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

Arson suspected in gazebo fire



By Staff Reports

The Patrick County Sheriff's Office is investigating a suspected arson case at DeHart Park in Stuart.

The gazebo in the Hospice Memorial Garden of DeHart Park was destroyed in the blaze that Sheriff Dan Smith estimated occurred between Sunday night and Monday morning.

"We would ask anybody in the local town that was driving by the park" that night "if they saw anything that's pertinent to give the sheriff's office a call," said Travis Murphy, director of the county's Parks and Recreation Department.

Murphy said authorities came to the park around 9:30 a.m. on Monday, April 8 to start investigating the incident.

"Where the gazebo's located, it's kind of tucked

away in the park, it was kind of hard to see. Based on the limited information I had, it should have been pretty visible from the road when it was on fire," he said.

Volunteers spent numerous hours trying to maintain the area and the gazebo, Murphy said.

"One way or another, as soon as we can, we're going to get it cleaned up and repaired and replaced, and that area will look brand new. We're going to make sure we put something back in there because it was just a valuable piece of land in an area that's really important," he said.

Murphy noted that hundreds of people's names are imprinted on the bricks of the walking path that leads to the Memorial Garden. Many visitors go to the park throughout the year just to see the names.

"A lot of the community members were walking just yesterday afternoon and walked over there when the sun was out Sunday afternoon," Murphy said. "Now, it's gone."

Setting the gazebo on fire was a selfish act, Murphy said.

"It's just one of those things that they need to think before they do," he said of the perpetrator or perpetrators.

An arson investigator with the Virginia State Police is assisting in the investigation, according to Smith, who is asking anyone with information about the incident to call him at (276) 692-7012 or Investigator Oscar Tejada at (276) 222-0460.

A reward is being offered for information leading to the arrest of those responsible.

(Photos by Pat Delaney)

Delegates oppose proposed rate hike

By Taylor Boyd

The state delegation stands firm against Appalachian Power's (also referred to as AEP) proposed rate hike after several previous rate increases were approved.

Dels. Wren Williams and Eric Phillips were among those signing an April 2 letter to State Corporation Commission (SCC) Commissioner Jehmal T. Hudson, to express opposition to AEP's recently filed request to increase revenues by \$95 million, or 5.1 percent.

"As the regulating entity responsible for approving electric rate increase in the Commonwealth, we write to express great concern on behalf of our constituents who have been hit with significant rate increases – and now face the prospect of another if this case is approved later this year," the letter states.

The letter, which was headed by Del. Terry G. Kilgore, R-Gate City, compared other utilities both in and outside of Virginia, and concluded that AEP customers already pay higher rates for electricity.

"Between July 1, 2007 and July 1, 2023, the average customer's bill increased more than 136 percent. As a result, too many of our



Del. Eric Phillips and Del. Wren Williams are pictured.

constituents have to make difficult choices between food, medicine, and heating or cooling their homes," the letter stated. "While we recognize that certain unique conditions exist throughout Appalachian Power's service territory and the cost of doing business continues to rise, we implore the SCC to consider the totality of the impact of recent and proposed increases on ratepayers."

(See Delegates p.3)

Abandoned home could be moved in three months

By Taylor Boyd

Nearly a year after an abandoned mobile home was left near the Virginia 8/103 intersection, it may be moved within three months.

Lisa Price-Hughes, resident engineer with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) said the removal process has been challenging because an asbestos inspection had to be done.

"Then we had to have an asbestos abatement, get a quote for that because that's got to get removed before the trailer can be demo-ed, and the person that does that has to have certain qualifications," she said.

Price-Hughes believes VDOT has found a person who meets those qualifications for the demolition.

While she does not have a set date as to when the demolition will take place, she thinks it will occur within the next three months.

Sondra Miller, who owns the property, said the home is costing her money.

"It's in my right of way. I was planning on opening up an Airbnb that would use that right of way to access the property, but I can't get back there to do anything that I

need to do," she said.

Miller said she would not feel comfortable with guests going by "a pig hole" on their way to the Airbnb.

"If I was going to an Airbnb and I turned in to go to the driveway and that's what was sitting there, I would turn around and leave," she said, adding that she can't do what she needs to do on the property "because somebody dumped that on the side of the road like that."

And that is costing her family money.

The home wrecked while it was being towed from Virginia 8 onto Virginia 103 in June 2023. The owner "was not transferring it correctly or using the proper equipment, and when they went to turn onto 103, the trailer fell into the side of the hill there," Miller said. "The police made him move it, and he came and moved it to where it sits. I guess just to get it out of the way, you know, out of the immediate road."

The current location is listed online as 6115 Dry Pond Highway, Stuart.

Miller said before the owner of the home could move it, he died.

(See Abandoned Home p. 3)



Solar eclipse through the clouds

A total solar eclipse was visible locally during breaks in the clouds on Monday, April 8. A solar eclipse occurs when the sun, the moon, and Earth line up, either fully or partially. During the eclipse, the

moon passes between the sun and Earth, casting a shadow on the plane that either fully or partially blocks the sun's light in certain areas, according to NASA. (Photos by Jamie Hall)

Smith discusses election bid

By Taylor Boyd

Senate candidate Chuck Smith attended the March 21 Patrick County Republican Committee meeting.

Smith, of Virginia Beach, who hopes to face incumbent Sen. Tim Kaine in the November election, said the Republican Party is facing critical mass.

"It's no longer the games that candidates like to play. It's no longer the games that the workers of the campaigns like to play. We got to get this one right," he said.

Smith believes this election is about four things: courage, integrity, loyalty, and experience.

"Our guys, our Republicans, have to have courage. We got to stop being weak in the knees," Smith said, adding that Republicans also must have the integrity to do what they say, and never side with the Democrats on critical issues that affect the foundation of the Republican Party.

"Loyalty to the Republican Party. We have no loyalty to the Democratic Party, we have no loyalty to the independents," he said, adding an experienced candidate also must run in the election.

He joined the United States Marine Corps in 1970 during the height of the Vietnam War.

"One out of three soldiers were coming home in body bags. A lot of our guys were coming home



Senate candidate Chuck Smith attended the March 21 Patrick County Republican Committee meeting.

in body bags, a terrible time," he said. "Some young people tell stories about courage and the candidates you work for. Let's not get it confused, courage is courage."

Smith said he is the only Marine - a retired Navy JAG Commander with 26 years of combined service – among the nine people in the race to face Kaine.

"There's only one person who's the former chairman of the largest Republican Party sit-

(See Election Bid p. 3)

Backing Small Business Grant Available for small businesses



tural significance. This year, eligible small business owners can apply for \$10,000 grants for projects that grow or improve their businesses by building community, supporting their economic viability, or bolstering meaningful change.

If you are in need of assistance in applying, please reach out to the Chamber.

Visit <https://mainstreet.org/about/partner-collaborations/backing-small-businesses> for more information.

In partnership with American Express, the Backing Small Businesses grant program supports economically vulnerable and under-resourced small businesses with community reach and/or cul-

Tennis Courts unveiled at PCHS



Patrick County High School (PCHS) is sporting beautiful new tennis courts, painted in the classic Cougar colors of green and gold. (By Pat Delaney)



Both the boys and girls tennis teams will now host visiting teams on new courts.



Tourism Talks

Hello Patrick, The trees are budding, the daffodils are showing strength, and my allergies are in full swing. The beauty of spring is rolling through our community, and you can feel the excitement in the air. This is the time of the year that you should put a little "spring in your step," as the older folks would say.

Speaking of steps, Tourism applied for a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission, and we were chosen to be a part of the Appalachian Gateway Community Initiative. We have a team of eight members that will head down to Decatur, Alabama, for a three-day workshop of intense training in community development focusing on Tourism. During the three-day workshop, participating teams will hear from national and regional experts, exchange ideas with other teams, and ultimately develop action plans for their communities. Before, during, and after the workshop, teams will receive targeted technical assistance, community tourism assessments, small grants for project implementation, and more. Our team members are Rebecca Adcock (Director of PC Chamber of Commerce), Sissily Harrell (Architect), Wayne Kirkpatrick (Dan River Basin Association Member), Lora Mahaffey (President of Bull Mountain Arts), Travis Murphy

(Director of PC Parks & Rec), Bryce Simmons (Stuart Town Manager), Sarah Wray (Reynolds Homestead Community Engagement, Partnership & Program Coordinator) and James Houchins (Director of PC Tourism).

Patrick, we are one of Appalachia's gateway communities, towns bordering on publicly owned lands, like national and state parks and forests. We want to promote and preserve our spaces. Promoting nature and culture is critical to economic growth, especially for areas experiencing economic distress and transition. Too much use impacts the preservation needed to maintain trails, waterways, crafting traditions, and more for future generations. This workshop will help us develop thoughtful strategies to grow our economy and protect our natural treasures. Patrick, we will represent you well. Keep the team in your thoughts and prayers as we head to Alabama the week of April 15th. You can learn more at: <https://www.arc.gov/investment/appalachian-gateway-communities-initiative-providing-tools-for-tourism/>.

We will let the other teams know they should come and get lost and find themselves in Patrick County. Talk to you soon, love you!

James Houchins,
Director of Tourism
jhouchins@co.patrick.va.us

Economic Summit for large businesses hailed as a success, Summit for small businesses set for April 29

The Patrick County Economic Summit was held on February 28, hosted by the Patrick County Chamber of Commerce and Reynolds Homestead. The Virginia Tech Center for Economic and Community Engagement was contracted to provide facilitation and surveying to gain a better understanding of local business needs and challenges. This event hosted businesses with 25 or more employees. Pre and post workshop surveys were completed by attendees.

Pre-survey results were received from eleven companies representing a wide variety of industry and business in the county. Businesses included tourism, manufacturing, machining, fuel services, wholesale, construction, senior care and education. Many of our companies have been in business for several decades, with two identifying as serving the community for nearly a century. When asked to describe the local business community, many respondents mentioned the difficulties that come with operating a smaller localized business. Pre-survey results indicated that businesses found childcare options and finding new hires as "Very Challenging" while employee health and wellness and soft skill training were "Slightly Challenging."

Respondents were also asked to identify business-related infrastructure challenges in the areas of utilities (water and sewer), broadband/internet, and the transportation of goods. Broadband/internet was identified as "Very Challenging" decreasing to "Slightly Challenging"

for transportation of goods. Businesses were also asked to rank business support services such as: meeting technology needs (cybersecurity, networking, etc.), access to financing and capital, access to services assisting with markets and profitability, and finding quality legal, marketing and financial services. A quarter of the respondents indicated that meeting technology needs and access to services assisting with markets and profitability were "Very Challenging," while most of the other business challenges were "Neutral" for the majority of the businesses.

During the workshop, attendees were split into seven different groups to discuss what is currently working well, pressing needs, and possible opportunities within their businesses and the county as a whole. Successes that were highlighted were appreciation for staff and new hires, positive relationships and partnerships with other businesses and clients, and a strong sense of community and support systems. Needs that were expressed were: hiring and retaining staff, lack of services including transportation, childcare and affordable housing, difficulty in affording increasing wages and lack of funding, and shortage of occupations including physicians, teachers, and HVAC technicians. With opportunities identified for development of incentives and highlighting factors to attract new young talent to the area such as tourism, art and music, restaurants and downtown revitalization, along with development of anchor institutions like healthcare facilities to serve both current needs and create new job opportunities.

The post summit survey asked attendees to list the county's top strengths and weaknesses. Weaknesses highlighted are the aging workforce, healthcare, housing and rising costs. Strengths identified are leadership, lower cost of living, dedicated employees and educational programs.

In summary, the weaknesses that were highlighted are the same on a national level, but are felt more pronounced in smaller rural areas like Patrick County. Finding unique ways to better leverage our current resources and strengths can be used to combat some of the weaknesses. Utilizing our strength of the school system and programs offered through Patrick & Henry Community College can help address the challenge of finding qualified employees while keeping younger individuals in the area due to lower cost of living to fill in with our aging workforce. Thus, exacerbating the weaknesses of childcare options and low housing stock.

The last time such an event was held was in 2016 with a Town Hall meeting led by the Patrick County Education Foundation and P&HCC. While childcare and the need for professional services and healthcare were not top weaknesses for people in 2016, other weaknesses have been met and addressed with the following. The biggest investment would be

Patrick & Henry Community College's Baliles and Reynolds Learning Center in Stuart created in partnership with the Patrick County Education Foundation. This facility is training the next generation of machine operators and offers space for current employers to receive specialized training.

We currently have a joint welding program at the high school with students and is open to the public in the evenings. Several soft skill and skill development programs are or have been offered by the following: P&HCC Verizon camp, Reynolds Homestead Science based camps and Young Women Trailblazers, career expo, and the college fair at PCHS.

Entrepreneurial and business start-up programs have been offered by the chamber with their PC Business Builders bootcamp classes. The Reynolds Homestead has offered the Evolve program. Both of these programs have had successes in assisting new businesses in the county. The county is still pursuing funding to create the Small Business Development Center in Stuart. P&HCC offers a Fabrication Lab at their Stuart location to assist in 3D printing, laser cutting and CNC router projects.

The 2024 summit was a great starting point for so many paths the county leadership can take to help address these weaknesses. Providing this space for local businesses to network and discuss their challenges but also celebrate their successes is an important part of the process. The next step the chamber is taking will be to assist Reynolds Homestead as they spearhead the Work-Based Learning program for businesses and community partners to learn the multiple ways available to connect high school students with local businesses through job shadowing, internships, externships, and apprenticeships. We need to help our youth to see and understand all the opportunities that do exist in our county, while also encouraging them to create their own entrepreneurial path to fill in what is lacking.

The chamber, working with our county and town governments, also will be looking at future programming and projects that will help alleviate some of the challenges our businesses have. The chamber, along with Reynolds Homestead, are planning to offer a similar economic summit for our smaller businesses in the county. The Road Map to work based learning event will be held April 29 at the community room at P&HCC's Stuart Site. This event will be free to attend but registration is encouraged.

The Chamber of Commerce and Reynolds Homestead would also like to thank Patrick County Economic Development Authority for their sponsorship of the Economic Summit, Food Country USA for food and water donation, Circle K Stuart for morning refreshments and the Patrick County High School Culinary Arts for providing the box lunches.

To read the full report, please visit the chamber's website at www.patrickchamber.com.

Pets of the Week



This handsome guy loves lots of fun and chasing a tennis ball is one of his favorite pastimes. He is a sweetheart and needs his chance at the good life.

This chunky fella was so ready for a new home he had to be held to be still enough to have his picture taken. He has a laid back personality and is a sweetie.

Visit the Patrick County Public Animal Shelter (PCPAS) Facebook page to view available pets or call (276) 694-6259 for more information. Adoption fees are \$10 and include spay/neuter and a rabies vaccination.

Delegates

(cont. from page 1)

Williams, R-Stuart, said the letter is intended to advocate for constituents - AEP rate payers.

"We have seen rate increase after rate increase after rate increase, and it's very frustrating because the majority of it is added costs based on regulations and other things passed in the General Assembly over the last couple of years," he said.

Phillips, R-Martinsville, said he signed the letter because he believes energy costs are the number one constituent issue that every delegate is hearing about.

"Just the seemingly ever-increasing rise in the cost of electricity. In 16 years, I don't know of anything that's went up 140 percent besides power," he said.

At some point, Phillips said the rising electricity costs are pricing people out of being able to have "what's become a modern basic necessity."

He added electricity is used for not only heating and cooling homes, but "it's how people cook, it's how they keep their food refrigerated. It's something that we all need and have to have" Phillips said. "We've really got to start looking at ways to rein in that cost."

Williams said AEP had two rate increases last year, with one in December. To help alleviate the proposed increases, he introduced a bill that would have frozen the rates for a year and a half instead of having them hit in December when ratepayers "feel it really hard between Thanksgiving and Christmas when everybody's in the red on their credit cards" and dealing with "the cold winter."

His proposal would have staved off the increase until spring.

"It would have gone around the calendar," Williams said. "We would have skipped great changes in December, and then any rate changes would have started on March 1 of every year. Instead of December 1."

By then, the weather is "pretty nice. It might be warmer during the day, cooler in the evening," Williams said, and that may help cushion the blow.

Williams' proposed bill did not pass the General Assembly.

"Apparently Democrats from Northern Virginia who have zero Appalachian Power ratepayers in their district decided that it might be better if that waited another year," he said, and

Abandoned Home

(cont. from page 1)

"Kind of like right after he abandoned the trailer on the side of the road. That was very unfortunate."

Miller said she's investigated every avenue she could think of to remove the mobile home, including setting it on fire, which "apparently is against the law because of the possibility of there being asbestos and mercury in it because it's so old."

Demolition contractors quoted her \$4,000 or more to demo the home, even though she has the necessary paperwork, including a Vehicle Removal Certificate and an Abandoned Vehicle Record Request Receipt issued by the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to present to a potential demo contractor.

