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

Patrick's foster care unit may be first for state take over

Foster "children have been hurt. Two of the incidents I know about were infants." - Steve Marshall

By Staff Reports

The county's foster care system has been declining, with at least two infants and older children in foster care being hurt, according to Steve Marshall, who represents the Blue Ridge District on the Patrick County Board of Supervisors.

The board has known about the issues within the local department of social services, some of which were outlined in an August 1, 2023, email from Patrick County Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court Judge Kimberly R. Belongia.

"It would be impossible for children to have not been hurt when you have that level of apathy," Marshall said of the board's inaction. "You have foster homes that haven't been supervised or inspected in over seven months."

Noting the "dire circumstances" the department is facing, the judge wrote that she "wanted the board to know that, in my opinion, the situation is only getting worse every day. These circumstances are likely to cause Patrick County a significant increase in spending and exposure to liability in the near future."

"Currently, PCDDSS is severely understaffed, and has an approximately 300 percent increase in the number of children in foster care



Steve Marshall

compared to past years," Belongia wrote, and noted at the time that there were 39 children in DSS custody. In the past, the average at any given time was nine or 10 children.

"For the last month, nearly every case I have heard has involved a foster care plan that has not been filed with the court in a timely manner. This lack of compliance has caused continuances which may put the county on the hook for placement costs for the children it would not otherwise have had to cover," the

(See Foster Care p.3)



The front entrance of the former hospital. (Photos by Pat Delaney)



Dr. Sameer Suhail, president and CEO of Foresight Health. (Contributed photo)

Former CEO of Foresight Health indicted in Chicago

By Staff Reports

Sameer Suhail, M.D., president & CEO of Foresight Health which owned the hospital in Patrick County, was among those indicted last week in Chicago in connection with an alleged scheme to embezzle more than \$15 million in hospital funds, according to a superseding indictment returned in U.S. District Court in Chicago.

Clayton Kendrick, of the Mayo River District, said the county and its Economic Development Authority (EDA) did not invest in the hospital deal. The county "was very careful with this one, and I am glad."

An indictment is not evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent and entitled to a fair trial at which the government has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

Suhail, 47, of Chicago, was charged with six counts of wire fraud, six counts of aiding and abetting embezzlement, and two counts of money laundering, according to Illinois authorities.

"This is unfortunate, disturbing bad news for our community," Del. Wren Williams, R-Stuart, said, adding that it delays the process to reopen the hospital. However, "we are continuing to make progress and move forward."

Doug Perry, chairman of the Patrick County Board of Supervisors, said he really doesn't care about Suhail's situation.

"We've got more important things to do. He made his bed, he can lay in it, and we've got more important things to do to move forward than give whatever he's done in the past

(See Foresight Health p.3)

County weighs options to address unexpected financial issues

By Staff Reports

The Patrick County Board of Supervisors discussed ways to address unexpected expenses, that include an additional \$83,868 for required line items and an estimated \$68,719 for maintenance repairs, plus an additional \$75,806 in school funding.

Clayton Kendrick, of the Mayo River District, asked how the \$170,431 in unexpended school funds was spent. The funds were returned to the county after the school division's Average Daily Membership dropped in the last fiscal year's budget.

County Administrator Beth Simms said the funds were spent to cover expenses in local departments that went over budget.

"We had to appropriate. We had to cover" healthcare expenses at the jail and expenses for other county



The Patrick County Board of Supervisors recognized P&HCC Coach Robbie Campbell for the P&HCC Softball Team winning the NJCAA Official 3 Softball World Series.

departments, like janitorial," Simms said, adding the county must pay for the jail medical bills "somehow, somehow."

Simms said that when crafting the

FY25 budget, county staff were not aware of the unexpected expenses presented to the board on Monday. She explained "the calculation" tool in the state budget changed, after our

budget was approved, so there's additional Required Local Match (RLM) for the school system."

After re-calculating the local match, and after the school division agreed to provide the county with additional funding for School Resource Officers (SROs), the additional amount the county had to give to the school division dropped to \$75,806.

Another portion of the unexpected expenses arose "at the animal shelter," Simms said. Boyce-Holland Veterinary Services "has gracefully not charged us for veterinary services up until now, is my understanding for quite a long time, and we will need to start paying a percentage of veterinary services that are performed."

After the meeting, Jones estimated those services would cost \$6,000.

(See Financial Issues p.11)

Pay, timing of public input questioned

By Taylor Boyd

The Patrick County Board of Supervisors heard from several residents at its Monday, July 8 meeting.

Kurt Bozenmayer addressed the board regarding changes in the agenda structure of the board meetings.

Bozenmayer said on January 8, when the board adopted an amended Rules of Procedure, one of the amendments that was suggested by Steve Marshall, of the Blue Ridge District, was to move the public comment to just before the closed session period "to give the public an opportunity to be heard on the business of the meeting."

Before that, he said the public comment portion of the agenda typically took place after the opening ceremonies and before the board discussed its new business and old business.

That arrangement "provided an opportunity for citizens to comment on the listed topics before action was taken on those topics by the supervisors. Under the newly adopted rules, public comment is now only permitted after the items under new business and old business have been discussed, and possibly acted upon, by the board," Bozenmayer said, adding the net effect of the change is that public input before discussion and/or action by the board is discouraged, if not outright suppressed.

"I appear before you tonight to ask

that you amend those Rules of Procedure to restore public comment to its previous place on the agenda, and thereby allow the citizens to speak their minds in public, prior to discussion and action by the supervisors," he said.

Alternatively, Bozenmayer said individual board members could host town-hall type meetings in their respective districts, at least quarterly, to provide a public forum for dialogue between residents and the board.

"In recent years, only supervisor Perry (Doug Perry, chairman, and of the Smith River District) has taken the time and effort to host such meetings," Bozenmayer said. "In either case, I believe that communication between the public and the administration can be improved beyond its current state."

Leo White said the last time he attended a board meeting, he was talking about the budget before it was passed and pay raises within it to certain positions.

"Mr. (Jonathan) Wood, before the end of this you said that we've got to get with Richmond because that's where the problem's at. I have an email here dated May 15, 2024, from Mr. Doug Perry to a citizen in this county," he said.

Quoting from the email, White read, "the raises come from Gov. Youngkin's (See Public Input p. 3)



Owners Michael Fiumara (left) and Steven Frankenbach (right) purchased Tony's Pizza in February and held a soft opening in early July.

Pizza shop reopens under new management

By Taylor Boyd

Tony's Pizza has reopened under new management, with plans to continue offering fresh, Italian-style pizza.

Owners Michael Fiumara and Steven Frankenbach purchased the business earlier this year.

Fiumara said the pair grew up together, and decided to purchase the property after he was laid off from a finance position in North Carolina.

"Steve calls me up, he's like, 'do you want to play golf?' and I was like, 'yeah,

I'm actually playing with my whole office. We all got laid off.' As we were playing golf, everybody was talking about what's the next step and this and that, he was like, 'there's a pizzeria for sale in Stuart,'" Fiumara said.

Fiumara, whose family owned a pizzeria in Long Island, said it was always something he wanted to try doing. As a result, the duo decided to look into getting into the business.

Frankenbach said the two consid-

(See Pizza Shop p.13)

Reynolds Homestead honors those enslaved on the former tobacco plantation

On a sunny and breezy Wednesday afternoon, June 19, about 70 people gathered at Virginia Tech's Reynolds Homestead in Critz, Virginia, to honor the men and women who were enslaved at the former Rock Spring Plantation.

A committee of men and women who are descendants of people who were enslaved on the plantation, led by committee chair Kimble Reynolds, Jr., planned the event that brought descendants together to share in their collective history and pay tribute to their ancestors.

The Reynolds Homestead, given to Virginia Tech in 1970, serves as part forest research project, part community gathering place, and part educational and cultural center. It includes the restored 1843 home where tobacco magnate R.J. Reynolds and his 15 siblings were born, several historic outbuildings, and a community engagement center.

Tours of the historic home, grounds, and African American cemetery were offered, as well as the opportunity to view historian John Whitfield's research on the enslaved community, which included birth records, listings of those who lived on the plantation and those who were buried there.

Under a large white tent on the lawn beside the historic home, the choir from the First Christian Church of Stuart, sang rousing gospel tunes as people gathered. Kimble Reynolds welcomed the guests and provided remarks on the origin of Juneteenth, also known as Freedom Day for African Americans across the United States. Juneteenth commemorates the day when word of emancipation reached the enslaved people of Texas, the last state to free the men, women and children who had been enslaved there.

Following opening remarks, guests

chatted with family and friends over a BBQ dinner supplied by Hylton's Wood-Cooking Grill. Children and youth made bracelets and necklaces with Pan African colored beads of red, green, and gold. Red represents blood shared and shed. Green represents natural resources and growth. Gold represents hope, justice, and equality.

As plates were cleared from the tables, guests were given leaf-shaped cards on which there was a name of someone who had been enslaved, or buried on Rock Spring Plantation. Reynolds again took the stage to lead a ceremony in their honor.

"For the enslaved there was a day-to-day struggle to plant and nourish the seeds of hope. And, in the dark hours of their existence, they used their voices to light a torch of hope to shine against the resistance of oppression. Inch by inch, day by day, generation after generation, songs like 'Swing Low Sweet Chariot' amplified the voices for a better tomorrow. A solemn but powerful battle cry for emancipation. And there is no battle greater than the battle for freedom," Reynolds said. "For some, the battle lasted for years. For others, the battle lasted for lifetimes.

Generations ago, our enslaved ancestors brought forth on this land the audacious idea and dreams that one day we would stand here in conditions better than they saw themselves. We sit and stand today on their battlefield."

Following his remarks, Reynolds asked participants to raise the leaves they held as he called out the names of those who had been enslaved or buried at Rock Spring Plantation. As each name was raised, a brief silence followed to honor the person whose name had been called. Once all names were called, Reynolds invited participants to exit the tent and hang the



Three generations of descendants of Kitty Penn Reynolds stand near the historic home at Reynolds Homestead. Left to right: Dana Reynolds and Reverend Eugene Reynolds (Kitty's grandsons); Richard A. Reynolds (Kitty's great-grandson) and Kimble J. Reynolds Jr. (Kitty's great-great-grandson). (Photo by Julie Walters Steele for Virginia Tech)

leaves on a wooden tree constructed to serve as a memory tree honoring the enslaved community.

When all the leaves had been hung, participants were invited to join hands in a circle around the tree where Bishop Burgie Penn led everyone in a congregational song and offered a benediction.

As the program concluded, Reynolds gathered some of his relatives for a photograph beside the tree. All were descendants of Kitty Reynolds, who was the enslaved woman who was tasked with caring for Hardin and Nancy Reynolds' children. Three generations stood proudly by the tree, two of Kitty's grandsons, one great-grandson, and Kimble Reynolds, Jr. her great-great-grandson.



