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Several people attended a recent town hall meeting to voice their opposition to a proposed solar project that would be on property owned by Mike McKenzie.

Landowner views solar project as opportunity for agricultural property

By Taylor Boyd and Debbie Hall

If Mike McKenzie has his way, a portion of the land that has been in his family for generations soon will become a solar farm, which he views as another chance for agricultural property to be put to different use.

The project, Moscato, LLC, a subsidiary of Energix LLC, is the second proposed solar farm in the county. A majority of the Planning Commission recently found the proposal was 'substantially in accordance' with the county's Comprehensive Plan. The Patrick County Board of Supervisors will next consider the project.

On Monday, the board green-lighted a similar project, known as FairyStone Solar, LLC, on Commerce Street in Stuart.

McKenzie explained that his property has been in some part of his family since before the Civil War, and primarily was used for

agricultural purposes. Before World War II, the land was owned by his grandfather. When his father returned from WWII, he wanted to start a dairy farm.

"We ran a small dairy farm for a number of years until about 1960, and the dairy business got to be too much for my father to handle by himself. It was hard to get any labor around Patrick County, or at least labor that was willing to do" that kind of work, McKenzie said. "You know, that's pretty hard work for low wages."

McKenzie said his father sold the dairy business and started raising beef cattle. That venture lasted another 20 years. By then, his father "was getting up in age, he had passed the age of 70, and he decided that he was going to give up cows altogether.

"He planned to farm white pine," which was used by various furniture

(See Solar Project p.3)

Stuart receives \$700,000 for downtown revitalization

By Taylor Boyd

The Town of Stuart received \$700,000 from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) for its Downtown Revitalization Project.

Town Manager Bryce Simmons said the ARC grant funds will be earmarked specifically for improvements to the Stuart Farmers' Market, which includes a new timber frame bandshell, and the structural decking portion of a mega deck, that will be situated behind some of the businesses along Patrick Avenue.

"That's still a little bit up for discussion between the property owners, but we do anticipate

anywhere between five to eight businesses could be affected by the mega deck," he said.

Simmons said the ARC grant is in coordination with the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) that was announced at the end of last year. The town received \$990,271.45 from the CDBG.

"The CDBG funds are being used as a match towards the ARC grant. So, this is no actual match dollars from taxpayer citizens of the Town of Stuart," he said.

The town applied for the ARC grant in the first quarter of 2023.

(See Stuart p. 3)

More than 15 named in indictments

Grand jurors handed down more than 20 indictments on March 4, according to records in the Patrick County Court Clerk's Office.

An indictment is not an indication of guilt, but a grand jury's determination that enough evidence exists to warrant a trial.

Those named in the indictments are:

*Kenneth Russell Griffith, 33, of Ararat, two counts strangulation and one count abduction, August 11.

*James Daniel Biggs, 33, of Stuart, breaking and entering, Sep-

tember 3.

*Joyce Lee Charles, 40, of Meadows of Dan, one count each credit card forgery and credit card larceny, on or between March 1 through June 30.

*Kelly Simpson Manning, 57, of Stuart, one count each forge public record and perjury, on or between June 5-6.

*Summer Nicole Collins, 36, of Stuart, grand larceny of a motor vehicle, April 1.

*Randall Keith Fagg, 73, of Patrick Springs, possession of a

(See Indictments p.3)

Grant funds tapped to provide breathing equipment to fire crews

By Taylor Boyd

The Patrick Henry Volunteer Fire Department (PHVFD) put the funds it received from a federal Assistance to Firefighters grant (AFG) to good use, and invested in breathing apparatus for its firefighters.

Chief Mike Hudson said the department used the \$186,800 grant to purchase 24 self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), or air packs, and 48 SCBA bottles.

"That means you have an air pack with a bottle and a spare bottle for each air pack," he said.

The cost of the 24 air packs was around \$216,800.

"We received from the federal government \$186,800 and some odd dollars. We actually wrote a check for \$30,000 to supplement the award that we got from the federal government," he said.

Hudson said the SCBAs are required for a firefighter to fight a structure fire.

"That's what the firefighter puts on his back, that's what he breathes in when he goes in a smoke-filled environment," he said. "They're used for what we call an immediate danger to life and health (IDLH) atmosphere, and that's where deep breathing apparatus is required when you go in an IDLH atmosphere whether it be a fire or a hazmat incident."

Hudson said the department uses the SCBA quite a bit and noted the equipment was recently used when responding to a car fire.

"Anytime there's a possibility that you could get burned lung, anytime you have a house fire, anytime you go into a car wreck where you don't know what you're going" to be "exposed to or not, you put the air pack on your back," Hudson said. "You may or may not have to snap it on and start breathing it, but you go to have it on and be ready to go."

Hudson said the SCBAs also have a shelf life because the bottles are only good for around 15 years.

The bottles are tested every five years to ensure they will sustain pressure, "but after 15 years, you have to get new bottles," he said.

Hudson said the last time the department got new air packs was a little over 20 years ago.

"And they were all worn out of date, we were having issues with them, and so then we got this grant," he said buying new ones was a necessity.

Hudson anticipates the new air packs will last the department 20 to 25 years, with regular



The Patrick Henry Volunteer Fire Department received 24 self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), or air packs, and 48 SCBA bottles with the grant funds.

maintenance.

The department pays to have the air packs blow tested every year to ensure they are working properly, he said, adding "A little bit of maintenance will go a long way to keep from having to put, what a quarter of a million dollars out for air packs."

Hudson added the grant was from 2022. The department received the funds at the end of 2023.



Patrick Henry Volunteer Fire Department Assistant Chief Tommy Hudson received a \$500 check from the Stuart Rotary Club. The department serves both Henry and Patrick counties.

"That's how delayed the process is," he said.

He believes Patrick Henry was the only fire department in Virginia to get a grant for 2022, or at least the only one for air packs.

Those interested in donating to the department can mail checks to 3150 County Line Road, Patrick Springs VA, 24133. Anyone wishing to volunteer with the department is encouraged to call (276) 629-7677.

Frontrunners win dual primary elections

By Taylor Boyd

Of the 12,982 registered voters in Patrick County, 2,338 cast a vote during the dual primary on Tuesday, March 5.

According to unofficial results, 2,082 votes were cast in the Republican primary. Donald Trump won with 1,812 votes against challengers Nikki Haley, Ron DeSantis, and other candidates. Haley received 235 votes, and 27 votes were cast for Ron DeSantis

In the Dan River District, a total of 439 votes were cast including 392 for Trump, 38 for Haley, and 6 for DeSantis.

In the Peters Creek District, 376 votes were cast. Trump received 335 votes while Haley received 41. DeSantis received zero votes.

A total of 356 votes were cast in the Mayo River District including 313 for Trump, 35 for Haley, and seven for DeSantis.

Trump garnered 230 votes in the Blue Ridge District. Haley received 64 votes and DeSantis seven.

In the Smith River District, Trump won 339 votes while Haley received 29 and DeSantis one.

Trump received 139 early voting votes and 64 mail-in votes. Haley received 20 early votes and eight mail-in votes while DeSantis got one early voting vote and five mail-in votes.

President Joe Biden won the Democratic race with 230 votes, unofficial results indicate.

He received 14 votes in the Dan River District and 27 votes in the Peters Creek District.

In the Mayo River District, Biden won 21 votes while receiving 41 votes in the Blue Ridge District.

Biden also won 15 votes in the Smith River District, 25 early voting votes, and 87 mail-in votes.

Faster, secure login option offered for VEC benefits

The Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) announced a faster and easier way for customers to access unemployment benefits. VEC has partnered with ID.me, a trusted digital identity verification tool, to help claimants quickly connect to Virginia's unemployment benefits system. Now, it's E-Z with ID.me for customers to apply for benefits, file weekly claims and access other important documents.

"This new login option solves the main challenge we've been dealing with for some time, providing our customers with easy access while keeping out fraud. By partnering with ID.me, we are able to do just that," said VEC Commissioner Demetrios Melis.

Customers can simply go to VEC's website, click on "Claimant Login" and select the green button to sign up or sign in using ID.me. ID.me is secure, simple to use, and the process takes just minutes to complete. To verify their identity, they'll need their government photo ID (driver's license or passport) and their social security number.

Claimants can choose one of three convenient options, including using the camera on their cell phone or computer, a video call with an ID.me agent, or an in-person verification at select retail locations.

"We are currently seeing over 80% of our customers successfully access the benefits system when using ID.me," said Melis. "The Virginia Employment Commission remains dedicated to enhancing the overall customer experience and serving the critical needs of Virginians during challenging times."

ID.me is a federally certified identity provider with over 115 million users, 1.2 million in Virginia alone. ID.me partners with 31 states and multiple federal agencies, including Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

ID.me will never share personal information with third parties, ensuring that claimants' sensitive data remains confidential and secure. To learn more about ID.me's privacy policy visit: www.id.me/privacy.

Chamber Chat

By Rebecca Adcock

February is the shortest month of the year. Even with an extra day, this time of year is always packed full. This month was another planning month. The magazine layout is coming along, and it will be ready for the county Tourism Summit the first part of April and all the spring events that begin to happen.

The chamber attended the meeting that Tourism organized with VDOT and the Park service in regard to the operation of Mabry Mill. There will not be sit-down dining available there this year, but the Park service has been soliciting for food vendors to operate food trucks there, so we are hopeful this along with some other items that the Chamber and Tourism can do will help promote the area to visitors.

The biggest program that we focused on in February was our Economic Summit. This workshop was held with our larger employers, who employ twenty-five or more people and looking at our success and challenges that we face in the county. We had a great turnout of businesses and our community leaders as we worked through topics that were facilitated by Virginia Tech. This event was a first of its kind for the county and we were happy to work with our partners at Reynolds Homestead to bring this event to fruition. Help and sponsorship was also provided by the Patrick County Economic Development Authority, Patrick County Tourism and Town of Stuart. All the spokes of the wheel are working together to move our county



forward. We will be sharing the report once it is completed.

We will be hosting a Business After Hours on Thursday, March 7th at the Historic Star Theatre. This is a great time to check out the facility and find out what events are coming. We will also be hosting a ribbon cutting at CPB Behavioral Therapy on Main Street in Stuart on Wednesday, March 27th. This company opened two years ago on Blue Ridge Street and rapidly outgrew that location. We are happy they were able to find suitable space in Stuart to continue offering their services.

The year is starting out at a rapid pace and not looking to slow down. We are busy formalizing our program and events calendar for the year and looking forward to seeing you at one of them.

Welcome new members: Glenn's Way (Adcock is the director of the Patrick County Chamber of Commerce)

Spring Break Travel Scams

It's that time of year again – the holidays are long past, and summer is still a long way off. It's time for a spring getaway. But beware, for everyone looking for a great spring break deal there is a criminal out there offering an amazing deal. These three tips will help you spot a potential travel scam.

First, be wary of any deal where the price tag is dramatically lower than what else is available at your destination. Next, verify the legitimacy of online travel sites by looking

closely at the web address – scammers often "spoof" legitimate hotels and third-party booking sites. Finally, don't trust anyone who requests a wire transfer, cryptocurrency or gift card to pay for your getaway – these are the payment forms preferred by today's fraud criminals.

Don't get left out in the cold this spring. Visit the AARP Fraud Watch Network at www.aarp.org/fraud-watchnetwork or call the AARP Fraud Watch Helpline at 1-877-908-3360.

Schools, youth groups kick off safe teen driving initiative

More teen drivers in Virginia will be involved in traffic crashes between the months of May and August than any other time of the year, statistics show. To help save lives and prevent crashes during the high-risk warm weather months, Virginia schools are kicking off a statewide teen safety campaign this week to develop driver and passenger safety behaviors among youth and teens. The peer-to-peer campaign, Arrive Alive – It's a Whole Vibe, focuses on the increased risk of teen driver crashes during the spring and summer months and during prom and graduation.

According to data for 2023, 6,186 crashes involved a teen driver during the spring/summer months from May through August. Additionally, 12 teens aged 15-19 were killed in motor vehicle crashes, 1,620 were injured, and 191 were seriously injured in crashes between the months of May and August.

Forty-seven high schools, middle schools, and youth groups are participating in Arrive Alive, which is sponsored by Youth of Virginia Speak Out About Traffic Safety (YOVASO) and the Virginia State Police.

Participating schools and youth groups will take part from March through May by completing activities that educate and remind teens to buckle up, drive safely, and to celebrate prom, graduation, and other fun events without drugs

and alcohol. Middle school students will focus their messaging on being a safe passenger, bicyclist, and pedestrian.

There are two options for participating: non-competing and competing. Schools and youth groups that elect to compete will be required to complete pre and post seat belt checks to measure the campaign's impact, a creative project that reaches a majority of the students at their school or in their youth group, and a variety of other activities to promote safe and responsible driving; or for middle schools, one or more of the three middle school topics. Non-competing schools may register to receive materials and complete any activities of their choice.

"We encourage all schools, youth groups, parents, and teens to join the free Arrive Alive campaign and help keep our youth safe during these upcoming high-risk months," said Mary King, YOVASO program manager. "No teen wants to ruin a fun vibe, whether it be a party, a day at the lake, or a night out with close friends, by experiencing a crash. Through Arrive Alive, we can all work together as parents, schools and communities to do our part in making sure our teens buckle up, drive the speed limit, put away distractions, and avoid alcohol and drugs every time they get in a motor vehicle."

Arrive Alive is funded by a grant from the Virginia DMV. In addition, grants from State Farm support educational incentives and materials.

"At State Farm, we want to keep drivers and

passengers safe on the roadways," said State Farm spokesperson Dwayne Redd. "This campaign is a creative reminder to young drivers to always make good choices, slow down, and buckle up. With these actions, the number of accidents, serious injuries and deaths will be reduced."

Each school and youth group that competes in Arrive Alive will submit their campaign entry at the conclusion of the campaign to be evaluated based on activities completed, the effectiveness and creativity of its creative traffic safety project, the percentage of students reached, and the percentage increase in the school's seat belt usage rate by the end of the campaign.

Prizes funded by the Rapids Forever 3 on 3 Tournament will be awarded to the top three participants in the high school and middle school division as follows: first place, \$500; second place, \$250; and third place, \$100. The winners will be announced on June 14. YOVASO extends a special "thank you" for the campaign this year to the Rapids Forever 3 on 3 Tournament, for sponsoring the prizes, wristbands, and puzzle pens in memory of Nick Booth and Will Hammitt of James River High School (Chesterfield Co.).

For more information or to register your school or youth group for the Arrive Alive campaign or to request parent resources, contact Casey Taylor, Program Development Coordinator at (540) 739-4392.