"The DMV says that it has to be done by a licensed demolition contractor. That's why I started a GoFundMe to try to raise the \$4,000-\$5,000 that it would take to pay a demo contractor," she said.

Miller started the fundraiser in December, but quickly took it down and issued refunds to those who had donated.

Election Bid

(cont. from page 1)

ting committee in the Commonwealth of Virginia. There's only one person in this whole race who has practiced law, not just longer than every other person running in this race, but longer than Tim Kaine," he said.

Smith, who was raised in a church by his grandmother, said he believes in America, "the founding fathers, God Almighty, and We the People.

"It's precisely because I believe you can count on me to stand for America, stand for Virginia, and stand by the grace of God, come hell or high water no matter what, stand and endorse Donald J. Trump as the next president of the United States of America and never let him down, so help me God," he said.

Smith stressed he's not a weak, establishment politician. A pro-life, child safety, and school

added that he believes AEP is trying to recoup some of the funds spent on solar projects from ratepayers.

"They're trying to frontload money for projects that they are required by law to do by taking additional fees from ratepayers prematurely," he said, adding electric power companies have effectively been accused of doing this.

"What we did was basically say like, 'you can't keep doing this because it's absolutely unaffordable for our constituents.' You're not going to fund all of your projects on the backs of our ratepayers here in Southwest Virginia," he said.

AEP, which is headquartered in Columbus, OH, seems to be more concerned with that state and some of its more lucrative rate areas, Williams said. That means "we just sort of get the short end of the stick all of the time."

Phillips said there are also other factors in play that aren't AEP's fault as to why they keep increasing prices.

"Like the Virginia Clean Economy Act (VCEA) that our friends on the left passed that requires zero percent carbon emissions for both AEP in 2045 and Dominion (Energy) in 2050," he said.

Phillips said AEP must have its total emissions cut by 80 percent by 2030.

"That's a very aggressive schedule. That's six years from now," he said.

Phillips said the company can't implement all these new technologies for free and there's a cost to having solar farms and wind farms.

"You can go to AEP's own website, and it says they're going to invest \$9.8 billion in renewable energy by 2028. They don't have a choice but to do it because the state has mandated that they become carbon free, in other words, no greenhouse gases at all," he said.

Phillips believes that is an impossible task and will not happen by the allotted deadline.

"Just the scale of what they're being asked to do is just too large. It's too expensive on the rate payers, but the money's got to come from somewhere. When the state mandates, this is what you have to do, and you are a highly regulated industry, they don't have a choice but to do it unless the state wants to fund it through taxes, and or they have to fund it through rates," he said.

Phillips added it's already being funded through taxes and rates. On the other hand,

"There were a couple of tragedies where people were doing GoFundMe for those, and I just did not want to be out there asking for money when there are people who need it for things like accidents or have health concerns," she said.

Around this time, Miller said learned from a VDOT Land Use representative that the agency would take care of the removal.

"He said that it would take a while, and I don't know how long a while is," she said. "I couldn't get any information, any like details about when they plan on having it gone, if they still plan on having it gone, I have no idea."

Miller said she and several others believe it's VDOT's responsibility to remove the disabled mobile home as it also has a right of way on the road.

"Many times, I've seen where they park their vehicles all up and down there when they use it like as a rendezvous place for their big vehicles, and they'll park then up and down that street there," Miller said, and she also believes the road is a utility access point and right of way for

he said because of everything required by the VCEA, AEP probably does need to raise its rates.

"In other words, they're kind of in a rock and a hard place. They're not completely innocent in this, they've been raising their rates for a longtime, but the Clean Economy Act basically calls out two companies: AEP and Dominion because they're the two largest in Virginia and puts them under all these regulations that they have to meet by certain dates or they'll be out of compliance with the law," Phillips said.

Williams said he and the other delegates who signed the letter are currently arguing with the State Corporation Commission, which sets the power rates.

"Appalachian Power actually has to prove why those rates need to be increased. Technically all of the delegates in this area with all of these ratepayers, we just weighed in with the SCC to try to push the SCC to make sure they don't just unilaterally increase the rate," he said.

Williams compared it to a real estate tax increase.

For instance, "it's up to 4 percent or whatever, and people think we're going to raise it to 4 percent. They're asking for a certain amount, but that doesn't mean they'll get it or get that much," he said.

Williams said delegates are pushing to make sure AEP either doesn't get the rate increase or gets the least amount possible "because it's getting absurd with the cost of electricity."

He said there have been "astronomical bills of around \$2,000" in Franklin County for a single building. "We can't get any discount or disparity or anything like that. We tried because we're regionally so much poorer than Kentucky and Ohio. There's only so much money and there's only so much funding, and we're just getting squeezed. It's just frustrating," Williams said.

At this juncture as Republicans are in the minority in the legislature, Phillips said unless "we get our friends on the other side to agree with us" there's very little that can be done "other than make our voices heard, try to represent our constituents in the best way that we can with things like this letter.

"A lot of people think it's just a symbolic thing," Phillips said. "Well, we've got to do something, and this is one of the things we can do."

utility companies.

"I think VDOT has to keep it clear for utility companies."

Miller said she wants VDOT to get rid of the abandoned mobile home so she can use her right of way.

She's also tired of people reaching out to her and thinking it's her responsibility to remove the trailer.

"I get calls constantly and messages from people asking me when that trailer's going to get moved. They think it's mine because it's on my property and they're like, 'you need to move that because it's ugly and we don't want it in our community.' And I'm like, 'I don't have the resources. You know, talk to VDOT,'" she said.

Miller said she hasn't been able to get an update on the trailer's removal status from VDOT, and she doesn't know if there's a timeline for the mobile home to be moved or if there's a process underway.

Miller said she was told VDOT would perform tests for asbestos or other potentially hazardous materials, "but that was back in December."

choice, supporter, Smith also supports the concept of Make America Great Again (MAGA).

"Automatically anti-Democrat and a card-carrying, gun-toting one hundred percent unapologetic supporter of the second amendment to the United States Constitution, our military, and our men and women in blue," he said.

Smith also wants to take care of veterans, rebuild America's infrastructure, and become energy independent. He plans to protect families by fighting "wokeism and cultural Marxism, stopping transgenderism, and fixing schools.

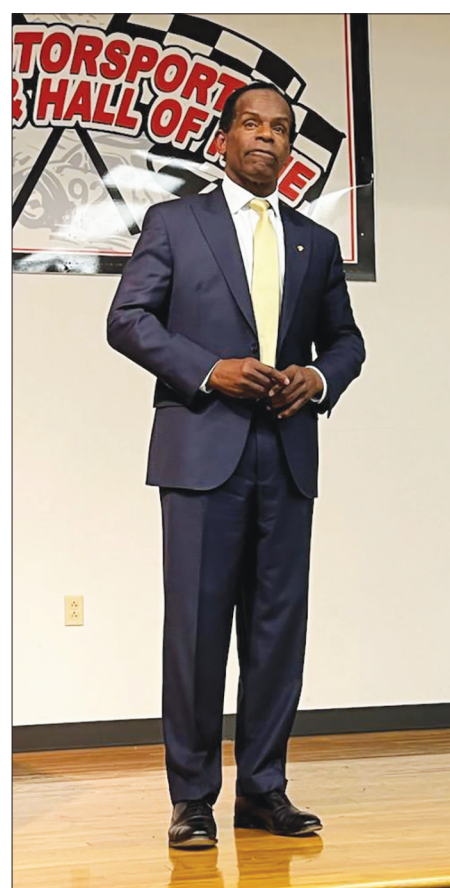
"Unlike the weak establishment Republicans who have constantly failed to win a United States Senate seat in over 20 years, the only way to win back Virginia is for a true, Populist

conservative to mobilize the old dominion voters on issues they're concerned about," he said.

Smith said these include American jobs, secure borders, a strong military, and no more pointless foreign wars.

"Instead of pointless foreign wars, why don't we stop the influx of illegal immigration, fentanyl trafficking, drug trafficking, human trafficking, sex trafficking across our Southern border," he said. "Instead of funding foreign wars, why don't we enshrine election integrity on election day and get rid of absentee balloting and mail-in balloting."

Representatives from the Gwendolyn "Gwen" Hickman and Scott Parkinson campaigns also attended the committee meeting and spoke about their candidates.



THANK YOU FOR READING
THE ENTERPRISE

Government Bureaucrat's Royalties

While I travel throughout Virginia's Ninth Congressional District, one of the opportunities afforded to me is visiting our local schools.

The Ninth District is big, comprised of twenty-eight cities and counties.

It is home to more than sixty high schools.

School visits allow me to talk directly with students and listen to their questions and feedback.

Recent school visits included several in Wise and Buchanan.

One student was interested to hear about the influence of stock ownership on Members of Congress and conflicts of interest.

Shortly after entering Congress, I sold my entire stock portfolio.

As I have often joked, I don't know what my wife did with the \$6,000. The money is gone and so is any conflict.

While this isn't the course of action that every Member needs to take, I decided that the best course of action for me was to sell.

In recent years, Members from both sides of the aisle have faced pressure to sell their stocks or place them in a blind trust.

I would like to see this same pressure applied to government bureaucrats and regulators.

That is why I introduced the Royalty Transparency Act, a bill that requires an officer or employee in the executive branch of the U.S. Government to file financial disclosure reports and report royalty payments that they receive.

This legislation will empower Congressional oversight efforts of the financial disclosure filing system for executive branch employees.

U.S. Senator Rand Paul (R-KY) has introduced a Senate companion bill.

One of the reasons for this bill is that it requires researchers in the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and other agencies to disclose royalties they receive.

An article from Reason Magazine cites that some working at NIH over the last decade earned an estimated \$400 million in royalties from third-party companies for medical treatments and innovations they have helped produce.

However, information pertaining to how much the agency's employees were paid, who they were being paid by, or what they were being paid for has been concealed from the public.

This raises the question whether the agency and/or employees place a greater interest on profiting off of innovative medicines rather than studying and analyzing these treatments for the benefit of American science and patient health.

Last summer, NIH selected Dr. Jeanne Marrazzo to serve as the new director for the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID).

This position had to be filled due



Morgan Griffith

Representative

to the retirement of NIAID's well-known former director, Dr. Anthony Fauci.

Dr. Fauci's career in government spans back to the '60s, when he joined NIAID as a clinical associate in 1968.

Dr. Fauci worked fifty-four years at the agency. In 1984, he became the director of NIAID, serving in that role until his retirement in December of 2022.

A whopping thirty-eight years as head of one of our leading institutions, an institution which gives out thousands of grants! In a recent transcribed interview, Dr. Fauci told us he could not keep track of all the grants and had other people to do that.

Of note, Ecohealth Alliance sub-awarded \$598,500 in NIH grant funds to the Wuhan Institute of Virology during 2014-2019 for bat coronavirus research.

I believe the COVID-19 virus originated from bat research at Wuhan's Institute of Virology.

From 2019-2022, Dr. Fauci made headlines for various things. One of those storylines highlighted his salary, as he earned the title of highest-paid federal government employee. In 2022, he received \$481,000, more than the president of the U.S. who receives \$400,000.

Also Dr. Fauci is set to receive the largest federal retirement package in history, with a reported first-year pension payout of \$414,000.

Additionally, Dr. Fauci and his wife, Dr. Christine Grady, saw their net worth increase from around \$7.6 million in 2019 to \$11.5 million in late 2022.

This net worth increase can be attributed in part to gifts and royalties.

Such gifts and royalties raise eyebrows.

I am not saying he did anything illegal or unethical, but as a public servant, there should be transparency regarding the money you receive directly or indirectly from government service.

I am committed to transparency and bringing potential conflicts of interest of executive branch bureaucrats and regulators to light.

At a time when Americans are losing faith and trust in their institutions, we need more sunlight on why some of our public servants are receiving large amounts of compensation.

I am trying to fix that problem with the Royalty Transparency Act.

Call my offices with questions, concerns, or comments: Abingdon, (276) 525-1405; Christiansburg, (540) 381-5671, or via email at <https://morgangriffith.house.gov/>.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Evil

(Prager U, Todd Starnes, Franklin Graham, Fox, Karthy Hochul, Tate Reeves, Kristi Noem, Paul Chappell, Jonathan Isaac)

I wrote this article on March 31, 2024, and I hope you had a blessed Easter Sunday. May the spirit of renewal and hope that Easter brings uplift your hearts and fill your homes with happiness.

I am sure you have heard that the President declared Easter Sunday as "Transgender Visibility Day." The President also failed to post a proclamation about Good Friday, and they banned children from decorating White House Easter Eggs with religious images.

Just hours after President Bidens declaration Franklin Graham issued a warning: "Millions of Christians across the nation are enraged over the administration's decision to celebrate child mutilation surgeries on the holiest of days for followers of Christ. This once again shows how little respect President Biden and his administration have for God. On the most significant day of the Christian calendar, when the Church around the world celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ who died and shed His blood for the sins of mankind, the Biden administration uses this opportunity to flaunt sin, to glorify sin, and to celebrate sin. Graham warned Americans that our nation was on a slippery moral slope. "The Bible says, '...they proclaim their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it. Woe to them!' (Isaiah 3:9). Judgment is coming. Instead of celebrating sin, we need to confess our sins, repent of our sins, and ask for God's forgiveness."

The Supervisors in Fairfax County,

Virginia, voted unanimously to designate March 31 as a day to celebrate the visibility of men who think they are women and vice versa.

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul ordered 13 state buildings to be lit with transgender colors as a show of support for the LGBTQ movement. It is a stark contrast to 1956 when three Wall Street skyscrapers were illuminated with three giant crosses on Good Friday.

Mississippi Gov. Tate Reeves called Biden's declaration a "shocking and intentional attempt to insult and mock Christians across America."

South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem echoed Tate's sentiments, writing that the Biden White House is making it clear that people of faith "have no place in America."

Dr. Paul Chappell, pastor of Lancaster Baptist Church in California, said. "This declaration from the White House is a mockery to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Orlando Magic star Jonathan Isaac commented on X that "the White House wants you to hate! This helps no one and only promotes division. They know exactly what they are doing. We should be angry but do not lose focus. Because He is risen there is hope for all."

The President has made it clear that people of faith, have no place in his America. The Democrats now worship at the altar of the LGBTQ religion, and they pledge allegiance to the rainbow flag. The declaration represents the very essence of evil and the malevolent power of wickedness.

Pray for our country.

William Salser,
Stuart

A different way to get a hospital for Patrick

It's been pretty much proven. We can't rely on a single state delegate to bring hospital services to Patrick County. It's too big, too complicated, a job.

Instead, go to the primary source of the funding that's needed, the federal government, and coordinate a collection of smaller initiatives to produce a county-wide network of hospital outposts, staffed by nurse practitioners, x-ray technicians and other health care specialists. That network would be connected by technology to each other and to physicians whom the county can't afford to support on its own.

Such a network would also help invigorate the local economy. Not only would the healthcare professionals become part of the county work force, they would need the support of a wider circle of county-based specialists - day-care teachers, restaurateurs and various small businesses.

It's a vision proposed by Karen Baker, candidate for 9th District Representative, a seat now held by Republican Morgan Griffith. Baker is a Democrat. Both are lawyers.

Granted, Baker's vision of a county-wide healthcare network is ambitious. It will take a representative who has the energy, the knowledge and the tenacity to make it happen. Baker has that. She was a federal employee for 30 years, first as a trial lawyer for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, litigating cases against discrimination based on age, disability,

race and sex. From there, she became an administrative law judge for the Social Security Administration. After "retirement," she went back to school and became a registered nurse in 2011, spending that career at a small rural hospital's cardiac and intensive care units. She remains a member of the District of Columbia Bar and has continued pro bono work helping disabled individuals seeking disability benefits.

Despite her previous experience, including decades as a military wife, Becker concedes that learning the ins and outs of the Halls of Congress won't be easy.

In contrast, Griffith should already have those connections. He is now in his eighth consecutive term after being first elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2010. Before that, he operated a private law practice based in Salem for 25 years, then joined the Albo & Oblon law firm in 2008. For most of those years, he was active in the local Republican Party, and was elected to the Virginia House of Delegates in 1994, where he served nine terms.

Baker would come to the job of U.S. Representative for the 9th District well along on the House learning curve, however. She already knows how to negotiate, how to ask for help, how to learn.

And she'll put in the time, she adds, grinning: "I'm not a party girl."

Judy Ferring,
Claudville

Let Go of the Anchor

By Bryan Golden

Imagine you are swimming while holding a heavy anchor which is pulling you under water. What would you do? Of course you would let go of the anchor to keep from drowning. Maintaining your grip on the anchor would lead to certain disaster.

With your survival at stake, you wouldn't hesitate to drop the anchor. Yet, in life there are issues you are hanging onto which are drowning you. Anger, hate, bitterness, resentment, and grudges are all anchors pulling you to the bottom. Trying to change circumstances outside of your control also drags you to the bottom.