Guests at the Juneteenth celebration gather around the memory tree to honor those enslaved at Rock Spring Plantation. (Photo by Kristin Hylton for Virginia Tech)

Pets of the Week



This puppy is a sweetheart and just 5 to 6 months old. He was left behind when his litter mates were adopted. He is so sad he doesn't have a home yet, please come visit him.

This handsome guy was found near Woolwine Elementary and the Dollar Store traveling with a female similar to him.

Visit the Patrick County Public Animal Shelter's (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.

Majority of Virginia localities are under a drought advisory

The majority of Virginia's localities are under either a drought advisory watch or warning.

According to a recent Drought Advisory Declaration from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and the Virginia Drought Monitoring Task Force, 12 counties are under a drought advisory warning and 95 counties and cities are under a drought watch.

The declaration was issued to advise Virginians in the affected areas to prepare for a potential drought. While recent rainfall has helped in some areas, it has not alleviated conditions for farmers in many areas across the commonwealth, especially in the Shenandoah and Northern Virginia regions.

A drought or severe drought designation is initiated by local U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency offices and approved by the U.S. secretary of agriculture. This type of designation enables farmers in the affected counties to be eligible for certain assistance from FSA. Farmers in the counties and cities that are contiguous to the primary drought declaration counties also are eligible to

apply for the same emergency assistance.

This assistance includes FSA emergency loans. When eligibility requirements are met, the FSA will assess each emergency loan application individually and will consider specific circumstances and needs. Farmers in eligible localities have eight months from the date of the disaster declaration to apply for emergency loans.

The Virginia drought declaration is different from a USDA disaster designation. As conditions warrant, the USDA may issue a natural disaster designation for localities.

This is the second consecutive year that farmers have experienced drought conditions across much of Virginia with over 60 localities receiving a USDA disaster designation last year, according to the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Farmers affected by drought conditions are relying on irrigation to keep their crops growing, but that can be a costly endeavor.

"The corn and soybeans are really affected by this drought," shared David Hickman, owner of Dublin Farms in Accomack County and a Virginia Farm Bureau Federation board member. "The parts of the farm that aren't irrigated are going to have low yields." The farm relies on surface ponds for water supply, so without some rainfall, that source is limited.

"Our potatoes are the most valuable crop, so we'll irrigate the potatoes, and what water is left over will be put on the farm," Hickman said.

John Cromwell, owner of Cromwell's Produce in Virginia Beach, said even growing with irrigation can be a struggle.

"Almost anybody will tell you irrigation can be as much a problem as it is a solution—moving the pipes and keeping everything running. But we've been able to keep it going," he shared.

"Droughts can severely impact agriculture by reducing crop and forage yields, and lead to additional cost for feed, watering and destocking livestock," said Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Matthew Lohr. "Droughts also reduce growth in our forest and increase the risks of forest fires. We can all take steps to help our farmers by conserving water and buying local. We can also help protect our forests by adhering to burn bans and putting out campfires."

In addition to the USDA disaster designation, the federal agency has a variety of other programs to assist farmers who may suffer from natural disasters. Virginia Cooperative Extension also has resources to help before, during and after emergency situations. Farmers should contact their local Extension office to access information that may improve the drought resilience of their operations.

For farmers who may need to sell or buy extra hay due to drought conditions, VDACS hosts a Hay Clearing House through its Division of Marketing.

PATRICK COUNTY BRANCH LIBRARY						
JULY		2024				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
1	2	3	4	5	6	
			CLOSED FOR INDEPENDENCE DAY	Sit & Stitch 11:00	Family Movie 11:00 Trolls Band Together	
8	9	10	11	12	13	
Yoga 10:00*	Summer Reading Program 11:00 Splatter Art	Walking Club 9:00	Chair Exercise 10:15	Storytime at the Farmer's Market 10:00	Board Game Day	
Chair Exercise 1:30		Book Bingo 10:30	Teen Program 11:00 Recycled Art			
LEGO Club 4:00		Yoga 1:15*	Not Your Mother's Book Club 5:00			
15	16	17	18	19	20	
Yoga 10:00*	Summer Reading Program 11:00 We're Going on a Bear Hunt	Walking Club 9:00	Chair Exercise 10:15	Storytime at the Farmer's Market 10:00		
Chair Exercise 1:30		Retired Teacher's Book Club 11:00	Teen Program 11:00 Decorative Journaling			
LEGO Club 4:00	Books & Bakes 5:00	Yoga 1:15* Legal Aid 5:00 Protective Orders		Sit & Stitch 11:00		
22	23	24	25	26	27	
Yoga 10:00*	Summer Reading Program 11:00 VMNH Exploring Nature	Walking Club 9:00	Chair Exercise 10:15	Storytime at the Farmer's Market 10:00		
Chair Exercise 1:30		Paint Like Seurat*	Teen Program 11:00 Book Vs. Movie			
LEGO Club 4:00		Yoga 1:15*				
29	30	31				
Yoga 10:00*	Summer Reading Finale 11:00 Olympic Games	Walking Club 9:00	Interested or have questions about our programs? Call us at 276-694-3352. *Registration required.			
Chair Exercise 1:30		Yoga 1:15*				
LEGO Club 4:00						

DMV Select in Stuart changes hours

The new hours for the DMV Select office in Stuart, effective Monday, July 15, and until further notice, are Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.

County Administrator Beth

Simms said there is currently only 1 full-time employee working in the DMV. The county is searching for a DMV Select Clerk. Once that position is filled, the office will resume regular hours.

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Foster Care

(cont. from page 1)

judge wrote.

Belongia also noted DSS workers were not getting their applications for Medicaid IV-E funds filed on time. If children's placements are not paid for by IV-E funds, they are paid by the Children's Service Act (CSA) funds.

"I'm sure you are all aware that the county's reimbursement percentage of CSA funds is significantly higher than with IV-E funds. So, the county is already spending more money than it should simply because there is not enough staff to properly service each of these cases," Belongia wrote in the email.

"Effective August 4, 2023, PCDSS will only have one foster care Family Services Specialist on staff," the email stated. However, that worker was on maternity leave until October 2023.

"That means there will be no workers in this unit. All of this unit's responsibilities will be shifted to the Child Protective Services (CPS) unit," Belongia wrote, and noted that then-DSS director Joan Rogers requested the approval of two new positions in February 2023. "The board of supervisors denied both of her requests."

Rogers left the agency last year, according to Marshall.

In a June 14, 2024, email to County Administrator Beth Simms, Belongia stated the situation is considerably worse now.

"Please note that there are now over 50 children in foster care in Patrick County. There is currently one foster care supervisor and NO foster care social workers on staff. Additionally, since this letter was written, PCDSS has been monitored by the Virginia Department of Social Services, and is now subject to a VDSS Corrective Action Plan.

"Not to be overdramatic, but I am concerned that PCDSS is close to being the first jurisdiction in Virginia to have the state come in and 'take over' its foster care unit. A takeover is un-

charted water, but I can only imagine, any cost of such an occurrence would be charged back to the jurisdiction," Belongia's email stated.

Marshall said DSS now has 34 children in foster care, one supervisor and one worker with another scheduled to start working next week.

"The absolute, most horrible maximum that you're supposed to have per worker is 15. We had one worker for over 50 children, it's just not acceptable. We have 53 now as far as I know. As of Tuesday," July 9, 53 kids, he said.

Marshall believes there's no way the board didn't know there were issues with DSS. In addition to the emails from Belongia, "there's indications, things come up."

Because the situation was so dire, Marshall was among those who wanted the board initially charged with overseeing the department dismantled, and an advisory board appointed instead. That way, the county – and supervisors – are directly responsible.

"With the Advisory Committee, that makes the board of supervisors essentially the Board of Social Services (BSS). Then we appoint a representative, which is now Beth (Simms). She becomes the Board of Social Services. The one person now is the Board of Social Services under the law," he said.

At the February 6 BSS meeting, the board voted unanimously to dissolve the Administrative Board of Social Services (ABSS) and requested the board of supervisors establish an advisory board in its place.

On February 12, Marshall requested the board of supervisors convert the BSS to an advisory board. The board of supervisors voted at its April 8 meeting to appoint Simms as the BSS, which in effect dissolved the administration board and established the advisory board.

The advisory board currently has two members – Jane Cardwell, who serves as the at large

member, and Marshall, who is the board's representative.

Marshall said two applications have been received for the Mayo River District position. He made a motion to appoint Samantha Willard to the position at the July 8 meeting but received no second. The other applicant, John Sayer, submitted his application on July 9.

Marshall said what he wants to do is, and is attempting to do, is engender some kind of sense of urgency on the board.

"Forget the money, all I keep hearing about hiring people is we can't pay what other people do. Well, you don't have a choice. Not only is it the right thing to do, but don't forget this is all state mandated, and federal law mandated," he said, adding the county is supposed to be taking care of youngsters in foster care.

Marshall said he also keeps hearing about how DSS trains its employees, but they then leave.

"They won't (leave) if you pay them and incentivize them. If you're paying them more and you're incentivizing them more than Henry County, they're not going to leave Patrick County to go to Henry County or any other county," he said. "It should be a no brainer and just do it because you have to fix the issue."

If the state comes in and "takes over," Marshall said instead of it paying 84-87 percent of all costs, the county will have to pay 100 percent of all costs.

"I think we're extremely close right now to having the state come in and take over. The board of supervisors is in a position to stop it. We're in a position to do what needs to be done to rectify the problem," he said.

Marshall said if the board doesn't adopt an urgent posture to rectify the situation with DSS, he believes the state should come in and "take over. Whatever solution is needed to keep the kids safe."

Foresight Health

(cont. from page 1)

any attention. We got no hand in it, and we've got a lot of things in the works to move the county forward and improve," Perry said.

Perry said he doesn't know what will happen with the hospital property since it was sold

Foresight HS Property Holdings – Blue Ridge LLC, sold the former hospital property in March to Wolf of Wabash, LLC, in Illinois.

After the sale, "who knows what kind of shenanigans and tomfoolery they're up to," Perry said. "I don't know what they'll do with it, and at this point, as run down as it is or the shape that it's in, I don't know what can be done with it. We'll just have to wait and see."

"The recent news of Mr. Sameer Suhail being indicted is another blow to the community's trust, regarding the development of the former hospital property in the Town of Stuart; however, it is not surprising news," said Bryce Simmons, Stuart Town Manager. "In my professional capacity, I have tried to work with Foresight Health to identify zoning issues, needs of the community, and connect the company to people that can help. The majority, if not all of those efforts, have been met with broken promises or complete silence, which is extremely frustrating when trying to plan for improved services in the community.

"On multiple occasions, our community leaders have been blamed for the lack of a hospital, when the reality is, we cannot advocate for a



The grass has grown nearly as tall as the sign at the hospital.

healthcare system that is based on lies and misrepresentations," Simmons said. "I understand the need for better healthcare in the Town of Stuart and in Patrick County; however, I cannot in good faith, bankrupt the local government for that sole purpose. I do look forward to working with the new owner of the property and hope that we can build a trusting relationship, aimed at providing this critical need for our citizens."