Pets of the Week



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

This sad little brindle pup is missing her litter mates. But don't be fooled, she is not shy. Check out the video online of her playing with her litter mates. She is a normal, happy girl.

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.

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Solar Project

(cont. from page 1)

manufacturers before many of those jobs moved offshore, McKenzie said. "Only the cleared land was planted in white pine, and that was passed to me."

Around 2012, McKenzie said, "We thinned quite a bit of what had been planted, and I don't know, I enjoyed the fact that there was money coming in, but we went ahead and cleared off large portions."

Four years later, in 2016, he was contacted by a North Carolina company about the prospect of leasing his land for a solar farm.

"Although it got my interest almost from the beginning, I made no effort to contact anybody or invite a proposal or anything of that nature," McKenzie said. Instead, he decided to wait and see how things developed.

Ultimately, his age played a large role in the decision to go ahead with the solar project. "I was approaching age 70. Obviously, my time is rather limited as to what it has been, and I just need to make some plan about how I was going to leave the property," McKenzie said.

"Of course, I could, and have, in fact, replanted all of the land that was timbered. Only this time, I went with loblolly" pines, he said.

Fewer than 100 acres, including setbacks and other vegetative buffers and wildlife crossings, would be used for the solar project in McKenzie's bid to make preparations for the next owner of the property.

"I don't have any family to pass the property onto. I have a daughter," but she does not live in the county, he said, adding that some of the funds from his lease would go into a trust. He wants to use some of the monies to restore the I.M. Akers General Merchandise Store, which he owns. His goal is to get it listed on Virginia's list of historic places.

"Also, I would like to support the Patrick County Historical Museum and the Patrick County Historical Society, which owns the museum. The historical museum has a number of very interesting items in its collection now. It could be expanded to hold many more," he said.

Given his stance that the project would benefit the county, McKenzie said he has been surprised at the amount of backlash to the project.

"The first indication of how strongly the opposition might be" was apparent at a January 16 Patrick County Planning Commission meeting, McKenzie said.

If he could have a conversation with those who are vocally opposed to the project, McKenzie is unsure of what he would say, in part because "I would characterize their objections as being largely emotional and not really rational in the

sense they are looking at reality.

"Then, my response might get emotional on my part," he said, chuckling. "If you want to be cynical, you could say that 'Patrick County is snatched defeat from the jaws of the future.' Or 'Patrick County hides from the future, again' because this (opposition) has happened in the past."

McKenzie recalled that in the 1960s, there was an effort to combine the higher grades in the county's five rural high schools and consolidate them into one high school.

"I think they had a public hearing in the courthouse in which there was a lot of opposition expressed to the idea of closing the five, more or less, community schools," he said.

McKenzie added the opposition now is a continuing pattern of being averse to any proposed change "without looking at it rationally or in realistic terms."

For instance, McKenzie said one of his neighbors built a house on the hill of an adjacent property.

"His house is situated so that he can see virtually everything I do on my property. When he built his house, I wasn't even aware of it until we cut timber. Then I could see it. That's freedom," he said. "But now, this particular neighbor is opposing my plans for my property because it might affect him. He doesn't see that he's already affected me."

McKenzie said another person talked about utility poles being planted on a lot close to that person's house at a meeting where solar was discussed.

"Well, that's life. I mean everybody assumes some risk during their life," McKenzie said. "It's also freedom. He had the right to build his house where he did, and if he gets handed utility poles, then well, that's sort of too bad."

"You win some, you lose some, and some you get rained out. It's just part of life, and nobody has claimed that life was going to be fair for anybody," he said.

In retrospect, McKenzie said he shouldn't have been surprised at the opposition to the Moscato project.

"It's typical Patrick County. People in Patrick County are just opposed to any change whatsoever," he said.

Since he hasn't been out in the community, McKenzie said he can't gauge the support for his project, but he is surprised that some of the most vocal opponents to the proposed solar project aren't native to the county, but rather those who moved to the area.

"I would think coming from outside of Pat-

rick County, they've come from communities that were maybe more progressive than Patrick County. I would expect them to maybe look down on practices in Patrick County and be more amenable to changing systems," he said.

Regardless, "their opposition seems to be largely emotional. They don't see any benefit to them personally, and maybe that hasn't been pointed out to them. That might be a mistake, but I think there could be some substantial benefit, particularly in economic terms," he said.

McKenzie said the county seems stagnant, especially compared to the 1950s and 1960s when he was growing up. Solar farms would serve as an incentive for various industries to at least consider moving to the area.

"If we could get more industries here, there would certainly be more opportunities for young people to stay in the county," he said.

Developing new industries also may provide the leadership and sponsorship to revive the hospital.

"It was United Elastic that provided the leadership and the sponsorship to get the building erected in the early '60s. A lot of people felt it was unfair, and it probably was, but they required that all of their employees make some contribution from their wages to the construction of the hospital," McKenzie said. "So, everybody was more or less mobilized for that particular purpose."

One of the biggest problems he sees in Patrick County is "too much attention to scenery." The scenery and topography "have been perhaps the biggest obstacle to development in Patrick County."

"I mean look at the construction work on Route 58. The General Assembly passed legislation to expand Route 58 in 1989, so it's been 35 years and \$300 million, and we're trying to send some workmen down on that project, and look what a project it is," McKenzie said. "They're literally tearing down mountains to put a road through."

A thoughtful man who said that despite all of the opposition he's faced with the proposed solar farm, he would still choose to go ahead with the project.

"There is very little you could do with undeveloped property that would have as good of a return," he said.

If he second-guesses anything, it would be his attendance at some of the discussions about the solar project. He noted that he has not seen other property landowners who intend to lease their property to a solar company at meetings. "Maybe that was the better choice. I don't know."

Stuart

(cont. from page 1)

Currently, Simmons said the two grants are all the funding the town has allocated to the downtown revitalization project.

"We hope that this will complete the first phase. Once we have that first phase completed, we'll be looking at potentially other sources of funding for additional phases," he said.

Simmons is unsure of when construction on the project will start.

"I haven't had a meeting with the state or Appalachian Regional Commission regarding the agreement and the contract between the town and DHCD," he said. "So, I can't say right now. It's going to be con-

tingent upon environmental review, having to select a consultant, and doing the final design. There's a lot of pieces that have to be completed before we can say we're ready to construct."

U.S. Rep. Morgan Griffith, R-Salem, said the grant is great news and will not only help make improvements at the Stuart Farmers' Market, "but also transform a now unusable space in the town's downtown area into a community amenity. This new deck structure will provide handicap accessibility to the buildings it will be built behind and also access to the creek below."

The \$700,000 was part of \$1,900,000 in

federal funding given to three projects in Bland County, Stuart, and Lee County.

U.S. Sens. Mark Warner, D-Alexandria, and Tim Kaine, D-Richmond, said communities across Virginia have tremendous momentum, ideas, and initiative for projects that will improve their towns and grow their economies.

"They often just need the resources to execute them. We're thrilled to see federal funding meet clear needs and bring ... community improvement projects to life to help communities grow and thrive," the senators said.

Indictments

(cont. from page 1)

Schedule I or II drug, October 3.

*Darryle Theodore Hand, Jr., 49, of Martinsville, one count each robbery-serious bodily injury and aggravated malicious wounding, September 15.

*Roscoe B. Hensley, 52, of Mount Airy, N.C.,

one count each grand larceny and breaking and entering, April 1, 2022.

*Benjamin William Plaster, Jr., 40, of Fieldale, grand larceny, September 14.

*Daniel Edward Tucker, 62, of Stuart, possession of a Schedule I or II drug, October 17.

*Timothy Underwood, 25, of Stuart, one count each strangulation and abduction, September 19.

*Johnny Ray Gwyn, 55, of Mount Airy, N.C., one count each breaking and entering and grand larceny, on or about April 1-18, 2022.

*Scottie Andrew Cassell, II, 30, of Stuart, one count each distribute child porn and possess child pornography, July 24.

*Ronnie Daniel Goad, 49, of Meadows of Dan, attempted malicious wounding, October 30.

*Phillip Kentrell Womack, 29, of Greensboro, N.C., elude, November 7.

*Richard Clay Fitzgerald, 35, of Patrick Springs, two counts each aggravated sexual battery and indecent liberties and one count solicit child to perform child pornography, on or between October 5, 2017, through October 1, 2022.

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TikTok



Morgan Griffith

Representative

Everyone knows TikTok is the video sharing application (“app”) that people of all ages use, especially younger people. In fact, according to TikTok, 170 million Americans use the social media app.

Unlike other popular social media sites (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.), TikTok is linked to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). In China, the Communist Party runs the government.

TikTok is currently owned by its Chinese parent company ByteDance.

The CCP requires companies like ByteDance to cooperate with their government, share information, etc.

According to Axios, former ByteDance executive Yintao Yu claimed that ByteDance “has served as a useful propaganda tool for the Chinese Communist Party.”

The Energy and Commerce (E&C) Committee, on which I serve, has done a lot of work this Congress to investigate this issue and figure out legislative solutions.

Last March, TikTok’s CEO Shou Chew came in to testify before the Committee. It was clear throughout the hearing that despite claims to the contrary, TikTok, through ByteDance, is closely connected to the CCP.

As a long-standing member of the legal community, I was particularly appalled that Mr. Chew on the one hand said TikTok was completely separate from ByteDance, and on the other, was totally unabashed that TikTok and ByteDance have the same lawyers.

The Committee recently considered H.R. 7521, the Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act, designed to tackle national security threats like the one posed by TikTok.

The legislation is aimed at protecting the United States of America by preventing foreign adversaries, specifically, China, Iran, North Korea, or Russia, from targeting and surveilling U.S. citizens and manipulating American public opinion and policy through their apps, like TikTok.

Make no mistake, TikTok can be informative and a lot of fun, but it can also be used nefariously by the Chinese Communist Party.

In the bill, if an app is determined to be owned by a company controlled by a foreign adversary, the app must be divested (i.e. sold off) by the foreign adversary’s company or the app will be prohibited in the United States. But, once sold, the app would be allowed for use in the United States.

I attended security briefings on the legislation. Also, at a previous public hearing before a different committee, former U.S. National Security Agency Director Paul Nakasone testified about TikTok. He stated the app “...provides a foreign nation a platform for information operations, a platform for surveillance...”

Before the bill was introduced, I was asked to review the draft lan-

guage and helped to craft the final product.

We wanted to make it clear we do not want to ban TikTok, we just want its ties to the CCP severed permanently and irrevocably.

Immediately prior to the bill being brought up in Committee, E&C Members were part of a 4-hour executive session/classified hearing.

Because it was a classified hearing, I cannot discuss the details. But even without the classified hearing, it is clear that many in our intelligence community believe TikTok is a national security threat.

The information we learned was alarming enough to bring Republicans and Democrats together in the defense of the United States.

The legislation passed Committee unanimously (50-0!) and will next be considered by the full House.

When TikTok caught wind that the Committee was considering this legislation, their online disinformation campaign against the legislation was robust, and quite astonishing.

Targeted American users who tried to access TikTok were compelled to call their Congressman before they could even access the app’s features.

TikTok also released a false statement on social media stating that the bill was “an outright ban of TikTok.”

As explained above, if TikTok is sold by ByteDance, it is free to operate in the United States. But clearly, the CCP does not want to give up their ability to spy and manipulate.

Further, they stated that the bill “tramples the First Amendment rights” of Americans (like China really cares about free speech).

I believe saying this bill would violate the First Amendment is incorrect. The Supreme Court makes a distinction between laws based on the content of speech vs. conduct. Laws based on conduct, which threatens national security, particularly when likely orchestrated by a foreign power, are not “per se” violations of the First Amendment.

Content placed on TikTok by American citizens is not the issue. Conduct is.

America is at risk!

While I cannot share everything I know, I am convinced TikTok, while owned by ByteDance, a Beijing Company, and directed by the CCP, can be used to damage American security.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Proposed Town Noise Ordinance

I would like to address the Proposed Town of Stuart Noise Ordinance which will be addressed again at the next Stuart Town Council Meeting on Wednesday, March 20th at 7 p.m.

I am in disagreement with this Noise Ordinance. It infringes upon the rights of ALL the citizens of the Town of Stuart to solve a neighborly dispute. The purpose of the ordinance is to give law enforcement the right to charge citizens criminally for Noise. However, these neighbors already have civil recourse under the 1950 Code of Virginia: 1) Have a Property Lawyer prepare and send a Cease and Desist Letter to the neighbor(s) causing the problem 2) Have Mediation or a Negotiator with your Neighbor(s) 3) File a Nuisance Lawsuit and you will need to prove that the noise is unreasonably loud or disturbing and that it is interfering with your use and enjoyment of your property. You will also need to show that you have made a reasonable effort to resolve the issue through communication with your neighbor. These neighbors have called the Town Office and the Pat. Co. Sheriff’s Dept. seeking remedies to this situation rather than utilizing the Civil Remedies that already exist.

This Noise Ordinance lacks Equal Protection of the Law, infringes upon Free Speech, and is Discriminatory. We ALL have the right to enjoy our properties and our liberties. We have a beautiful town and for the most part everyone in this Town has always gotten along. I hope this Ordinance doesn’t become a mechanism for neighbors to be “ratting” on each

other when God’s word has already told us two things: 1) Love your neighbor as yourself 2) Love your enemies. I do believe this situation needs prayer especially for peace.

A copy of this Noise Ordinance was not made accessible to the public until Friday, February 16th around 3 p.m. in the afternoon. The law was followed in that the Hearing had to appear in the paper for 3 weeks. When I went to the Public Hearing, Bryce Simmons stated no one had contacted him about this ordinance. You can’t make an informed opinion for something you don’t have access to.

A copy of the ordinance is now available at the Town of Stuart Office located at 100 Patrick Avenue, on their Facebook page (Town of Stuart, Virginia), and their website (townofstuartva.com). You may also express your opinion about this Noise Ordinance by calling (276-694-3811) or faxing (276-694-2583) or writing the Town Office, or posting on the Town’s Facebook page namely to Bryce Simmons, Town Manager; Ray Weiland, Mayor; Rebecca Adcock, Jeff Houchins, David Hoback, Erica Cipko, and Terry Dalton (Town Council Members). And if you have animals, you should take heed of this ordinance. This ordinance is detailed, and every citizen needs to read and respond to this ordinance. Why should all the citizens of the Town be subjected to an ordinance for something that the law provides a legal civil remedy for already?

Alpha Hiatt,
Town Resident

Heros (The Bible)

The world does not need more role models, it needs more of Jesus Christ. People will not find a better person to emulate positive character traits from than Jesus Christ himself.