The problem is that from a young age you have become accustomed to holding on to anchors. The potential damage is not readily recognized because there doesn't appear to be any immediate threat. Furthermore, there is a tendency to pick up and hold onto additional anchors. Then in response to the weight increasing to un-

manageable levels, you tend to tighten your grip rather than letting go.

There are several reasons for this self-destructive behavior. First of all, you don't realize you are actually carrying an anchor. Instead, you have become conditioned to believing that your feelings are the result of what others are doing to you, not what you are doing to yourself. Since you are not aware of the anchor you're carrying, letting go of it is never even considered an option.

Another reason for not letting go is the false belief that your negative feelings are somehow detrimental to the person you blame. This thinking implies that when you are angry, bitter or upset, the person responsible for your feelings is in some way harmed by your anchor. This logic makes as much sense as believing the weight you are carrying is making someone else tired.

Trying to change someone else is another anchor to let go of. This endeavor

or leads to never ending frustration. A person can change if they want to, but you cannot make them do it. Although you don't have any control over the actions of others, you do have control over your response.

When you persist in attempting to get others to change, your anchor grows in weight, pulling you down deeper and deeper. Your grip tightens as you get even more determined to force changes. This is a doomed scenario which typically tears relationships apart.

Let go of this anchor by recognizing people for who they are. Deal with them on this level. Put your energy into your response to their actions. Just because someone acts doesn't mean you have to react.

Continually being offended and taking things personally is yet another anchor. Becoming upset never improves a situation. True freedom is attained through the realization that it really doesn't matter what other

people think, say, or do.

In order to let go of the anchor, you must be aware of the fact that you are holding onto one. Accomplishing this requires you to constantly monitor your emotional state. Your goal is an awareness of how you are feeling and why.

Understanding this cause and effect relationship enables you to recognize when you are holding onto an anchor. Through this approach, you will find you are holding onto anchors more frequently than you realized. Just let go each time you grab onto an anchor.

You are now in the process of changing a lifelong habit. Don't make any excuses for holding onto the anchor. Never say to yourself "I can't let this go." Letting it go is essential for your mental and physical well-being.

Bryan is the author of "Dare to Live Without Limits." Contact Bryan at Bryan@columnist.com or visit www.DareToLiveWithoutLimits.com Copyright 2024 Bryan Golden

Patrick Pioneers

Patrick County School Teachers of 1949

By Beverly Belcher Woody

This week, I thought it would be fun to take a look at the 1949 list of schools and teachers in Patrick County. I started school in 1971 and several of these dedicated teachers were still working, including Edith Anglin, Hazel Hawks, and Carrie Rangeley.

Miss Vergie Thompson was the elementary school supervisor, Miss Carr Leach was the visiting teacher, and J.V. Law was the division superintendent for Patrick County schools in 1949.

Teachers at the Meadows of Dan school were Curtis F. Prillaman; Dorn O. Spangler; Eloise N. Shelor; Alice T. Thomas; Frances P. Underwood; Evelyn Terry; Kathleen Sowers; Nelson Thomas; Howard Underwood; Fanny B. Anderson; Elizabeth V. Cock; Lucy E. Bowman; Pauline W. Cock; Crystal Cruise; Alice Shelor; and Wilma Egas.

In the first half of the 20th century and earlier, it was common for teachers to board with families in the community they served. Wilma Egas boarded with my great-grandparents, Herman and Nannie Wood Hall, and this grew into a lifelong friendship between them.

Blue Ridge School teachers were C. W. Woodruff; Garland T. Beyerle; Harry A. Epperson; C. W. Spencer; Fred W. Brent; Charles C. Fultz; Lola G. Weatherman; Nannie W. Puckett; Claudine Jarrell; Ala Dean Smith; Aladean Slate; Katie Hiatt; Era Epperson; Ethel Wilson; Grace Pedigo; Agnes King; Mrs. D. C. White; and Alma Clark.

School teachers at Red Bank School were Francis Turner; Ruth C. Merkey; Mamie Collins; Ilene M. Cooke; Mrs. Paul Waller; Frances Taylor; Annice Collins; Virginia B. Mitchell; and Helen W. Anderson.

Hardin Reynolds Memorial School teachers were D. J. Horne; James W. Price; Sallie C. Via; Bill Ehmann; Elizabeth Clark; Mildred



Wilma Egas from Herman and Nannie Hall collection.



Wilma Egas photo from Herman and Nannie Wood Hall collection.

H. Huddle; Mable T. Grogan; N. C. Terry; W. H. Anthony; Mary Ann Patterson; Pearl Brown; Mrs. Ben Cooper; Mamie Zentmeyer; Lila Brady; Eva Sheppard; Frances K. Reynolds; Maude Tudor; and Ione Hagen.

School teachers at Stuart High School were R. P. Via; James E. Tate; A. E. Williams; J. Guy Davis; Priscilla Sherwood; Ethylene Fulcher; Estelle R. Moore; Edward R. Kairis; Gertrude H. Hopkins; Margaret Hazelwood; Mildred H. Hopkins; Elva R. Powell; and Edith B. Anglin.

The teachers at Stuart Elementary School were Mrs. Cora Joyce; Vera B. Newman; Carrie D. Rangeley; Mabel B. Norris; Vera Shelton; Burton M. McCreedy; Mabel Griggs; Mabel Joyce; Audrey Davis; Kathryn Taylor; Martha E. Ross; Hazel Hawks; and Minnie Mae Fain. Teachers at the African American school in Stuart were Clarence Staplefoot and Mattie B. Alexander.

Woolwine teachers were N. P. Stockner; Algie L. Spencer; C. B. Hopkins; Gertrude Weaver; Beulah Thomas; Noel Weaver; James F. Hall; Betty Sue Clements; Beatrice L. Wood; Beatrice Foley; Ovilla Rakes; Pearl Thomas; Orea Rakes; Vergie Ross; Nellie P. Harbour; and Elva Bowling.

Patrick Springs School teachers were James

E. Hodges and Eunice M. Wood, and the Central Academy School teachers were Virginia H. Dobyms and Elsie Gilbert. Mary B. Cummings and Vergie Tuggle taught at the Anthony School and Lucy T. Worley and Eva E. Wood taught at the Lone Ivy School. The Ross School teachers were Ora H. Thomas, Hazel B. Harbour, and Eulalia Martin and the Via School teachers were Alice T. Wright and Annie Foley. Lewis Webb and Laura Small taught at the Indian Knob School.

Heidelbach School teachers were Effie P. Brammer and Ruth Myers; and the following schools only had one teacher! Free Union-Katherine Fain; Brown-Judy Bowman; Wilson-Mary Ella Foley; Pendleton-Earl Woodward; Pine Grove-Mattie T. Young; Big A-Zula Hanby; Mountain View-Frances Terry; Dodson School-Mrs. O. K. Ridinger; Cross Roads-Ethel B. Brim; Red Hollow-Elizabeth Barker; West Liberty-Eva Spencer; Willis Gap-Agnes Doretha France; and Stella School-Edna H. Hagwood.

I hope readers recognized some of their schoolteachers' names and it (hopefully) brought back some good memories! Woody may be reached at rockcastlecreek1@gmail.com or (276) 692-9626.

Social Security Matters

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

Ask Rusty – When Should my Wife Claim Her Social Security Benefit?

Dear Rusty: I just saw an article which said that certain spousal options were going away, but there are still good options for when a spouse can claim. I am filing for my Social Security to start in October when I turn 70. My wife's full retirement age (FRA) is in December, and she now plans to file then for half of what my FRA benefit would have been (our original plan was for both to file in August). My wife's main reason for delaying until her FRA is to lock her into my maximum benefit if she has to someday change to Survivor's Benefit. Will this be gone for us? Neither of us was born before January 1, 1954. Please advise. Signed: Plan-

ning for Both

Dear Planning: I expect that the article you refer to was speaking of the option to claim only a spousal benefit first and allow one's personal SS retirement benefit to grow. That option was available only to those who were born before 1954 and had reached full retirement age. As you now know that option is not available to you.

Assuming your wife's highest benefit entitlement will be as your spouse, your current strategy – you claim your maximum benefit to start in October at age 70 and your wife starts her benefit in December at her FRA – is a good one which will yield the maximum possible monthly benefit for both of you. But for clarity, your wife's survivor benefit as your widow has nothing to do with when she claims her spouse benefits now.

The only thing which will affect your wife's benefit as your surviving spouse is her age when she claims

the survivor benefit. If she has already reached her FRA of 66 years and 8 months when you pass, she will get 100% of the amount you were receiving when you died, instead of the smaller spousal amount she was receiving while you were living. Her survivor benefit would only be less than 100% of yours if she claimed it before reaching her full retirement age (which, of course, we hope would not be the case).

Just so you have the complete picture, your wife could, if desired, claim her Social Security to start at the same time as you in October but, since that would be earlier than her FRA, the amount she would get would be less than 50% of your FRA entitlement. Her spouse benefit would be reduced by 0.694% for each month earlier than her FRA it starts. For example, if your wife starts her spousal benefit in October when your benefit starts, she will get about 98.6% of the amount she would get

if she waited until December to start her benefits. That's a permanent reduction, so if your wife's life expectancy is at least average (about 87), it's likely still wisest for her to wait until her FRA to start benefits. But in any case, when your wife claims her spousal benefit now will have no effect on the survivor benefit she will get as your future widow.

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 Humble Legumes Can Prevent Chronic Disease

I grew up being taught to understand the nutritional benefits of the foods I ate. I was fortunate to be able to understand why I didn't eat meat or dairy products, outside of the occasional cheese pizza that our family would order on a busy day, or when dad cooked for us. My parents always explained why we had a plant-based diet and as we became older, they also left the decision open to us and told us that if we ever were curious to try meat-based dishes, we could. We made the personal choice to refrain because at that point, we didn't have any propensity for meat dishes.

Our decision was not because our parents taught us a certain lifestyle but as we became older, our decision became based on a knowledge and understanding of the topic. The sole reason for our diet and lifestyle choices was based upon the effect it would have on our present and future life as adults. As we matured and entered adulthood, we began to witness our family members experience medical issues that largely happened because of their lifestyle. Chronic diseases were becoming the new trend in our friends and family.

Seeing this tragic turn of health in close friends and family not only encouraged me to continue my plant-based lifestyle, but it gave me a strong passion for sharing with others the benefits of a plant-

based diet. Fortunately, the plant-based diet is not just a fad that will come and go; but is steadily becoming a lifestyle of the future. My burden is for the children that will be the next generation in our world. We need to help prepare for their future by investing in their physical, mental, and spiritual health. These are all strengthened by healthy lifestyle practices.

Let's talk beans

Let's talk about the plant-based diet and the benefits of eating foods high in fiber and rich in plant protein. Growing up, I noticed that there were main staples in our diet that were included in most meals, making them "high priority foods." Legumes were one of those high priority foods that were a big part of our childhood diet.

Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes (beans), nuts, and seeds in the diet lowers the risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, and type 2 diabetes. Even though research shows the benefit of legume consumption, only about 8% of U.S. adults eat legumes daily. The nutritional benefits of legumes are exponential, and we must make legumes a high priority food in the everyday diet.

Beans are nutritious seeds in the form of pods. These pods fall within the legume family. There is a wide variety of legumes such as "pulses," which include the following

common varieties: kidney beans, cannellini beans, Great Northern beans, navy beans, fava beans, cranberry beans, black beans, pinto beans, soybeans, black-eyed peas, chickpeas, and lentils. Legumes are a powerhouse of nutrients, containing not only fiber and protein, but also carbohydrates, vitamin B, iron, copper, magnesium, manganese, zinc, and phosphorus. Legumes are also low in fat, free of saturated fat, and cholesterol free. The glycemic index for legumes is low, ranging from 10 to 40. Not only are legumes highly nutritious, they're also important in the prevention of many chronic health conditions.

How legumes help prevent chronic disease

Three chronic conditions that can be prevented or managed by a well-balanced diet that includes legumes are type 2 diabetes, hyperlipidemia, and hypertension. A study of patients with type 2 diabetes showed that patients who consumed more legumes had significant decreases in cholesterol, triglycerides, systolic, and diastolic blood pressures. Follow-up studies indicated reductions in A1C and blood glucose levels.

For hyperlipidemia, a condition in which one has an abnormally high concentration of fats or lipids in the blood, eating legumes consistently can lower total and LDL

cholesterol levels.

Finally, hypertension. Because legumes are high in potassium, magnesium, and fiber, they have a beneficial effect on a patient's blood pressure management. In one study, obese patients were given two servings of legumes and four servings of whole grains each day for 18 months, replacing refined carbohydrate foods. The results showed that blood pressure, triglycerides, weight, and waist circumference were reduced.

Good nutrition for disease prevention or management

Nutrition is not only a preventative measure, but it is also a disease management tool. "One bite at a time" can change the future of the next generation. Start by making small changes, then gradually make those changes habits. Soon those habits will become habits that heal your body.

Healthy nutrition can be incorporated into the clinic routine for healthcare providers as well. Nutritious eating is not just a journey that should be started alone, but the health care system needs to be an educational guide to help us reach our lifestyle goals.

(Submitted by Betty Dean. Written by Raeann Leal. Used by permission from www.lifeandhealth.org Courtesy of LifeSpring – Resources for Hope and Healing Stuart, VA)

Byron leads Hendrick Motorsports' podium sweep at Martinsville



William Byron, driver of the #24 Axalta Ruby Chevrolet, celebrates in victory lane after winning the NASCAR Cup Series Cook Out 400 at Martinsville Speedway on April 07, 2024 in Martinsville, Virginia. (Photo by Jared C. Tilton/Getty Images)



William Byron, driver of the #24 Axalta Ruby Chevrolet, celebrates with a burnout after winning the NASCAR Cup Series Cook Out 400 at Martinsville Speedway on April 07, 2024 in Martinsville, Virginia. (Photo by James Gilbert/Getty Images)

By Reid Spencer
NASCAR Wire Service
William Byron has a penchant for milestones, and in Sunday's Cook Out 400 at Martinsville Speedway, he got another.

Last year Byron picked up the 300th NASCAR Cup Series victory for Hendrick Motorsports at Texas Motor Speedway.

On Sunday, in a race that went to overtime, Byron led an unprecedented 1-2-3 finish for owner Rick Hendrick at the 0.526-mile short track, as the organization celebrated its 40th anniversary in NASCAR's premier division.

In front of a throng of employees and supporters gathered in tents overlooking Turn 2, Hendrick became the only organization to sweep the podium positions in a Cup race at Martinsville. Byron's victory was the 29th for Hendrick Motorsports at the track, most for an organization at a single NASCAR venue.

"Just so proud of everyone at Hendrick Motorsports," Byron said. "Grew up a big Hendrick fan. To be here for the 40th anniversary, all that goes into just this organization, all the people, it's all about the people. Just want to thank Mr. Hendrick and (wife) Linda and everyone involved.

"It's pretty awesome. Bad-ass to win at Martinsville. We've been struggling at the short tracks. Just kept inching up on it. I've got a great team. They just kept my head in it. It stunk to do a restart there at the end like that, but that's the way it goes."

An early green-flag pit stop proved the difference for the driver of the No. 24 Chevrolet, who earned

his third victory of the season, his second at Martinsville and the 13th of his career.

With Denny Hamlin in the lead, crew chief Rudy Fugle called Byron to pit road on Lap 297 as the first of the lead-lap drivers to get fuel and fresh tires. Hendrick teammates Kyle Larson, the pole winner, and Chase Elliott followed a lap later.

The early stops allowed the Hendrick drivers to leap-frog Hamlin, who pitted on Lap 299 and could not advance past the fourth position before caution for John Hunter Nemechek's accident in Turn 4 on Lap 398 of 400 sent the event to overtime.

On Lap 310, Byron passed Elliott for the ninth position, and as the drivers ahead of him made pit stops, he worked his way forward, passing Daniel Suarez for the lead on Lap 327 before Suarez came to pit road.

Byron led the next 86 laps, and after Elliott was credited with leading Lap 413 at the overtime restart, Byron surged ahead for the final two circuits and crossed the finish line 0.550 seconds ahead of Larson.

"Congrats to William," said Larson, who won the first 80-lap stage wire-to-wire. "He did a really good job. Kind of schooled us all there after that green flag stop. Did a really good job passing all of us. He was able to set a good pace, still get through traffic good.

"My car felt really good. I think we were all kind of the same speed, honestly. Just lost a little bit of track position there in the second stage. Was never able to overcome it."

Byron held a lead of more than two seconds before the fifth and fi-



William Byron, driver of the #24 Axalta Ruby Chevrolet, and crew chief Rudy Fugle celebrate after winning the NASCAR Cup Series Cook Out 400 at Martinsville Speedway on April 07, 2024 in Martinsville, Virginia. (Photo by Jared C. Tilton/Getty Images)

nal caution of the race. On the overtime restart, he survived a bump from Elliott, who slipped to third behind Larson at the finish.