In a release announcing the indictments, the U.S. Attorney's Office in the Northern District of Illinois wrote that the former Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of a Chicago hospital schemed with a colleague and the owner of a medical supply company to embezzle the funds.

As the hospital's CFO, Anosh Ahmed was responsible for managing the hospital's finances, including its Finance, Accounting, and Accounts Payable departments. From 2018 to 2022, Ahmed allegedly schemed with the hospital's Chief Transformation Officer, Heather



The hospital property appears unkempt and unmaintained.

Bergdahl, and the medical supply company owner, Suhail, to cause the hospital to issue payments to vendor companies for purported goods and services that the defendants knew had not been provided, the indictment states. Many of the purported vendor companies were allegedly created by Suhail and Ahmed under various names to conceal their association with the fraudulent payments, the indictment states. Bergdahl allegedly opened bank accounts in the names of two legitimate hospital vendors and caused the hospital to deposit fraudulent payments into those accounts, the indictment states.

In an effort to conceal the scheme, Ahmed, Bergdahl, and Suhail allegedly created fictitious invoices, payment requests, delivery re-

ceipts, and other false documents about goods and services purportedly provided to the hospital. As a result of the scheme, the three allegedly caused the hospital to pay more than \$15 million into bank accounts that they controlled, the indictment states.

The superseding indictment returned Thursday also charges Ahmed, 40, of Houston, Texas, with eight counts of wire fraud, four counts of embezzlement, eleven counts of aiding and abetting embezzlement, and three counts of money laundering. Bergdahl, 37, of Houston, Texas, is charged with 14 counts of wire fraud, 21 counts of embezzlement, and one count of money laundering.

The investigation is ongoing.

Public Input

(cont. from page 1)

state budget plan and took effect back in December. The state reimburses the county for those salaries and most of the salaries of those within these departments. The county does need to contribute to the salaries in the amount of difference between positions, but most of it is paid by the state. This is where the state's compensation board comes in."

"To get a better understanding of the taxpayer's true expenses instead of looking at the end expenditures, factors, and subtracting the compensation board along with federal and state grants from the total expenditures. County taxes aren't floating all the salaries and those raises. The state's increases have caused the county to increase some salaries in order to keep pay equal," White said, and asked Perry where in the email were constitutional officers mentioned.

"You made people believe that the pay raises that we're talking about were set forth by Gov Youngkin. I even went and talked to two senators, two – a Democratic and a Republican

so nobody could tell me I'm a hypocrite. They both told me that they don't have no idea what you're talking about" that the pay hikes were called for in Youngkin's budget.

White said this was when the senators informed him about the constitutional officers, who are elected officers such as the sheriff and circuit court clerk.

"Now, from what these two both told me, the Democratic Senator and the Republican Senators' aides told me was that the compensation board sets pay for them throughout the state of Virginia. They pay a portion of it as well as the county. Now, if the county decides to give the sheriff a raise, that's on us. We pay that. They (state) won't," he said.

White said he specifically asked County Administrator Beth Simms and others if the state paid for non-constitutional officers and was told, "no."

"So, for you to sit here and call me a liar - I've got the emails. Where did you talk about constitutional officers until just today? You didn't, so don't



Kurt Bozenmayer requested the public comment portion of the meeting be reinstated to the first part of the meeting to give residents an opportunity to be heard before the board votes.



During his comments to the board, Leo White read an email he received from Doug Perry.

call me a liar again. I don't appreciate that. You made people believe that the state is paying these" raises," White said, adding that he essentially was told by Perry, 'oh don't worry about it, they're getting these big raises, don't worry about it' because the state is paying some of it.

"They're not. Constitutional officers, yes. So next time you call somebody a liar, make sure I don't have an email where you're saying nothing but it," White said.

- Jack Betts discussed the efforts to finish paving Belcher Mountain Road.
- Steve Ferring discussed the county's funding.

NATO

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Towards the end of World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin convened for the Yalta Conference.

It was discussed at this meeting the extent to which the Soviet Union could exercise influence over future governments of the liberated Eastern European nations.

Following Germany's surrender, the heads of the Allied powers met again for the Potsdam Conference. This time however featured President Harry Truman on behalf of the United States, and Prime Minister Clement Attlee would replace Churchill in the middle of the sixteen-day summit.

Yalta and Potsdam helped set the stage for a superpower conflict between the U.S. and USSR. A Cold War began to brew.

As Churchill so famously proclaimed while touring the United States, an iron curtain had descended across Europe.

Soviet-controlled states began to pop up. The democratically-elected government in Czechoslovakia was overthrown in 1948 by the communists with Soviet support.

Following World War II, the communist People's Republic of Yugoslavia under Marshall Tito also formed.

This expansionism initiated the West to act. NATO was created in 1949, the treaty being signed by twelve countries at the Departmental Auditorium, known today as the Andrew W. Mellon Auditorium, in Washington, D.C.

President Truman remarked at the signing ceremony: "If there is anything certain today, if there is anything inevitable in the future, it is the will of the people of the world for freedom and for peace."

Freedom and peace.

To achieve these, NATO understood how integral it was to establish a strong collective defense capability.

The agreement allowed for the member states to build a command structure, resulting in a military headquarters. NATO tapped victorious American General Dwight D. Eisenhower as the group's first Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR).

Additionally, the Washington Treaty contained Article 5, which states that any attack on a NATO ally is considered an attack on all NATO allies. Therefore, NATO allies will come to the defense of a NATO ally under attack.

A strong and unified military organization could promote deterrence and collective security, as opposed to threatening the defense of member nations and the world.

To neutralize potential Soviet expansionism in the continent, NATO took on an aggressive role of adding members.

Greece, which experienced a civil war thanks to communist forces,

and Turkey joined the alliance in the 1950's.

For a time, Turkey had U.S. Jupiter missiles.

Following West Germany's accession to NATO in 1955, the Soviet Union orchestrated its own collective defense agreement known as the Warsaw Pact, pitting an Eastern bloc against a Western bloc.

The iron grip of the Russian bear only grew, as garrisons of Soviet troops were stationed in Eastern bloc countries.

Their armies helped suppress the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968 to halt reform.

Despite the Cold War continuing, after NATO's formation the world did not see additional Soviet expansion in Europe.

The tearing-down of the Berlin Wall, after Ronald Reagan's famous speech, marked a pivotal point in the Cold War, with Western leadership firmly overwhelming the Soviets on the world stage.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 crowned NATO as victorious.

NATO accomplished its goal of defeating Soviet expansionism, but there were other objectives to meet.

In the seventy-five years of its existence, the world has changed dramatically.

Many territories under Soviet control sought nation-state status. NATO ensued with its mission to accommodate political integration into Europe.

Most former Warsaw Pact countries, when free to choose, chose democratic republican forms of government and applied to join NATO.

The Baltic Republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were restored.

NATO intervened in Yugoslavia after it dissolved and bloody conflicts arose.

Thirty-plus years following the collapse of the Soviet Union, critics have argued NATO has served its purpose and the alliance is no longer necessary.

Critics also point out that many NATO members historically have not met the threshold of committing 2% of their GDP to defense spending.

As the authoritarian regimes of China, Russia and Iran are either taking land, intimidating countries, or both, the foundational reason for NATO still rings true.

That reason?

It is the will of the people of the world to have freedom and peace.

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



Morgan Griffith

Representative

RAISING TAXES AGAIN IN PATRICK COUNTY

The air conditioning system (HVAC) at the Patrick County Branch Library is over 30 years old and only half of it is working. The library temperature is currently reaching into the low 80's in the afternoon, and manager Garry Clifton advises that the library will close early if the temperature reaches 85 degrees F.

The cost for replacing the HVAC in the library is estimated to be around \$61,000 and this was presented to the Patrick County Board of Supervisors at the 08 July meeting (the County owns the library building.) It will have to be done sooner or later, but it is needed urgently NOW in the summer heat.

County Administrator Beth Simms presented several options to pay for this replacement: take the money from the County's \$11 million-plus Unrestricted Reserve Funds, or raise the meals tax, the transient occupancy tax, or the personal property/machine & tools tax. During discussions at the 08 July meeting, the supervisors approved getting additional quotes for the 22 July meeting, and then may vote at that time to raise

the transient occupancy tax to pay for it. Raising the transient occupancy tax (tax on hotel/motel stays, campgrounds, B&B's, etc.) will only stress the County's already-struggling tourism industry.

State guidelines for fiscal stability recommend an unrestricted reserve fund of 15-20% of total expenditures. As of 6/30/23, the \$11,257,180 in the County's Unrestricted Reserve Fund represented 22%, well in excess of state recommendations. I cannot understand why, with over \$11 MILLION in the bank drawing interest, the Board of Supervisors is considering RAISING TAXES to cover this expense. If the HVAC replacement costs even \$70,000, that still leaves the Unrestricted Reserve Fund at over 21%.

Please write or call your Supervisor prior to the 22 July meeting (contact info is available on the County website, www.co.patrick.va.us or call the administration building at 276.694.6094) and let them know how you feel about raising taxes with this much surplus in the bank.

Kurt Bozenmayer,
Buffalo Ridge

Attacks on Christians

(Christian Headlines, Fox, Christianity Today, The Christian Post, BBC, Liberty Champion, Newsweek)

The number of attacks against U.S. churches more than doubled in 2023, according to the "Hostility Against Churches" report, released by the Family Research Council. There were 436 acts of hostility against churches from January through November 2023 compared to 195 in 2022. There were 96 in 2021, 55 in 2020, 83 in 2019 and 50 in 2018. Most of the incidents were acts of vandalism. The report also found gun-related incidents, arson and bomb threats used against churches.

The church is not encroaching on the government, it is the government encroaching on the churches, and it is coming most viciously from the Biden administration, who is engaged in a campaign to weaponize the federal government against their political opponents and people of faith.

Recently, 11 anti-abortion protesters were convicted for peacefully protesting and praying at a Tennessee abortion clinic in 2021. Their crime? Arriving at an abortion clinic before it opened and sitting in prayer while handing out flyers that shared the value of human life.

Sadly, churches and pregnancy resource centers have been subject to violent attacks in the wake of the Dobbs decision, to which the Biden administration has turned a blind eye.

In 2021, the Biden administration instructed the DOJ to go after concerned parents at school board meetings and compared them to "domestic terrorists." The FBI mounted a spying program on traditional Catholics and identified them as individuals who might

be part of the "far-right nationalist movement. "In the eyes of the Biden DOJ these Christian patriots are the actual threat to the American way of life – not the criminals who are carjacking, terrorizing, and even killing everyday Americans in our cities.

The socialist agenda pushed by the Biden Administration, schools and universities are polluting the minds of the next generation with anti-Christian and anti-God messaging. This should concern all of us.

Open Doors, an organization that globally monitors Christian persecution released its World Watch List 2024 ranking the 50 worst countries in the world when it comes to Christian persecution. The top 10 worst persecutors for 2024 were North Korea (No.1) Somalia (No. 2), Libya (No. 3), Eritrea (No. 4), Yemen (No. 5), Nigeria (No. 6), Pakistan (No. 7), Sudan (No. 8), Iran (No. 9), and Afghanistan (No. 10).