Jesus was:

Compassionate

Jesus never looked away from people; He always looked upon them and had compassion (Matthew 9:36). He set His own needs aside to minister to others.

Servant

Jesus was the ultimate servant. In Mark 10:45, Jesus even tells everyone: “the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve” Jesus did not want people to praise him. He did the exact opposite by serving others.

Loving

If anyone doubts His love, all they have to do is look upon the cross and see the agony that He bore for their sins. He experienced that horrible death so that all can be saved. That, very clearly, is true love at its finest.

Forgiving

One of the most startling things said in Scripture is found in Luke 23:34, when Jesus is on the cross and proclaims: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Even while bleeding and experiencing pain, Jesus had His heart set on forgiveness—forgiving those who put Him there in the first place.

Committed

Jesus was everything total commitment stands for. The apostle Paul stated, “And being found in fashion as a man, He humbles himself, and became obedient unto death even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:5). Jesus stated in John 8:29, “For I do always those things that please Him.” In these two passages is a revelation of com-

plete devotion to God.

Prayerful

No matter how busy His ministry got, He found time to be alone and pray. People always tried to find Him, and He never turned them away, but He also made sure to make time spent with His heavenly Father a priority.

Gentleness

There were times where Jesus used stern words, but He knew when gentleness was appropriate. He was very kindhearted and gentle. But, when He was making a point in an argument, He knew when turning up the heat was necessary and only did so strategically.

Patience

Jesus was surrounded by disciples who constantly doubted him, Pharisees and Sadducees who continually attacked Him, and large crowds who would not leave Him alone. Despite all of that, He kept His composure and responded appropriately to every individual.

Self-Control

Matthew 4:1-11. “Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting 40 days and 40 nights, he was hungry”. Although He was offered food, power, and many other things, Jesus controlled His desires and submitted them all to the will of the Father.

Humble

Even when the crowds sought to make Him king, He rushed away from their grasp. He did not want to become a sideshow performance that people could enjoy. Rather, He wanted to seek and save the lost and offer forgiveness for sinful people.

Pray for our country.

William Salser,
Stuart

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 Tragedies-Hugh Chaplin Marshall

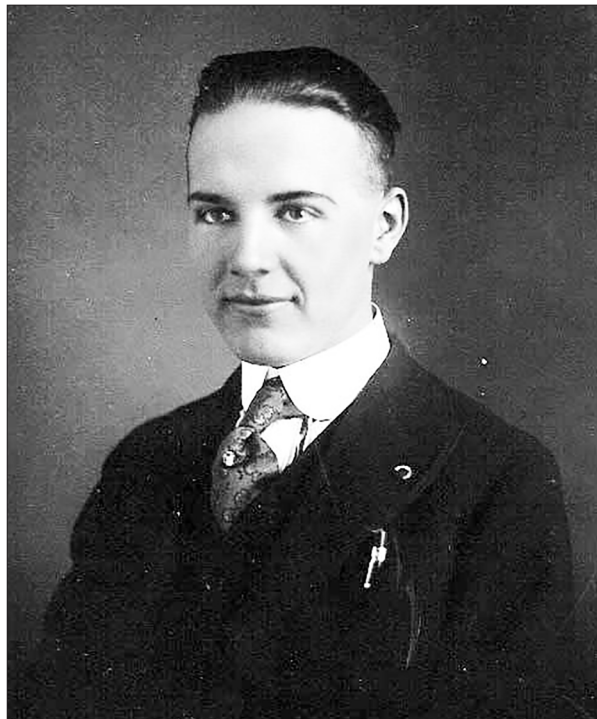
By Beverly Belcher Woody

Last week, we began looking at some of the tragic drownings that have occurred in the T. J. George Mill Pond in downtown Stuart. In the summer of 1925, Larkin and Alexander Austin lost their lives there; this week, we will look at the life of another victim of the mill pond, Hugh Chaplin Marshall.

Hugh was born in Laurel Fork, Virginia on the 27th of December 1899 to Dr. John William Marshall and Hattie Octavia Marshall. In the 1910 census, Dr. Marshall, his wife, three daughters, and one son, Hugh were living in Laurel Fork where Dr. Marshall was the local dentist; by the 1920 census, Dr. Marshall had moved his family to Patrick County, and he was practicing dentistry in Stuart.

According to an article in the January 21, 1921, edition of the Roanoke Times, Hugh had recently been hired as the assistant cashier of the Bank of Stuart and the Patrick County Bank. Hugh married Miss Lillie Margaret Hooker in Patrick County on the 22nd of June 1921. Lillie was the daughter of Samuel Hairston Hooker and Nancy Lucinda Agee of the Elamsville community of Patrick County. Hugh and Lillie welcomed their little daughter, Nancy Hooker Marshall, on the 2nd of September 1922.

On Friday, July 6th, 1923, a horrible tragedy occurred. According to an article in the July 17th edition of the Danville Bee, "Hugh went with a group of friends, in the sultry heat of the day, for a plunge in the mill pond. He apparently did not know that the water close to the running board (diving board?) built on the bank for bathers was deceptive and while looking deep, was not really more than two or three feet deep. He was preparing to dive in when some of his friends saw what he was about to do and shouted to him, but



Hugh Chaplin Marshall. Courtesy of K H Boaz.

it was too late. Striking the sandy bottom, his backbone was broken just below the neck, and he remained under the water for two minutes. Others, realizing what had happened, quickly swam to him and brought him out unconscious. He later was revived, only to find out that he had no use of his body from the shoulders down."

Hugh was taken to Dr. Martin's hospital, which was located near the old Stuart lumber plant, where he was given the best care possible. Specialists from Roanoke and Richmond were called in for consultations. At Hugh's own request, his former pastor, Dr. John J. Parsons of Richmond, was called to Hugh's bedside, where he remained constantly with the young man until the end of his life.

Hugh Marshall died on the 17th of July 1923, he had lain and suffered for nearly two weeks; he was 26 years old. In addition to his parents

Hugh Marshall Dies From His Backbone Being Broken

(Special to The News)

Danville, July 17.—Hugh Chaplin Marshall, assistant cashier at the First National Bank at Stuart, died last night from injuries sustained while diving ten days ago. The funeral will be held at Stuart tomorrow afternoon. Marshall, who was 26 years of age and married, broke his back when he plunged into a mill pond at Stuart at a point he believed the water to be deep. Specialists from Richmond and Roanoke who were called to his bedside thought that he might live several years but that, as his backbone was broken, just below the neck he would be helpless for the rest of his life. Yesterday he grew worse and he died during the night.

The News and Advance, 1923, 07-18, page 3.

and siblings, he was survived by his wife, and his one-year-old daughter. According to his obituary, "the Martinsville people who attended his funeral were Mr. J.C. Shockley, Mr. and Mrs. C.M. Hart, Mr. W.P. Hodnett, Messrs. H.B. Kester, Julian Kester, A.J. Lester, F. R. Brown, Roy Prillaman, Claude Turner, John T. Penn, Kelsey Puckett, C.T. Womack, J.A. Brown, and Rev. C.M. Wales. Hugh was buried with Masonic honors and most of those present from Martinsville were masons who took part in the ceremony. The funeral service was conducted by Rev. Dr. Parsons, of Richmond, assisted by the Rev. Messrs. Douglas and Thompson, of Stuart. Mr. Marshall was a young businessman of fine standing in his community, very highly esteemed by all for his recognized high character and had a great many friends who felt for him a sincere attachment. Hugh was buried in the Stuart Cemetery."

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 - Will My Benefit Increase if I Work While Collecting Disability?

Dear Rusty: I will be 64 in March and currently receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) payments. My full retirement age is 67, but I'm thinking about trying to return to work.

If I work and my earnings exceed the monthly disability payment limits, but do not exceed the annual limit, how will my disability payments be affected? Will working while receiving Social Security disability payments change my Social Security benefit amount when I reach my full retirement age of 67? Signed: Mending

Dear Mending: Social Security doesn't go by annual earnings when it comes to disability (SSDI) - they go by monthly earnings. If your work earnings in any one month of 2024 exceed \$1,550, that will be a flag to SS that you are no longer disabled (\$2,590 per month if you're blind). If that happens for a few months in a row, they will most likely stop your SSDI payments. Often, this happens retroactively - they won't find out until sometime later that you repeatedly exceeded the monthly limit - but they will likely cancel your SSDI benefits and require you to repay any benefits you received in months you exceeded the monthly SSDI earnings limit, or months they deem you were capable of working without restriction.

I suggest you consider enrolling in Social Security's "Ticket to Work" program. While enrolled, you can work and will have a rolling 9 month "Trial Work Period" over 5 years, during which you can earn more than \$1,110/month (in 2024) without jeopardizing your SSDI benefits. If, after completing your 9 month trial work period, you are taken off of SSDI (because you're no longer considered disabled), and you again become disabled and unable to work, your SSDI benefits can resume without requiring you to go through the entire application process again. You can test your ability to work, will be able to work some and can earn more than the limit in some months, which makes the Ticket to Work program your best option. Read more about it here: <https://choosework.ssa.gov/>.

As for whether working while on SSDI will improve your benefit at your full retirement age (FRA), that depends. Your current SSDI benefit is equal to your FRA entitlement from your earnings record at your disability onset date (but paid to you prior to your FRA). The method for determining your benefit under SSDI is complex and depends on the age at which you became unable to work and the number of Social Security credits you had accumulated at that time. Although SS retirement benefits normally require you earn at least 40 SS quarter credits and are based on your highest earning 35 years, those approved for SSDI can get benefits with fewer than 40 credits and less than 35 years of lifetime earnings. Since each case is unique, I cannot say whether your earnings

while on SSDI will improve your FRA amount, but Social Security will monitor your earnings and increase your benefit if appropriate.

FYI, your SSDI benefit would normally automatically convert to become your regular SS retirement benefit at your FRA at the same amount you were receiving while on SSDI. It's possible that the limited earnings you may have from working while on SSDI may increase your benefit, but that's impossible for me to predict. Your benefit is based on your lifetime earnings history (adjusted for inflation), not on your contributions to Social Security while working.

So, if you are on SSDI and wish to try returning to work, and you think your monthly earnings will occasionally exceed the SSDI limit, I suggest you contact Social Security (1.800.772.1213 or your local office) to explore enrolling in the Ticket to Work program. That would be your best option to avoid jeopardizing your SSDI benefits, and your benefit amount will be automatically adjusted by Social Security if appropriate.

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 2

We can learn another epigenetic lesson from a story that I like to call "The Tale of the Fat Yellow Mouse". These two mice look very different. One is obese, the other is lean. One is yellow, the other is brown. One is sick, the other is healthy. But believe it or not, these mice are genetically identical. How is this possible?

Dr. Randy Jirtle, a leading expert in the field of epigenetics, did a fascinating experiment on Agouti mice. These laboratory mice are genetically bred to be obese. They are born with a yellow coat instead of a brown coat. These poor mice are genetically wired to gain weight rapidly and to develop diabetes, heart disease, and often cancer. They give birth to more Agouti mice, and the cycle of disease continues.

Because of his interest in epigenetics, Dr. Jirtle decided to do an experiment on the Agouti mice. He wanted to see what would happen when the mice were fed a special nutritional supplement in addition to their

regular mouse chow. Imagine his surprise when the fat, yellow mice soon began giving birth to lean, healthy, brown-coated mice. These brown-coated offspring weren't at risk for the diseases of their parents. At first, Dr. Jirtle and his team of researchers thought that the Agouti gene had changed in the offspring. However, testing revealed that the healthy brown mice had the exact same gene as their parents - it simply wasn't activated anymore. It had been switched off through diet.

This is exciting news. A simple nutritional change made a profound genetic difference. Not only can our health choices improve our own genetic outcomes, they can also influence the health of future generations. Reflecting on the agouti mouse study, Dr. Jirtle wrote:

"Epigenetics is proving we have some responsibility for the integrity of our genome. Before, genes predetermined outcomes; now, everything we do-every-

thing we eat or smoke- can affect our gene expression and that of future generations. Epigenetics introduces the concept of free will into our idea of genetics."

So, what exactly is free will? The dictionary defines it as: the ability to make choices that are not controlled by fate. What an empowering thought! If you are struggling with type 2 diabetes, prediabetes, or any other lifestyle-related disease, you don't have to accept that disease as your destiny.

Health has much more to do with choice than chance.

So why not start today? Every choice counts. Go for a walk. Eat some fresh vegetables. Go to sleep early. The simple choices you make each day will soon begin turning your good genes on and your bad genes off.

(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)

Marriage Licenses

Following are the marriage licenses issued in December, according to records in the Patrick County Circuit Court Clerk's office:

Joshua McGrady - Tara Jones
Santiago Toledo- Arrollo
- Diana Chavez-Vasquez
Marion Wise- Kathy Breeden

Christopher Bell claims victory in Toyota domination of Phoenix

By Reid Spencer
NASCAR Wire Service

AVONDALE, Ariz.—There were so many variables in Christopher Bell's victory in Sunday's Shriners Children's 500 at Phoenix Raceway that it's difficult to pinpoint the determinative factor.

First, Toyota introduced a new body style in the NASCAR Cup Series this season. Second, NASCAR debuted a new short-track competition package in Sunday's race. Third, the Toyotas unloaded for Friday's 50-minute practice with consistent speed—allowing them to test their long-run prowess.

That combination of factors conjured up a decisive victory for Bell at a track where Toyota drivers had led a total of 15 laps in four Next-Gen-era races combined.

Bell and his Camry compatriots turned that statistic upside down on Sunday, combining to lead 298 of 312 laps. After Denny Hamlin started from the pole position, all four Joe Gibbs Racing drivers led significant numbers of laps—Hamlin with 68, Ty Gibbs with 57, Martin Truex Jr. with 55 and Bell with 50.

Tyler Reddick, a 23XI Toyota driver, contributed 68 laps led, as Bell ended Chevrolet's three-race winning streak to start the season.

And while some drivers had difficulty in dirty air, Bell's No. 20 Camry had no trouble passing cars, coming from 20th on a restart on Lap 221 to claim the lead and beat Ford driver and runner-up Chris Buescher to the finish line by a distant 5.465 seconds.



Denny Hamlin, driver of the #11 Mavis Brakes Plus Toyota, leads the field to the green flag to start the NASCAR Cup Series Shriners Children's 500 at Phoenix Raceway on March 10, 2024 in Avondale, Arizona. (Photo by Meg Oliphant/Getty Images)

"Man, this one feels really good," said Bell, who was eliminated from last year's Championship 4 race at Phoenix when his brake rotor exploded. "Just a credit to (crew chief) Adam (Stevens), man. Adam, my engineers... all the mechanics on this thing.