Bubba Wallace ran fourth, followed by reigning series champion Ryan Blaney. Joey Logano, Tyler Reddick, Alex Bowman, Ryan Preece and Chase Briscoe completed the top 10. Hamlin pitted for fresh tires before the overtime, restarted 10th and came home 11th.

"We were just trying to do anything we could to steal one with our Sport Clips Toyota," Hamlin said. "The tires didn't wear enough to matter. We saw that when Joey (Logano) stayed out on those 80-lap lefts and led most of the stage (Stage 2).

"Tires didn't wear, and we just struggled to pass all day. Once I came out of that cycle, third or fourth, that's kind of just where I

stayed."

Larson, who led 86 laps, took over the series lead by 14 points over Martin Truex Jr., who finished 18th on Sunday, and by 17 over Hamlin.

The only negative aspect of the Hendrick party was the absence of the team owner, who underwent knee replacement surgery and couldn't attend. But NASCAR Hall of Famer Jeff Gordon was there to serve as grand marshal and represent the organization.

"These guys, these three guys, as well as Bowman, they drove their butts off," Gordon said. "How about that William Byron, the 24 car? Every time we have a milestone day or opportunity or moment, he steps up.

"He got number 300. This is going to be a huge win for him and the whole organization."

PCHS Track and Field competes in Vinton

By Ashlee Mullis
The PCHS Track Team competed in the Terrier Team Challenge at William Byrd High School on Saturday, April 4.

The Girls 4x800 Meter Relay Team, consisting of Sadie Martin, Mackenzie Williams, Hannah Harmon, and Callie Wood, finished in 4th place. In the 100 Meter Dash, Shaunteal Hill placed 24th and Eliza Clifton placed 42nd.

In the 200 Meter Dash, Hill placed 14th and Clifton finished 36th. Martin finished 6th, Williams finished 21st, and Harmon finished 46th in the 800 Meter Run. Wood placed 19th in the 1600 Meter Run. Clifton placed 19th in the Long Jump.

In Discus, Brandy Quesinberry placed 12th, and Tara Collins placed 19th. Collins placed 37th in Shot Put, and Quesinberry placed 38th.

The Boys 4x800 Meter Relay Team, consisting of Noah, Hiatt, Hunter Martin, Fisher Martin, and Greeley Terry finished 2nd. Avone Kidd, Stephen Spencer, Dylan Quesinberry, and Ethan Cobbler finished 15th in the 4x100 Meter Relay. Quesinberry and Spencer finished 43rd and 45th in the 100 Meter Dash.

In the Boys 200 Meter Dash, Cobbler, Kidd, and Spencer finished 24th, 38th, and 42nd, respectively. In the 400 Meter Dash, Nathan



Shaunteal Hill runs for the Cougars.

Callahan finished 31st and Eli Slater-Hairston finished 41st. Fisher Martin, Hunter Martin, and Xavier Seda-Torres finished 13th, 14th, and 25th in the 800 Meter Run, respectively.

In the 1600 Meter Run, Hiatt placed 36th, William Overby placed 35th, and Brett Foley placed 41st. In the Boys Field Events, Cobbler was 19th and Kidd was 35th in the Long Jump.

Tyrese Penn placed 18th and Reggie Brown placed 25th in Discus. In Shot Put, Trevor Joyce finished 29th and Carlos Beceril placed 37th.

Sports Briefs

By Ashlee Mullis
Varsity Baseball Plays at Myrtle Beach

The PCHS Varsity Baseball Team spent Spring Break at Myrtle Beach, taking part in the Ripken Experience. The Cougars knocked off undefeated Raceland, Kentucky Squad, 10-6, racking up 14 hits on the night.

Noah Jessup was 3-5, scoring 3 times. Gavin Fain, Tucker Swails, Jackson Horton, and Broc Taylor each added 2 hits. Swails, Horton, and Taylor had 2 RBIs each. Taylor got the win on the mound pitching 5 relief innings, allowing 1 hit, striking out 6, and walking 1.

Middle School Track Competes

The PCHS Middle School Track Team competed against 6 other teams in the Floyd MS Invitational 2024 on March 29.

The Girls 4x400 team, consisting of Gracen Conner, Sarah Hagwood, Cameron Rakes, and Shi-

anne Townsend, finished 2nd in the event. In the 100 Meter Dash, Conner finished 1st, Kaylene Garcia finished 8th, Shianne Townsend finished 10th, and Isabella Mashburn finished 11th. In the 200 Meter Dash, Conner, Garcia, and Mashburn finished 2nd, 8th, and 10th, respectively.

In the 400 Meter Dash, Hagwood finished 3rd, Townsend was 5th, and Rakes was 7th. In the 800 Meter Run, Alaleigh Jones and Emma Purdy were 9th and 10th. Olivia Clifton placed 6th in Discus, and Maddie Martin and Autumn Hawks were 2nd and 7th in Shot Put.

In the Boys Category, Joshua Ayers finished 4th in the 100 Meter Dash, 3rd in a 200 Meter Dash, and 1st in the 400 Meter Dash. Riley Jones finished 7th in the 800 Meter Run and 9th in the 1600 Meter Run.

Caden Quesinberry finished 4th in Discus and 8th in Shot Put. Aidan Slate finished 11th in Discus and Shot Put.

PCHS Sports Schedule

The Patrick County High School Cougars Sports Schedule for the week of April 15-20:				
4/15	4:30p	Girls Tennis vs Martinsville	7pm	Girls Soccer at James River
	5pm	Baseball at James River	4:30p	Boys Tennis vs Radford
	5pm	Softball at James River	4:30p	Girls Tennis at Radford
	6pm	Boys Tennis vs Martinsville	5pm	Baseball at Radford
	7pm	Boys Soccer vs James River	5pm	Softball at Radford
			7pm	Boys Soccer vs Radford
			7pm	Girls Soccer at Radford
			4/19	Track Meet at Floyd County
				TBA

Application Period Opens for AFID Infrastructure Grant Program

The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) is currently accepting applications for the spring round of the Governor's Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development (AFID) Infrastructure Grant program. Created in 2021, AFID Infrastructure Grants are awarded to support locally identified investments that aid small-scale farmers and food producers in growing their operations.

Projects should directly support local food production and forestry while also demonstrating a broad community benefit. Grant funds should be used primarily for capital expenditures. Priority project areas include new and existing food hubs, farmers' markets, commercial kitchens, and other value-added facilities such as those used for processing and packaging meats, dairy products, produce, or other Virginia-grown products.

Applications must be made by a political subdivision of the Commonwealth, such as a county, city, town, industrial and economic de-

velopment authority, or planning district commission. Grant applications must be submitted by 5 p.m. on May 6, 2024. The maximum award per grant is \$50,000.

Localities are encouraged to work with small farmers, food producers, local food systems advocates, and others interested in building their community's local food and farming infrastructure. This competitive grant requires an equal cash match from the locality, with reduced match available for economically distressed localities.

This grant program has two funding rounds in each fiscal year. The first round is an open application period in the fall, with a target award announcement date of December 31. The second round is also an open application period in the spring, with a target award announcement date of June 30.

For more information on the AFID Infrastructure Program, please contact Genette Harris at (804) 786-1906 or at Genette.Harris@vdacs.virginia.gov.



Family plays together at jam

An Open Jam held on Friday, April 5, at the Willis Gap Community Center, featured several members of one family performing together. Tommy Nichols on guitar with his granddaughter Lena Nichols on fiddle and grandson Andy Nichols on

guitar while playing Amazing Grace. Seated were Don Rierison on fiddle, Alan Cray on guitar, and Les Edgell on bass.

The center is located at 144 The Hollow Road, Ararat. (By Mary Dellenback Hill)

Mayberry Trading Post to celebrate more than a century of tradition, family, and heritage

The historic Mayberry Trading Post, nestled along the iconic Blue Ridge Parkway, is poised to celebrate its 132 years of service on Saturday and Sunday, April 13 and 14.

This trading post is a cherished landmark. It has been a beacon of community, tradition, and family for more than a century, inviting visitors to immerse themselves in the timeless beauty of the region and the warmth of Appalachian hospitality.

The general store stands as a testament to the enduring spirit of the region and the values it holds dear.

"We are thrilled to welcome visitors from near and far to join us to celebrate the beauty of springtime in the Appalachian Mountains," said Pam Frazier, owner of the historic general store. "Our 132nd anniversary marks not only a milestone for our establishment but also a testament to the enduring traditions and sense

of community that define our region." At the heart of our celebration lies the spirit of family and togetherness. As travelers venture along the scenic Blue Ridge Parkway, they are invited to pause and partake in the festivities at our general store, where a myriad of seasonal activities awaits. From live music performances to storytelling sessions that capture the essence of Appalachian folklore, there's something for everyone to enjoy.

"For generations, The Mayberry Trading Post has been a gathering place for families to reconnect and create lasting memories," Frazier said. "We invite visitors to immerse themselves in the rich tapestry of Appalachian culture and forge new traditions with their loved ones."

For more information about the celebration and upcoming events, visit www.mayberrytradingpostva.com.

Marriage Licenses

According to records in the Patrick County Circuit Court Clerk's Office, the following marriage licenses were issued in March 2024:

- Ethan Marston- Madison Colina
- August Holt - Lindsey Harris
- Timothy Sutphin- Melanie

- Harvey Bret Hauman- Nanacy Legal-lais
- Jeffrey Russell- Ashlee Swilling
- Benny Baliles - Kristen Taylor
- Daniel Vineyard - Kaitlyn Foley

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Park Clean Up Day held in Ararat



John Reynolds, of the Patrick County Historical Society; John Wilson, member of the JEB Stuart Birthplace Preservation Trust Board of Directors and Ronnie Hayes, its president, pick up litter on April 6 at Laurel Hill Park, 1091 Ararat Highway, Ararat. Not pictured are Misha Fulton, also a Board of Directors member, and another volunteer. (By Mary Dellenback Hill)

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Mountain Valley Hosts Workshops in Recognition of National Healthcare Decisions Day

In recognition of National Healthcare Decisions Day (NHDD) on April 16th, Mountain Valley, a local hospice and palliative care organization, has announced a series of workshops to raise awareness about the importance of healthcare planning and documentation.

NHDD emphasizes the significance of making healthcare decisions known and documented for oneself and loved ones, especially regarding end-of-life care. As part of this initiative, Mountain Valley's workshops, hosted in five locations in North Carolina and Virginia, will educate and assist the community in preparing their healthcare wishes. The events will include informative sessions on various essential documents, including the Living Will, The Five Wishes®, Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) orders, Health Care Power of Attorney (HCPOA), and Medical Orders for Scope of Treatment (MOST). Knowledgeable staff members will be available to guide attendees through the process of understanding and complet-

ing these important documents.

Whether you're seeking to draft new documents or update existing ones, Mountain Valley's staff is trained to help you with all of the end-of-life legal documents authorized for use in North Carolina and Virginia. If you are unable to attend a workshop, contact a representative today and schedule an onsite presentation or personal consultation. All events will be held on Tuesday, April 16th from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

North Carolina locations are Mountain Valley Corporate Headquarters (Dobson), SECU Hospice Care Center (Yadkinville), Mountain Valley Serious Illness Specialists (Kernersville). Virginia locations: Mount Olivet Community Church (Galax) and Axton Baptist Church (Axton). Addresses for all locations are listed at [https://www.mtnvalleyhospice.org/event/national-healthcare\[1\]decisions-day-workshops/](https://www.mtnvalleyhospice.org/event/national-healthcare[1]decisions-day-workshops/).

For more information, call (888) 789-2922.

Post members join county-wide cleanup effort



Members of VFW Post 7800 participated in its quarterly trash pickup of VFW Road in Patrick Springs on Saturday. The portion of road is the group's adopted highway. Members participating were: (front, left-right) Michelle Warren, Bruce Couti; (middle, left-right) James Hines, Dave Warren. (third row, left-right) Donald Cockram (Commander), Israel Grissom (Quarter Master), Michael Robinson.

Program about brain, body health presented to retired teachers

The Theme for the March program of the Patrick County Retired Teachers' meeting was "Living for Your Brain and Body." The program was presented by Brooke Gill, Program Manager of the Central and Western Virginia Chapter of Alzheimer's Association. She discussed the most recent findings offering valuable insights on maintaining a healthy brain and body as one ages and discovering effective lifestyle choices that can positively impact cognitive and physical well-being throughout the aging process. She offered tips for taking charge of your brain and body health.

Retired teachers set up a fund to assist high school seniors to financially acquire appropriate attire for graduation.

Betty Perry made and delivered treatment bags for clients at the Developmental Center for St. Patrick's Day.

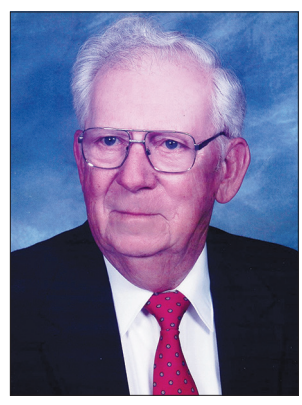


Brooke Gill

Members who are unable to attend meetings because of health issues were remembered with a gift card.

Patrick County Retired Teachers continue to support the youth and community.

Garl T. Smith



Mr. Garl T. Smith, age 95 of Stuart, passed away Saturday, April 6, 2024, at home surrounded by his loving family. He was born in Patrick County on October 3, 1928, to the late Robert Jones Smith and Novia Lyon Smith. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his wife, Madeline Fulcher Smith; one sister, Arlis Gay Smith; and a son-in-law, Jerry Billings. Garl served in the U.S. Air Force and retired from Sara Lee. He loved farming, which he officially retired from at age 85, fishing, and spending time with his family. He was a member of Peters Creek Baptist Church.

Surviving is three daughters and a son-

in-law, Katherine "Kathy" Billings of Martinsville, Rebecca "Becky" and Junior Blevins of Bassett, Michelle McAlister of Stuart; eight grandchildren; 14 great grandchildren; two great great grandchildren; one niece, Mary Frances Russell of West Virginia; one nephew, William Edwin Stacks of Gainesville; his special friend, Nancy Grant of Abing-

don; and his fur baby, Maggie.

Funeral services will be held Thursday, April 11, 2024, at 11:00 AM at Moody Funeral Home in Stuart with Pastor Terry Ragsdale officiating. Burial will follow in the Peters Creek Baptist Church Cemetery with military rites by the Patrick County Veterans Memorial Honor Guard. The family will receive friends Wednesday night from 5 to 7 PM at the funeral home. Flowers will be accepted, or memorials may be made to Peters Creek Baptist Church Cemetery Fund c/o Delano Biggs, 8214 NC 89, Hwy W, Westfield, NC 27053. Online condolences may be made to www.moodyfuneralservices.com.

John Irwin Hand



John Irwin Hand, 89 of Pittsboro, North Carolina, passed peacefully and was promoted to Glory, surrounded by family on March 28, 2024. John was born in Plainfield, New Jersey on November 6, 1934. After high school, he met the love of his life Pat, and served in the US Navy from 1952 to 1956. After his service, he was married and grew his family, and was a business owner in New Jersey. John was called to and moved his family to Woolwine, Virginia in 1976, where he founded and was the Director of Bethel Campgrounds, later known as Bethel Bible Camp. He de-

signed and built every building at the Camp, and served there until his retirement in 2015. He lived his final years at Pittsboro Christian Village in Pittsboro, NC.

John was preceded in death by his parents, Helen and Irwin Hand; his siblings Lois Eustice and Richard

Hand; and his daughter Naomi Hand. John is survived by his beloved wife and partner of 67 years Patricia "Pat" Hand of Pittsboro, NC; his children John David, Seth (Ann-dec.), Martha "Marti" (Bob), Eric, Sarah, Nathanael "Nate" (Teresa Ann), Lydia (Paul), Rachel (Brian) and Esther (Louis); 13 grandchildren and 4 great grandchildren.

There will be a Memorial Service at Pittsboro Christian Village in Pittsboro, NC on Saturday, April 27 at 2 PM, and his remains will be laid to rest at Bethel Bible Camp in Woolwine, VA at a later date.

Pauline Shelor Conner

Mrs. Pauline Shelor Conner, age 87 of Woolwine, Virginia passed away on Sunday, April 7, 2024, at Sovah Memorial Hospital of Martinsville and Henry County. She was born in Patrick County on September 26, 1936, to the late Thorburn Jefferson "T.J." Shelor and Tula Mae Alderman Shelor. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her hus-

band, Moir Curtis Conner; and one brother, Lonnie Shelor.

Mrs. Conner is survived by two children, Gary Conner and wife, Norma and Julia Conner, all of Woolwine; two sisters, Imogene Hall of Stuart and Lorna Belcher of Woolwine; and several nieces and nephews.

A graveside service for Mrs. Conner will be held on Wednesday, April 10, 2024, at

2:00 p.m. in Woolwine Cemetery with Pastor Shaun Draughn officiating. The family will receive friends from 12:30 to 1:30 on Wednesday afternoon at Moody Funeral Home in Stuart. Memorial donations may be made to Smith River Rescue Squad, P.O. Box 122, Woolwine, VA 24185. Online condolences may be sent by visiting www.moodyfuneralservices.com.

