine states, including Virginia.

An applicant must show specific documentation from another jurisdiction, have no unresolved action against their license or certificate, and submit a written statement that says they understand Virginia regulations and laws.

The bill passed both chambers unanimously.

Virginia for all lovers

Sen. Adam Ebbin, D-Alexandria, introduced Senate Joint Resolution 11, a constitutional amendment to repeal the current state definition of marriage as only between one man and one woman. It was continued to 2025. A House measure was also continued.

The Virginia constitution was amended in 2006 to define marriage, and legislative efforts have been ongoing for at least a decade to include protections for same-sex couples.

A continued Democratic majority is necessary to codify the right to marry regardless of sex, gender or race, according to Ebbin.

"Republican legislators have dragged their feet in the past and very few of them have been supportive," Ebbin said. "I'm appreciative of those who have."

Same-sex marriage became federally recognized through the U.S. Supreme Court Obergefell v. Hodges ruling. Advocates and couples have voiced concern that there are no state protections if the ruling is overturned, other than limited protections in the Respect for Marriage Act passed in 2022.

Two bills that recently passed both chambers and head to the governor's desk would ensure marriage licenses for same-sex couples. HB 174 and SB 101 make up for the state constitutional gap.

"In the short term, we just want to make clear that clerks issue licenses to people regardless of whether it's a same-sex marriage or opposite-sex marriage," Ebbin said.

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Editor Debbie Hall

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The columnists' views appearing on this page do not necessarily reflect the editorial position of *The Enterprise*.

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P&HCC Recognized by Achieving the Dream as a 2024 Leader College of Distinction

Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC) has been designated a Leader College of Distinction by Achieving the Dream (ATD), a national nonprofit dedicated to advancing community colleges as hubs of equity and mobility in their communities.

“Patrick & Henry Community College is honored to be one of only six schools in the nation to receive this important designation, which highlights our success in increasing retention and closing economic opportunity gaps,” said P&HCC president Dr. Greg Hodges, adding, “It is especially significant to us to recertify as a Leader College of Distinction, having been one of the original 26 colleges to join ATD in 2004.”

ATD created the Leader College of Distinction award in 2018 to recognize colleges that have pursued and met challenging student success goals, often earning Leader College status several times. Leader Colleges of Distinction must show improvement in three or more student outcome metrics, including at least one lagging indicator such as completion or transfer with an earned baccalaureate. Leader Colleges of Distinction are also required to show they have reduced equity gaps in at least two metrics for at least two student groups. These requirements recognize and motivate sustained and proactive reform efforts



P&HCC president Dr. Greg Hodges receives the Leader College of Distinction award from Dr. Monica Parrish Trent (ATD Chief Program and Network Officer) and Dr. Karen A. Stout (ATD President and Chief Executive Officer) at Achieving the Dream's annual DREAM conference in February.

that result in greater improvements in student success and equity.

Patrick & Henry Community College was also presented with a special 20th anniversary award at ATD's annual DREAM conference: the Network Legend Award. Since

2004, ATD has worked with its network to innovate in response to the world's current reality. The Network Legend Award recognized the 15 colleges that began their partnership with ATD in 2004 and celebrates their longevity in the Net-

work.

P&HCC is part of the ATD Network, made up of 300+ colleges committed to advancing equity and supporting student success at their institutions and throughout their communities. P&HCC has been a member of the ATD Network since 2004.

ATD is a partner and champion of more than 300 community colleges across the country. Drawing on expert coaches, groundbreaking programs, and national peer network, the organization provides institutions with integrated, tailored support for every aspect of their work — from foundational capacities such as leadership, data, and equity to intentional strategies for supporting students holistically, building K–12 partnerships, and more. ATD calls this Whole College Transformation. Its vision is for every college to be a catalyst for equitable, antiracist, and economically vibrant communities. ATD knows that with the right partner and the right approach, colleges can drive access, completion rates, and employment outcomes — so that all students can access life-changing learning that propels them into community-changing careers. Follow ATD on X (Twitter), Facebook, and LinkedIn. To learn more, visit the Achieving the Dream (ATD) website: www.achievingthedream.org.