"You don't get cars like that very often, as you know. Just super, super proud. Proud to be on this 20 car. This Rheem Camry was amazing today. I feel like we have capability of running races like this a lot. Hopefully, this is the first of many this year."

The victory was Bell's first at Phoenix and the seventh of his career.

Divergent pit strategies under the sixth and final caution for Hamlin's spin in Turn 2 on Lap 215—as he broke loose to the inside of Reddick's car while fighting for the lead—scrambled the running order, with Truex and eight other drivers staying on track while the rest of the field came to pit road.

With the final 92 laps running caution-free, Truex had to pit for fuel and tires on Lap 272, surrendering the lead to Bell, who held it the rest of the way.

After crashing out in 37th place last Sunday at Las Vegas, Buescher was happy with his solid second-place run.

"I didn't quite see the 20 (Bell) there at the end, so I know they were lights-out," Buescher said. "We have some work to do to get to that point. What thrills me is we were by no means perfect on balance, so we have a lot of room to make this thing better, which is awesome."

Gibbs, who regained track position with a two-tire pit stop on Lap 218, came home third, a career-best finish. Brad Keselowski ran fourth, two spots behind his Roush Fenway Keselowski teammate; and reigning Cup Series champion Ryan Blaney came home fifth, ending a streak of three straight runner-up finishes at the one-mile track in the Sonoran Desert.

Ross Chastain, a Phoenix winner last November, was sixth, and Truex worked his way through the field on fresher tires to finish seventh. Michael McDowell, Chase Briscoe and Reddick completed the top 10. Hamlin finished 11th after his Lap 215 spin.

Blaney overtook 14th-place finisher Kyle Larson for the series lead. He leaves Phoenix 10 points ahead of Larson and Truex, who are tied for second in the standings.

Notes: Chastain was the only Chevrolet driver to finish in the top 12... The only non-Toyota driver to lead laps was Todd Gilliland, who ran long in his Front Row Motorsports Ford during a cycle of green-flag pit stops in Stage 2 and held the top spot for 14 circuits... Reddick won the first stage, and Bell claimed victory in the second stage.



Cobbler Signs to Wrestle at P&HCC

By Ashlee Mullis

Patrick County High School Senior, Ethan Cobbler, signed his letter of intent to wrestle at Patrick & Henry Community College.

Cobbler said, "I am very excited to continue wrestling at P&H. I am very appreciative of this opportunity."

In attendance for the signing were front (l-r) Stepfather John Corns, Ethan Cobbler, Mother Tashia Corns; Back (l-r) PCHS Athletic Trainer Gail Browning, PCHS Wrestling Coach Tim Lawson, P&HCC Wrestling Coach Chad Lange, PCHS Athletic Director Terry Harris.

Condon named head volleyball coach at P&HCC

Megan Condon was hired as the next head volleyball coach at Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC). She is set to take over for Brandi Woods, who led the Patriots for two seasons.

"I'm over the moon about accepting this position at Patrick & Henry and taking the helm of the volleyball program," Condon said. "Becoming a collegiate head coach is something I've strived to achieve since stepping out on the court as a player and ever since becoming a coach."

Condon joins P&HCC after serving as the head coach of South Stokes High School in Germantown, N.C. since February 2020. The Cherry Creek, NY native moved to North Carolina at the age of 7 and later played volleyball for North Stokes High School and Montreat College. As a player at North Stokes, Condon set school records for aces in a season (86) as well as most assists per set.

No stranger to NJCAA Region 10 action, Condon was also an assistant coach at Surry Community College in Dobson, N.C., from July



Megan Condon

2019-January 2020. Condon assisted in training players based on their position, maintaining player stats, and running team practices.

Coach Condon is actively recruiting student-athletes interested in joining the volleyball program beginning this Fall 2024. If interested, please visit www.phccsports.com for more information or email mcondon@patrickhenry.edu.

Baseball team ready to defend title

By Pat Delaney

For the first time in school history, a team from Patrick County High School will be the defending state champions when members of the baseball team take the field this week. According to head coach Tal Swails, his team is ready for the challenge.

"It's just like I told them on day one when we came out," said Swails, "for the first time since June the 9th, you're no longer state champions. You're former state champions. And everybody's the same. Everybody's record is 0-0."

Among the challenges will be opposing teams knowing they are playing the defending champs.

"The difference is everybody knows you won it. We're a good team and we've always been a good team and we always have competitive games, but we've never been a former state champ, and nobody knows what that feels like," said Swails.

The Cougars will make the move to the Three Rivers District this season, which includes state semi-finalist Alleghany, who beat the Cougars in the region championship game last season. Tough opposition is nothing new for the Cougars, with many of the players having a history of success going back to playing Dixie Youth baseball together.

"These guys know how to win. They've known how to win for years.

They won when they were young. They're not going to get freaked out over being the hunted because they've always been winners and they have an expectation to win," he said.

"I mean, these guys won state championships when they were young kids in Dixie Youth," said Swails. "Some teams can be talented, but they may not know how to win. These guys know how to win. There's nobody we're going to play that they'll be wide-eyed over."

Coach Swails knows that as good as the team can be, it is a long season and there are many things that have to fall their way in order to make another deep postseason run.

"Things have to work out. You've got to stay healthy, you've got to get some breaks. You're going to have bad days. It's how you play through those bad days" that will determine success, he said.

The Cougars will field an experienced team, losing just two starters from last year's team. Among the returning players will be senior Tucker Swails, 2023 VHSL Class 2 Player of the Year, whose season included the first perfect game thrown by a Cougar.

With the returning talent, Coach Swails and his team are ready to get the season started, and looks forward to the challenge of defending a state title.

"We're going to get everybody's best shot. Nobody's going to look past us, that's for sure. Everybody knows what we've got back. Everybody knows

we're extremely talented and have a real good shot to go deep again," said Swails, adding, "It's going to be a fun year."



Coach Tal Swails throwing batting practice.



Cougars watch as their teammates field batting practice.



Before 1972, Moody Funeral Home provided ambulances to the county and surrounding areas. Most areas across the nation were serviced by funeral services before the official formation of present-day EMS.

50th anniversary of Surry County EMS celebrated

The Surry Community College Chapter of the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society and the James Hunter Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution partnered to honor the 50th anniversary of the Surry County Emergency Medical Service on Feb. 14.

"The brave men and women of the EMS are always there whenever we call," explained DAR Regent, PTK Advisor, and SCC Instructor, Dr. Kathleen D. Fowler.

According to Emergency Services Chief, Eric Southern, emergency personnel who are on duty rarely get to sit down for meals. "Sometimes they may have to be in their ambulance or on a critical scene for hours, so snacks like these can be something they will take with them and eat in between calls. Anytime we receive gifts like this, they are always very appreciated by everyone."

The official 50th anniversary celebration for the Surry County EMS


is scheduled to be held the last week of September with an open house held daily Sept. 23-26, and a celebration on Sept. 27. This will allow the public to see their equipment, meet their personnel, and see demonstrations.

Surry County EMS has over 130 personnel divided among five stations across the county. Together, they answer an average of 27 calls daily and have a total of eight ambulances, two quick response vehicles, and two rescue supervisor units on the road per day.

Surry County EMS provides emergency medical care at the paramedic level. They also have critical care paramedics that provide transport from local hospitals to those in Winston-Salem. In addition, Surry County EMS has Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) and paramedics who are trained in wilderness search, high angle rescue, water recovery, confined space, and in tactical medicine.

Griffith Announces Start of 2024 Congressional Art Competition

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



2023 winning entry titled "Highland Ponies"

CONGRESSIONAL ART COMPETITION 2024

THEME:
"LANDMARKS OF VIRGINIA'S NINTH DISTRICT"

Congressman Morgan Griffith invites interested Ninth District high school students to participate in the 2024 Congressional Art Competition. Please submit a photograph of your original artwork to either the Christiansburg or Abingdon office by 5 p.m. on Monday, April 15, 2024. For specific guidelines, please contact Josh Hess at josh.hess@mail.house.gov or by calling one of the district offices.

Congressman Morgan Griffith's District Offices

323 West Main Street Abingdon, VA 24210 (276) 525-1405	17 West Main Street Christiansburg, VA 24073 (540) 381-5671
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NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC OF AN APPLICATION BY APPALACHIAN POWER COMPANY, FOR APPROVAL TO CONSTRUCT AND OPERATE A BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEM CASE NO. PUR-2024-00001

On January 23, 2024, Appalachian Power Company ("APCo" or "Company") completed the filing with the State Corporation Commission ("Commission") of an application ("Application") pursuant to § 56-580 of the Code of Virginia ("Code"), the Utility Facilities Act, and the Commission's Filing Requirements in Support of Applications for Authority to Construct and Operate an Electric Generating Facility, for approval to construct and operate a battery energy storage system ("BESS") project along its Glade-Whitetop distribution circuit ("Project").

In support of its Application, the Company states that the Project will be composed of two separate BESS sites connected to the Glade-Whitetop 34.5 kilovolt distribution circuit in southwestern Virginia, with a total rating of 7.5 megawatts (capacity) and 30 megawatt-hours (energy). The Company states that one site is located in Smyth County, Virginia, and the other in Grayson County, Virginia.

APCo represents that it will use the Project to benefit its customers in two ways. First, the Company states that it will utilize the Project to reduce costs for customers. Specifically, APCo states that the Project will be used to lower the Company's overall system demand and thus reduce the need for other sources of generation during periods when customer demand is high. Second, the Company states that it will use the Project as a primary source of power for customers served by the Glade-Whitetop distribution circuit, who have experienced a disproportionately high levels of outages. APCo submits that the Project will therefore both improve reliability for the Company's customers and reduce the Company's cost of service.

APCo states that the Project has an estimated total cost of approximately \$57.3 million with approximately \$34.5 million for the procurement and installation of the BESS components. The Company states that it will file for recovery of eligible project costs in a future Virginia Clean Economy Act filing.

Interested persons are encouraged to review the Application and supporting documents for the details of these and other proposals.

The Commission entered an Order for Notice and Hearing in this proceeding that, among other things, scheduled a public hearing on APCo's Application. On June 11, 2024, at 10 a.m., the Hearing Examiner assigned will hold the telephonic portion of the hearing for the purpose of receiving the testimony of public witnesses. On or before June 5, 2024, any person desiring to offer testimony as a public witness shall provide to the Commission (a) your name, and (b) the telephone number that you wish the Hearing Examiner to call during the hearing to receive your testimony. This information may be provided to the Commission in three ways: (i) by filling out a form on the Commission's website at www.scc.virginia.gov/pages/Webcasting; (ii) by completing and emailing the PDF version of this form to SCCInfo@scc.virginia.gov; or (iii) by calling (804) 371-9141. This public witness hearing will be webcast at www.scc.virginia.gov/pages/Webcasting.

Beginning at 10 a.m. on June 11, 2024, the Hearing Examiner will telephone sequentially each person who has signed up to testify as provided above.

On June 11, 2024, at 10 a.m., or at the conclusion of the public witness portion of the hearing, whichever is later, in the Commission's second floor courtroom located in the Tyler Building, 1300 East Main Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219, the Hearing Examiner will convene a hearing to receive testimony and evidence related to the Application from the Company, any respondents, and the Commission Staff.

To promote administrative efficiency and timely service of filings upon participants, the Commission has directed the electronic filing of testimony and pleadings, unless they contain confidential information, and has required electronic service on parties to this proceeding.

An electronic copy of the public version of the Company's Application may be obtained by submitting a written request to counsel for the Company: Noelle J. Coates, Esquire, American Electric Power Service Corporation, 3 James Center, 1051 East Cary Street, Suite 1100, Richmond, Virginia 23219, or njcoates@aep.com. Interested persons also may download unofficial copies from the Commission's website: www.scc.virginia.gov/pages/Case-Information.

On or before June 5, 2024, any interested person may submit comments on the Application electronically by following the instructions on the Commission's website: www.scc.virginia.gov/casementments/Submit-Public-Comments. Those unable, as a practical matter, to submit comments electronically may file such comments by U.S. mail to the Clerk of the State Corporation Commission, c/o Document Control Center, P.O. Box 2118, Richmond, Virginia 23218-2118. All comments shall refer to Case No. PUR-2024-00001.

On or before April 11, 2024, any person or entity wishing to participate as a respondent in this proceeding may do so by filing a notice of participation with the Clerk of the Commission at: www.scc.virginia.gov/clk/efiling. Those unable, as a practical matter, to file a notice of participation electronically may file such notice by U.S. mail to the Clerk of the Commission at the address listed above. Such notice of participation shall include the email addresses of such parties or their counsel, if available. A copy of the notice of participation as a respondent also must be sent to counsel for the Company. Pursuant to 5 VAC 5-20-80 B, *Participation as a respondent*, of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure ("Rules of Practice"), any notice of participation shall set forth: (i) a precise statement of the interest of the respondent; (ii) a statement of the specific action sought to the extent then known; and (iii) the factual and legal basis for the action. Any organization, corporation or government body participating as a respondent must be represented by counsel as required by 5 VAC 5-20-30, *Counsel*, of the Rules of Practice. All filings shall refer to Case No. PUR-2024-00001.

On or before April 25, 2024, each respondent may file with the Clerk of the Commission, at www.scc.virginia.gov/clk/efiling, any testimony and exhibits by which the respondent expects to establish its case. Any respondent unable, as a practical matter, to file testimony and exhibits electronically may file such by U.S. mail to the Clerk of the Commission at the address listed above. Each witness's testimony shall include a summary not to exceed one page. All testimony and exhibits shall be sent to Staff, the Company, and all other respondents simultaneous with its filing. In all filings, the respondent shall comply with the Rules of Practice, including 5 VAC 5-20-140, *Filing and service*, and 5 VAC 5-20-240, *Prepared testimony and exhibits*. All filings shall refer to Case No. PUR-2024-00001.

Any documents filed in paper form with the Office of the Clerk of the Commission in this docket may use both sides of the paper. In all other respects, except as modified by the Commission's Order for Notice and Hearing, all filings shall comply fully with the requirements of 5 VAC 5-20-150, *Copies and format*, of the Commission's Rules of Practice.

The Commission's Rules of Practice, the public version of the Company's Application, the Commission's Order for Notice and Hearing, and other documents filed in this case may be viewed on the Commission's website at: www.scc.virginia.gov/pages/Case-Information.

APPALACHIAN POWER COMPANY

Congressman Morgan Griffith, R-Salem, announced the beginning of the 2024 Congressional Art Competition in the Ninth District.