In 2023, 5,000 Christians were murdered for their faith. The deadliest country for Christians was Nigeria, with more than 4,100 Christians murdered for their faith—82 percent of the global tally. Over 4,000 were abducted, 15,000 churches were attacked or closed driven by mob violence in India, church closures in China, and attacks in Nigeria, Nicaragua and Ethiopia, and 295,000 Christians were forced to flee their homes.

ISIS terrorists murdered at least 80 Christians in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in attacks between June 4 and June 8. ISIS killed at least 42 more people on June 12.

Pray for the world, missionaries, and our country.

William Salser,
Stuart

Next blood drive set for August

Thank you, Patrick County. Your donations totaled 27 equivalent units which translates to helping as many as 81 patients with medical issues.

Thank you, Vicki Bennett for your continued support of the blood drive.

Thank you, Volunteers! They are the ones who make your donation experience as pleasant as possible. The Volunteers take time out of their schedule to help donors through the general process of donation. Volunteers this month were Debra Boswell, Denise Clark, William Hines, Betty Holt, Harriette Moore, and our newest volunteer, Lucy Moore. It's all about having fun!

We are always interested in adding to our roster of Volunteers. If you are interested in giving back to your community, please consider volunteering your time with the Patrick County Blood Drive, the oldest continuing blood drive in the county. Please stop by the next blood drive or contact one of the volunteers for further information.

Please remember that the American Red Cross encourages donors to make an appointment for your time to donate via internet at redcross.org or by calling 1-800-733-2767.

Next month's blood drive is scheduled for Tuesday, August 12, 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Gene Stirewalt,
Stuart

**VISIT US ONLINE AT
WWW.ENTERPRISE.NET**

Letters to the Editor/Viewpoints Policy

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

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

**THANK YOU FOR READING
THE ENTERPRISE**

Patrick Pioneers

Madison Lee "Matt" and Ella Smith Burnette
By Beverly Belcher Woody

I seriously doubt in the community of Meadows of Dan, there has ever been a man more loved and respected than Mr. Matt Burnette. Madison Lee "Matt" Burnette was born on the 1st of February 1904 to John Burnette and Orpha McGrady Burnette. Matt was the fourth child born to the couple; the first being Mary Jane; followed by Annie Eunice; Elisha Reuben; then Matt; next was Louisa Ruth; John Dexter; Gracie Irene; and Eulalia Dora Burnette.

Mr. Matt married Miss Ella (NMN) Smith of Laurel Fork in Carroll County, Virginia on the 27th of November 1926. Ella was the second child born to Marion William Smith and Flora Banks Smith. Ella's older brother was Elbert, and her younger brother was Burton Smith.

Mr. Matt would tell a funny story about his courtship of Miss Ella Smith. When visiting Ella, Matt would tie his horse to the same apple tree in the front yard of her parents. The horse would paw the ground beneath the tree while he waited on Mr. Matt. Miss Ella's Daddy, Marion W. Smith, asked Matt to tie his horse somewhere else because the hole where the horse had pawed was getting so deep that Mr. Smith was afraid the apple tree might fall over!

Mr. Bob Heafner, editor of the Mountain Laurel (mt-laurel.com) once asked Mr. Matt what his favorite toy was as a child. Matt recalled that a man once gave him a piece of an old rubber inner tube and he made slingshots out of it. Mr. Matt's mother wrapped it in paper and put it in an old trunk so sunlight couldn't get to it. When it was time for a new slingshot, Mr. Matt would cut off just enough of the old inner tube for a new slingshot and would store the remainder away for the next time.

Everyone that encountered Mr. Matt has a memorable story to tell. My first memory of Mr. Matt was at my grandparent's farm in Willis, Virginia in 1974. My grandfather was retiring after many years working on the Blue Ridge Parkway and he and my grandmother were moving "below the mountain" to be near their only child and only grandchild. Mr. Matt was the auctioneer in charge of selling the items that married folks collect over a period of nearly five decades.

Mr. Matt got his start as an auctioneer at the age of eleven. His first job was auctioning off the logs that were cut when clearing the site for the Concord Primitive Baptist Church. In an interview by Julie Hazelwood and shared by Matt's granddaughter, Joyce Burnette Webb, Mr. Matt stated, "I guess I was born an auctioneer. Unless it's born in a man, he won't be a good one. I never reached out very far, just here and adjoining counties. Hazelwood asked Mr. Matt if he had taken any special training to be an auctioneer and he stated, "I've never took a bit of schooling, it's just as natural as talking."

In addition to auctioneering, Mr. Matt supported his growing family by sawmilling and farming. Matt and Ella's first son, Arlie Eugene, was born in January of 1928, followed by William Kenneth in July of 1930, and Glenn Clayton Burnette in March of 1938.

Shortly before Glenn was born, Mr. Matt got a job working for the National Park Service building the Blue Ridge Parkway. Mr. Matt was paid .30 cents an hour for his work in helping build a 20-mile stretch of the parkway. Matt and Ella Smith also owned land



Matt and Ella Smith Burnette (from Burnette family)

beside Meadows of Dan Baptist Church and its' cemetery of which part would be taken to become part of the parkway. On this land were graves of Africans who were enslaved by the Langhorne family of Meadows of Dan. Mr. Matt cared for the graves marked with fieldstones, but once the land was taken for the parkway, workers took the fieldstones and used them to fill in what would become the "scenic highway".

Mr. Matt never forgot about this cemetery and showed his sons and grandchildren, and anyone else who would listen where the graves were located. In 1984, Mr. Bob Heafner promised Matt that he would do his best to get the headstones restored on the National Park Service (NPS) land, next to the Blue Ridge Parkway. After diligently working for thirty-four years with NPS officials, Heafner was able to preside over the dedication of the monument in August of 2018. If Mr. Matt had not insisted on sharing his knowledge of the cemetery, it would likely have been lost to the ages.

Mr. Matt started working as a custodian for Meadows of Dan Elementary/High School in 1945 and continued to work there for the next twenty years. My mother attended the school during this time and has such fond memories of Matt; she said all the children loved him because he was so kind to everyone.

Once Mr. Matt retired, he went full-bore on making handmade toys like the ones he played with as a child: Jumping Jacks; Dancing Dans; pop guns; sling shots; whimmy diddles; horseshoe puzzles; and spinning tops. All the toys were made from soft pine wood and usually fashioned with his pocketknife. Mr. Matt would spend five or six hours a day making the toys and folks could purchase them at Mayberry Trading Post and Mabry Mill.

Joyce Burnette Webb shared the following memories of her grandparents, "When the grandchildren were growing up, he always gave us lots of attention. He sang little songs, recited poems, and told ghost stories. Grandpa Matt had little short sayings invented just for us that he would frequently recite or sing to us. He would sit on the porch with us and sing hymns in his beautiful voice. He played with us and his handmade tools. He would teach us the tricks of the toys or challenge us to solve the puzzles. He particularly enjoyed chasing us with the pop guns!"

Joyce remembered, "He had dairy cows and taught me how to milk, then Grandma would show us how to make butter and cottage cheese. Coffee was very popular in the Burnette home. When I was about 5 years old, Grandpa would mix coffee, cream, and sugar and feed it to me from a saucer. They used brewed coffee which often left grounds in the bottom of the cup.



Matt Burnette demonstrating his handmade slingshot. (Photo from Library of Congress)

Grandpa would gather us around the table and look into the grounds in the cup and tell us our futures. He was always looking out for us. At family dinners, he always saw to it that the children's plates were filled before the adults dug in themselves."

Linda Burnette Fain also shared some memories of her grandparents, "Grandpa always spelled his name Burnett, without the e at the end. Pronounced Burn-it. But Grandma Ella put the e at the end and their 3 sons were Burnette. Funny because when I was born, my birth certificate came back without the e. My parents went through a process to correct it!"

Linda continued, "Grandpa Matt was also adept at storytelling. He especially liked ghost or supernatural stories. I have recordings of his story telling and his singing. Grandpa Matt was a wonderful singer, and he was also a water dowser. He used a Y shaped big wooden stick. I recall that he was occasionally called upon to find water underground. Grandma Ella was supportive of Grandpa in his various interests. She was talented in being an exceptional wife, mother, and grandma! Grandma was also outstanding at crocheting and cooking."

Mr. Matt passed away on the third of February 1987; he was 83 years old. His beloved wife, Miss Ella followed him less than three years later, passing away on the 6th of November 1989 at the age of 81. They are buried at Meadows of Dan Baptist Church Cemetery.

We are fortunate that we can still see and hear Mr. Matt and Miss Ella today! You can go to YouTube and just type "Matt Burnett" in the search bar and a wonderful video of the couple recorded by WFMY-TV comes up. The Southern Folklife Collection in the Wilson Library at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill contains audio recordings of Elder Bennie Clifton and Mr. Matt singing Primitive Baptist hymns. In 1978, as part of the Blue Ridge Parkway Folklife Project for the Library of Congress, Mr. Matt was photographed, and audio interviews were recorded. By just going to the Library of Congress website, and typing Matt Burnett into the search bar, we can see over a hundred photographs of Mr. Matt doing the things he did so well. Tapes of Mr. Matt conducting an auction are also on display at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., along with some of his hand-crafted toys. What a legacy this couple has left behind!

Thank you to Matt and Ella Burnette's granddaughters, Joyce Burnette Webb and Linda Burnette Fain for providing much of the information for this article. 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 - We Want to Claim SS at 62. When Should we Apply?

Dear Rusty: My wife and I are going to be taking Social Security at 62. She will be 62 on April 15, 2025. I will be 62 August 7, 2025. When should we apply for Social Security? Signed: Ready to file

Dear Ready: Social Security recommends you apply for benefits about 2 - 3 months prior to when you want your benefits to start (to get them time to process your application). You will specify on your application when you wish your benefit to start, so applying early isn't a problem. Just a few things to keep in mind:

Your first month of eligibility will be the first month you are 62 for the entire month. In your wife's case, her first month of eligibility will be May 2025, and in your case your first month of eligibility will be September 2025. Your wife's benefits will be paid on the 3rd Wednesday of every

month, and your benefits will be received on the 2nd Wednesday of every month (payment dates depend on when your birthday falls).

Social Security has an earnings test for those collecting early benefits (before your full retirement age). If you are working and exceed the earnings limit, SS will take away some of your benefits. The earning limit for 2024 is \$22,320 and, if that is exceeded, SS will take away \$1 in benefit for every \$2 you are over the limit (the limit changes annually, so the 2025 limit will be more). Thus, if you plan to work after collecting, you must stay aware of the earning test. If you earn substantially more than the earnings limit, you even may be temporarily ineligible to collect benefits (until you either earn less or reach your full retirement age (FRA) when the earning test no longer applies).