IRS Scams on the rise

Tax season isn't just about filing returns; it's also prime time for IRS impostor scams. According to the Federal Trade Commission, consumers reported theft of \$5.8 million via these scams in 2023 alone. Here is what you need to know about IRS impostors so you can stay one step ahead of these crooks.

IRS impostor scams often begin with a robocall, instructing you to press a number on your keypad to talk with a live agent or call back using the number provided. Victims often trust these contacts because the phone numbers seem legitimate. However, scammers can manipulate caller ID to appear as though the call is coming from the IRS.

Once they have you on the phone, they may demand payment for back taxes under the threat of arrest. The payment of

choice in these scams tends to be via wire transfer, gift cards, or cryptocurrency. If you get this type of request, it is 100% certainly a scam.

Sometimes these impostors will claim the IRS owes you an unexpected refund in an attempt to steal sensitive information like your Social Security number or bank account details.

Even if a caller has personally identifiable information of yours to "prove" who they are, don't believe it. Disengage, and if you're concerned, contact the entity via a trusted number (a paper statement or by finding a number on that entity's website).

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

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

PATRICK PULPITS

Babe Ruth visualized a home run

By Van Yandell

Matthew 27: 29-31 "And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him."

One of major league baseballs' greatest was the New York Yankees legendary Babe Ruth. George Herman Ruth was a home run hitter whose record has been broken but his name recognition will live forever in the annals of baseball history.

One of the many stories of his exploits was the pointing of his bat at the left-center-field area to predict his forth coming home run. Many have debunked this as a stretch action of him or otherwise intention but the notion remains of many of us, he was visualizing where he intended to hit the ball.

Nonetheless, to visualize or have a picture of anything increases the reality of success and/or understanding.

The infeed rollers on my planer (lumber surfer) stopped feeding the wood into the blades. It took about a short second to determine the belt had broken. To replace a belt on a washer recently was simply a matter of draining, unplugging and tilting it back to get to the belt.

Not so with the planer. The entire top of the machine had to be disassembled and removed. One of the parts that had to be disconnected was the electrical switch. It had six wires, all with the same type connector.

My first inclination was to tape the wires and draw a schematic so I would be able to reconnect correctly. Then the thought of using my phone to make a picture of the switch, disconnect the wires, and then the rest of the planer could be removed to get to the belt.

Once the new belt was installed, looking at the picture on the phone made the reconnections simple. Sometimes, we simply need to be able to see something to make it work or make sense. As Babe Ruth was seeing the path and distance of the ball he was about to hit, to visualize offers us advantages that without, we would not have.

"A picture is worth a thousand words" certainly is a truism that never grows old. When teaching Industrial Arts, I gave numerous demonstrations of tools and processes necessary for students to complete an assigned action.

Several times students told me, "I didn't understand when you explained to us the procedure but when you showed us, I did." In Industrial Education, this is an every day occurrence. Sequencing and visualizing are as important as wood, steel and electricity.

In 1956, Benjamin Bloom published a framework for sequencing educational objectives. Known as Bloom's Taxonomy, this framework has been applied by teachers and has been deemed very success-

ful in the learning by students of concepts and other educational goals.

That sequence was/is knowledge, comprehension (understanding), application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. In many educational areas one must also include visualization or perhaps, visualization is inherent in all six of Blooms paradigms.

There is very little if any doubt in any educators mind, Blooms Taxonomy has greatly increased the learning potential of multitudes of students. To apply this sequence proves beneficial in studies from replacing a belt on a planer, to literature, the arts or science of the universe and of course, baseball.

Once again, I must emphasize, to visualize ideals and concepts is essential in the total process from knowledge to application and further on to evaluation.

For the Christian, to read the story of Jesus and the Disciples entering Jerusalem on Palm Sunday (Luke 19: 28-44) to the point of the resurrection could be greatly enhanced by visualizing the events of those seven days. Movies or documentaries may help but they're seldom Biblically accurate.

To have knowledge of the week many call Holy Week, is an important first step but to understand the consequences of that very significant week is crucial.

I walked into The Cathedral of Seville (Spain) in July 1992. That massive structure and the construction of it that took place 500 years prior were mind-boggling.

Forever etched in my memory was the sculpture of Jesus on the cross of Calvary. The image brought tears into my eyes and the thought that my sin had put Him there was heartbreaking.

That has been over three decades ago and the vision and the feeling remain. I could never rid myself, and would not want to, of that vision. The reality of that awful day for our Jesus, as superficial as human understanding may be, was indeed a fact and to have a mind's picture of His agony is devastating.

At times in sermons, I have asked congregations to close their eyes and create a picture in their minds of Jesus on the cross, suffering, bleeding and dying for the sins of all mankind. The responses have been extreme, from misunderstanding to literal tears.

We must always teach that eternal salvation is attained by a faith based belief (Ephesians 2: 8) in Christ Jesus crucified (Matthew 27: 35) for the remission of sin (1 John 1: 9) and resurrected (Matthew 28: 6).

To visualize our Jesus on the cross is a step in the understanding and forever determines our actions in telling the world about Him. If Christians do not tell the world about Jesus, no one will.

Can you visualize yourself in a conversation with an unchurched person and telling them about the offer of eternal life by Jesus by believing in Him?

Van Yandell is a retired Industrial Arts teacher, an ordained gospel evangelist and commissioned missionary.

BIBLE TRIVIA

BY WILSON CASEY

- 1. Is the book of 3 Corinthians (KJV) in the Old or New Testament or neither?
- 2. Who was praised for his beauty "from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head"? Absalom, Elisha, Pekah, Tola
- 3. What camp saw 185,000 of its soldiers slaughtered by an angel of the Lord? Assyrian, Midianite, Philistine, Persian
- 4. From Genesis 1:30, what is the first color mentioned in the Bible? Purple, Red, Green, Yellow

5. Which city's wall fell down flat at the shout of Joshua's army? Tarsus, Jericho, Corinth, Sardis
6. From 2 Kings, who became king of Judah at age 8? Abijam, Rehoboam, Marcus, Josiah
ANSWERS: 1) Neither, 2) Absalom, 3) Assyrian, 4) Green, 5) Jericho, 6) Josiah
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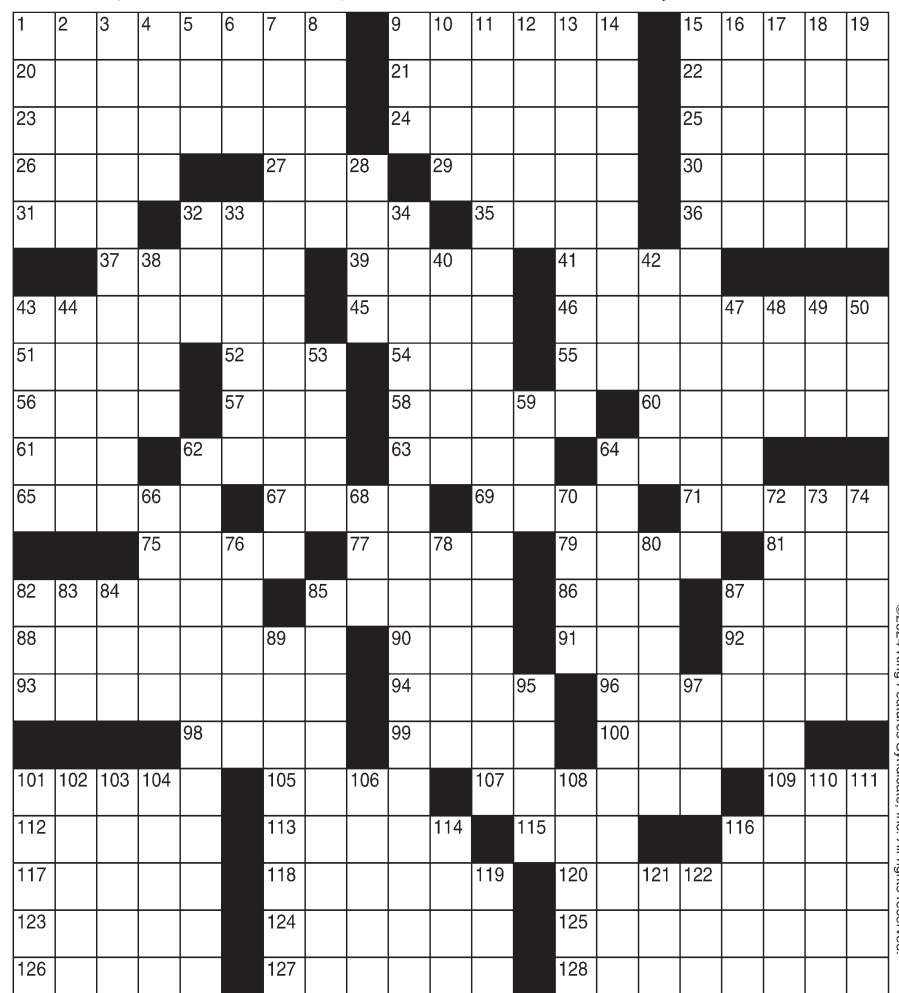
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ACROSS	51 Entertainer Falana	81 Suffix with Seattle	120 Rip apart	14 Equestrian training	72 Hora or hokeypokey
1 Extreme self-deniers	52 Nutrition std.	82 Behind bars	123 Justice Kagan	15 Bit of outdated hi-fi equipment	73 Classic arcade name
9 Common proof of age	54 "— Kapital"	85 Bruno — (shoe brand)	124 Distinctive film director	16 Traveled in a curved path	74 Smooth transition
15 Plotting band	55 Tapering off	86 Moo — pork hooters	125 Ripped apart	17 Tennis' Becker	76 31-Across on the sly
20 Cousins of croci	57 They have depots: Abbr.	87 Be boastful	126 Impertinent	18 Astonish	78 Viscous
21 Worker whose job is fitting	58 Father of Beau Bridges	88 Hurting from hiking, say	127 Meager	19 Suit coat flap	80 Novelist Jane
22 Nice smell	60 Most bizarre truck, in brief	90 Color tone	128 Jewel box holders ... or eight features of this puzzle?	28 — monster (large lizard)	82 Possibilities
23 Stylized bow that's a token of affection	62 Sandy islets	91 Gridiron stats		32 Lofly trains	83 This moment
24 Godly	63 Napoleon's isle of exile	92 Pale brown		33 — del Fuego	84 Java
25 Fragment	64 News anchor	93 Legume-family plant		34 Romantic evening meal	85 Fulfill expectations
26 Unwrap	65 Hebrew holy scroll	94 Incline		38 In-favor votes	87 Really tired
27 Put on fancy duds, with "up"	67 Plus others: Abbr.	96 "Not so!"		40 Longtime politico Mo	89 Sailing races
29 Many Punjabi believers	69 "Noah" actress	98 PC memory units		42 Rival of Xerox or Canon	95 "Take it out" mark
30 Take forcibly	71 Chewed	99 19th-century Shakespeare editor		43 Political pull	97 Beatified Fr. woman
31 Marry	73 Legume-stimulants	100 Chevy muscle car		44 DIYer's book	101 Really years
32 Cultural	75 Title for a fictional Southern rabbit	101 Farfalle, e.g.		47 Build upon	102 Teresa of —
35 Many August babies	77 Cowboys' city, informally	105 A8 carmaker		48 Deadlock	103 "Boxcars" roll
36 Ford bomb	79 Writer	107 Paige of "Evita"		49 Mil. officer	104 Cold temps
37 Writer Elinor or Philip	Dinesen	109 Gene-splicing need		50 Mil. officer	106 River mouth
39 Praise highly		112 Trellis plants		53 Mgr.'s aide	108 Silly prank
41 Toad feature		113 Current style		59 Tasty tuber	110 Constituent of gunpowder
43 Toppings for nachos		115 Finale		62 December 25	111 At — for words
45 "The King —"		116 Colorado ski mecca		64 Periodic payment to a stockholder	114 — ex machina
46 Shakes up		117 Vetoed		66 Taper off	116 Observe
		118 Early online protocol		68 Judges' org.	119 Ill, to Italians
				70 Very fine rain	121 Inclined
					122 '16 Olympics host



Puzzle answers page 13

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YARD SALE

Yard Sale Six person, maybe more. Mini Flea Market. Thursday April 11th, Friday April 12th & Saturday April 13th 8am-4pm each day. 661 Collinstown Road, Stuart, Virginia (Dry Pond area)

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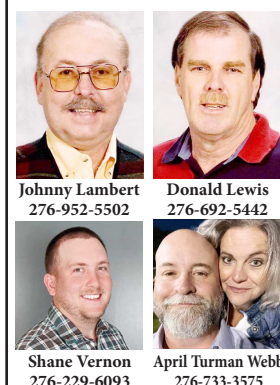
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Stew held to benefit baseball teams



The Blue Ridge and Meadows of Dan Ozone Baseball teams, Affiliated with Dan River Park, hosted a Brunswick Stew on Saturday, April 6 at the Ararat Ruritan Club, 4711 Ararat Highway, Ararat.

Paige Terry, head coach, and a team of parents joined together to host this event to raise money for team expenses. Last year, a similar fundraiser was successful, and helped outfit two teams with team jerseys, hats and trophies, provide a team outing, equipment for multiple teams, and donate the remaining funds to the Blue Ridge Booster Club.

Coach Terry said the Blue Ridge and Meadows of Dan Ozone teams believe being active in your Community is a positive attribute to have and use. (By Mary Dellenback Hill)



Paige Terry (left-right), Mary Dellenback Hill and her son Joshua B. Hill get in line to enjoy some of the hot Brunswick Stew and afterwards, to get some carryout containers of the stew for neighbors. (Photo by Jessica Wright)

Virginia produce growers invest in food safety education, training

Because foodborne illness outbreaks fuel widespread concern over food safety, Virginia growers and food handlers are investing in training and education.

Fruit and vegetable producers from across the state gathered on March 26 at the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation headquarters to participate in the first Virginia Produce Safety Cleaning and Sanitizing Workshop. The program was led by representatives of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Virginia Cooperative Extension and Virginia Tech.

The full-day workshop centered on understanding the federal Produce Safety Rule, which establishes science-based minimum standards for the safe production of fruits and vegetables. Published in 2015, the rule is part of FDA's ongoing efforts to implement the Food Safety Modernization Act passed in 2011.

"We're all in this together," remarked Ben Marshall, an FDA produce safety expert. "We're only as good as the people in the room working every single day to produce the safest, most efficient food for consumers."

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has estimated that 48 million people get sick, 128,000 people are hospitalized and 3,000 people die from a foodborne illness every year in the U.S.

Among the 250 multistate outbreaks investigated by the CDC from 2017 to 2020, 65% were linked to contaminated foods. Fresh fruits and vegetables were the most common source of outbreaks, as foods consumed raw are more likely to contain germs that cause illness.

Foods also can be contaminated by unsafe handling at home. The CDC website offers steps homeowners can take in the kitchen to reduce risk of foodborne illness. The

Extension Virginia Fresh Produce Safety Team also offers a comprehensive suite of food safety resources for consumers and producers.

While food and drinks can be contaminated in a number of ways along the food chain, the workshop highlighted food safety practices that produce growers and handlers can implement to mitigate risks. Each participant walked away with materials to develop an individualized sanitation program.

"It's encouraging to see this room filled with people who are passionate about the produce industry," remarked Stuart Vermaak, a food safety expert and Extension agent in Loudoun County. "As we see the rates of outbreaks going down, it's because of the work that you all are doing to be collectively educated and reduce risk."

Through a series of lectures and hands-on activities, participants explored effective methods of cleaning and sanitizing to prevent the growth of pathogens, identified food safety hazards within operations and developed sanitizing standard operating procedures.

Many workshop participants had enrolled in previous Produce Safety Alliance trainings to stay up to date on FSMA Produce Safety Rule requirements and ways to implement on-farm food safety practices.

"These classes are very important because you're getting the information straight from the experts," remarked workshop participant Rosemary Reese, a Halifax County fruit and vegetable grower.

For more information on the VDACS Produce Safety Program, grower trainings and related resources, visit vdacs.virginia.gov/food-produce-safety.shtml. Those interested in participating in a future class should contact Laura Strawn, Extension specialist and workshop organizer, at lstrawn@vt.edu.

Arrests Reported

The Patrick County Sheriff's Office reported the following:

*Michael Dustin Bryant, 42, of Patrick Springs, was charged March 29 with probation violation. Senior Deputy E. Sain was the arresting officer.

*Moises Flores Rivera, 29, of Axton, was charged March

29 with one count each drive without license, reckless driving, non-citizens possess/transport firearm, and carry concealed weapon. Senior Deputy J.S. Kendrick was the arresting officer.