"Each year, the U.S. House of Representatives sponsors the Congressional Art Competition for high school students. It's a great opportunity to see the artistic talents of Southwest Virginia students, one of whom will have the chance to have his or her work displayed in the Capitol. Last year, Katelyn Wheatley of Carroll County High School won the Congressional Art Competition in Virginia's Ninth Congressional District. Her artwork is entitled 'Highland Ponies,'" Griffith said.

"The theme for this year's contest is 'Landmarks of Virginia's Ninth District.' I look forward to seeing how the young artists of the Ninth District will use their talents in exploration of this theme," he added.

Interested students must submit a photograph of their original artwork to either the Christiansburg or Abingdon district office by 5 p.m. on Monday, April 15 for consideration. Each entry must be accompanied by a completed student information release form, which is available by contacting a Ninth District office or visiting <https://morgangriffith.house.gov>.

The winning artwork will be displayed in the U.S. Capitol complex for one year. In addition, the second and third place selections will be on display in one of the Ninth District offices.

To read the complete listing of rules and guidelines or download the Student Release Form for the Congressional Art Competition, please visit <https://morgangriffith.house.gov>. Faculty or students with any additional questions about the competition may contact Josh Hess at (540) 381-5671 or by email at josh.hess@mail.house.gov.

PCHS Sports Schedule

The Patrick County High School Cougars Sports Schedule for the week of March 16-22

- 3/18** 5:30p Baseball at Dan River
- 5:30p Softball at Dan River
- 5:30p Girls Soccer at Dan River
- 7pm Boys Soccer at Dan River
- 3/20** 4:30p Boys Tennis vs Glenvar
- 4:30p Girls Tennis at Glenvar
- 5pm Baseball vs Glenvar
- 5pm Softball vs Glenvar
- 7pm Girls Soccer vs Glenvar
- 7pm Boys Soccer at Glenvar
- 3/21** 5pm Softball at North Stokes
- 3/22** 5pm Baseball vs Martinsville
- 7pm Girls Soccer at Martinsville
- 7pm Boys Soccer vs Martinsville

Perry Stephen "Steve" Greer

Perry Stephen "Steve" Greer, 62, of Mount Airy, NC (formerly of Patrick Springs) passed away at Woltz Hospice Home in Dobson, NC on Tuesday, March 5, 2024. He was born on February 21, 1962 in Henry County, Va to the late Nancy Ruth Greer.



Greer of the home, his father: Perry Greer of Patrick Springs, VA, one sister, Robin Letchworth (Craig) of Patrick Springs, VA. two sons, Sagan Greer and Michael Greer and 3 nieces; Lindsey Rogers, Kelsey Land,

Carley Letchworth and a nephew; Zach Letchworth.

A funeral will be held on Wednesday, March 13, 2024 at 2:00 pm at Norris Funeral Services Chapel in Stuart, VA with Doctor David Sparks officiating. Burial will follow at Providence Community Cemetery.

The family will receive friends one hour prior to the service from 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm at Norris Chapel.

Norris Funeral Services in Stuart is serving the Greer family. Online condolences may be made at www.norrisfuneral.com.

George Trent

George Trent, 81, of Spencer, VA passed away on Thursday, March 7, 2024 at Martinsville Health & Rehab in Martinsville, VA. He was born on August 5, 1942 in his family home in Henry County, VA to the late William Basil Trent, Sr. and the late Helen Virginia Hylton Trent.



2024 from 3:00 - 4:00 p.m. A graveside service will follow the visitation at 4:30 p.m. at the Nettle Ridge Church Cemetery, officiated by Pastor Curt Ashley. At George's request, no flowers are requested or expected. If you would like to honor the life of George, please send a donation to St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital, 501 St. Jude Place, Memphis, TN 38105.

George remained a "country man" all his life. He loved his profession as an independent logger, as well as that of being a farmer. He enjoyed country life and his family. He considered himself successful when he could make it through life his own way.

Survivors include numerous nieces and nephews left to remember him. In addition to his parents, George was predeceased by a daughter, Linda Faye Trent, two sisters, and a brother.

The family will receive friends at Norris Funeral Home, Stuart Chapel, Stuart, VA on Thursday, March 14,

his family, his dogs, and time spent with friends. He will always be remembered for being a hardworking, strong, resilient and loving son and brother. He was known for his teasing banter and generous

Mary Taylor Creasey

Mary Taylor Creasey, 93, of Richmond, Virginia, passed away peacefully on March 5, 2024, surrounded by her loving family. She was the daughter of the late Jesse Benjamin and Bettie Shough Taylor. She has many loving arms waiting for her, as she was preceded in death by her husband, Cecil H. Creasey, Sr., with whom she made beautiful music; and all of her ten siblings: sisters, Lula Maye Taylor Hall and Thelma Lucille Taylor Smart; and her brothers, John Richard Taylor, Talbott Milton Taylor, Jesse Benjamin Taylor, Jr., Robert Lincoln Taylor, Claude

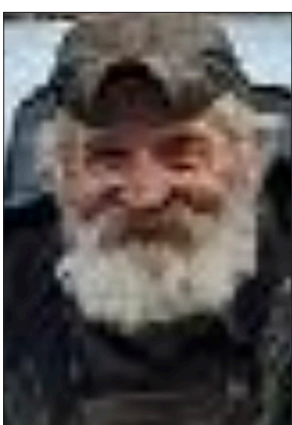


Wesley Taylor, Eugene Hampton Taylor, Raymond Beane Taylor and William David Taylor. She is survived by her children, Suzanne Creasey, Diane Kent and Cecil H. Creasey, Jr. (Susan); and grandchildren, Caroline Creasey, Harvey

Creasey, Oliver Creasey, Taylor Kent, Julia Salter and Teddy Kent. Her funeral service was held 10:30 a.m. Monday, March 11, 2024, at Reveille United Methodist Church, with the family receiving friends at 10 a.m. Interment followed in Westhampton Memorial Park. In lieu of flowers, the family welcomes donations to The Pinnacle Living Samaritan Program (for residents who outlive their financial resources at Hermitage Richmond where she lived in assisted living) or the Bon Secours Community Hospice House (where she spent her last hours peacefully).

Lester Hampton Hughes

Lester Hampton Hughes, 63, of Woolwine, VA passed away at his home on March 7th, 2024. He was born on November 3rd, 1960, in Winston Salem, North Carolina to the late Howard L. Hughes and Annabelle Hall.



Most of his career was spent behind the wheel of an eighteen-wheeler tractor trailer where he traveled the country. Most recently, he was a heavy machinery operator for Branch Construction. He was an avid outdoorsman who enjoyed hunting and fishing. He loved

spirit, along with being a fierce protector of his loved ones.

In addition to his mother, he is survived by one brother, David Hughes (Rhonda) and one sister, Sylvia Prescott (Mark), both of Bassett, VA.

A memorial will be held at 2PM on Tuesday, March 12th, 2024, at Norris Funeral Services in Stuart, VA with Minister Lee Ashley officiating.

Norris Funeral Services in Stuart is serving the family. Online condolences may be made at www.norrisfuneral.com.

Virginia Ann Slate Bingman

Virginia Ann Slate Bingman, 90, of Critz, VA passed away on Friday, March 8, 2024 at The Landmark Health Care Center, Stuart, VA. She was born on May 6, 1933 in Claudeville, VA, the eldest child of the late William Beach Slate and the late Mary Powell Slate.



sister-in-law, Dot Nelson, Patrick Springs, VA as well as numerous nephews, nieces, great-nephews and great-nieces.

Virginia was predeceased by her husband, Sandy Moir Bingman, their only child, Sally "Beth" Crouch, brother, James "Jim" E. Slate, and sister, Verena P. Anderson.

Virginia Ann did volunteer work for Hospice for several years, and was a member of the Virginia Education Association and Patrick County Retired Teachers Association. A faithful

long-time member of Salem Church, she enjoyed the church activities and spent many years as a Sunday School teacher. She was also a member of various committees in the church.

The family will receive friends at Norris Funeral Services, Stuart Chapel, Stuart, VA on Wednesday, March 13, 2024 from 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. A funeral service will take place on Thursday, March 14, 2024 at 2:00 p.m. at Salem Church, Patrick Springs, VA with Pastor John Franklin.

Interment will follow at Critz Baptist Church Cemetery, Critz, VA.

At Virginia Ann's request, no flowers are requested or expected. If you would like to honor her life, please send a donation to Salem Church Endowment Fund, 159 Salem Church Road, Patrick Springs, VA 24133.

Gueindoline Willis Hall, 89, of Roanoke, Va., passed away on Wednesday, March 6, 2024, in the loving company of her family.



Gueindoline, who was known by many as Gwen, was born on August 13, 1934, to John and Sylvia Willis. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her brothers, J.V. Willis and Carlin Willis; and her son-in-law, Mark Scarbrough.

She is survived by her loving husband of 68 years, C. Wayne Hall; her daughters, Sharon Hall Sain and Sheila Hall Scarbrough; her son-in-law, Jeffery Sain; grandchildren, Amanda Sain Sarver and Clinton Sain; great-grandchildren, Samantha Sarver and Nathaniel Sarver;

great-great-grandson, Jaxton Schrader; sisters, Velda Willis and Mavis Newman; and brother, Coleon Willis.

Gwen was born in Willis, Virginia (in the shadow of the Buffalo), graduated from Willis High School and married the love of her life and raised a family. She was active in

her neighborhood and in her church, Mt. Olive Primitive Baptist. An exceptional cook, Gwen loved her family and friends enjoying her hospitality at her home. She loved being with her family at Smith Mountain Lake, Smart View family reunions and holiday celebrations at home.

The Funeral Service was held at 2 p.m. on Monday, March 11, 2024, at Oakey's South Chapel. Burial followed in Sherwood Memorial Park. The family received friends prior to the service from 1 to 2 p.m. Online condolences may be made at www.Oakeys.com.

Arrangements by Oakey's Funeral Service - South Chapel, Roanoke, VA (540) 989-3131.

Gueindoline Willis Hall

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3	2	8	9	6	4	5	1	7
6	1	4	5	8	7	2	3	9
1	4	2	6	3	8	9	7	5
7	5	3	2	9	1	6	8	4
8	6	9	7	4	5	3	2	1
9	7	5	8	1	2	4	6	3
4	8	6	3	7	9	1	5	2
2	3	1	4	5	6	7	9	8

THANK YOU FOR READING THE ENTERPRISE

PATRICK PULPITS

A Call to Worship

Pastor Wayne Moore,
High Point Baptist Church

You may remember going to a church that printed the order of service in a bulletin. Many still do this. The headings define each part of the worship service. One popular heading was "Call to Worship." The heading states exactly what that part of the service is. Words, songs, or Scripture readings are often used to call the congregation to worship together. The Bible is full of calls to worship. One of the last ones is found in Revelation 19:5. "And a voice came out of the throne, saying, 'Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great.'"

This call to worship has not taken place yet. John is prophesying about a future call to worship in preparation for the Second Coming of Jesus. Even so, we may join in the worship now. In this verse, every person who serves and fears God is called to praise Him, both small and great. Worship is not limited to the outgoing and talented. God deserves the worship of the shiest and most unskilled as well. Worship is not about the person worshipping, but about the one being worshiped. God is worthy of our worship. Therefore, we cannot excuse ourselves from worshipping Him.

God is not looking for one person to stand out in the crowd. Notice

that in the next verse it speaks of a multitude, but one voice. "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings" (Rev. 19:6). A great multitude is made up of many people. The word "waters" is plural, as well as the word "thunderings." In all three cases, though, the word "voice" is singular. This verse uses a rainstorm to demonstrate how our praise to God should sound. It should sound like one voice. Rainstorms are made up of individual drops of water, but they make one sound. Choirs and congregations are best when one person is not heard above another and the group sounds like one voice. Our worship should call attention to God, not ourselves. When it comes to worship, we should get lost in the crowd, not stand out.

I see the potential for at least two errors in public worship. One is to refrain from joining in. The other is to stand out in the crowd. If you are shy and don't feel talented, you may be prone to the first error. If you are outgoing and talented, you may be prone to the second. Both deprive God of the glory He deserves. This passage in Revelation teaches us a better way to worship. Join in when you are called to worship God and try to blend in to become one mighty voice of praise.

Landmark Center to Offer Two Healthy Living Programs in March

March is National Nutrition Month, and The Landmark Center in Stuart is offering two free healthy living programs for interested individuals.

On Friday, March 22 at 1 p.m., nutrition expert Samantha Turner will present Nutrition and Aging: General Nutrition for Healthy Aging. A dietitian with OakStone Health and Nutrition, Turner will discuss how to ease into healthier aging through good nutritional choices.

Good nutrition across a person's lifespan helps prevent chronic disease — but it's never too late to make improvements to support healthy aging. Older adults are at greater risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease and cancer — as well as health conditions related to changes in muscle and bone mass, such as osteoporosis. The good news is that this population can mitigate some of these risks by eating nutrient-dense foods and maintaining an active lifestyle.

A healthy, nutritious lunch will be provided for this program which is sponsored by the Southern Area Agency on Aging in Martinsville.

The Alzheimer's Education Series continues its monthly programming at noon on Tuesday, March 26 with Brooke Gill of the Alzheimer's Association presenting Healthy Living for Your Brain and Body. This program is designed to offer research-based recommendations about taking care of our brains and our bodies in order to age as well as possible.

Healthy Living is presented free, and lunch is provided for attendees. This program is sponsored by the Alzheimer's Association of Central and Southwestern Virginia in Roanoke.

"The Landmark Center is grateful to our sponsors for bringing quality health and aging programs to Patrick County," said director of community relations Lisa Martin. "As health care becomes more difficult to access in rural areas, it's important to us to be able to offer programs that can benefit the health of our citizens."

Both programs are free, and lunch is provided. Registration is requested and a spot can be reserved by calling (276) 694-3050 or emailing lmartin@thelandmarkctr.com.

BIBLE TRIVIA

BY WILSON CASEY

1. Is the book of Isaiah (KJV) in the Old or New Testament or neither?
2. From Genesis 3, who made clothes for Adam and Eve out of skins? Adam, Eve, The Lord, Serpent
3. What did Jesus say His followers would never walk in? Fear, Solitude, Darkness, Shame
4. Lamentations 3 speaks of the wormwood and the

...? Fire, Gall, Fence, Fig
5. Who had a vision of a lion having eagle's wings? John the Baptist, Peter, Herod, Daniel
6. From 2 Samuel 20, who killed Amasa? Joab, Sheba, Abishai, Bichri
ANSWERS: 1) Old, 2) The Lord, 3) Darkness, 4) Gall, 5) Daniel, 6) Joab
Comments? More Trivia? Gift ideas? Visit www.TriviaGuy.com.
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Rev. Tommy Gosnell
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276-694-3440 11:00 Worship Service
www.stuartbaptist.org office@stuartbaptist.org

Risen Lord Catholic Church
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Stuart
(actually in Patrick Springs)
276.236.7814
Office Hours (Tue-Thu 8 am-3 pm)
Mass Schedule
Sundays at 8:30 a.m.
Reconciliation
Sundays 7:45 - 8:15 a.m.