By claiming at 62, you will incur a cut in benefits of about 30% from the amount you would get by waiting until your FRA to claim. And, except for annual cost of living adjustments, that is a permanent reduction. FYI, your benefit will continue to

grow if you wait longer to claim.

Deciding when to claim Social Security should take into account your financial needs, your life expectancy, and your goals as a couple. Claiming at 62 is the right choice for many, but waiting longer, if feasible, will result in a higher monthly amount, which could be beneficial if your life expectancy is long. Of course, we are here for you if you have any additional questions, so please don't hesitate to contact us again if needed.

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.

Sugary Drinks and Children (and Fruit Juice too)

Today I turned on the computer and was greeted with a slew of headlines talking about 5-year olds, soda, and obesity. They were all reporting on a study conducted by the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. The study found that 5-year olds who drink sugar-sweetened beverages (such as sodas, sports drinks, or juices) daily were more likely to be obese than 5-year olds drinking these beverages less often.

While some may consider this breaking news, I hope others consider it common sense. After all, if soda is linked to obesity in adults—it shouldn't be a surprise that it affects children as well.

Sugar-sweetened beverages, which is a broad category including soda, sweetened teas, sports drinks, some fruit juices, energy drinks, and blended coffee drinks, are a pervasive source of empty calories. Researchers now say that a fifth of the calories Americans consume come from drinks. Calories from these beverages are nutritionally empty and don't make you feel full—if over consumed, they can easily lead to obesity.

Another concern with these beverages is diabetes. For instance, a study in the journal, "Diabetes Care," found that people who drank sodas daily were 25% more likely to develop type 2 diabetes. The damage that soda can inflict on your teeth (because of the sug-

ar) should also be recognized. Cavities are painful and expensive; but perhaps more importantly, your adult teeth are not replaceable—you should do your best to keep them healthy.

But the problems with soft drinks do not revolve around sugar alone. Caffeine is an additive in many sodas (as well as other types of sugary drinks) which has caused concern among many health professionals. Caffeine is a drug that stimulates the central nervous system, and many scientists are concerned about the effects this stimulation may have on children's developing brains.

In addition to this, caffeine is well known to cause difficulty concentrating and sleeping. Caffeine, combined with the heaps of sugar present in soda, becomes a perfect recipe for hyperactivity (one thing kids these days don't need more of). Caffeine and phosphoric acid (which is a common ingredient in colas) are also associated with bone loss and low bone density.

Childhood obesity and these other health issues are very sad. No one wants to see their kid struggle with obesity or diabetes from an early age, and subsequently experience all of the health troubles associated with it. To make matters worse, soda and other sugar-sweetened beverages are such an unnecessary part of our diet. They offer us nothing positive nutritional-

ly, yet we spend millions of dollars on them each year and suffer many negative consequences health wise.

As adults, we need to set good examples for the children around us. We need to teach them to make healthy choices, which will eventually turn into good habits. The choices and habits they learn early in life will have a huge impact as they grow and become adults. Sodas aren't the only problem, but they are a big one. Teaching kids to drink water instead of empty calories is a good place to start.

Water is the only liquid our bodies really need. Besides being necessary for us to live, water can help us control our calorie intake by keeping us full. It is used to flush our bodies of toxins and can even help you lose weight. In many ways, it is the opposite of soda.

Each day, we should try to drink half an ounce for every pound that we weigh. That means someone who weighs 160 lbs. should drink about 80 oz of water (about 10 cups). Water has no negative side effects and is virtually free. By drinking more—and teaching our kids to do the same—we can only benefit.

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

Ryan Blaney earns his 12th career win at Pocono Raceway

By Holly Cain
NASCAR Wire Service

Long Pond, Pa. – Reigning NASCAR Cup Series champion Ryan Blaney returned to the site of his first career NASCAR Cup Series win and pulled away from the field in the closing laps of Sunday's The Great American Getaway 400 at a sold-out Pocono (Pa.) Raceway to deliver a strong reminder to the competition that he's primed to contend for another season trophy.

Blaney's No. 12 Team Penske Ford held off the track's all-time winningest driver Denny Hamlin in the No. 11 Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota by 1.312-seconds to give Blaney his second victory of the season – both coming in just the last month - and the 12th win of the 30-year old's career.

"Hell yeah boys, let's go," an elated Blaney screamed to his team as he crossed the historic Pocono finish line.

With the victory Blaney moves up to fifth place in the championship standings and thanks to his first win of the year at Iowa Speedway on June 16, he's one of only five drivers with multiple victories on the season.

"Feel like we've gotten to a great pace and speed the last couple months, honestly thought we let a couple races slip away from us I thought we should have won," Blaney said, adding, "It's just so cool to win here again. Won here seven years ago for my first Cup win, so awesome to be back."

Although he ran among the top-10 for much of the race, Blaney ultimately took the lead on a restart with 44 laps remaining and never relinquished it despite two more restarts and a highly-motivated Hamlin lining up either alongside him or directly behind him on each of those green flags.

Last week's race winner, Hendrick Motorsports' Alex Bowman filled Blaney's mirrors for

much of the closing laps until getting passed by Hamlin with seven laps remaining. Bowman finished third with his Hendrick teammate William Byron and Blaney's Team Penske teammate Joey Logano rounding out the top-five.

"Track position was just such a big thing and when that 12 [Blaney] jumped on that stage we won that put them in front of us and certainly were going to be hard to pass," said Hamlin, a seven-time Pocono race winner who won Sunday's second stage.

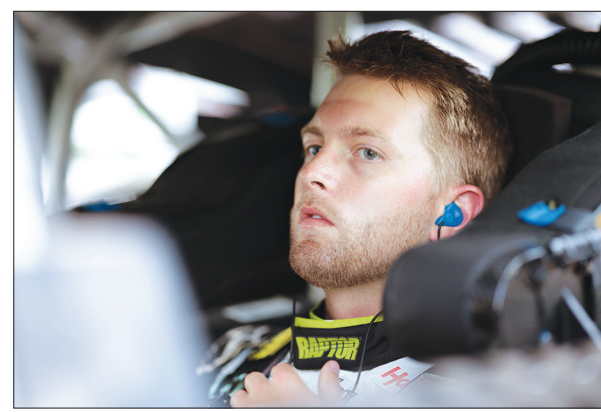
"Just not enough laps of green there at the end but hats off to them, great run. He kept up great pace at there at the front and hard for me to even get up there close enough to try to reel him in."

23XI Racing's Tyler Reddick, Roush Fenway Keselowski's Brad Keselowski, JGR's Martin Truex Jr. (the opening stage winner), Hendrick's Chase Elliott and 23XI's Bubba Wallace rounded out the Top-10. Both Elliott's and Wallace's finishes, in particular, were impactful on the championship standings.

The 2020 series champion Elliott took over the championship lead from his teammate, 2021 series champ Kyle Larson and takes a slim three-point advantage atop the regular season standings with only five races remaining before the Playoffs. The regular season champion receives a valuable 15 extra Playoff points to carry with him through the 10-race Playoff run.

Wallace's top-10 was also important in his quest to become championship eligible for the second consecutive year. He is now ranked 17th, only 27 points behind 16th place Ross Chastain with the top-16 drivers following the Sept. 1 race at Darlington, S.C. eligible for the championship.

Chastain, one of four drivers inside the NASCAR Cup Series Playoff field without a win



William Byron, driver of the #24 Raptor High Heat Chevrolet, looks on in his car prior to the NASCAR Cup Series The Great American Getaway 400 Presented by VISITPA.com at Pocono Raceway on July 14, 2024 in Long Pond, Pennsylvania. (Photo by James Gilbert/Getty Images)

but based on points, finished 36th on Sunday. His No. 1 Trackhouse Racing Chevrolet slammed the Turn 1 wall on Lap 53 and the team had to retire the car.

Richard Childress Racing's Kyle Busch was involved in a multi-car accident with 39 laps remaining and finished 32nd Sunday. He's now finished 27th or worse in four of the last five races and is ranked 19th in the standings, 102 points behind 16th place Chastain. The two-time series champion is not only trying to make the Playoffs but extend a career winning streak to 19 seasons.

The NASCAR Cup Series moves to the famed 2.5-mile Indianapolis Motor Speedway for Sunday's Brickyard 400 (3:30 p.m. ET, NBC, Indianapolis Motor Speedway Race Network, SiriusXM NASCAR Radio). Front Row Motorsports driver Michael McDowell won last year's Indy race, but it was on the road course. The last driver to win a race on the 2.5-mile speedway is recently retired driver Kevin Harvick in 2020.

Buchholz joins Northern General Surgery

Northern Regional Hospital is pleased to announce the addition of General Surgeon, Dr. Carl Buchholz.

Born in Waukesha, WI, Dr. Buchholz's journey to becoming a general surgeon marks a passion for medicine and a dedication to serving rural populations. He completed his Bachelor of Science in Molecular and Cellular Biology and Bachelor of Science in Physiology at the University of Arizona before earning his Medical Degree from the University of Virginia School of Medicine. Dr. Buchholz then completed his General Surgery Residency at Virginia Tech School of Medicine in Roanoke, Virginia, where he honed his surgical skills and commitment to patient care.

Dr. Buchholz's approach to patient care emphasizes listening and collaborative decision-making. He tailors treatment plans to meet each patient's unique needs. He is eager to introduce innovative techniques to enhance surgical outcomes, including less invasive approaches to procedures like inguinal hernia repair.

"I strongly believe that geography shouldn't limit access to quality healthcare," said Dr. Buchholz. "I am excited to become a trusted healthcare provider in Mount Airy, building lasting relationships with my patients and the community."

"We are thrilled to welcome Dr. Carl Buchholz to our team at Northern Regional Hospital," said Dr. Jason Edsall, Chief Medical Officer at Northern Regional Hospital. "His dedication to patient-centered care and surgical excellence, combined with his commitment to our community, will undoubtedly



Dr. Carl Buchholz

enhance our ability to deliver comprehensive healthcare services."

Dr. Buchholz joins colleagues Dr. Elizabeth Bond and Dr. Scott Corbin at Northern General Surgery. He looks forward to learning from their expertise and contributing to the hospital's mission of providing exceptional care in a compassionate setting.

Dr. Buchholz moves to Mount Airy with his wife Sarah and their one-year-old Leora. Outside of medicine, Dr. Buchholz is a passionate outdoorsman with diverse hobbies, including cycling, gardening, and orchardry.

For more information or to schedule an appointment with Dr. Carl Buchholz, please visit

Choose-Northern.org or contact 336-789-9176.

Congressional staff to hold local office hours

Ninth District U.S. Rep. Morgan Griffith's staff will hold hours in Henry and Patrick counties on July 24.

Staff will be in Henry County, from 10 – 11:30 a.m., in the Henry County Administration Build-

ing, Summerlin Room, 3300 Kings Mountain Road, Martinsville.

Staff will be in Patrick County from 12:30 – 2 p.m., in the Patrick County Administration Building, Conference Room, 106 Rucker Street, Stuart.