Legislation addresses long-standing VA foster care legal issues

Edwin J. Viera

Virginia News Connection

Virginia's General Assembly is taking up a bill to address outcomes for kids in foster care.

Previous legislation either failed to pass or was watered down in favor of further research on the issues. House Bill 893 would require Virginia's Judicial Council to adopt new standards for attorneys to qualify to represent parents in child dependency cases.

Valerie L'Herrou, deputy director of the Center for Family Advocacy at the Virginia Poverty Law Center, described the impact it can have on families.

“When parents have better legal represen-

tation, the children achieve their permanency goal faster,” L'Herrou pointed out. “On average, four months faster.”

She pointed out the faster turnaround can reduce state foster care operation costs. Typically, Virginia spends \$305 million annually on foster care. Most opposition to previous bills has subsided, in light of state research about the extent of the issue. The bill passed the House of Delegates and has been referred to the Senate Committee for Courts of Justice.

With more than 5,000 children in foster care, L'Herrou argued now is the time to act. She added if this bill passes, it could serve as a springboard for future improvements to the

system.

“I think this will start giving judges information that they need in order to effectively decide cases,” L'Herrou emphasized. “When a case goes to court, you're hearing from both sides, and if you only hear from one side, then you're getting an incomplete picture.”

The bill would also raise the rate of compensation for attorneys taking such cases. In the meantime, L'Herrou stressed programs are providing parents with sufficient legal representation. The Family Preservation Project has been filling the gap by taking what she calls a “holistic approach” to family separation cases.

Initial unemployment claims decrease

The number of initial unemployment insurance claims decreased in the latest filing week to 1,996 and was at typical pre-pandemic volumes, according to data from the Virginia Department of Workforce Development and Advancement.

For the filing week ending February 24, seasonally unadjusted initial claims for unemployment insurance in Virginia totaled 1,996, which was a decrease of 276 claimants from the previous week. Continued weeks claimed totaled 15,736, which was a decrease of 81 claimants from the previous week but an increase of 34 percent from the 11,785 continued claims from the comparable week last year. An industry

was reported for ninety-three percent of continued claims. Of those, over half (57 percent) of continued claims were from administrative and support and waste management (2,162), professional, scientific, and technical services (2,064), construction (1,529), manufacturing (1,324), and health care and social assistance (1,271). 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 February 24, the U.S. advance figure for seasonally adjusted initial claims

was 215,000, an increase of 13,000 from the previous week's revised level. The previous week's level was revised up by 1,000 from 201,000 to 202,000. The advance number of actual U.S. initial claims under state programs, unadjusted, totaled 193,988 in the week ending February 24, a decrease of 5,349 (or -2.7 percent) from the previous week. There were 202,156 initial claims in the comparable week in 2023.

Looking at preliminary data,

most U.S. states reported decreases on a seasonally unadjusted basis. Oklahoma's preliminary weekly change (-1,986) was the largest decrease. Oregon's preliminary weekly change (-1,376) was the second largest decrease. Texas's preliminary weekly change (-1,299) was the third largest decrease. Michigan's preliminary weekly change (-990) was the fourth largest decrease. Virginia had the thirteenth largest decrease (-332).

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Dribben named to VCA teaching artist roster

By Taylor Boyd

A Meadows of Dan area woman was recently named to the Teaching Artist Roster of the Virginia Commission for the Arts (VCA) as part of its newest cohort.

According to the VCA, the roster “serves as an online resource for Virginia’s nonprofits, units of local and tribal government, or schools seeking professional teaching artists to facilitate immersive and participatory arts residences.”

Angela Dribben, who specializes in literary arts and poetry, said there is a competitive application process to get on the roster.

“They are really vetting that person on the roster to see if they do have a firm idea of how to meet certain educational objectives,” she said.

As a lot of the roster and applicantes teach in public or private schools, Dribben said VCA wants to know if they have an idea of how to use the arts and meet educational objectives so that two things are happening in the classroom.