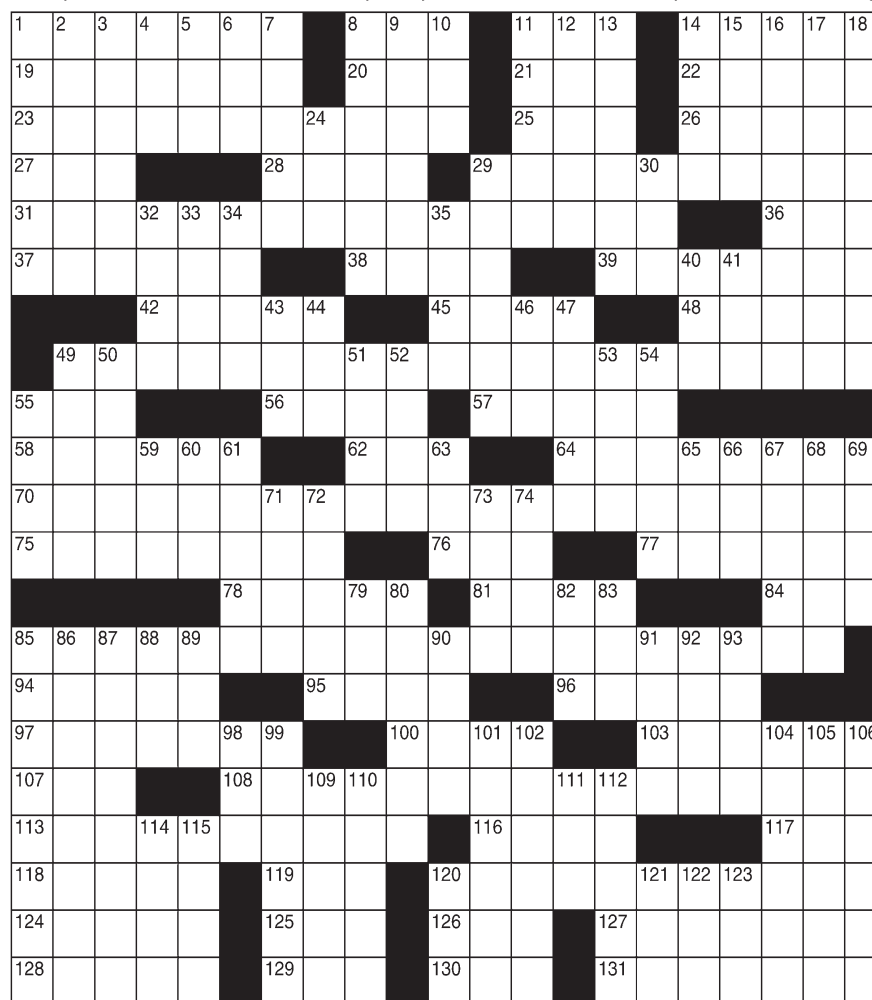
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Super Crossword

WELL-DEFINED

- | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|---|--|---------------------------------|--|
| ACROSS | 48 Stray calf | 113 120-Across #8 | 8 Burial vaults | 49 The Beatles' "— Work It Out" | 86 The "E" of UAE |
| 1 Ran after | 49 120-Across #4 | 116 Male sweetie | 9 Poet Percy — Shelley | 87 Overtums | 88 Singer Sumac |
| 8 — oil (trendy marijuana extract, for short) | 55 Plead | 117 Day, to Juanita | 10 — Moines, Iowa | 50 Tequila plant | 89 Word before goblin |
| 11 Old TV ET | 56 Cabinet chief: Abbr. | 118 Totally lost | 11 One-off, as a committee | 51 Sacred image | 90 Employed |
| 14 Feudal peons | 57 Muse of poetry | 119 Bruins' Bobby | 12 Lerner's songwriting partner | 52 Big Apple address abbr. | 91 — bad example |
| 19 More ill-bred | 58 Mimosa tree, e.g. | 120 What this puzzle literally provides | 13 Skillet | 53 Sch. near the Rio Grande | 92 Split |
| 20 Loaf in a deli | 62 "Put — Happy Face" | 124 Wee | 14 ilk | 54 Axes, e.g. | 93 Ritalin treats it, for short |
| 21 Palme — (Cannes award) | 64 DiCaprio of "Titanic" | 125 Hitler's stat | 15 Grand-scale | 55 Scrooge's outbursts | 98 Science writer Willy or ESPN anchor Bob |
| 22 "La Traviata," e.g. | 70 120-Across #5 | 126 Single-named R&B singer | 16 Give new energy to | 59 U.S. spy org. | 99 Urge strongly |
| 23 120-Across #1 | 75 More futile | 127 Erase | 17 Region prohibiting slavery prior to the Civil War | 60 Fluid in a pen | 101 Kind of steak |
| 25 "Over here!" | 76 Possess | 128 Some Canadian gas stations | 18 Made unhappy | 61 Anxiousness | 102 Like some headsets |
| 26 Sieved, as potatoes | 77 Gets the impression | 129 Tot's "piggy" | 24 — Puf (facial sponge) | 63 In times past | 104 Chemist's "I" |
| 27 Folk rocker DiFranco | 78 Core belief | 130 Bible translation, e.g.: Abbr. | 29 Really hate | 65 Scot's denial | 105 Brief pang |
| 28 Drink holders | 81 Light tan | 131 Lobby sofas | 30 Suffix with serpent | 66 Novelist Rand | 106 For a really long time |
| 29 120-Across #2 | 84 Groom's vow | DOWN | 32 Resist boldly | 67 Varnish stuff | 109 Muscle car booster |
| 31 120-Across #3 | 85 120-Across #6 | 1 The Sims or Minecraft, say | 33 Singer Lisa | 68 "Judge —" (Stallone film) | 110 Macabre |
| 36 Suffix of enzymes | 94 "Take —" ("Jot this note") | 2 Muse of astronomy | 34 City in Sicily | 69 — buco | 111 Interval |
| 37 Don effortlessly, as shoes | 95 Water spigots | 3 Fast part of a river ride | 35 Once, once | 71 Artist Jan van der — | 112 Is really angry |
| 38 Toxin-fighting fluids | 96 Extort money from | 4 Govt. stipend | 40 Word file alternative | 72 "Nola" composer Felix | 114 Lotto variant |
| 39 Functional unit of a kidney | 97 Fit to reside in | 5 Adm.'s org. | 41 — polloi | 73 Actor Wilson | 115 Deposits, as eggs |
| 42 Wield a saber or foil | 100 Architect Saaninen | 6 Brain wave test: Abbr. | 43 Syringe amts. | 74 How much was recorded | 120 License-issuing agcy. |
| 45 Sky twinkler | 103 Island near Bora Bora | 7 Harry Potter bully Malfoy | 44 Stretch (out) | 79 LAX info | 121 Palindromic file suffix |
| | 107 Rage | | 46 — Lingus (Irish carrier) | 80 High-quality CSA soldier | 122 Fitting |
| | 108 120-Across #7 | | 47 Writer Dahl | 83 Web address | 123 Cashew, e.g. |



Puzzle answers page 13

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Fairy Stone State Park Now Hiring Multiple Seasonal Positions! Beach Maintenance Ranger Beach Ranger (Lifeguard) Contact Ranger

Food Service Ranger Maintenance Ranger www.dcr.virginia.gov/jobs DCR is EEO Apply online or at the park office: 967 Fairystone Lake Drive Stuart, VA 24171 276-930-2424 Positions open until filled.

ESTATE SALE

Part 2 of a HUGE Estate/ Yard sale March 16th at Ross Harbour Church at 6260 Elamsville Road, Stuart. We ran out of room before we ran out of boxes! So, there are many new items including MORE fishing rods, tackle, and tools, wheelbarrows, furniture, organ, hand tools, fishing, dish sets, box lots, and so much more. Outside sales at 7am, Inside at 8AM sharp, Basement full! Rain or Shine. We will have free coffee.



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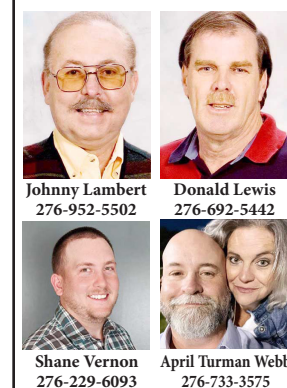
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Transmission upgrades needed to keep U.S. climate goals on track

Edwin J. Viera

Virginia News Connection

Environmental groups in Virginia are among those looking at how to improve and modernize electrical grid transmission.

Experts said the grid's age and current state aren't conducive to the boom in renewable energy projects being developed. The lack of preparation is being felt all over the country but particularly in Virginia, where the latest report card gives the state's grid operator the lowest score.

Quentin Scott, federal policy director for the Chesapeake Climate Action Network, said grid operators' long-term planning needs to consider increasing renewable energy.

"They don't really account for high usage of renewables," Scott pointed out. "They're not accounting for the popularity of the Inflation Reduction Act. They're not accounting for state policies that require states to be 100% clean energy by 2050 or 2040."

Other experts feel grid operators like Virginia's PJM Interconnections need to hire more people to deal with interconnection requests. But increased demand for those jobs makes it harder to address

the problem. Virginia's General Assembly passed House Bill 862 to make the process more efficient.

If grid operators cannot make the changes in time, around 80% of the emissions reductions outlined in the Inflation Reduction Act might not happen. Scott and other environmental advocates are worried about losing ground. Along with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission being a backstop authority for such projects, he noted microgrids can help improve the grid's efficiency.

"Solar panels that are on your roof or community solar projects; small businesses that erect you know, a wind turbine near their business," Scott explained. "Microgrids allow those sort of localized communities to have more planning, more control over their local resources."

Microgrids are also known to be weather resilient. Given the strong effects climate change is having on states' electrical infrastructure, it can be prudent to prevent blackouts. Research has shown if Texas had more connections with the Southeastern U.S., there would not have been as many power outages during the deadly 2021 winter storm.

Veteran Laptop Project provides laptops to P&HCC



In the photo: Jack Raymondson (T4T), Rosemary Bowers (P&HCC), John Hall (MEWI), Jack Hanbury (P&HCC), and Morgan Hyde (VDS) celebrate the start of the Virginia Veteran Laptop Project at P&HCC.

Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC) has received laptops to provide to veteran and veteran spouse students thanks to Virginia Department of Veterans Services' (VDS) Military Education & Workforce Initiative (MEWI).

Following the success of the Military Student Technology Initiative and through a partnership with the Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) and Tech for Troops (T4T), Military Education & Workforce Initiative (MEWI) has been able to establish the Virginia Veteran Laptop Project (VVLVLP). Through this effort, laptop computers are made available to veterans and their spouses at no cost to the family. Veterans and military spouses who are currently enrolled at a Virginia Community College and taking classes can participate. This program is open to any veteran or military spouse regardless of discharge status.

MEWI program manager John Hall and Tech For Troops (T4T) business development lead Jack Raymondson visited P&HCC to present the laptops to Rosemary Bowers, P&HCC veterans coordinator, and Jack Hanbury, P&HCC

vice president for financial & administrative services.

"This project is not just to bring computers to students, but also to provide them with all the other knowledge that DVS has to offer them about services - from care services to benefits and claims, DVS offers all that benefit free of charge," said Hall.

In 2023-2024 school year, P&HCC had 22 veterans/veteran spouses/reserve veterans participating in GI Bill student services.

"It's exciting to be able to bring this opportunity to our veterans and spouses that are attending here at Patrick & Henry Community College," said Bowers.

MEWI assists veterans and service members with their transition from active duty to civilian life and enhances employment opportunities for Virginians who have served in the United States Armed Forces, and their spouses, by providing a pathway to education, training, certifications, and technology.

T4T recycles and distributes computers with the support of corporate, state and federal partners to distribute laptops to veterans and their families.

Debunking Motorcycle Myths

DMV Reminds Motorcyclists of the Importance of Training

Spring is just around the corner, and as the weather gets warmer, we will see more motorcyclists enjoying the ride. The Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles' (DMV) Highway Safety Office is reminding riders to ensure they have a motorcycle endorsement and proper training before they put their bike on the road.

"As a fellow rider I know that the thrill of riding a motorcycle is unmatched, but I also know the importance of proper training," said DMV Commissioner Gerald Lackey, the Governor's Highway Safety Representative. "Whether you are just taking up riding or you've been riding for years, a certified training course will make you a better rider and it could save

your life."

In 2023, there were 2,127 crashes involving motorcyclists on Virginia's roadways and 127 motorcyclists lost their lives. But this isn't all because drivers aren't paying attention. In Virginia, one-in-four motorcyclists are riding without a motorcycle endorsement and 76% of riders involved in a motorcycle crash had not completed a training course. To encourage riders to get the necessary training and prevent crashes, DMV is debunking some common motorcycle myths.

Motorcycle Myths:

I don't need a special endorsement on my license to ride a motorcycle.

In Virginia operating a motorcycle without the proper license or endorsement could result in penalties that may include fines or even jail time.

I've been riding for years. I don't need a training course.

Training courses are about so much more than learning to ride. Certified

training courses can help correct unsafe habits, remind you how to safely react when faced with an unexpected danger and brush up on your skills. Best of all, a Virginia Rider Training Program makes getting your motorcycle endorsement from DMV even easier.

I wear all my gear when I ride so training is just unnecessary.

While safety gear such as helmets, eye protection, proper clothing and gloves can save your life in the event of a crash, proper training can help prevent you from getting into that crash. Gear and training are a team that helps ensure you arrive alive.

I don't ride on interstates, so I'm way less likely to crash.

In 2023 87% of motorcycle crashes occurred on non-interstate roads. Where you drive doesn't matter if you aren't driving safely and aren't properly prepared for the unexpected.

Learn more about the facts of motorcycle safety and about Virginia Rider Training Programs at <https://www.dmv.virginia.gov/>.