Consumer Fraud Fight Goes to the White House

Last year the Federal Trade Commission recorded \$10 Billion in reported fraud from U.S. consumers. Because fraud is underreported, we know that actual losses are much higher.

While education empowers older Americans to protect themselves, more is needed to eliminate this large-scale problem. That's why AARP advocates for bipartisan laws and regulations to strengthen consumer protections against scams on everything from illegal robocalls, to gift card regulations to cryptocurrency scams and more. This work is done in state legislatures across the country, in Congress and even at the White House.

Earlier this year AARP joined White House officials and industry leaders in a meeting aimed at helping the federal government fight back against the use of artificial intelligence-enabled voice cloning to commit

fraud. A virtual White House conference followed in June, with AARP again at the table. With fraud already at an epidemic level, the addition of AI powered scams is alarming, which is why AARP is focused on advocating for a strong legislative response to this threat.

Already this year the Federal Communications Commission has moved to make it illegal to use AI voice cloning in robocalls targeting consumers. As a result, a scammer who cloned President Biden's voice to deceive voters in New Hampshire was recently fined \$6 million.

The AARP Fraud Watch Network is a free resource for all. Learn how to proactively spot scams or get guidance if you've been targeted. Visit aarp.org/fraudwatchnetwork or call our dedicated helpline to speak to a fraud specialist at 1-877-908-3360.

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Crossing the Lines

News snippets from outside the city/county lines...

Housing project in Villa Heights underway



Lee Clark, director of Planning, Zoning, & Inspections, gave an update on the Villa Heights Community Housing Project.

The Henry County Board of Supervisors recently heard an update on the Villa Heights Community Housing Project, which will provide 16 site-built new, affordable, single-family homes.

Lee Clark, director of Planning,

Zoning, & Inspections, said the county cleaned up a few structures of the Villa Heights area using a section of the county's existing code.

Now, "we're going to turn that into 16 new site-built homes," he said, adding the homes will be a "mixture of two-bedroom and three-bedroom units."

Clark said he believes the project will be transformative for that community.

"What was there for a number of years had created an environment that wasn't healthy, and I think we're going to do is going to be transformative and actually a big positive for that" community, he said.

Clark said the county currently owns the sites after it took possession of the properties through judicial processes. "We're going to use them to our benefit now," he added.

Clark believes the housing project will attract some current commuters to make a move.



Homeless individuals often visit places like the Virginia Harm Reduction Coalition office to cool off.

Localities urged to consider opening a cooling shelter

Two women are leading the charge to create a cooling center to serve the homeless population in Henry County and Martinsville.

Ariel Johnson, who is director of the MHC Warming Center, and warming center volunteer Nancy McMillian.

Johnson explained the warming center exists for colder months, but after March, the weather starts to heat up. But during warmer months like June, July, and August, this becomes a health hazard due to the risk of heat stroke, heat exhaustion, and sun poisoning.

"They sleep in that (heat), they do everything in that," said Johnson, who added that homeless people visit the Harm Reduction Center just to cool off.

McMillian takes food and supplies to homeless individuals throughout the week.

"They won't let them go into the library, they don't have anywhere to go, and we don't have the cooling

places for them," she said, adding that the stigma around homeless individuals keeps them from finding places to stay cool or warm up in the summer.

"They don't bite, they are some of the sweetest individuals," said McMillian, who works at the warming shelter but noted there are limitations on when it can open. For now, the warmer months aren't part of its schedule.

With the current local housing crisis, the number of individuals who are considered homeless has risen. The World Population Review currently states that there are 6,529 homeless individuals living in Virginia, and the Collinsville area has seen an influx of homeless individuals in recent years.

With summer bringing blistering heat, many homeless individuals, as well as individuals who work with them, are asking for a cooling shelter to help combat heat-related illnesses.

Youngkin recommends city for ARC funding

Gov. Glenn Youngkin recommended a handful of localities/projects to receive Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) funds, including the City of Martinsville. The ARC will finalize approval of these project awards later this year. If approved, Martinsville would receive \$700,000 for its MiNet expansion.

"These projects represent the innovation and strong entrepreneurial spirit of the Appalachian region," Youngkin said in a release. "ARC plays a pivotal role in empowering our Appalachian communities to address their unique challenges, capitalize on their unique assets and drive positive change throughout the region."

Mayor LC Jones said the city is blessed and thankful for Youngkin's support.

"The governor has always been

very favorable to Martinsville, and the projects and progress we've got going on here in Southside Virginia," Jones said, adding that the city has "heavily invested into our MiNet, our local broadband.

Jones said the city has invested in broadband expansion in the city sector that includes the Druid Hills area.

"It's the Druid Hills area that will be our first area of focus simply because we've already started working out there, so we're just going to go to try and complete that area then expand on into other areas of the city," he said.

The ARC funding is "really going to be able to allow us to expand our program. So, it is a blessing to get it, and we're looking forward to getting moving and expanding it a little further as soon as possible," Jones said.

"History of Community Police Departments" to be part of lecture series

Sunday, July 21, 2024
3:00 P.M.
Historic Henry County Courthouse
1 East Main Street
Uptown Martinsville

MHC
MARTINSVILLE-HENRY COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Sunday Afternoon
Lecture Series

"History of Community Police Departments" with Ron Stowe

The Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society will host its monthly Sunday Afternoon Lecture, "History of Community Police Departments," with Ron Stowe, at 3 p.m. on Sunday, July 21, at the Historic Henry County Courthouse.

Stowe will discuss the history of the three police departments that no longer exist in Henry County. All three of the police departments started in the 1920s with the growth of the furniture and textile industry in the area and the mill towns that grew around them. Each of the companies funded their individual police departments, although the county also contributed. The Stanleytown Police Department closed in June 1980 when the business climate significantly changed. Bassett Police Department began to downsize in the mid- to late 1980s and eventually closed. The Fieldale Police

Department kept one officer into the 1990s before it closed.

The son of the Stanleytown Police Department's last Chief of Police, Stowe grew up in Stanleytown and graduated from Bassett High School. He attended Danville Community College and then followed in the footsteps of his father, Melvin Stowe, by joining the Henry County Sheriff's Office in 1975. In 1980, he moved to High Point, North Carolina, where he continued working in law enforcement at the High Point Police Department and retired as a captain.

Admission to the lecture is free, made possible by corporate sponsors, Carter Bank & Trust and The Lester Group. The Historic Henry County Courthouse is fully handicapped accessible. The Martinsville-Henry County Heritage Museum will be open following the presentation.

Class of 1960 celebrates reunion

G.W. Carver High School
Class of 1960
64th Class Reunion
June 15, 2024

The GW Carver High School, Fieldale, VA Class of "60" celebrated its 64th Class Reunion on Saturday, June 15, 2024, at the Smith River Missionary Baptist Association Center, (the former Richard H. Clarke Elementary School).

This was the last class in the Henry County School System that started school walking. (Buses were not provided for African American students until 1948 when the former Irisburg Elementary School was opened.) There were 105 students to graduate that year, (a record for Henry County), and 54 classmates passed on and 12 were unable to attend for health reasons.

Twenty-four classmates attended the reunion. They are, (from left to

right), front row: Howard Riley, Iris (Stone) Patterson, Patricia (Manns) Hairston, Doris (Woody) Branch, Shirley (Flood) Hairston, Veola (Hairston) Dones, Gertie (Perkins) Martin, Gloria (Hairston) Millner, Brenda (Finney) Draper.

Second row: Rebecca (Cooper) Gravely, Margaret (Clark) Moore, Shirley (Foster) Brim, Geneva (Smith) Jones, W. Lee Millner, Rose (Barner) George, Faye (Matthews) Thomas, Mary (Green) Martin, Beatrice (Martin) Nappier, Mary Spencer, Wedell (Moore) Turner, Curtis R. Millner.

Third row: Vernon Hairston, Samuel M. Wimbush and not pictured; Elizabeth (Stockton) Thompson.

Homestead Creamery expands in Franklin County

Homestead Creamery Inc. will invest more than \$2.5 million to renovate and expand their Franklin County production facility, Gov. Glenn Youngkin announced last week. The company will construct a new ice cream production room and install additional production and refriger-

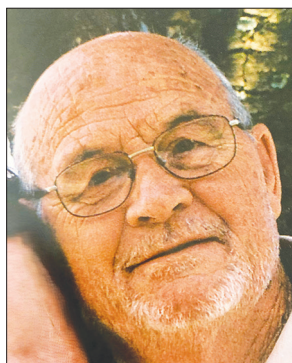
ation equipment and freezers, in response to increased customer demand for their premium churned ice cream products. Through this expansion, the company will add two new jobs, and purchase an additional \$1.9 million of Virginia-produced cream over the next three years.

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James "Jim" Shelton Jett



Mr. James "Jim" Shelton Jett, age 88, of Woolwine, Virginia passed away on Wednesday, July 10, 2024, at SOVAH Hospital of Martinsville. Mr. Jett was born in Texas on September 25, 1935, to the late Gloyd and Jesse Morgan Jett. In addition to his parents, Mr. Jett was preceded in death by his wife; Sunny Jo Hubbard Jett, two brothers; G.T. Jett and Harold Jett, sisters; Gladys Fern Benjamin and Juanita Levert. James, more commonly known as "Jim" or "Shelton" to most was extremely proud of his service to his country. Jim served in the Navy and Air Force from where he retired with 29 years of service. Jim also retired as a lab technician at Lewis Gale Hospital. In his free time,

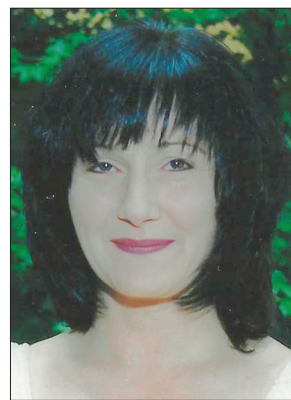
Jim enjoyed ancestry work, fishing, and a good game of Domino's. Jim was looking forward to meeting his great-grandchild, Maggie Rain, and hoped that she would be born on his birthday. Jim was a member of Woolwine United Church. Left to cherish the special memories of Mr. Jett are his son, Jon G. Jett (Betty) of Woolwine, Virginia; one granddaughter, Brittany Jett King (Phillip) of Stuart, Virginia; one great-granddaughter

on the way, Maggie Rain King; and several nieces and nephews across the country.

A memorial service for Mr. Jett will be held at a later date. Memorial donations in memory of Mr. Jett may be made to Jon and Betty Jett, P.O. Box 67, Woolwine, Virginia 24185. Moody Funeral Home in Stuart is serving the Jett family, and online condolences may be sent by visiting www.moodyfuneralservices.com.

The family of Mr. Jett would like to extend a special thanks to the friends and caregivers of Mr. Jett, Connie Belcher and Jennifer Hartman for all their acts of kindness, love, and care given to Mr. Jett during his final days. The family appreciates each of you.