“They’re looking for” evidence “of experience doing it. So, when you apply to be on the roster you’re saying ‘here’s a program that I’ve done. Here’s the objectives that it meets, here’s the age groups I’ve taught it to, here’s proof of it,’” she said.

Dribben said being on the roster also allows organizations that might want to bring teachers on to expiate the process.

For example, she said a hospice group might bring a teaching artist on to teach legacy writing, or to write through their grief.

“So, you can use a VCA teaching artist and have good access to grants to cover the cost of that teaching artist. That is a real benefit to be able to do that and not have to go back to the beginning and then vet them.,” she said.

Personally, Dribben believes being on the roster is a validation that she’s on the right path.

“I spent a lot of time writing, submitting, getting published, getting rejected, getting the M.F.A - it’s a huge financial investment and a huge time investment,” she said. “In working in the arts as a volunteer...I was doing all of this work, and wondering if it

mattered and if I was getting anywhere with it, you know, and wondering about having invested in a M.F.A because so much of my work was volunteer.”

Being on the roster also showed Dribben that she was going to be able to make the M.F.A make sense and did deserve to be compensated for the experience that she brings into a classroom.

Dribben said most places she’s taught at have been through the VCA. She did Teacher Professional Development for Martinsville City Public Schools and Henry County Public Schools, taught in Henry County schools, Floyd County Public Schools, and the Jesse Peterman Memorial Library.

“I’m getting ready to teach through Floyd Center for the Arts, and I’ve got an arts camp that I’m doing through Feeding Needles this summer. We’re doing big art,” she said.

Since being put on the Teaching Artist Roster, Dribben said she’s done the legwork herself and been successful.

“The VCA is really, really supportive, and they really help you navigate the process. I do feel like, not just for me, because places in this area could use teaching artists from all over Virginia that are on the roster,” she said.

Dribben feels like there’s a lot more opportunity to put the teaching artists to work and to use this support from the VCA that’s being offered.

“There’s this opportunity out there to bring artists of all mediums to the schools, into other programs, so I would love it” for people to contact the artists and have them come, she said.

A published poet, Dribben said she became a little frustrated with the submissions process to get published.

“So, submitting as a poet can become strenuous, demanding, and expensive. It doesn’t sound like much, but \$3 a submission, \$4 a submission, \$5 a submission, it adds up, and it’s so saturated that the amount of submission that you need to send out can add up,” she said.

To submit a book, she said the price range is \$25-30 per book per submission.

“So, I became a little frustrated with the

submissions process. I was successful, I have a book out. I mean my publications are probably well over 100 now, but it didn’t feel fulfilling to me. I mean, is anyone reading it? It just felt like this weird hamster wheel of money and time and never feeling satisfied,” she said.

Dribben then went into working poetry individual art and doing public art.

These are a lot of the classes she currently teaches. Dribben said she does a lot of visual poetry in classrooms because it’s accessible and “no matter how you learn something in it, you can work with.”

She said it also gives students a place to put their art.

“Because if we write, I feel like most of us write to be heard, to be understood, to connect. I feel like that’s really why we’re writing. When I was teaching people to write poetry, I didn’t want to get them on the same hamster wheel,” she said.

Dribben said she’s doing more public art than focusing on publishing as she finds it to be more satisfying to connect with others, help them articulate what they want to say, and help them share what they want to say.

In Southwest Virginia, Dribben said the VCA wants to serve as the region has not historically applied for as much support as other parts of the state.

“So, this is an area it has been communicated to me that the VCA is very interested in helping support in the arts. I mean, this just couldn’t be a better time to take advantage of the Teaching Artist Roster,” she said.

Dribben wants people to feel encouraged to apply or to reach out to a Teaching Artist.

“Most of us would walk someone through the process. You know, so if there’s any ‘I don’t have time to go apply for a grant’ or ‘I don’t know what the process is like,’ the process is really straightforward. The teaching artists are very adept at doing it,” she said.