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

LEGAL

Patrick County Public Schools - Mowing RFP 2024-MNT-001

The Patrick County School Board is accepting written proposals from interested parties to furnish labor and equipment to mow and trim the major portions of all school grounds for the 2024-2025 school session (July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025). This includes spraying for weed control. Bidders are encouraged to attend a pre-proposal meeting Thursday, March 21, 2024 at 8:00 a.m. at the Maintenance Office located at 117 Via Avenue, Stuart, VA 24171. Proposals will be accepted at the Maintenance Office until 10 a.m. on March 28, 2024. For further information about mowing specifications and expectations, call 276-694-6984.

LEGAL

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. 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

Wednesday, March 13
The Patrick County Economic Development Authority (EDA) will have a special meeting at 7 p.m. in the second floor conference 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 at 4 p.m. at the Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC) Stuart site. A business meeting will not be held.

Wednesday, March 20
The Stuart Town Council will meet at 7 p.m. in the Town Office.

Events

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 Fairy Stone park Volunteer Fire Department from 3-4:30 p.m.

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

A Fayerdale Missing Town hike will be held at 2:30 p.m. at the Fairy Stone 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.

Part 2 of the huge Yard Sale at Ross Harbour Church, 6260 Elamsville Road, Stuart. Fund-raiser for scholarship. Organizers ran out of room last week before all items were unboxed. Great deals available, and free coffee. The event will be held rain or shine. It begins at 7 a.m. outside and 8 a.m. inside.

Sunday, March 17
Swift Creek will be in concert, 4 p.m. at Pleasant View Baptist Church in Patrick Springs. All are invited. A love offering will be taken.

Thursday, March 21
Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC) will hold a Taking Your Social Media to the Next Level entrepreneurial workshop course from 12-1 p.m. at the Daton IDEA Center. The cost is \$15. Pre-registration is required by going to ph.augusoft.net, or calling (276) 656-5461.

The Patrick County Republican Committee will meet at the Wood Brothers Motorsports Hall of Fame Auditorium starting at 6 p.m. Senate candidate Chuck Smith will attend.

The Carroll County Genealogy Club will meet

at 5 p.m.

Saturday, March 23
Mayo Mountain Church will hold an Easter Egg Hunt, cupcake competition, and scavenger hunt from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

An Experience Youth Rally will be held at the PCHS Auditorium at 6 p.m. Corey Ball will serve as the guest speaker. Entry is free

Ongoing

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.

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

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/volunteers welcome. For more information, call (276) 693-6018.

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

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.

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 Quilters' Sit-N-Sew is held on Saturdays from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Quilted Colors. Call 276-694-3020 or email patrickcountyquilters@gmail.com.

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.

Arrests Reported

The Patrick County Sheriff's Office reported the following:

*Dakota Storm Lewis, 20, of Martinsville, was charged Feb. 27 with two counts of threat. Inv. T. Jessup was the arresting officer.

*Joshua Wayne Justice, 35, of Stuart, was charged Feb. 27 with shoplifting. Sgt. E.J. Litz made the arrest for Henry County.

*China Marie Welch, 30, of Riner, was charged Feb. 28 with one count each possess firearm by non-violent felon and grand larceny: firearm. Senior Deputy A. Kinney was the arresting officer.

*Katina R. Vipperman, 39, of Stuart, was charged Feb. 29 with probation violation. Deputy C.A. Strother was the arresting officer.

*Gerald Randolph Lyons, 58, of Ararat, was charged March 1 with failing to obey a court order. Sgt. J.G. Pickerel was the arresting officer.

*Brandy Lynn Morrison, 35, of Stuart, was charged March 6 with driving motor vehicle- license revoked or suspended. Lt. D.L. Foley was the arresting officer.

*James Russell Music, 35, of Mount Airy, N.C., was charged March 6 with probation viola-

tion. Senior Deputy M. Nester was the arresting officer.

*James Albert Havens, II, 45, of Patrick Springs, was charged March 6 with one count each stalking and violation of protective order. Lt. D.L. Foley was the arresting officer.

*William Massie Pritt, Jr., 51, of Spencer, was charged March 6 with abuse/neglect child. Senior Trooper J.N. Mabe was the arresting officer.

*James Nelson Thompson, 24, of Patrick County Jail, was charged March 6 with possess Sch. I/II with intent to manufacture/sell/distribute. Senior Deputy E. Sain was the arresting officer.

*Dakota Ray Goins, 23, of Stuart, was charged March 6 with forgery. Sgt. L.K. Carroll, Jr., was the arresting officer.

*Dustin David Haynes, 34, of Salem, was

charged March 7 with fail to appear. Franklin County made the arrest for Patrick County.

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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January's Unemployment Rate Unchanged at 3.0 Percent

Virginia's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in January remained unchanged at 3.0 percent, which is 0.1 percentage point below the rate from a year ago, according to a release from Virginia Works (Department of Workforce Development and Advancement). Household survey data in January suggested the number of employed residents increased by 8,212 to 4,448,520 and the number of unemployed residents increased by 346 to 139,731. The labor force increased by 8,558 to 4,588,251. Virginia's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate is 0.7 percentage points below the national rate, which remained unchanged at 3.7 percent.

The Commonwealth's labor force participation rate increased by 0.1 percentage points to 66.6 percent in January. The labor force participation rate measures the proportion of the civilian population age 16 and older that is employed or actively looking for work.

In January, Virginia's nonagricultural employment, from the monthly establishment survey increased by 8,700 to 4,200,000. December's preliminary estimate of employment, after revision, increased by

34,300 to 4,191,300. In January, private sector employment increased by 4,200 to 3,458,500 while government employment increased by 4,500 to 741,500. Within that sector, federal government jobs increased by 700 to 190,500, state government employment increased by 3,700 to 157,400, and local government increased by 100 to 393,600 over the month.

Seasonally adjusted total nonfarm employment data is produced for eleven industry sectors. In January, six experienced over-the-month job gains, one remained unchanged, and four experienced a decline. The largest job gain occurred in Professional and Business Services (+5,100) to 807,900. The second largest job gain occurred in Government (+4,500) to 741,500. The third largest job gain occurred in Financial Activities (+1,400) to 224,000. The other gains were in Manufacturing (+1,100) to 248,600; Education and Health Services (+500) to 594,600; and Mining and Logging (+100) to 7,300.

The largest job loss occurred in Trade, Transportation, and Utilities (-2,200) to 670,000. The second largest job loss occurred in Leisure and Hospitality (-1,500) to 417,300. The third largest job loss occurred in Information (-200) to 69,500. The other loss was in Construction (-100) to 218,100.

Miscellaneous Services remained unchanged.

From January 2023 to January 2024, Virginia Works (DWDA) estimates that total nonfarm employment in Virginia increased by 59,900 to 4,200,000, private sector employment increased by 42,900 to 3,458,500, and government employment increased by 17,000 to 741,500 jobs. Within that sector, federal government jobs increased by 2,700 to 190,500, state government employment increased by 7,500 to 157,400, and local government increased by 6,800 to 393,600 over the year.

For the eleven industry sectors in Virginia over the year, seven experienced over-the-year job gains, and four experienced a decline. The largest job gain occurred in Education and Health Services (+22,500) to 594,600. The second largest job gain occurred in Government (+17,000) to 741,500. The third largest job gain occurred in Leisure and Hospitality (+13,800) to 417,300. The other gains were in Miscellaneous Services (+4,800) to 201,200; Financial Activities (+3,300) to 224,000; Construction (+3,200) to 218,100; and Manufacturing (+2,300) to 248,600.

The largest job loss occurred in Trade, Transportation, and Utilities (-2,700) to 670,000. The second largest job loss occurred in Professional and Business Services (-2,400) to 807,900. The third largest job loss occurred in Information (-1,800) to 69,500. The other loss was in Mining and Logging (-100) to 7,300.



Five dead in Sunday plane crash

Five people died in a plane crash Sunday, according to a release from the Virginia State Police and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

A twin-engine IAI Astra 1125 crashed near Ingalls Field Airport in Hot Springs, Virginia, around 3 p.m. local time on Sunday, March 10. Five people were on board. The FAA and the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) will investigate. The NTSB will be in charge of the investigation and will provide further updates.

The state police reported that the flight originated in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., and was scheduled to land at Ingall's Field. According to the plane owner's attorney and family friend, the occupants

were attending an event at the Homestead Resort in Hot Springs, Va. The occupants of the aircraft were the pilot and the co-pilot, (both men) and three passengers, (a man, a woman and a male juvenile). There were no survivors in the crash.

The plane was short on its approach to the runway, struck the trees and then the hillside, the VSP reported.

The remains have been sent to the Virginia Office of the Medical Examiner, Western District for positive identification. There will be no further updates from the Virginia State Police until such a time when the remains have been identified and family notification has been made.

Professional among sectors to lead initial filings

The number of initial unemployment insurance claims increased in the latest filing week to 2,174 and was at typical pre-pandemic volumes, data from Virginia Works (the Virginia Department of Workforce Development and Advancement) suggests.

Professional, scientific, and technical Services led the number of initial filings for unemployment insurance.

For the filing week ending March 2, seasonally unadjusted initial claims for unemployment insurance in Virginia totaled 2,174, which was an increase of 178 claimants from the previous week. Continued weeks claimed totaled 15,827, which was an increase of 91 claimants from the previous week but an increase of 36

percent from the 11,615 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 (2,157), professional, scientific, and technical services (2,090), construction (1,509), manufacturing (1,342), and health care and social assistance (1,284). 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.

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Substance abuse among older adults can be a hidden epidemic in farming communities

Agricultural life presents unique pressures that may result in silent suffering among older farmers. Stigmas surrounding behavioral health and a lack of access to resources can exacerbate substance abuse issues, including high-risk drinking.

A recent AgriSafe webinar called "Navigating Rural Realities: Addressing Substance Use and Aging in Agricultural Communities" explored how the intersection of substance use and aging poses complex problems.

Tina Christine Chasek, Ph.D., professor at the University of Nebraska Omaha, said a farmer's tie to the land goes deep. Genetic and anthropological evidence suggests that agricultural production has an inherited basis encoded into our genetic material—a construct known as the "agrarian imperative."

Farming is "generationally important to the identity of the family," she said. "But when something goes wrong, it creates a lot of stress and tension, and (it's) a hit to your mental wellness."

Agricultural producers face many unique chal-

lenges—government commodity prices and policies, extreme weather events, animal and crop diseases, financial insecurity, chronic injuries, hard physical labor and long hours.

Farm women experience similar pressures, Chasek said, plus caregiving and holding multiple roles, often working third shifts at home or on the farm. They may experience a lack of recognition for those contributions.

In addressing high-risk drinking among older adults, Chasek noted an unrecognized form of ageism may be at play.

"Let older folks do their thing," she said is a common attitude. "They're older, you can't change people now, so let's not look at it."

But according to the National Institute of Drug Abuse, up to 65% of people 65 or older report high-risk drinking, defined for that age group as exceeding seven standard drinks a week for men and five standard drinks for women.

An older adult processes alcohol differently, Chasek

added, because of the body's water content or ability to metabolize substances. Grief and loss compounds with age and is a contributing social factor to high-risk drinking.

"There is a lot of shame and stigma around behavioral health in general and especially substance abuse," she said.

Data shows a higher rate of substance use disorders in rural areas, coinciding with a shortage of behavioral health providers.

"Close friends and family are the most likely to notice when an older loved one is turning to alcohol or other substances to cope with stress," said Matt Nuckols, coordinator of the Virginia Farm Bureau Safety Program. "It's important they make sure their loved ones are regularly seeing a primary physician to help monitor abuse issues."

Other resources also are available, like the AgriStress Helpline at 833-897-2474 or agrisafe.org/agri-stress-helpline. Visit bit.ly/436cV8W to view the AgriSafe webinar.

Patrick business among those participating in Fast Track 2024



Lisa Martin (left) and Carol Wood (right) manned the Blue Ridge Therapy and Landmark Center booth at Fast Track 2024, held March 5 and 6 in Martinsville. Now in its 28th year, the Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce's Fast Track is a premier trade show designed to connect the local community with businesses, organizations, and services. (Photo by Jessica Dillon)

Let's Go Adventures series to offer new educational experiences

Virginia State Parks is offering a new series of programs to help visitors experience a diverse range of outdoor activities under the guidance of experienced rangers.

Let's Go Adventures kicks off this month and features Let's Go Camping, Let's Go Kayaking, Let's Go Hiking, Let's Go Fly Fishing, Let's Go Orienteering and Let's Go on an Archery Adventure.

These programs are designed to help break down barriers for first-time participants and give them

the skills and confidence needed to recreate at Virginia State Parks.

Not only will participants learn the basics of each activity, including selecting the proper equipment and how to use it, but they will also learn about Leave No Trace Principles, park etiquette and safety guidelines.

"We're excited to provide a platform for people to step outside their comfort zones, connect with nature and create lasting memories," said Sammy

Zambon, visitor experience specialist. "Our goal is to empower individuals to embrace adventure and explore the wonders of Virginia's great outdoors."

The Let's Go Adventures programs will be held year-round, allowing participants to explore different parks and landscapes across Virginia.

Advance registration is required for archery, fly fishing and kayaking. Depending on the program, there may be an age requirement or registration limit. Except for Let's Go Kayaking, which costs \$15 per person, the programs are free to attend; however, regular park admission fees apply.

To learn more and find an upcoming Let's Go Adventures program, go to virginiastateparks.gov/lets-go-adventures.



Lt. Kirk Hensley, of the McDowell County Sheriff's Office, will be teaching three training courses in April at Surry Community College's Yadkin Center. Hensley is a Retired Master Trooper of the North Carolina State Highway Patrol who has presented to various local, state and federal agencies across the United States and internationally. He has authored three books on the subject of officer protection. To register, go to surry.edu/law.

Law Enforcement Training Series set for April

Surry Community College will be hosting three training classes taught by Lt. Kirk Hensley of the McDowell County Sheriff's Office in April. Hensley is a Retired Master Trooper of the North Carolina State Highway Patrol who has presented to various local, state and federal agencies across the United States and internationally. He has authored three books in the subject of officer protection.

The first class is strictly for law enforcement personnel, and the other two classes are open to all first responders.

The first class, **Surviving the First Three Seconds**, will be taught on April 15, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Surry Community College's Yadkin Center. The course, designed by Lt. Hensley, equips officers with a five-step approach to gain the upper hand. Students will learn to read body language, identify armed suspects through clothing cues, interpret verbal threats, sharpen street-level interviewing, and detect lies. By mastering these techniques, officers can enhance safety and assess threats more rapidly. The training is designed to help officers at all stages in their career survive encounters with potential threats using methods validated by Duke University researchers.