Lynne Ann Boniphant Hicks



Mrs. Lynne Ann Boniphant Hicks, age 68 of Meadows of Dan, Virginia passed away at her home on Saturday, July 13, 2024. She was born in Zanesville, Ohio to the late Jerry and Maryann Boniphant. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by one sister, Holly Boniphant. Throughout her life, Lynne was a beacon of compassion and kindness. Her love for the outdoors was evident in her passions for gardening, fishing, and tending to beautiful flowers. In her younger years, she immersed herself in equestrian activities, nurturing and caring for horses. Lynne found solace and joy in canoe trips to Canada, surrounded by the serene beauty of nature. Animals held a special place in Lynne's heart. She adored her dogs, cats, chickens, goats, and horses, showering them with love and care. Lynne was not only a devoted wife and loving moth-

er but also a caring grandma whose presence brought warmth and joy to those fortunate enough to know her. Her family meant everything to her, and she cherished every moment spent creating unforgettable memories with them. In addition to her roles within her family, Lynne shared a passion for ballroom dancing with her husband. Together, they glided across dance floors, a testament to the love that bound them together throughout the years. As we mourn the loss of Lynne Ann Boniphant Hicks, let us remember the light she brought into our lives. Her leg-

acy of love, compassion, and unwavering kindness will continue to inspire all those who were fortunate enough to know her.

Mrs. Hicks is survived by her devoted husband, James Hicks; two children, Tara Brown Burton (Thomas Anthony) and Alec Hunt (Tracy); six grandchildren, Sophie, Kennan, Lexi, Jaxon, Penelope, and Madison; two nieces, Haley Gurvis and Chelsea Gurvis; and her beloved animals, Gunner, Beau Beau, Hanah, Deja, Aryia, Minsky, Layla, Aslan, Anna, Ilee, Wuji, Nola, and Tia.

A memorial service will be held at a later date. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made online to a Leukemia Foundation of the donor's choice. Moody Funeral Home in Stuart has been entrusted with the arrangements and condolences may be sent by visiting www.moodyfuneralservices.com.

Nelda Mae Craig Lovell



Mrs. Nelda Mae Craig Lovell, age 95 of Meadows of Dan, Virginia and formerly of Woolwine, passed away peacefully Friday, July 13, 2024, at her daughter's home. She was born in Patrick County on September 3, 1928, to the late Ewell McKinley Craig and Mary Ethel Dickerson Craig. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband, Edgar Leonard Lovell; five siblings, Lester Craig, Sr., Dorris C. Conner, Avis C. Conner, Arvin Craig, and an infant sister; and her stepmother, Aldean Craig. Mrs. Lovell was a faithful member of Conners View Primitive Baptist Church. She loved life and her family deeply; known as a great cook and hard worker. She enjoyed mowing her yard and did so for as long as she was able, well into her

80's. Of all the titles she had in life, Granny was her favorite. She will be greatly missed by all who knew and loved her. Mrs. Lovell is survived by one son and daughter-in-law, Leonard and Debbie Lovell of Patrick Springs; one daughter and son-in-law, Brenda and Carl Hubbard of Meadows of Dan; two grandchildren, Tina Gammons and Jamie Lawless; four great-grandchildren, Madeline and

Chandler Gammons and Cheyenne and Justin Lawless; one special niece, Joyce DeHart of Woolwine, and several nieces and nephews.

Funeral services for Mrs. Lovell will be held Friday, July 19, 2024, at 2:00 p.m. at Conners View Primitive Baptist Church with Elder Tim McGrady officiating. Burial will follow in the Conner's View Primitive Baptist Church Cemetery. The family will receive friends Thursday, July 18, 2024, at Moody Funeral Home in Stuart from 6:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. Flowers will be accepted, or memorial donations may be made to Mountain Valley Hospice and Palliative Care, 1427 Edgewood Drive, Suite 101, Mt. Airy, NC 27030. Online condolences may be sent by visiting www.moodyfuneralservices.com.

Home Country

Slim Randles

Life is kinda like a corrugated, washboard ranch road, I believe. You give anything enough time and experience and you'll find that warts and scars and grooves will get worn in it. The down times and the up times can lead to a corrugation in our dirt roads and our lives.

Any good cowboy knows how to handle a washboard road, though. Taken slowly, a pickup truck hits each little dip and rattles its carburetor until it puts a kink in the distributor clamp. It takes forever to get someplace, of course, but it does give a guy time to compose a symphony or a letter to Congress.

There is only one way to handle a washboard road: gun it!

Oh yeah, Mama. You step down on the pedal and kick that monster up to about 52 miles an hour and everything smooths out. Fly, baby, fly.

We hit only the high spots on the road and live a bit daringly, challenging the existence of any possible oilpan-killing rock ahead. The country slips by more excitingly and a driver tends to grin a lot.

And in life, we can wallow forever in the slow and low stuff and take ages to get somewhere, or we can floor it, give a yell, and skip along on the high spots.

Somehow, that sounds like more fun.

Feet sore from all that walking? Hey, just sit on a rock and sprinkle some "Foot's Achin" powder on them. The secret's in the sitting.

CNBC Names Virginia "America's Top State for Business"

Virginia is ranked "America's Top State for Business" by CNBC, Gov. Glenn Youngkin announced last week. The annual ranking measures all 50 states on 128 different metrics in 10 key categories of competitiveness to determine which states are delivering most effectively on the things that mean the most to business.

"When a business chooses to invest and grow in Virginia, we're promising best-in-class talent, infrastructure, power solutions and business-friendly environment. Our administration has facilitated waves of economic investment and business expansions to reinvigorate growth and opportunity across Virginia. The Commonwealth has experienced record job growth and has welcomed companies committing over \$74 billion in capital investment from major corporations like Amazon Web Services, The LEGO Group, Raytheon and Boeing, along with major expansions from others like Hilton, Northrop Grumman and Framatome," said Governor Glenn Youngkin. "Economic development is a team sport, and Virginia's made giant strides in business-ready sites, workforce develop-

ment, regulatory reduction, infrastructure investment and all-of-the-above power solutions. I am thrilled that our great Commonwealth has been named America's Top State for Business."

Since day one, Youngkin's constant effort to make Virginia more affordable for families and a comprehensive focus on improving our business ecosystem has included \$5 billion in tax relief to Virginians, reforming and consolidating workforce development efforts to focus on job creation and preserving Virginia's Right-to-Work status, implementing an All-American All-of-the-Above Energy Plan to meet the power demands of a growing Commonwealth, historic investments in business-ready site development, robust infrastructure improvements and empowering excellence in education with multiple pathways for students to succeed.

Virginia's premier talent base makes for a world-class labor pool ready to meet business needs. The Virginia Talent Accelerator Program, ranked the No. 1 Customized Workforce Training Program in the U.S. by Business Facilities in 2023 and 2024, and Virginia's

historic Tech Talent Investment Program are helping Virginia build the workforce of the future. Virginia is competing to win with more than \$550 million funded for site development to accelerate construction and deepen the inventory of shovel-ready sites for employers before they come to Virginia. Site readiness has been the deciding factor for numerous major recent Virginia wins, including the LEGO Group.

"With top talent from high-ranking universities to robust supply chain infrastructure and a friendly business climate, Virginia has the perfect combination to make it a clear choice for business investment. I am thrilled that CNBC has recognized the huge efforts on many fronts that make Virginia America's Top State for Business," said Secretary of Commerce and Trade Caren Merrick.

"Being named America's Top State for Business is a testament to the incredible progress being made throughout the Commonwealth, not least by the many thousands of businesses who call Virginia home," said VEDP President and CEO Jason El Koubi. "This recognition is years in the making, and I am

incredibly grateful to all of our state, regional, and local partners that contributed to this distinction."

For the first time, CNBC weighted infrastructure — including availability of shovel-ready sites — as the most important component for businesses when deciding on investment and cited the Virginia Business Ready Sites Program, in addition to Virginia's world-class port, rail, roadway, and air transportation ecosystem as major contributors to the recognition. In addition to infrastructure and workforce, the categories for the 2024 CNBC ranking include economy, quality of life, cost of doing business, technology and innovation, business friendliness, education, access to capital, and cost of living. Virginia has previously been named America's Top State for Business by CNBC in 2007, 2009, 2011, 2019, and 2021.

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LEGAL

Meeting Notice Patrick County Public Service Authority Organizational Meeting

The Patrick County Public Service Authority Board of Directors will hold its Annual Organizational Meeting on Tuesday, July 23, 2024, at 6:00 PM in the 3rd Floor Court Room of the Patrick County Veterans Memorial Building. Petitions and requests from the public to address the Board shall be submitted in writing to the PSA located in the Patrick County Administration Building at 106 Rucker Street, Suite 218, Stuart, VA. Petitions and requests to address the Board shall be submitted no less than five (5) business days prior to the scheduled meeting and placed on the official meeting agenda in order to be considered. Persons wanting to address the Authority's Board not having submitted a pre-request to do so may only be heard after a majority of Directors agree. The Directors encourage public attendance at all meetings.

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Financial Issues

(cont. from page 1)

Because the Jeb Stuart Volunteer Rescue Squad planned to shutter, the amount of county funding it was to receive was cut from the current budget. The squad recently announced it would continue as a volunteer agency, and Simms said the county's allocation of \$21,062 would need to be added back into the budget.

Maintenance issues at the Patrick County Courthouse, the Stuart site of the Blue Ridge Regional Library, and the Patrick County Historical Society & Museum also were identified.

Jones said one quote received for replacing the library's heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system is \$61,179.

Documentation of the quote was not provided to the board, which also requested additional quotes. The project will be rebid. The board will consider all of the bids and vote during its work session on Monday, July 22.

Repairs to the courthouse are estimated to be \$7,540. An estimate for repairs to the museum was not presented.

Jane Fulk, interim representative for the Dan River District, said the county was in the red eight days into the new fiscal year that began on July 1.

"That doesn't sound good," Fulk said and asked Simms how the county was to pay the unexpected expenses, and suggested cutting new positions from the current budget, which includes \$60,000 for the Director of Facilities post.

The description for that position "is similar to what you do," Fulk said to Simms. "Four pages. It's what you do. According to what I've got on the facilities director, he's doing everything you're doing, plus."

"Okay," Simms said, and explained that the positions had been approved by the board and were already in the budget.

Fulk said the job description for the facilities director "needs to be just a little more specific."

"Thank you," Simms said, and explained that she consolidated/tailored two positions – Director of Tourism and Director of Economic Development – into the facilities position to fit the county's needs.

"Instead of having two directors," Simms said the two departments would be consolidated.

Fulk asked whether the other supervisors were aware of that decision.

"Yes ma'am. We've been talking about this for 6-months," Simms said, adding that at this point, it would be "hard to eliminate" the facilities director post because interviews are scheduled.

"The Small Business Development position hasn't been posted" yet, she added.

Perry said he believes the facilities director post is needed, but some of the others could perhaps be added back if they were cut.

"If we do need one, I think they should live in Patrick County. I don't like paying someone that doesn't have any skin in the game," Fulk said.