*Thomas Wayne Mitchell, 68, of Stuart, was charged March 31 with as-

sault, Master Deputy M.T. Rorrer was the arresting officer.

*Seth Daniel Palmer, 40, of Mount Airy, NC, was charged April 1 with one count each probation violation and identity theft. Senior Deputy A. Kinney was the arresting officer.

*James Nelson Thompson, 24, of Patrick County Jail, was charged April 1 with probation violation. Sgt. B.S. Webb made the arrest for Franklin County.

*Joseph Lee Tate, 47, of Mt. Airy, N.C., was charged April 3 with one count each reckless driving and drive without license. Deputy C. Merriman was the arresting officer.

*Charles Richard Milligan, Jr., 28, of Collinsville, was charged April 3 with interfering with the property rights of another. Senior Deputy C.M. Gilbert was the arresting officer.

LEGAL

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
PUBLIC HEARING: The Town of Stuart will hold a Public Hearing on Wednesday, April 17, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. at the Stuart Town Office located at 100 Patrick Avenue in Stuart, Virginia, to discuss a proposed Noise Ordinance. If you would like to review the proposed Noise Ordinance, you may do so at the Stuart Town Office, referenced above, or by visiting the Town's website (www.townofstuartva.com). If you plan to attend and have any special needs requirements, please contact Bryce Simmons, Town Manager, at (276) 694-3811 or bryce.simmons@stuartva.org

LEGAL

FOR PUBLIC NOTICE:
The Town of Stuart has scheduled two (2) upcoming Budget Committee Meetings. The first meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 4, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. in the Stuart Town Office located at 100 Patrick Avenue. The second meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 11, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. in the Stuart Town Office located at 100 Patrick Avenue. The Stuart Budget Committee will discuss the Town's Budget for Fiscal Year 2025. Those that are interested in providing comment to the Budget Committee, please contact Bryce Simmons, Town Manager by phone at (276) 694-3811 or by email at bryce.simmons@stuartva.org

LEGAL

REQUEST FOR QUOTE TOWN OF STUART, VIRGINIA

The Town of Stuart, Virginia is soliciting a Request for Quote from qualified Contractors or Individuals to provide Inspection and Inventory Services for a Lead Service Line Inventory Project. These services include excavation or potholing, identifying water service lines, and recording the existing material of the water service lines entering the water meter box from the Town's service tap and the type of material leaving the meter box, supplying the customer. An electronic recording file, or inventory form, will be provided to enter all data required. For reference, the Town of Stuart has 617 metered water accounts, which must be inventoried before October 1, 2024. The proposed inventory project is being funded by the Virginia Department of Health (VDH). All state and federal requirements by this agency must be met. All guidelines for the Request for Quote will be available for review on the Town of Stuart website (www.stuartva.org). Any additional questions can be emailed to information@stuartva.org or can be submitted to the Stuart Town Office at 100 Patrick Avenue, Stuart, VA, 21417.

The Town of Stuart will accept Quotes until 2:00 p.m. Eastern Local Time, on Thursday, April 25, 2024. Two (2) hard copies of the Quote shall be mailed or hand-delivered to Bryce Simmons, Town Manager at PO Box 422, 100 Patrick Avenue, Stuart, VA 24171. Questions regarding this solicitation should be made prior to Thursday, April 18, 2024.

This request is extended without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, marital status, age or physical or mental handicap. The selected Firm or Individual will be required to comply with all the State and Federal guidelines or requirements, including, but not limited to:

- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Civil Rights Act of 1964
- The Americans with Disabilities Act
- Age Discrimination Act
- MBE/WBE Solicitation Guidelines

The Town of Stuart will reserve the rights to accept or reject any or all proposals; to waive any formalities or technicalities as it deems appropriate; and to retain multiple qualified Individuals or firms as it deems appropriate. For projects that may be successfully funded, the Town of Stuart reserves the right, if it so deems, to enter into negotiations with the selected firm for any resulting services related to the project implementation.

Minority and/or female-owned businesses or firms are encouraged to apply. The Town of Stuart is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Winkler to portray President Jefferson Davis, When he speaks at April 13 Memorial Service

The Wharton-Stuart Camp of the Sons of Confederate Veterans will hold its Confederate Memorial Day service on April 13. The ceremony begins at 11 a.m. at the Patrick County Courthouse in Stuart to honor those soldiers from Patrick County who served from 1861 to 1865 in the War Between the States.

This year's speaker will be President Jefferson Davis, portrayed by Sam Winkler, a living history actor that currently lives in Roanoke, Virginia. He is a proud member of the Fincastle Rifles SCV and vice president of the Virginia Order of the Confederate Rose.

Winkler has been doing living history portrayals for more than 20 years. Of the historical figures he portrays, Winkler's favorite is President Jefferson Davis.



"I feel it is an honor and privilege to portray such a great leader," Winkler said.

Following the presentation, a wreath will be unveiled, and flowers laid at the base of the monument in remembrance of the Confederate dead. The ceremony will end with the SCV honor guard firing a 21 gun salute, followed by the playing of "Taps."

The SCV is the direct heir of the United Confederate Veterans, and the oldest hereditary organization for male descendants of Confederate soldiers. Organized in Richmond in 1896, the SCV continues to serve as a historical, patriotic, and non-political organization dedicated to ensuring that a true history of the 1861-1865 period is preserved. The ceremony is open to the public and all are encouraged to attend the gathering to honor these Patrick County soldiers.

LEGAL

BWW# VA-368816-1
TRUSTEE'S SALE OF 1023 UNION BRIDGE ROAD, FERRUM, VA 24088. In execution of a certain Deed of Trust dated June 30, 2010, in the original principal amount of \$104,295.00 recorded in the Clerk's Office, Circuit Court for Patrick County, Virginia as Instrument No. 100001137. The undersigned Substitute Trustee will offer for sale at public auction in the front of the Circuit Court building for Patrick County, 101 West Blue Ridge Street, Stuart, Virginia, or any such temporary alternative Circuit Court location designated by the Judges of the Circuit Court, on May 6, 2024, at 1:15 p.m., the property described in said Deed of Trust, located at the above address, and more particularly described as follows: ALL OF THAT CERTAIN PARCEL OF LAND, TOGETHER WITH THE IMPROVEMENTS THEREON AND APPURTENANCES THEREUNTO BELONGING, LYING AND BEING IN SMITH RIVER MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT OF PATRICK COUNTY, VIRGINIA, BEING DESIGNATED AS TRACT 6A CONTAINING 5.412 ACRES AS SHOWN ON THAT PLAT OF SURVEY ENTITLED "KATIE V. LANE" PREPARED BY TERRY A. WALLER, L.L.S., DATED SEPTEMBER 28, 2008, OF RECORD IN THE CLERK'S OFFICE OF THE CIRCUIT COURT OF PATRICK COUNTY, VIRGINIA, AS INSTRUMENT NUMBER 0802379. TERMS OF SALE: ALL CASH. A bidder's deposit often percent (10%) of the sale price or ten percent (10%) of the original principal balance of the subject Deed of Trust, whichever is lower, in the form of cash or certified funds payable to the Substitute Trustee must be present at the time of the sale. The balance of the purchase price will be due within fifteen (15) days of sale, otherwise Purchaser's deposit may be forfeited to Trustee. Time is of the essence. If the sale is set aside for any reason, the Purchaser at the sale shall be entitled to a return of the deposit paid. The Purchaser may, if provided by the terms of the Trustee's Memorandum of Foreclosure Sale, be entitled to a \$50 cancellation fee from the Substitute Trustee, but shall have no further recourse against the Mortgagor, the Mortgagee or the Mortgagee's attorney. A form copy of the Trustee's memorandum of foreclosure sale and contract to purchase real property is available for viewing at www.bwwsales.com. Additional terms, if any, to be announced at the sale and the Purchaser may be given the option to execute the contract of sale electronically. This is a communication from a debt collector and any information obtained will be used for that purpose. The sale is subject to seller confirmation. Substitute Trustee: Equity Trustees, LLC, 8100 Three Chopt Road, Suite 240, Richmond, VA 23229. For more information contact: BWW Law Group, LLC, attorneys for Equity Trustees, LLC, 6003 Executive Blvd, Suite 101, Rockville, MD 20852, 301-961-6555, website: www.bwwsales.com. VA-368816-1.

Meetings

Thursday, April 11
The Patrick County School Board will meet at 5:30 p.m. in the school board office.

Tuesday, April 16
The Patrick County Planning Commission will hold its regular business meeting at 6 p.m., Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC) Stuart site in the community room.

Wednesday, April 17
The Stuart Town Council will meet at 7 p.m. in the town office.

Events

Wednesday, April 10
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, April 11
The Patrick County Senior Citizens Group will hold its April monthly meeting at 11 a.m. in the Hooker Building at Rotary Field. Entertainment will be provided by Charles Bowman. Barbeque, slaw, buns, and beverages will be provided to all attendees, attendees are requested to bring vegetables and/or desserts to share with the group.

Roving Ranger: Turtle Time, 10 a.m., Fairy Stone State Park.

Friday, April 12
Moonshine Hollow Hike, 10 a.m., Visitor's Center at Fairy Stone State Park.

Fairy Stone Hunt, 11 a.m., Visitor's Center at Fairy Stone State Park.

Fairy Stone Workshop, 1 p.m., Shelter 4, Fairy Stone State Park.

ADA Trail Hike, 1:15 p.m., Fairy Stone State Park. Sign up through the park office.

Fayerdale Missing Town, 2:30 p.m., Shelter 4, Fairy Stone State Park.

Saturday, April 13
Little Mountain Falls, 9 a.m. @ Amphitheater Trailhead Parking Lot, Fairy Stone State Park.

Second Saturday at Mayo River Trails: Redbud Trail Hike (approx. 2 miles) 10 a.m. @ 500 Pratt Road, Spencer, by Fairy Stone State Park.

Fairy Stone Hunt, 12 p.m., Visitor Center, Fairy Stone State Park.

Lakeshore Trail, 1:30 p.m., Amphitheater Trailhead Parking Lot, Fairy Stone State Park.

Fairy Stone Workshop, 2 p.m., Shelter 4, Fairy Stone State Park.

Sunday, April 14
Joyful Sound will present a program of gospel music at 4 p.m., Pleasant View Baptist Church in Patrick Springs.

Mountain View/Horse Camp Trail, 9 a.m., Amphitheater Trailhead Parking Lot, Fairy Stone State Park.

Iron Mine, 1:30 p.m., Iron Mine Parking Lot, Fairy Stone State Park.

Wednesday, April 17
Chef Mark Anthony's free dinner and a message, 6 p.m., Stuart Adventist Church, 220 Patrick Ave., Stuart.

Thursday, April 18
The Carroll County Genealogy Club will hold a business meeting at 6 p.m.

Roving Ranger: Turtle Time 10 a.m., Fairy Stone State Park.

Friday, April 19
The community food pantry will be at the Fairystone Volunteer Fire Department from 3-4:30 p.m.

Moonshine Hollow Hike, 10:00am @ Visitor Center, Fairy Stone State Park

Moonshine Hollow Hike, 10 a.m., Visitor's Center; Fairy Stone Hunt, 11 a.m., Visitor's Center; Fairy Stone Workshop, 1 p.m., Shelter 4; ADA Trail Hike, 1:15 p.m., sign up through the park office, and Fayerdale Missing Town, 2:30 p.m., Shelter 4, Fairy Stone State Park.

Saturday, April 20
The Fairystone Volunteer Fire Department will hold a country breakfast from 6:30-10 a.m. adult plates are \$10 each and child plates are \$5 each. All take out plates are \$10 each.

Fairy Stone Hunt, 11 a.m., Visitor Center; Roving Ranger: Conservation Successes, 12 p.m.; Fairy Stone Workshop, 1 p.m., and Oak Hickory Trail, 1:30 p.m., Shelter 4, Fairy Stone State Park.

Sunday, April 21
Moonshine Hollow Hike, 10 a.m., Visitor Center, Fairy Stone State Park.

Fairy Stone Hunt, 1:30 p.m., Visitor Center, Fairy Stone State Park.

Tuesday, April 23
The Patrick County Chamber of Commerce in partnership with Longwood Small Business Development Center will hold an informational session and discuss the steps needed, regulations, marketing plans, taxes and resources that are available to those who are interested in starting or have recently started a business in the county, 5:30 p.m., at the P&HCC Stuart Site. This is a free event, but registration is requested by visiting the chamber's website, www.patrickchamber.com or online at <https://bit.ly/startabusinesspc>. Call (276) 694-6012 or

email director@patrickchamber.com with questions.

Thursday, April 25
Learn to DIY a decorative ceramic rain boot with acrylics and daisies, 2:30 p.m., at the Patrick County Branch Library. A \$10 nonrefundable supply fee is required to register. Call (276) 694-3352.

Ongoing

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

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

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

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

The Ararat Ruritan Club hosts Rook games, Mondays, 6:30-8 p.m.

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

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

Open Jam Acoustic, Fridays at Willis Gap Community Center. Doors open at 6 p.m. for concessions, with music 7-10 p.m. A 50/50 drawing will be held at about 8:15 p.m.

The Patrick County Senior Citizens is sponsoring a three day and two nights trip to Elkins, West Virginia, departing Wednesday, September 18 and returning Friday, September 20. Trip includes chartered bus transportation, two nights' accommodations at the Holiday Inn Express in Elkins, tour of the WV Railroad Museum, 4-hour train ride, admission to the Crandell Creek Band bluegrass music show, admission to the Gandy Dancer Dinner Theatre, admission and guided tour of the Green Bank Observatory, five meals (two breakfasts, one lunch, and two dinners), baggage handling, all taxes, and all gratuities. Any adult, regardless of age, is eligible to participate. Trip flyers and more specific information, including cost, can be obtained by calling the Recreation Department at (276) 694-3917 or Judy Lacks, trip coordinator, at (276) 694-4767.

Latest Unemployment Insurance Weekly Initial Claims at 2,081

More than 2,080 unemployment insurance weekly initial claims were filed during the week ending March 30, according to Virginia Works, which is 0.8 percent lower than last week's 2,098 claims and 33.1 percent higher than the comparable week of last year (1,563).

Nearly 83 percent of claimants self-reported an associated industry; of those reported, the top five industries (60 per-

cent) were Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (236); Administrative and Support and Waste Management (232); Manufacturing (197); Health Care and Social Assistance (184); and Retail Trade (166).

Continued weeks claims (15,302) were 1.3 percent lower than last week (15,497) and were 29.4 percent higher than the comparable week of last year (11,823). Nearly 93 percent of claimants self-reported an associated industry; of those reported, the top five industries (56 percent) were Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (2,258); Administrative and Support and Waste Management (2,069); Health Care and Social As-

sistance (1,311); Manufacturing (1,248); and Retail Trade (1,165).

In the week ending March 30, the advance figure for seasonally adjusted initial claims was 221,000, an increase of 9,000 from the previous week's revised level. The previous week's level was revised up by 2,000 from 210,000 to 212,000. The advanced number of actual initial claims under state programs, unadjusted, totaled 196,376 in the week ending March 30, an increase of 2,455 (or 1.3 percent) from the previous week. The seasonal factors had expected a decrease of 5,304 (or 2.7 percent) from the previous week. There were 195,200 initial claims in the comparable week in 2023.

Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

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DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ◆◆◆

◆ Moderate ◆◆ Challenging
◆◆◆ HOO BOY!

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Motorists reminded to keep eyes, hands and minds on road during Distracted Driving Awareness Month

Each day, over 1,000 people are injured and nine are killed in crashes involving distracted driving, according to data reported by Drive Smart Virginia. Virginia Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Co. has long partnered with the nonprofit organization charged with raising awareness and changing behavior to improve roadway safety.

April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month, and the observance reminds drivers to eliminate distractions. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention describe three types of distracted driving—visual, manual and cognitive.

“Visual distractions take your eyes off the road,” said David Tenenbaum, DSV treasurer and VFBMIC senior actuarial manager. “Manual distractions include taking your hands off the wheel. Cognitive distractions occur when your mind wanders from the driving task at hand.”

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration said distracted driving has become a deadly epidemic, and cell phone use has become the most common distraction. Other risky actions include adjusting the radio or GPS, applying makeup, eating and drinking.

By driving distracted, you’re robbing yourself of seconds you may need to avoid a close call or deadly crash, according to the NHTSA.

In 2020, it became illegal in Virginia to hold a handheld mobile device while driving. DSV recommends enabling a “Do Not Disturb” app to block incoming correspondence while the vehicle is in motion. Or use your device’s hands-free options carefully.

“While there are many ways a driver can be distracted, handheld phone use is the most egregious, as it involves all three kinds of distraction—manual, visual and cognitive,” Tenenbaum added. “For this reason, we encourage all drivers to put the phone down and concentrate on the important task of driving.”

He added that “hands-free isn’t risk-free. Even if the phone isn’t in your hand, there are still dangers involved when a driver doesn’t fully concentrate on the road.”