To find grants to work with a Teaching Artist Roster member, go to <https://vca.virginia.gov/grants>.

Organizations interested in booking Dribben can reach her at angeladribben@gmail.com.

SCC Recognizes National Consumer Protection Week

Choices abound for consumers in today’s marketplace. Knowing how to effectively navigate those choices is essential.

The State Corporation Commission (SCC) is pleased to join the Federal Trade Commission and other organizations throughout the country in recognizing National Consumer Protection Week (March 3-9). This annual awareness campaign encourages Americans to understand their consumer rights and make informed decisions to help avoid unsuitable and fraudulent products and services.

The SCC encourages Virginians to protect themselves financially and know where to turn for help – whether they are investing, planning for retirement, looking for ways to save money on their energy bill or shopping for insurance or a loan. It reminds Virginians that it stands ready throughout

the year to answer inquiries and provide information and assistance regarding industry sectors over which it has regulatory responsibility. Those sectors include insurance companies and agents, state-chartered financial institutions, investment firms and their representatives, retail franchises and investor-owned utilities providing electric, natural gas, water, sewer and telecommunications services.

The SCC offers a wealth of consumer information on these and other topics, much of which is available on our website at scc.virginia.gov. Our specially trained staff can assist Virginians in making informed choices and assisting with questions if they are not satisfied with the responses they receive from businesses that the SCC regulates.

The SCC urges Virginians to thoroughly evaluate any offer; shop around and compare prices and terms; keep written records of all transactions; find products and services that suit your needs; and verify if an individual or company is licensed or registered with the SCC. If a problem arises, try to resolve it with the regulated individual or company first. If you are still not satisfied, you can contact the appropriate SCC division by phone, mail or email using the online complaint form.

To access complaint forms and a description of the complaint process, visit the SCC website at scc.virginia.gov and select the appropriate division. To contact the SCC by phone, call toll-free (in Virginia) at 1-800-552-7945 or, in Richmond, call:

- Bureau of Insurance – (804) 371-9741
- Bureau of Financial Institutions – (804) 371-9657
- Division of Securities and Retail Franchising – (804) 371-9051
- Division of Public Utility Regulation – (804) 371-9611
- Office of the Clerk – (804) 371-9733
- Division of Information Resources – (804) 371-9141

In the event the SCC does not have regulatory authority over a particular firm, individual, product or transaction, its staff will direct consumers to any appropriate local, state or federal authority for assistance. These may include local law enforcement; the Office of the Attorney General; or the Federal Trade Commission, which consumers also may contact directly through its toll-free helpline at 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357).

To learn more about National Consumer Protection Week, visit consumer.ftc.gov/features/national-consumer-protection-week.

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Central Virginia poultry growers forming co-op in wake of Tyson facility closure and contract buyouts

Though Tyson Foods continues contract buyout payments with longtime chicken grower Pete Watson, four broiler houses sit empty on his Nottoway County farm after 32 years in the business.

Poultry production is a livelihood Watson planned to pass on to his son and co-operator, 32-year-old William "Rooster" Watson.

Citing its "inability to economically improve operations" in Central Virginia, Tyson Foods announced it was closing its Glen Allen processing facility in March 2023. This decision affected 700 processing plant jobs, and it left 55 Central Virginia farms with empty poultry houses and the question of farm succession and survival.

"I have two little ones myself," Rooster Watson said, "and I hoped one of them would be interested in running the farm someday too."

More than 50 impacted poultry growers gathered in Farmville Feb. 22 to hear about the formation of the Central Virginia Poultry Cooperative Inc. and its 13-year agreement to sell cage-free eggs to Indiana-based Dutch Country Organics LLC. With a mix of excitement and healthy skepticism, growers learned how CVP will support a mass pivot from raising broiler chickens to pullet and table egg production. Dutch Country supplies eggs to major grocery chains, including Aldi, Costco, Kroger and Walmart Inc.

Virginia Farm Bureau Federation and the Virginia Foundation for Agriculture, Innovation and Rural Sustainability worked with producers to help establish the new cooperative and partnered with

localities and the state to help structure an economic development package for CVP that will benefit both chicken producers and grain growers in the region.