The next class on **Professional Communication** will be taught on

April 16, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Surry Community College's Yadkin Center. This class improves the communication skills of officers while they interact with citizens. It is a course that provides a roadmap to better communication with people who are trying to make decisions while under duress. It also teaches impactful strategies for how to have effective and professional dialogue with a focus on respect, dignity and safety for all those involved. This course incorporates the psychology of human decision-making. Strategies based in this framework emphasize problem-solving and de-escalation.

The final class covers **Human Behavior Analysis**, and it will be taught on April 17, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Surry Community College's Yadkin Center. This class provides the street officer with tools to detect criminal behavior and to enforce the law more effectively through increased understanding of the cognitive processes related to pattern detection, human behavior baselining, and environment analysis. The student is taught to use a systematic method of environmental observation to better identify deviations in behavior while recognizing threats both to the officer and the public.

For more information about the training classes, contact Barry VanHoy at vanhoyb@surry.edu. To register, go to surry.edu/law.

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Citizen Science Program needs your help observing the weather

Do you ever wonder how much rainfall you received from a recent thunderstorm? How about snowfall during a winter storm? An important volunteer weather observing program needs your help. The Community Collaborative Rain, Hail, and Snow network, or CoCoRaHS, is looking for new volunteers. The grassroots effort is part of a growing national network of home-based and amateur rain spotters with a goal of providing a high density precipitation network that will supplement existing observations.

CoCoRaHS came about as a result of a devastating flash flood that hit Fort Collins, Colorado, in July 1997. A local severe thunderstorm dumped over a foot of rain in several hours while other portions of the city had only modest rainfall. The ensuing flood caught many by surprise and caused \$200 million in damage.

CoCoRaHS was born in 1998 with the intent of doing a better job of mapping and reporting intense storms. As more volunteers participated, rain, hail, and snow maps were produced for every storm showing fascinating local patterns that were of great interest to scientists and the public. Recently, drought reporting has also become an important observation within the CoCoRaHS program across the nation. In fact, drought observations from CoCoRaHS are now being included in the National Integrated Drought Information System.


By 2010, the CoCoRaHS network had reached all 50 states with nearly ten thousand observations reported each day. Through CoCoRaHS, thousands of volun-

teers, young and old, document the size, intensity, duration and patterns of rain, hail, and snow by taking simple measurements in their own backyards.



Volunteers may obtain an official rain gauge through the CoCoRaHS website, www.cocorahs.org, for about \$33, plus shipping and handling. Besides the need for an official 4 inch plastic rain gauge, volunteers are required to take a simple training module online and use the CoCoRaHS website or app to submit their reports. Observations are immediately available on maps and reports for the public to view. The process takes less than five minutes a day, but the impact to the community is tenfold: By providing high quality, accurate measurements, the observers are able to supplement existing networks and provide useful results to scientists, resource managers, decision makers and other users.

"An additional benefit of the program to the National Weather Service is the ability to receive timely reports of significant weather (hail, intense rainfall, localized flooding) from CoCoRaHS observers that can assist forecasters in issuing and verifying warnings for severe thunderstorms," said Anita Silverman, CoCoRaHS State Co-coordinator and meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Blacksburg, VA.

How does one become a CoCoRaHS observer? Go to the CoCoRaHS website and click on the "Join CoCoRaHS" emblem on the upper right side of the main website. After registering, take the simple online training, order your 4 inch rain gauge and start reporting.




Free CoCoRaHS Observer Mobile App available at:


Measure precipitation in your own backyard with CoCoRaHS!

The Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network (CoCoRaHS) needs you! Everyone can participate, young, old, and in-between. The only requirements are an enthusiasm for watching and reporting weather. It only takes a few minutes a day and gives you the chance to participate in real hands-on science. You'll be amazed at what you learn as you become more aware of the variable weather that impacts you, your neighbors, your state and our entire country.

Join CoCoRaHS Today!

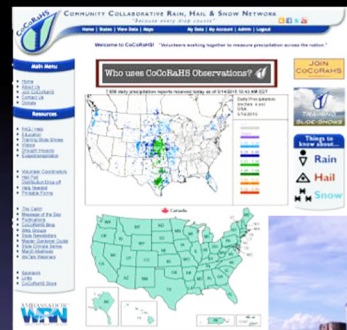
Funding for CoCoRaHS provided by:




"We are in need of new observers across the entire region. We would like to emphasize rural locations and areas of higher terrain" added Silverman.

CoCoRaHS can also be reached on Facebook, X (Twitter), and YouTube.

Help observe precipitation in your community !!



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States push to change voting laws ahead of 2024 election

Virginia votes to rejoin voter roll program, amid nationwide changes to voting laws and questions of election integrity.

By **Emmaline Luetkemeyer and Emily Richardson**

With contributions from Allie Hagggar, Claire Grunewald, Brody Foster, Morgan Severson and Amelia Kimball

State lawmakers around the U.S. concerned about the integrity of elections ahead of the 2024 presidential vote have proposed and enacted an unprecedented number of laws to restrict — and, in some cases, expand — voting rights and ballot access.

In Virginia, lawmakers recently voted to rejoin a national membership organization that helps maintain voter rolls.

The nonpartisan Election Registration Information Center, or ERIC, ensures up-to-date voter rolls and helps voters register when they move, according to Sen. Schuyler VanValkenburg, D-Henrico. Virginia was a founding member of ERIC in 2012 under the direction of former Republican Gov. Bob McDonnell.

Virginia withdrew from ERIC in May 2023, citing other states departing and “increasing concerns regarding stewardship, maintenance, privacy and confidentiality of voter information,” among other reasons, according to a letter from the commissioner of the Virginia Department of Elections. Nine states had left ERIC by October 2023, according to VanValkenburg.

VanValkenburg introduced Senate Bill 606 to require state membership in ERIC and a budget amendment to cover membership fees. Democrats narrowly pushed the proposal past both chambers, where they hold a slim majority. The problem could be the governor’s pen, because Virginia Democrats do not have the two-thirds majority to overturn a veto. The bill has a governor’s action deadline of March 8.

At present, 24 states and the District of Columbia are ERIC members. There was a recent exodus of Republican-led member states fueled by “right-wing misinformation,” according to VanValkenburg.

Virginia attempted to reform the organization’s bylaws before leaving, according to Gov. Glenn Youngkin’s spokesperson Christian Martinez. Virginia signed agreements with six nearby states last September to share data and “securely compare voter lists and identify potential voter fraud.”

“Virginia decided to diversify its list maintenance efforts, successfully sought direct access to state and federal data sources and increased the number of states from where we receive data,” Martinez stated.

Virginia Democrats see rejoining ERIC as the superior option, despite data-sharing agreements with the nearby states. Virginia should not have left ERIC in the first place, because it was an agreement that worked, VanValkenburg said.

“You can look at a number of comments from election officials across the country, including election officials in states that left ERIC, that show that there’s really no replacement,” VanValkenburg said.

The governor will review any legislation that comes to his desk, his spokesperson responded when asked

about a potential veto.

Election law became a partisan issue as a result of misinformation former President Donald Trump and other election deniers spread about ERIC and election administration, VanValkenburg said.

“I think ERIC got caught up in the big lie of the 2020 election, and unfortunately that’s filtered its way down to the votes on rejoining,” VanValkenburg said.

It is important for the legislature to prioritize voter access and secure elections, VanValkenburg said.

Under a Democratic governor and legislature in 2020, Virginia lawmakers reformed election laws to expand voting access. Measures included a 45-day early voting period, permanent absentee voter list, recognition of Election Day as a state holiday and same-day voter registration.

Republican efforts to overturn some of these bills have been thwarted.

Voters could face new requirements in 2024

In the shadow of the 2020 presidential election, states enacted more “restrictive” and “expansive” laws related to voting in 2021 and 2023 individually than in any other years in the last decade, according to the Brennan Center for Justice. Because of this, voters in 27 states will face new requirements that weren’t in place when they voted in 2020.

From outlawing guns in polling places to proposing “mugshot bills,” states across the country continue to consider new legislation that modifies the voting process, and imposes new regulations on ballot counting, absentee and early voting, polling places and election workers.

“Generally among legislators at the state and national level, concerns about voter fraud have become more pronounced,” said David Kimball, a political science professor at University of Missouri-St. Louis.

Kimball said this sort of legislation has increased since the 2020 election, after Trump made unfounded accusations that electronic voting equipment was making mistakes.

For example, at least 13 bills to regulate or ban electronic ballot tabulators were introduced in eight states this year, including Arizona, Indiana, Kentucky, New Hampshire and West Virginia, according to Voting Rights Lab data.

Pending legislation in Missouri proposes that all ballots should be cast on paper and hand counted. The bill outlaws the use of automatic tabulating equipment and voting machines, except those needed for accessibility purposes. More than 90% of U.S. election jurisdictions use ballot tabulators, according to the nonprofit Bipartisan Policy Center.

Ballot-counting scanners are widely used in states like Missouri even though people still vote on paper ballots, Kimball said. Counties will hand-count a random sample of ballots to ensure it matches up with the machines.

“It’s not like they’re relying entirely on the scanners,” Kimball said. “In big, big counties with hundreds of thousands of voters and ballots counted by hand, it’s going to take time and can be very frustrating and prone to errors.”

No excuses and ballot drop-off
How advanced voting and absentee

ballots are handled is a hot-button topic.

Mail-in, advanced and absentee voting are under scrutiny in many states, including Florida, Kansas, and Missouri and Virginia.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, 28 states offer “no-excuse” absentee voting, where voters can request and cast an absentee or mail ballot with no excuse or reason necessary.

Florida allows “no excuse” absentee voting, but Sen. Blaise Ingoglia, R-Spring Hill, tried to change that. Ingoglia proposed SB 1752, which would allow voters to cast mail ballots only if they couldn’t vote in person because they were out of town during an election, hospitalized or in jail. A similar measure was introduced in Virginia, but also failed to advance.

Ballot drop-off in several states is subject to change, too.

One Kansas bill, nicknamed the “mugshot bill,” sparked controversy during its February hearing. HB 2572 mandates personal delivery of a ballot and requires individuals to have their pictures taken and their information recorded when delivering advance voting ballots on behalf of others.

In Florida, the Republican-led State Affairs Committee proposed a bill that would limit the number of ballot drop-off locations during early voting periods across the state.

Florida’s Republican-controlled legislature and Gov. Ron DeSantis previously banned official ballot drop-off boxes that aren’t physically guarded at all times when they’re available, which made it more expensive for county election administrators and reduced the number of drop-off locations.

Separately, Florida Republicans required voters to request a new ballot before every election. Before the change, a voter could receive a mail ballot by making a single request every four years. Far more Democrats in Florida cast ballots by mail and during early voting periods, while Republicans tend to show up on Election Day.

A new polling place atmosphere

Polling places and election workers around the country are facing new rules, too.

New Mexico’s Senate recently passed a bill, SB 5, that makes bringing a loaded or unloaded gun within 100 feet of a polling place’s door while voting takes place a misdemeanor.

SB 5 specifies that law enforcement and concealed carry permit holders are two exceptions. Some conservatives and rural Democrats opposed the bill, and it passed the state House by a single vote.

New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham has until March 6 to sign the bill, which she is expected to do.

The Virginia General Assembly recently passed a similar measure proposed by Del. Irene Shin, D-Fairfax. The bill passed both chambers on party-line votes, but still faces a Republican governor.

In Missouri, SB 926 would expand the regulation of exit polling, sampling and electioneering to apply not only to polling places on Election Day, but during the absentee voting period as well.

The bill would also create the offense of “tampering with an election official,” which includes harassing, intimidating or deceiving an election official or their family members. Committing the offense could result in imprisonment and a \$2,500 to \$10,000 fine.

“On the safety side, this is something I think has become an increasing concern since 2020: threats to election workers,” Kimball said, adding, “that’s spurred, I think, some legislators to propose measures to increase safety.”

Following false claims that the 2020 presidential election was stolen, counties across the U.S. experienced a surge in threats directed towards election workers, according to multiple reports and studies. This increase in threats led to an exodus of election personnel.

To alleviate staffing gaps at polling stations, Kansas considered a bill to broaden the pool of eligible poll workers. Kansas HB 2616 would expand eligibility to include active military members, their spouses or dependents and full-time college students regardless of residency or registered voter status.

“The best way to improve voter con-



“I voted early!” sticker shown outside of early voting polls. Photo by Kaiana Lee.

“When you actually see how the process works and all the safeguards that are in place, it really does make you think there is no way to corrupt this. The more people we can get to participate the better.”

Changing access to the polls

At least 240 bills that would change early voting availability in 41 states were introduced, and some enacted, since January 2023, according to Voting Rights Lab data.

For example, as a response to the poll worker staffing shortage, Kansas HB 2512 would mandate at least four hours of early voting on the Saturday before the election starting this year and then take away the Monday in-person early voting period starting in 2025.

Texas HB 1217, which went into effect Sept. 1, aims to standardize voting hours for rural and urban communities by requiring all counties to offer extended early voting hours.

According to an analysis of the bill, inconsistent voting times between counties meant residents in rural counties had “less time to vote than if they lived in a metropolitan area.” Polling locations in most metropolitan areas already operated under extended early voting hours.

Additionally, Texans from rural parts of the state can expect to see more polling locations with longer hours this election cycle.

Nearly 90 counties, most of them rural, are a part of the state’s Countywide Polling Place Program, which allows residents from any precinct in the county to vote at any location. The program, which counties voluntarily opted into, allows counties to combine smaller precincts and consolidate voting locations since residents could vote throughout the county.

But under Texas SB 924, which also went into effect Sept. 1, combined precincts in counties participating in the program cannot contain more than 10,000 voters, making them need more polling locations to comply with the law.

Votebeat, a nonprofit news organization, reported that some smaller Texas counties will have to double their polling locations to comply with the new law, while bigger counties that already offer a large number of voting locations may not need to add any.

Kimball, the political science professor, said that while the overall increase in the volume of proposed legislation is a reaction to fears related to the voting process, needed improvements can still result.

“In general, there are very miniscule rates of voter fraud in the United States ... So at least in terms of combating fraud, there aren’t any major problems there that need to be corrected...” Kimball said. “But there are always ideas for making registration procedures more efficient and maybe a little more accessible to people who face challenges.”

Richardson, digital editor with the Virginia Commonwealth University Capital News Service, reported from Richmond, Virginia. Luetkemeyer, assistant city editor at the Columbia Missourian at the University of Missouri, reported from Columbia, Missouri. Reporters Allie Hagggar at the University of Kansas, Brody Foster at the University of New Mexico News Port, and Morgan Severson and Amelia Kimball at the University of Texas at Austin also contributed to this reporting.

This collaboration is a project of the Center for Community News to elevate high-impact, university-led state-house reporting.

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