To limit distractions, motorists are advised to program GPS and hands-free devices before leaving the driveway. Pull over to a safe place when doing something that will take your eyes or mind off the road. Concentrate on driving—don’t drive when upset or too tired.

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

“Make sure that everyone is properly buckled,” Tenenbaum said. “That’s your best defense against distracted drivers.”

One way Virginia Farm Bureau is trying to limit distracted driving is through its usage-based insurance program Drive2Save, in which motorists are rewarded with lower premiums for safe driving habits.

The Drive2Save program’s smartphone app runs in the background to gather driving information, allowing participants to track their driving scores and specific incidents that may impact their scores—like speed, cornering, hard braking and distracted driving.

“This gives participants a picture of what they’re doing well and where they can improve to become safer drivers,” said Ben Ashby, VFB underwriting personal lines manager. “And the more favorable the driving score, the lower the insurance premium.”

To learn more about the Drive2Save program, contact your local Farm Bureau insurance agent or visit drivesmartva.org/current-projects.

Record number of books donated during Agriculture Literacy Week

This year’s annual Agriculture Literacy Week broke records while enriching children’s agricultural awareness and helping them make connections with farming.

More than 1,500 volunteers read to over 70,000 students during Virginia Agriculture in the Classroom’s annual Agriculture Literacy Week, March 18-22. Participants in the event read AITC’s 2024 Book of the Year, Logan’s Greenhouse by JaNay Brown-Wood, and donated more than 3,100 copies of the book to public and private schools, community clubs and local libraries.

“This was a record-breaking year, with the most books donated so far,” said Tammy Maxey, AITC executive director. “Thanks to volunteers who dedicated their time to share agriculture’s story and donate books, thousands

of children had an opportunity to connect with farming and learn why it’s so important to their communities.”

In addition to reading books during Agriculture Literacy Week, volunteers engaged children with the sources of their food and fiber through hands-on educational activities, demonstrations and Q&A sessions.

In Isle of Wight County, Virginia Cooperative Extension agents Tabatha Davis and Livvy Preisser and program assistant Brandy Compton, along with partnering agricultural organizations, read to students at local elementary schools. During the readings, they led energetic discussions about students’ favorite fruits and vegetables, how agriculture impacts their daily lives, and the role farmers play in getting food from fields to forks.

“Ag Literacy Week helps bridge the gap between farming and youth,” Compton said. “A lot of youth will never step foot on a farm. It’s in-

credibly important that children and future generations know that food just doesn’t appear at the grocery store—a lot of faith, stewardship and man hours are behind it all.”

Now in its 14th year, Agriculture Literacy Week is AITC’s largest educational event and provides a fun, interactive way to increase children’s knowledge of farming and the importance of where their food comes from.

Volunteer readers also included Virginia’s first lady, Suzanne Youngkin; Virginia Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Matthew Lohr; Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Commissioner Joseph Guthrie; members of Virginia’s legislature; county Farm Bureau leaders; employees of VDACS and Farm Credit; and FFA and 4-H club members and other agricultural organizations.

To learn more about Agriculture Literacy Week and how to support Virginia AITC, visit virginia.agclassroom.org.

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Video visitation access expanding state correctional centers in April

The Virginia Department of Corrections (VADOC) and partners ViaPath and Assisting Families of Inmates (AFOI) are expanding access to video visitation at Deerfield Correctional Complex and Pocahontas State Correctional Center in April.

Under the expansion, every living area at each facility will be equipped with video visitation equipment, allowing inmates to conduct visits from their living areas.

Deerfield Work Center’s video visitation is now live. Deerfield Work Center 2 will expand on Wednesday, April 3, and both Deerfield Correctional Center

and Pocahontas State Correctional Center will expand on Tuesday, April 9.

To accommodate the expansion of services, new operating hours for video visits will be in place. The hours of operation for the general population will be 9 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and 7 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. on weekends. Any previously scheduled visit outside of those hours will need to be rescheduled once the new hours are implemented.

If two inmates in the same living area are scheduled for a visit simultaneously, one visit will remain and the other will be canceled. For the canceled visit, the visitor can reschedule their visit in the Visitation Scheduler.

Video visitation will not be available when facilities are operating on lockdown status.

“We are excited to be expanding our visitation options at Deerfield Correctional Complex,” said VADOC Director Chad Dotson. “Ensuring inmates have visitation with their loved ones is an integral part of the re-entry process. I hope these expansions will allow even more connections between inmates and their loved ones.”

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WPPDC Strengthens Team with Two New Hires

The West Piedmont Planning District Commission (WPPDC) recently hired Rebekah Morgan as Community Development Specialist and Chasta White as Housing Programs Specialist. These new additions further solidify the commission's commitment to driving positive change and growth within the region.

Morgan is the Community Development Specialist, bringing with her a wealth of experience and a strong background in government and community planning. Before joining the WPPDC, she was the Assistant Park Manager at Fairy Stone State Park.

She has a master's degree in public administration from Troy University. Morgan also served in the Marine Corps as a Special Intelligence Communicator/System Administrator. She enjoys spending time with her four kids and is excited for warmer weather so they can go kayaking and hiking area trails.

"I look forward to getting to know our community partners and the communities they serve

while being able to assist them with obtaining grants to help fund their projects and plan future projects," said Morgan. "There is a lot of great work going on in the planning district, and I'm excited to be able to be a part of it."

White will be the Housing Programs Specialist, equipped with a proven track record in housing. Her in-depth understanding of housing programs and grant proposals makes her a vital addition to the commission's efforts in addressing the region's housing needs. White gained valuable experience as the Housing and Redevelopment Specialist for the City of Danville before joining the WPPDC. She possesses a profound insight into Danville, having been born and raised there. She also served the City of Danville as their Senior Account Clerk and Housing Environmental and Grant Specialist. She attended Hampton University where she majored in Accounting. She likes to travel, try new foods, and watch her kids play sports.

"I look forward to creating housing in the en-

tire WPPDC area as well as improving the quality of life to those that we serve through housing and various programs," said White.

"We are delighted to welcome Rebekah and Chasta to our team," said Kristie Eberly, executive director of the West Piedmont Planning District Commission. "Their combined expertise and commitment to community development and housing programs will play a pivotal role in advancing our initiatives and serving the needs of our communities."

The West Piedmont Planning District is a regional planning organization serving the counties of Franklin, Henry, Patrick, and Pittsylvania; the cities of Danville and Martinsville; and the Town of Rocky Mount. The WPPDC seeks to carry out its mission by facilitating regional thinking and dialogue among the district's local government, K-12 and higher educational institutions, economic development organizations, workforce development, and other key stakeholders. Learn more at westpiedmontpdc.org.

Additional tools added in fight against fentanyl

A bill signed last week is expected to help combat the fentanyl crisis.

Signed last week by Gov. Glenn Youngkin, Senate Bill 469 strengthens the fight against the alarming and devastating crisis that has inflicted profound harm in the Commonwealth.

The bill makes it a Class 6 felony for any person - except for permitted manufacturers - to possess, purchase, sell, give, distribute, or possess with intent to sell, give, or distribute an encapsulating machine or a tableting machine that manufactures, compounds, converts, produces, processes, prepares, or otherwise introduces into the human body a controlled substance; a Class 5 felony if such person knows, intends, or has reasonable cause to believe that such action will result in the unlawful manufacture of a controlled substance or counterfeit controlled substance that contains a controlled substance classified in Schedule I or Schedule II of the Drug Control Act or a controlled substance analog as defined in relevant law.

The bill also makes it a felony punishable by imprisonment for not less than 10 nor more than 40 years for any person 18 years of age or older to knowingly allow a minor or a mentally incapacitated or physically helpless person of any age to be present during the man-



Gov. Glenn Youngkin participates in a bill signing ceremony at the Barbara Johns Building, April 4.

ufacture or attempted manufacture of any substance containing a detectable amount of fentanyl.

The bill also increases from a Class 2 misdemeanor to a Class 6 felony the penalty for violations related to adulterated or misbranded drugs and cosmetics.

"By signing this legislation, we are more resolved, more emboldened, more unified and more focused than ever before to ensure no more Virginians die as a result of this fentanyl epidemic," said Youngkin. "We are sending a powerful message that Virginia will take critical action against the produc-

tion and distribution of this horrible poison and we will not tolerate the devastation wrought by this deadly substance."

"We lose an average of five Virginians every day to fentanyl overdoses. The rise of counterfeit drugs and synthetic opioids, like fentanyl, continue to fuel the drug epidemic gripping the nation right

now, but Virginia is fighting back. By enhancing penalties and criminalizing the possession and use of machines to produce counterfeit drugs, we are supplying law enforcement personnel with the tools they need to hold drug dealers accountable for poisoning our communities," said Attorney General Jason Miyares.

"Tragically, virtually every person in the Commonwealth has a family or other close connection to someone who has died of a drug overdose, fentanyl in particular. The Virginia Department of Health reports that almost 79% of drug overdose deaths in our Commonwealth are due to fentanyl. This is unacceptable," said Sen. Mark Obenshain. "This new law provides three avenues to get at those who are manufacturing and altering these drugs for sale. It's going to help protect our children and save their lives. I am grateful to my colleagues in the General Assembly, both Democrat and Republican who voted in favor of this bill and I thank the Governor for signing it into law today."

Analysis shows upswing in pediatric patients seeking treatment for mental health issues

A Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association (VHHA) analysis of inpatient hospital data spanning the first quarter of 2020 through the second quarter of 2023 shows that the number of pediatric patient (ages 0-18) emergency department visits with anxiety and depression diagnoses have increased statewide. The highest volume was recorded in the first quarter of 2023, with numbers surpassing pre-pandemic levels. Virginia hospitals average approximately 3,054 pediatric emergency department visits for anxiety and depression each quarter, with most of the diagnoses related to unspecified anxiety disorder (33 percent), single episodes of unspecified major depressive disorders (33 percent), unspecified depression (17.5

percent), generalized anxiety disorder (6 percent), unspecified PTSD (5 percent), and panic disorders (5 percent).

The analysis also provides a breakdown of patients by coverage type - Medicaid, commercial insurance, government payor, and self-pay - as well as patient gender proportions. The data indicates the emergency department visits during the period of this analysis skewed female (68.74% percent of visit, compared to 31.22 percent of visits involving male patients), and that the distribution skews towards older pediatric female patients between the ages of 12 to 17 (the distribution of visits for male patients is more even across the pediatric age range, with only a slight skew towards teenage years).

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Avoid the Introduction and Spread of Invasive Plant Pest and Disease

April is Invasive Plant Pest and Disease Awareness Month, and the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) encourages the public to help reduce the threat that invasive plant pests and diseases pose to the Commonwealth's agricultural and natural resources.

Non-native, destructive insects, plant diseases and harmful weeds are a tremendous threat to the Commonwealth's crops and forests, and can seriously harm the economy, environment, and even human health. Once invasive pests become established, they can grow and spread rapidly, often because they have no natural predators in their new environment and limited management options.

Invasive species, such as the Asian Longhorned Beetle, Spotted Lanternfly, Imported Fire Ant, Spotted Lanternfly, Boxwood Blight, Vascular Streak Dieback, Thousand Canker Disease, Wavyleaf Basketgrass, and Purple Loosestrife

can wreak havoc on the environment, displace or destroy native plants and insects, severely damage crops and potentially cause the closure of foreign markets to U.S. products that originated from infested areas.

Taking steps to prevent their introduction is the most effective method of reducing both the risk of invasive species infestations and the cost to control and mitigate those infestations. The following are a few simple steps to help avoid and stop the spread of invasive pests:

Don't move firewood over long distances as it can be a carrier of invasive insects and diseases. Use firewood that originates from the area where it will be burned. Spotted Lanternfly and Spongy Moth eggs can hitch a ride on firewood and start infestations in new areas.

Before leaving a work or recreational site, look for and remove any insects, seeds and other plant parts that might be attached to your equipment, boots, gear, and vehicle.

Consult with your local nursery or master gardener to select plants that are not invasive for landscaping and gardening projects. A wide variety of beautiful native plants that thrive in your local environment are available at local nurseries and garden centers.

Don't plant seeds of invasive plants in wildlife food plots.

Always declare any plant material brought into the United States when returning from a trip abroad.

Anyone suspecting an invasive plant pest or disease in their area should contact VDACS's Office of Plant Industry Services at ReportAPest@vdacs.virginia.gov, USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service at (804) 226.5262 or their local Virginia Cooperative Extension Service agent at <https://ext.vt.edu/offices.html>.

More information on invasive plant pests and diseases can be found at <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant-pests-diseases>.

K-9 Killed by MS-13 Gang Members While Protecting DOC Officer

Three inmates affiliated with the MS-13 gang and housed at Sussex I State Prison, allegedly viciously attacked another inmate within one of the facility's housing units. A fourth inmate allegedly appeared to be supervising the brutal assault that occurred on Tuesday, April 2, according to a release from the Virginia Department of Corrections (VADOC).

Corrections Officer Kharmishia Phillip Fields and her assigned K-9 Rivan were on duty and working in the area at the time of the alleged attack. Phillip Fields and Rivan responded to stop the attack, protect the inmates, and restore order. Rivan was violently and repeatedly stabbed and kicked by the inmates and later tragically died at the facility while VADOC staff attempted lifesaving measures.

The officer, a trained K-9 handler and 4-year veteran of the department, sustained no serious injuries due to her training and Rivan's courageous actions. Order was restored by Phillip Fields, responding officers, and Rivan's actions. The attacked inmate was transported to a local hospital for injuries sustained in the attack and was later returned to the facility.

The inmates involved in the malicious attack are from El Salvador and Guatemala, and at least three are verified members of MS-13, according to the release. The DOC confirmed that all four of the inmates were in the United States illegally at the time of their arrest and conviction. The inmates are incarcerated for several charges, including first degree homicide, attempted rape, kidnapping/abduction, malicious wounding, use of a firearm in commission of a felony, child pornography charges, grand larceny, and possession of a Schedule III Drug.

"The safety of our corrections team is our agency's top priority," VADOC Director Chad Dotson said. "Officer Phillip Fields has the agency's full support during this difficult time, and I personally wish her well in her recovery. The heroics she displayed during this brutal assault demonstrate her courage, her commitment to public safety, and her care for the safety of the inmate population. I thank her for her service."

Dotson added that "the loss of Rivan is truly tragic, but it is important to remember he did not die in vain. He lost his life while potential-

ly saving the lives of two people, his assigned officer and an inmate. The VADOC will never forget Rivan's sacrifice."

The incident also underscores "the importance of the VADOC's K-9 program," Dotson said. "K-9s play a vital role at our facilities. They protect our correctional staff. They protect our inmates and also deter aggressive inmate behavior. The Virginia Department of Corrections never wants to lose one of its K-9s in the line of duty, but their important role in ensuring long-term public safety for the Commonwealth is undeniable."

Rivan, a Belgian Malinois who would have turned 6 on April 30, joined the Virginia Department of Corrections in 2019 and was certified in July 2019. Rivan came from a K-9 family with a strong public safety tradition. His father worked for a police department in Southwest Virginia and his mother worked for the United States Secret Service.

The VADOC will hold a memorial service for Rivan later this month.

Because of the active and ongoing investigation, additional information will not be provided at this time.

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Housing study outlines strategies for Patrick, other areas

By Staff Reports

Even with the low poverty level in Patrick County, 1,235 households have difficulty making monthly housing payments, a recent housing study concluded.

The study, conducted by the West Piedmont Planning District Commission (WPPDC) in collaboration with the Virginia Center for Housing Research at Virginia Tech (VCHR) and Housing Forward Virginia (HFV), also determined that of those households, 1,115 spend more than 50 percent of their income on housing costs – which may cause them to choose between housing and other necessities.

The median gross rent in the county was \$668 per month in 2022. The increase in rent between 2018 and 2022 indicates a need for rental housing. County stakeholders discussed limited availability of housing, especially rental housing, that is attractive to prospective residents and workers.

The median sale price of homes in Patrick County has increased at a steady rate since 2015. In 2021 the median sale price has almost doubled the 2014 price. In the same time period, the number of days that a house was on the market decreased from 188.5 to 78. This shows an increasing demand for homeownership.

Many of Patrick County homes were built more than 40 years ago and likely need significant maintenance and energy efficiency improvements. Improvements to older housing can help alleviate the cost burden among residents and lower energy cost. An estimated 1,627 households in Patrick County have high energy costs. There are 691 households that have low incomes and high energy costs which result in an energy burden.

Strategies outlined in the study include:

Improving existing housing conditions. According to the study, local governments can play a pivotal role in accelerating the repair and rehabilitation of deteriorating homes by establishing partnerships with local nonprofits and housing agencies that have expertise in home rehabilitation. The local government also can serve as a vital link between homeowners and funding sources, including state and federal grants earmarked for home repairs, initiate proactive code enforcement to identify homes most in need of repair, particularly in manufactured home communities. By working closely with community leaders, the local government can ensure that residents are fully informed about the resources and assistance programs available to them.