In December 2023 the Commonwealth Regional Council was awarded a \$35,000 planning grant from the Governor's Agriculture & Forestry Industries Development Fund on behalf of CVP. The planning grant was matched by funding from the council's member counties: Amelia, Buckingham, Charlotte, Cumberland, Lunenburg, Nottoway and Prince Edward. These counties stand to benefit from the return of poultry production to the region.

In turn, the VFBF board of directors authorized up to \$500,000 for the purchase of CVP's non-voting Class B preferred stock, pending approval of certain cooperative documents, said Scott Sink, VFBF vice president.

"I apologize your worlds got turned upside down last March," he told growers at the Feb. 22 gathering. "But I'm in awe of what you've been able to put together in less than a year."

In pivoting from broiler production to pullets and eggs, infrastructure conversions are required, like pouring expensive concrete slabs for cage-free hen houses. That capital investment worried some growers in the room.

However, Dutch Country's contract with CVP will allow CVP to offer producers long-term contracts that should make grower financing more attractive for lending institutions, said Bill Osl, co-op public director and VFBF board member.

At a Feb. 28 press event at Tom Schaubach Farm in Burkeville, Virginia Sec-

retary of Agriculture and Forestry Matt Lohr announced the Governor's AFID Infrastructure Grant will award a \$50,000 matching grant to the Commonwealth Regional Council on behalf of CVP for capital expenses. Additionally, the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services will award \$341,750 from its Rural Rehabilitation Trust Fund for capital expenses related to biosecurity and food safety.

The Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission also announced a \$1.4 million grant to assist CVP with certain startup costs during its first two years of operation. CVP will provide matching funds.

CVP will provide its producers with chickens and feed, and arrange the sale and distribution of the eggs. Producer members will be responsible for converting their housing and raising pullets or producing eggs according to prescribed standards. CVP will pay the producers on a per-bird or per-egg basis. The member-owned cooperative will sell the eggs to Dutch Country Organics, which will clean, sort and grade the eggs.

Each CVP member will have one share of common stock and a say in governing the cooperative, including selecting the board of directors. Producers also must purchase shares of non-voting Class A preferred stock in order to raise pullets or eggs. CVP is offering poultry producers a 20% discount on the purchase of Class A stock before the March 31 deadline.

To learn more about CVP membership or investment opportunities, contact chair John Bapties at 434-547-8242 or johnbapties@gmail.com.

Hungry Mother State Park opens registration for new birding festival

Registration is open for Hungry Mother State Park's inaugural Life's Extras Birding Celebration, a festival to honor the life of long-time volunteer and Virginia Master Naturalist Randy Smith.

Smith, who always looked for "life's extras," passed away after a brief illness in January 2023. He loved spending time in nature and was an active birder. He maintained a list of bird species he had seen over his lifetime and took great joy in leading bird walks and owl prowls at Hungry Mother.

The park will honor his memory May 3-5 with a birding festival featuring 15 different birding activities, from bird hikes and owl paddles to a live raptor show and programs on bird rehabilitation. Speakers include birding experts, licensed wildlife rehabilitators, Virginia Master Naturalists and more.