Leveraging water/sewer service expansion. An upcoming expansion of public water and sewer

utilities will inherently make residential development easier and more attractive to builders. The county can take advantage of this opportunity to encourage developers to focus their efforts on smaller “starter” homes, and in lieu of any new zoning ordinance or formal growth management regulations, the county can proactively design utility service policies to serve this goal. The primary tool for the county will be its power to issue hookup permits for new homes. For areas included in the service expansion, the county can design permit fees and the application review process to incentivize preferred housing types and find ways to align its subdivision regulations to supplement these measures.

For example, current regulations require new lots served by water and sewer to be at least one-half acre. This lot size minimum could be reduced (to one third or one quarter) to coincide with applicable criteria created for favorable permits. Offering lower or waived application fees, or expedited approvals, also could be offered to proposals that would increase the supply of lower-cost homes within the service area.

The study also recommended increasing Piedmont Community Services’ capacity to develop housing. It noted that those with physical or intellectual disabilities, or who have mental health or substance use challenges, have few appropriate housing options. Patrick County is not immune to this nationwide problem. In Virginia, Community Service Boards (CSBs) are often the primary provider of services for this population. Piedmont Community Services (PCS), the CSB serving Patrick and nearby localities, successfully operates several properties that provide supportive housing.

The county can help PCS expand its offerings in the county with a range of technical and financial assistance, such as helping PCS identify and assess potential locations for new housing, to include both vacant parcels and existing residential properties that are on the market. If PCS moves forward with a specific property, and to help lower costs and streamline the process, the county could offer incentives such as reducing or waiving fees for permits and utility hookups, proactively addressing any permit barriers, and reducing property taxes in accordance with applicable state enabling authority. The EDA also could offer grants to support property acquisition, site planning, and other pre-development costs, according to the study.

Study details housing challenges in region

By Staff Reports

Key findings of a recent housing study in the West Piedmont Planning District Commission (WPPDC) region indicate that households are facing challenges related to affordable starter homes, aging in place, and financial obstacles.

Workforce housing for low-wage workers and single-earner households was identified as a significant concern, according to the results of the comprehensive housing study conducted by the WPPDC in collaboration with the Virginia Center for Housing Research at Virginia Tech (VCHR) and Housing Forward Virginia (HFV).

The study’s goal was to address housing challenges and develop sustainable housing solutions for the region. Initiated in response to concerns identified by member localities, the study focuses on several key goals:

1. Developing strategies to improve the current housing stock and create new housing opportunities.

2. Providing information to assist economic developers, local governments, and housing developers in developing sustainable housing options to meet the needs of the growing region.

3. Offering strategies to facilitate regional collaboration and coordination to effectively address housing challenges.

The scope of work for the study included a comprehensive needs assessment, market analysis, and community outreach. This involved identifying specific issues affecting local communities such as workforce housing, housing equity, aging and substandard housing stock, and opportunities for rehabilitation, among others.

Additionally, the study team conducted listening sessions and engaged with local stakeholders to understand housing market conditions and challenges. This input helped shape the study to respond to local concerns and conditions. The study also includes population statistics, high-

lighting that the West Piedmont PDC Region comprises 99,190 households and a total population of 240,482. The region faces common housing challenges that lend themselves to regional initiatives and approaches to housing solutions.

“We are excited to present the findings of this comprehensive housing study, which will serve as a valuable resource for addressing the housing needs of the West Piedmont Planning District,” stated Sean Campbell, Housing Director for the WPPDC. “The collaborative efforts with the West Piedmont Planning District Commission, Virginia Tech, and Housing Forward Virginia have allowed us to develop tailored strategies that will positively impact our region’s housing landscape.”

The study’s final phase involved the development of tailored housing policies and strategies for each jurisdiction within the region. These solutions are detailed in the full technical report, which includes responsible actors, implementation steps, funding requirements, and best practices.

The release of this housing study represents a significant milestone in the WPPDC’s efforts to address housing challenges and promote sustainable development in the region. The comprehensive findings and tailored strategies will provide valuable guidance for local governments, developers, and stakeholders as they work towards meeting the housing needs of the West Piedmont Planning District. For more information and to access the full housing study report, visit www.westpiedmontpdc.org.

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Do you have gardening questions?



Buyers at last year's annual Plant Sale.



Before last year's annual sale got underway.



Business was brisk at last year's annual plant sale.

Kristine Adel, PCMG

The Patrick County Master Gardeners have answers, plus the group's annual Spring Plant Sale is almost here. The May 4 sale coincides with the annual yearning to begin gardening. Fresh gardening ideas are beginning to germinate, and soon, possibilities will spring up like violets, plans will begin to take root, and questions will buzz like bees.

For example:

Q: How can I get started on my garden without breaking the bank?

A: The Patrick County Master Gardeners' Spring Plant Sale pricing starts at \$1. The event will be held from 8 a.m. until noon on Saturday, May 4, in Stuart Rotary Main Building, 264 Woodland Drive, Stuart.

Q: What kinds of plants can I get at a local plant sale without driving across two counties to a chain store?

A: Our Spring Plant Sale has vegetable starts, herbs, perennials, annuals, bulbs, ferns, shrubs, hostas, irises, houseplants and more.

Q: Is there someone I can talk to about my gritty soil problems, or that spot I spotted, and the bug that's been bugging me - without anyone throwing shade, or

looking at me like I'm a blooming idiot?

A: Our Spring Plant Sale is staffed with Master Gardeners and Trainees who will be delighted to discuss your thorniest garden issues and help cultivate workable solutions. If they don't know, they know how to find out.

Q: Is The Patrick County Master Gardeners' Spring Plant Sale really the best way I can spend my Saturday morning on May 4th?

A: Yes. Not only are all of our plants grown and donated by members of our community, all proceeds from our sales flow back into our community through sharing with other local service organizations, participating in community service projects and awarding the Christopher Newton Cobbler Memorial Scholarship.

Plant donations will be accepted on Friday, May 3, from 10 a.m. till 12 p.m. and again from 5-7 p.m. at the Stuart Rotary Main Building, 264 Woodland Drive, Stuart.

The group is especially grateful to Eli Roberson and the Patrick County High School Horticulture Department for donating to the Spring Plant Sale. Thanks also to all of our community for your fantastic support

every year.

Last year, because of your support, the master gardeners were able to share the proceeds from the activities with several local service organizations, including the Patrick County Alzheimer's Group and The Dolly Parton Imagination Library of Patrick County, plus, it helped a member of the local Girl Scouts in the process to complete her Silver Award for Community Service.

The group also works directly with the community providing service and education through organizations such as Solutions to Empower People, (STEP), the Patrick County Library (Including maintaining a Seed Library), Patrick County Schools and The Landmark Center. Additionally, it maintains multiple Community Gardens in uptown and downtown Stuart and provides classes through our Learning Garden, which is moving soon to DeHart Park with times and dates to be announced.

To learn more, email pgmcassn@gmail.com.

Youngkin vetoes bills to require retail warning of invasive plant species

By Shelby Warren
Capital News Service

The governor vetoed two bills that required garden retailers to educate consumers on invasive plant species and encourage alternatives.

Sen. Saddam Salim, D-Fairfax, introduced Senate Bill 306 and Del. Holly Seibold, D-Fairfax, introduced House Bill 47.

Any place that sells an invasive plant species would have been required to display a sign nearby that warned consumers and encouraged them to ask about alternatives. The bills included a penalty of no more than \$500 for retailers who failed to post the signs and a stop sale order made until the signage was posted.

Invasive plant species are not native to the region and can negatively impact ecosystems. The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation has identified 90 invasive plant species, by rank of most to least invasive. Species on the list include kudzu, English ivy, pear trees, golden bamboo and periwinkle.

Gov. Glenn Youngkin vetoed the legislation on

April 2, and stated that DCR "already publishes and distributes educational information related to invasive plant species and the benefits of planting native species."

The state should continue efforts to educate consumers about invasive plant species and promote alternatives, Youngkin stated. The bills put additional requirements and civil penalties on "small businesses for the sale of plants with low levels of invasiveness, such as periwinkle and winter honeysuckle."

The governor also listed a procedural conflict with the bills, which made the DCR invasive species list the legally binding authority and would have upended regulatory protocol that requires a public notice and comment period, the governor stated.

The legislation had bipartisan support, and also buy-in from "the nursery industry, big-box stores, and anti-invasive plant advocates," Salim stated on X, formerly known as Twitter.

Salim attributed the "incredibly disappointing" veto to the governor choosing "politics over common sense policies." The senator plans to bring the bill back next year.

Invasive species have cost Virginia as much as \$1 billion annually, according to the Virginia Invasive Species website. This total exceeds \$120 billion nationally.

Current state code prohibits state agencies from planting, selling or propagating any listed invasive plant, unless necessary for "scientific or educational purposes or bona fide agricultural purposes."

Lawmakers recently approved a budget that distributes several million dollars across departments to help meet initiatives outlined by the Virginia Invasive Species Management Plan, and which includes the hiring of new employees.

Youngkin has vetoed 91 bills, some duplicates, as of April 3. He has until April 8 to take action on remaining bills and the budget. Then lawmakers will reconvene on April 17 to consider any of his proposed changes.

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

Wildlife officials monitoring increase in cases of avian flu in wild bird populations

In the past few weeks, the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) has received an increasing number of reports of sick or dead birds in the eastern part of the state with

the first report provided by a licensed wildlife rehabilitator in early March. Preliminary testing indicates that the likely cause is H5N1 highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI). Confirmatory

testing at the National Veterinary Services Laboratory is still pending.

At this time, infected birds have been found in the Northern Neck, Middle Peninsula and Hampton Roads regions of the state. Numerous species of shorebirds and waterbirds have been reported, but grebes, sanderlings, and gulls appear to be the most affected.

"DWR is working closely with our partners including the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) and the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) to ensure all Virginians and agricultural producers are aware of the increased detection and can take precautions to keep themselves and their livestock safe," said John Tracey, State Wildlife Veterinarian, DWR.

Waterfowl, and some shorebird and seabird species, often show minimal or no signs of illness when infected. However, these species can still transmit the virus to other birds that may get sick or die from the infection, including domestic poultry, raptors, and upland birds. Numerous species of wild mammals have also been shown to be susceptible and infection is often associated with scavenging of avian carcasses. During the spring months, Virginia sees numerous species of birds traveling overhead as they migrate to northern states and Canada. This can increase the chances of HPAI being transmitted to local wild populations and commercial flocks.

"All Virginia poultry owners should maintain the highest level of biosecurity as wild bird migrations along the Atlantic Flyway and recent HPAI detections in waterfowl confirm that HPAI remains present in our environment," said Dr.Carolynn Bissett, Program Manager, VDCAS Veterinary Services.

The public is advised to never pick up or handle dead wild birds. If you need to handle or dispose of a dead

bird, wear rubber gloves and other personal protective equipment, such as a mask and eye protection, then bury or incinerate the carcass, or double bag it and dispose of it in a landfill. After disposing of the carcass, wash your hands and clothing and disinfect your shoes. If you are frequently in contact with poultry, including backyard flocks, or other birds, you are encouraged to have separate clothing and shoes dedicated to use only in the areas where you keep your birds. Taking these precautions will help reduce the risk of spreading the virus.

The public can help monitor this wildlife health issue. If you observe any of the following wild bird occurrences, please notify DWR by calling the Virginia Wildlife Conflict Helpline at 855-571-9003 or email wildlifehealth@dwr.virginia.gov.

- Five or more dead vultures, waterfowl, shorebirds, or seabirds found in the same area
- Sick or dead eagles, hawks, owls, or turkeys, excluding carcasses found on the road
- Ten or more dead birds in the same area for any other wild bird species

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) considers the transmission risk of avian influenza from wild birds, backyard birds, and commercial poultry to people to be low. There have been rare cases of human infection with these viruses. People who are sick and might have been exposed to animals with confirmed or suspected HPAI should isolate away from others, including household members, and contact their local health department. Your local health department can help to coordinate testing and connect you with healthcare, if needed. For additional information about prevention and antiviral treatment of bird flu viruses in people, visit the CDC's website.



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Regulations to help manage hunter, landowner conflicts proposed

By Shelby Warren
Capital News Service

State wildlife officials recently voted to open a comment period for two proposed regulations that could manage how hunting dogs are allowed to enter private property, and made several other recommendations.

The Department of Wildlife Resources presented on March 20 several proposals drawn from the work of the Hound-Hunters & Private Landowners Stakeholder Advisory Committee, which began in March last year.

The University of Virginia's Institute for Engagement and Negotiation helped gather data with the committee and presented its final report to the board.

The Board of Wildlife Resources made seven proposals. Two of the recommendations will have a 45-day public comment period.

The Board wants to hear from the public about a proposal to require the use of GPS dog collars for any dog used in deer or bear hunting, if the animal is not already restrained. These collars are estimated to cost between \$250 to \$350.

Another proposed regulation up for debate would require a hunter to exercise "reasonable efforts" to prevent dogs from entering a landowner's property if either the landowner or a conservation police officer has stated that the dogs are not welcomed there.

Other proposals made included hiring and better training for conservation police officers, prohibiting hunting outside of open season and enhancing education efforts.

DWR has attempted to balance the state's long history of dog hunting with the rights of property owners as tension has escalated in recent years. The agency has a collection of studies going back to 2008 on potential solutions to help with conflicts between the two groups.

The growing concern has mostly been the presence of hunting dogs on land where they are not wanted, something that has happened more often as land ownership patterns change and the state population increases.

A hound hunting permit is one possibility floated a few times in the General Assembly but never passed.

Budget amendments were submitted in the House and Senate during the 2024 session, to create a permit system by Oct. 31. The proposed license cost was \$18, on par with other hunting license fees, according to Sen. David Marsden, D-Fairfax.

Marsden created the Senate budget amendment and has previously introduced legislation. The General Assembly passed the final budget and sent it to the governor without the permit language included.

Marsden also introduced Senate Bill 712 this year, which would keep hunters from releasing dogs within 15 feet of the edge of a state or local roadway. The bill included a misdemeanor charge, with an increasing penalty for subsequent violations. The bill had split support,



Department of Wildlife Resources is a state agency that provides resources on wildlife sport and conservation. Photo: Shelby Warren/VCU Capital News Service



A hound mix dog sits near a tree in a field. The Board of Wildlife Resources recently proposed two regulations that could manage a growing conflict between hunters and landowners.

and Lt. Gov. Winsome Earle-Sears cast the tie-breaking vote that killed the bill.

Marsden sees the matter as a public safety issue that pits people against each other if hunters "don't care where they release their hounds."

"So I guess that means that we're socialists," Marsden said. "We think everybody ought to be able to use anybody's property without their permission."

Robbie Shackelford, with the Newtown Hunt Club, has hunted for over 45 years. He believes the state's right to retrieve law should be upheld. Virginia and Minnesota are the only states with a law that allows hunters to access private property to retrieve hunting dogs.

"We as hound hunters treat our dogs like children and I have the right to go retrieve my children when they get in a place I don't want them to be," Shackelford said.

Hunting is a way of life for rural Virginia, but it is the people from Northern Virginia who don't like it, Shackelford said.

"But are we to stop what we're doing because one percent of the population in a rural area has got some issues?" he said. "To me, that's not fair."

This past hunting season, DWR followed up on hound hunting complaints in "hotspot" areas. They made 2,744 hunter contacts and found 128 violations. Most were handled with a warning, and 34 received a summons.

"Why is the number so low on citations?" said a Prince George landowner who identified himself as Richard Tetterton at the DWR meeting. "Because you don't have laws that are enforceable."

Problems will continue until laws are put in place that allow the DWR officers to make arrests, according to Tetterton.

"We have a proverbial intersection where everybody keeps having wrecks, but the local government and the government don't want to do a

thing about it until somebody dies," Tetterton said. "That's what you're dealing with."

Jim Medeiros, a stakeholder in DWR's advisory committee, has experienced hunting dogs disturbing his animals, as a private landowner and farmer. A cow was giving birth in a pasture when a pack of hounds came onto his property and interrupted the birth, he said.

"So I'm literally standing over the calf as cows were running back and forth, trying to make sure they go around me and nobody accidentally steps on this calf," Medeiros said.

Medeiros is currently fighting a lawsuit against DWR and the constitutionality of Virginia's right to retrieve law. Medeiros said he has nothing against hunting, "in any way, shape or form."

"But when a person can override private property rights, you can say I'm going to do on your property what I wish to do and you can say nothing about it," Medeiros said. "That's not what our constitution is about."

Members of the public will be able to comment on the two proposed hunting regulations once the forum is open.

DWR is wrapping up some administrative housekeeping and expects to have things ready in the next few weeks, according to public information officer Shelby Crouch. The department will then notify the public about the process.

The Board of Wildlife Resources encouraged people to participate in the comment period, "whichever side of the issue you may be on."

Once the comment period ends, the Board will meet to decide if they adopt the hunting regulations.

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