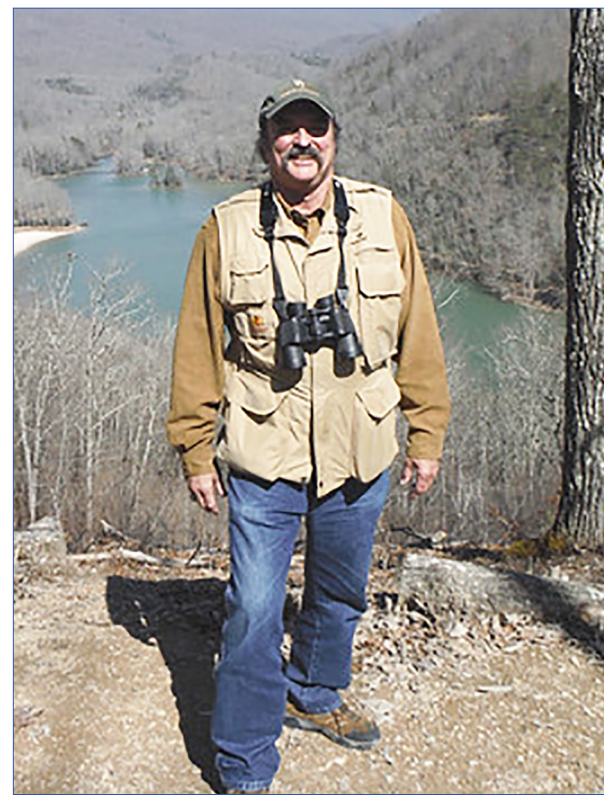
Admission to the festival is \$25 for a three-day pass, which includes all festival events, a commemorative patch and a three-day parking pass for Hungry Mother State Park, or \$15 for a single-day ticket on Saturday or Sunday, which includes the programs on the day of your choice; parking and a commemorative patch are not included.

Registration for Life's Extras Birding Celebration closes on April 26. All proceeds from the festival will benefit the Friends of Hungry Mother State Park. To learn more or to register, click here (<https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/event?id=2024-01-23-15-25-36-511057-c5s>).

The park also offers overnight accommodation for festival goers, including cabins, a family



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Randy Smith

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Roadside cleanup held Sunday



Several members of the Wood family spent their Sunday beautifying the roadside along Virginia 8 and Virginia 57 in the Buffalo Ridge community. Micala, Stephen, James and John Wood worked on the roadside near Woods Cold Storage, picking up 35 large orange bags of roadside trash. (Contributed)



Whooo gives a Hoot at Landmark



Residents of the Landmark Center were treated to a program, "Who gives a Hoot about Owls," led by Master Gardeners Jessica Hines and Norma Bozenmayer. Residents listened to owl calls, discussed types of owls, owl behavior and shared owl stories. All participants made a little snowy owl out of a pinecone. Did you know that barn owls, barred owls, great horned owls, spotted owls, and eastern screech owls are known to mate for life?

Applications now accepted for Virginia Service and Conservation Corps

Virginia State Parks is recruiting members for its 2024 Virginia Service and Conservation Corps (VSCC) AmeriCorps Interpretive Guide Program. VSCC AmeriCorps members will create and lead interpretive programs within the state park they are assigned, such as guided hikes and paddles, campfires and educational programs about the park's history and wildlife.

Eligible applicants must be at least 18 years old with a high school diploma, a US citizen and be able to serve 450 hours from May 3 to August 16. This program has no upper age limit and is great for those wanting to learn more about environmental education, conservation and park operations. The application deadline is April 12.

Benefits of being a VSCC AmeriCorps

member include a living stipend of \$9,152 dispersed in bi-weekly increments, an education award upon successful completion and hands-on job skills in a state park.

VSCC AmeriCorps members play a crucial role in connecting individuals with the natural, historical and cultural treasures that define Virginia's diverse landscapes. By passionately sharing knowledge and creating impactful interpretive programs, VSCC AmeriCorps members not only contribute to the preservation of Virginia State Parks but also empower communities to become stewards of their surroundings.

To learn more about the 2024 VSCC AmeriCorps Interpretive Guide Program or to apply, please go to virginiastateparks.gov/ameri-corps-interp-trail.



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LARRY COOTER VS JOHN HEARTBREAK
CUBAN ASSASSIN VS "USA" TONY RAY

PLUS: MARSHALL LAW, DAMIEN JAMES, ADAM HEX, ACE ENGLAND, KIDD LIGHTNING, K-KILLAH, ADAM MARCUM, AND A HUGE OVER THE TOP BATTLE ROYAL!!!!

ADVANCE TICKETS ON SALE NOW AT: LITTLE CEASARS, BOYCE-HOLLAND VETERINARY SERVICES, STAGE COACH, AND ALL RUTTER'S MARTIAL ARTS LOCATIONS!!

ADULTS \$12 EA IN ADVANCE \$15 AT DOOR, KIDS UNDER 12 \$10 IN ADVANCE \$12 AT DOOR

EVENT SPONSORED BY: RUTTER'S MARTIAL ARTS, IMPRESSIVE PRINTS AND DESIGNS, BOYCE-HOLLAND VETERINARY SERVICES, FRIEDRICH'S FAMILY EYE CARE, LAWLESS WELDING & FAB.

WATCH NICW AMERICAN PRO WRESTLING ON WMDV-23 STARNEWS EVERY FRIDAY AT 8:00PM

CARD SUBJECT TO CHANGE



April 5,
2024

GIFT CARD BINGO



Doors Open
6:00
Games Start
7:00 PM

Hosted By:
Patrick County
Alzheimer's
Group, LLC

Concessions Available
Individual Bingo Cards - \$ 20.00
Bingo Game Card Packs - \$25.00

Stuart Rotary - Hooker Building
264 Woodland Drive
Stuart, VA 24171



Children plant herbs at Storytime



You could smell the rosemary and thyme at Storytime this week. Children's librarian Sam Edmondson read "Monsters Don't Eat Broccoli," by Barbara Jean Hicks and "Chaiwala!" by Priti Birla Maheshwari. The children discussed herbs used in pizza making and planted a windowsill herb garden containing basil, oregano and thyme. Master Gardeners Jessica Hines and Norma Bozenmayer led the program. Join the fun at Storytime every Tuesday at 10:30 a.m. at the Patrick County Library and visit the Seed Library to start your own spring garden.

MARCH						PATRICK COUNTY BRANCH LIBRARY						2024	
Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday		Saturday			
Interested or have questions about our programs? Call us at 276-694-3352.										1		2	
4		5		6		7		8		9			
Yoga 10:00 Registration required		Storytime 10:30 Rainbows		Yoga 1:15 Registration required		Senior Chair Exercise 10:15		Sit & Stitch 11:00		Family Movie 11:00 The Lorax		Board Game Day	
Senior Chair Exercise 1:30						Wreath Program 2:30 Registration required							
LEGO Club 4:00						Youth Art Month Reception 5:00-7:00							
11		12		13		14		15		16			
Yoga 10:00 Registration required		Storytime 10:30 Green		Book Bingo 10:30		Senior Chair Exercise 10:15		Sit & Stitch 11:00					
Senior Chair Exercise 1:30				Yoga 1:15 Registration required		Not Your Mother's Book Club 5:00							
LEGO Club 4:00		Intro to Zen 1:30											
18		19		20		21		22		23			
Yoga 10:00 Registration required		Storytime 10:30 With the Master Gardeners: Spring		Retired Teacher's Book Club 11:00		Senior Chair Exercise 10:15							
Senior Chair Exercise 1:30				Yoga 1:15 Registration required		Open Art Studio 1:00							
LEGO Club 4:00		Books & Bakes 5:00											
25		26		27		28		29		30			
Yoga 10:00 Registration required		Storytime 10:30 Eggs		Yoga 1:15 Registration required		Senior Chair Exercise 10:15							
Senior Chair Exercise 1:30													
LEGO Club 4:00		Intro to Zen 1:30											

Do You Suspect Your Have Broken Something?

Skip The Primary Care, ER or Urgent Care!

Come Straight To Us!

ACUTE Orthopedic Walk-Ins Taken Daily

(during regular office hours)

SAME DAY X-RAYS

- ORTHOPEDIC WALK-INS ACCEPTED
- SHORTER WAIT TIMES
- CASH PAY OPTION AVAILABLE

NO REFERRAL NEEDED

UNLESS REQUIRED BY INSURANCE

2 CONVENIENT LOCATIONS

DANVILLE

109 Bridge Street • 4th Floor
434-793-4711

MARTINSVILLE

1075 Spruce Street
276-790-3233

MONDAY - FRIDAY 08:00 AM - 4:30 PM