The residential requirement "currently isn't in our policy," Simms said.

"The one that I asked you about" included the requirement, but that



Several residents attended the Monday, July 8 board of supervisors meeting.

requirement "was left out when" the position changed, Kendrick said.

Steve Marshall, of the Blue Ridge District, said he believes a residency requirement would result in fewer applicants.

Dipping into the county's reserve and contingency funds were discussed as options to pay the unexpected costs.

Simms said the reserve fund has been built up over the years.

"Currently at the end of FY23 budget, the balance in our unrestricted reserves was \$11,257,000," Jones said, adding that total was taken from the annual audit.

While the unrestricted funds are not part of any specific funds, Jones estimated \$450,000 from the county's contingency fund is from the \$11 million reserve fund.

Fulk asked if the \$11 million was supposed to go into next year's budget.

Jones said no, and noted the county continually holds those reserves.

"It's like savings that we haven't spent from prior years," Jones said.

Doug Perry, chairman, and of the Smith River District, asked what percentage the audit recommended for the reserve fund.

"The audit just kind of tells us what we have. We have an unassigned fund balance as percentage of total expenditures of 22 percent. The best practices are to keep 15 to 20 percent of that," Simms said.

Noting that funds for the courthouse were not to replace the unit, but to repair it, "that's just a band aid," Fulk said.

"Which is what we've been doing for a long time," said Simms.

In addition to using some of the county's unrestricted reserve funds, Perry asked if the board may want to consider raising the county's meals tax by one percent to five percent, increasing the Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) from five percent to six percent, or raising the county's personal property and the machine and tools tax.

Fulk opposed raising the meals tax because most of the local restaurants and small business owners struggled to update their systems with the last increase.

Another one would mean "they would have to redo everything. It would put a burden on your small businesses to do that. Also, that meals tax was done by a vote of the public, and I don't know how you're going to go up" on that "unless you want to go back and have a referendum with the public. And they voted it down seven times before we ever got it the first time, so I think that's a little no brain-

er," she said.

Kendrick said he didn't believe the machine and tools tax should be increased. "I think it's high enough," he said.

Perry also wasn't a fan of increasing the machine and tools tax.

"Business machines are expensive. They're even more expensive to maintain and keep in service, and you have to do that to keep your business running to make the money to pay the taxes. I'm just not a fan at all of machine and tools tax," he said.

Marshall also was unwilling to raise taxes.

And in the future, "as far as the budget goes, I think that ought to come out of committee. I don't think it should be two people" on the budget committee deciding it, Marshall said, adding that the county also needs to budget for planned maintenance and track the life expectancy of its equipment.

Jonathan Wood, of the Peters Creek District, said he didn't have a problem with using some of the unrestricted reserve funds to pay off the unexpected expenses such as the HVAC system or the courthouse issues.

However, "I don't want to dive into our unrestricted funds to pay for things that are going to be a reoccurring expense, like the school system, the animal shelter, (the) funding of Jeb (rescue). I really think we should try to find a better way to fund those because like I said, I hope if we reach in there to pull out for HVAC and pay the circuit court issue, that's a one time, every 20 years deal," Wood said.

"If we're looking at raising any tax, the Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT)" would affect "very, very few of any Patrick County residents. I don't want to touch the meals tax and I don't want to touch our small and medium and large businesses by fooling with the machine and tools tax," Wood said.

Simms said the TOT – sometimes called the lodging tax in some areas – applies to any short-term, 30-days or less rentals like Airbnb, hotels, and campgrounds.

"So, anytime you go anywhere, and you stay at Myrtle Beach or wherever, you're going to see on your reservation a local tax, and that's what it is. Virginia gives localities the right to charge a lodging or transient occupancy tax. It's taxed to whoever is coming to stay overnight in Patrick County," Simms said.

She also noted that a potential increase to the TOT would not go into effect until January 1, 2025.

Kurt Bozenmayer, chairman of the Planning Commission, recommend-

ed the board read the enabling legislation regarding the TOT before any decision was made.

"When that transient occupancy tax was initially approved by the state, it was written that anything over two percent of that five percent that was initially there was specifically to be earmarked for tourism. So, the county's portion of that transient occupancy tax is limited to two percent," he said.

Simms said the county had checked with its legal counsel on the matter and learned that "it is legal for us to do this and to fund. I mean, if we have a tourist here and they call 911, or we have to pay the commissioner of revenue to process TOT finance, has to process tourism invoices. We did have to check with legal to be sure that we can do this."

The board will hold a public hearing on August 12 to get input on raising the TOT by one percent.

Meanwhile, the board agreed to take some of the necessary funds from the county's unrestricted reserve funds, and replace them with the estimated \$140,000 the TOT tax increase is expected to generate.

The board approved paying the circuit courthouse bill from its unrestricted reserve funds, but tabled discussions about funding JEB Stuart Volunteer Rescue Squad's contribution, the animal shelter, and library until next month's meeting.

In other matters, the board:

*Approved the June 10 and June 18 meeting minutes.

*Approved the bills, claims, and appropriations.

*Recognized the Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC) Softball Team for winning the NJCAA Official 3 Softball World Series and Coach Robbie Campbell.

*Scheduled a public hearing for the August 12 meeting regarding the FY2024-2025 Patrick County School system unspent funds.

*Approved authorizing the county administrator to take in all invoices outside of current procedures of \$5,000 or less with a 4-1 vote.

*Approved an appropriation to the Department of Social Services (DSS).

*Approved the purchase of 20 chairs for board meeting attendees, a \$60 podium, and \$3,600 for two additional cameras for the Patrick County Administration Building. Funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) will be used for these purchases.

*Heard the administrator's report.

*Heard the supervisors' reports.

*Appointed Kurt Bozenmayer to the Tourism Advisory Council (TAC) for the Smith River District.

*Appointed Jeanie Clark to TAC for the Mayo River District.

*Appointed Bessie Weber to TAC as the at-large member.

*Appointed David Lusk to the Planning Commission for the Dan River District.

*Appointed Jane Carlson to serve as the at-large member for Piedmont Community Services (PCS).

*Appointed Clayton Kendrick to serve on the West Piedmont Planning District Commission Executive Committee.

Health Districts in Southwest Virginia conducting long COVID study

The Central Virginia Health District began a Long COVID surveillance project in October of 2023 that is now available to all residents of Southwest Virginia. Long COVID is when a person is still sick two or more months after getting COVID-19. Symptoms can include trouble breathing, a cough, feeling weak and tired, and problems with certain organs, such as the heart, brain, or lungs. A diagnosis of Long COVID is not required to participate. We want to learn about any long-term effects that people might have two or more months after a COVID-19 infection.

To participate in the study, you must meet the following criteria:

*Had COVID-19 at least once or been diagnosed with Long COVID

*Experienced symptoms lasting at least two months after a COVID infection

*Must be a resident of one of the following health districts: Roanoke City and Allegheny, Central Virginia, Cumberland Plateau, LENOWISCO, Mount Rogers, New River, Pittsylv-

nia-Danville, Southside, or West Piedmont.

If you qualify and would like to enroll, go to <https://redcap.link/virginialongcovidstudy>. A member from our team will make contact, review consent, and complete a phone interview. Individuals will then be asked to participate in follow up interviews in three and six months after the initial interview.

Findings from the study will be submitted for future publication and presentation to the scientific community and made available at CVHD.org. The purpose of the study is to improve our understanding of how Long COVID affects the residents of rural Virginia, assess the quality of support participants have received, and identify Long COVID resource needs.

Additional questions about the project can be directed to Cali Anderson, cali.anderson@vdh.virginia.gov. For more information about Long COVID, visit <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/protect-yourself/long-covid/>.

Latest initial claims for unemployment insurance increase

According to Virginia Works, that 2,136 unemployment insurance weekly initial claims were filed during the week ending July 06, 2024, which is 1.1 percent higher than last week's 2,112 claims and 24.1 percent lower than the comparable week of last year (2,816). Nearly 78 percent of claimants self-reported an associated industry; of those reported, the top five industries (57 percent) were Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (233); Administrative and Support and Waste Management (200); Health Care and Social Assistance (197); Retail Trade (161); and Manufacturing (158).

Continued weeks claims (16,471) were 0.2 percent higher than last week (16,433) and were 23.9 percent higher than the comparable week of last year (13,296). Nearly 93 percent of claimants self-re-

ported an associated industry; of those reported, the top five industries (59 percent) were Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (2,429); Administrative and Support and Waste Management (2,224); Health Care and Social Assistance (1,663); Accommodation and Food Services (1,404); and Retail Trade (1,353).

A person who has already filed an initial claim and who has experienced a week of unemployment files a continued claim to claim benefits for that week of unemployment. On a weekly basis, continued claims reflect a good approximation of the current number of insured unemployed workers filing for UI benefits, and are a good indicator of labor market conditions. While continued claims are not a leading indicator, they provide confirming evidence of the direction of the economy.

Meetings

Tuesday, July 16
The Patrick County Planning Commission will meet at 6 p.m. in the second floor conference room of the Patrick County Administration Building.

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

Thursday, July 18
The Patrick County School Board will meet at 5:30 p.m. in the School Board Office.

Monday, July 22
The Patrick County Board of Supervisors meets at 6 p.m., on the third floor of the county administration building.

Events

Thursday, July 18
New Hope Church of the Brethren will hold a Youth Game Night/Open House from 6-8:30 p.m., with board games, basketball, and football for games and pizza and soda. Ages 11 and up.

The Carroll County Genealogy Club will hold a brief business meeting at 5 p.m. at the club's library and meeting room located in the Historical Courthouse on the left side.

Saturday, July 20
Providence United Methodist Church men's group will hold a community breakfast from 7:30-10 a.m. The menu includes bacon, sausage, eggs, apples, gravy, and biscuits.

The seventh annual Rock Castle Reunion will be held at 12 p.m. at Woolwine Methodist Church. Attendees are encouraged to bring old photographs, artifacts, stories, and covered dishes. Email Beverly at rockcastlecreek1@gmail.com or call 276-692-9626 with questions.

49th annual Elgin Reunion. Potluck starts at noon at Fairystone Fire Station, Stuart, VA.

Saturday, July 27
Providence United Methodist Church will hold a Vacation Bible School from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Lunch will be provided for participants for ages 4-12.

Mayo Mountain Church will hold a Vacation Bible School from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The Patrick County Democratic Committee will meet at 11 a.m. at the Patrick County Library to finalize plans for its August meet and greet.

Friday, Aug. 2
Woolwine Elementary School will hold a Back to School Bingo event in the gym. Food will be served from 6-7 p.m. including hot

dogs, chips, dessert, and drinks, and bingo will start at 7 p.m. The cost is \$20 for 10 games with three bingo cards each game, one coverall game, two door prize tickets, and one dauber.

Saturday, Aug. 3
The Fairystone Volunteer Fire Department will hold a Golf Tournament Fundraiser. 4 person captains' choice, 9 a.m. at Gordon Trent Golf Course. The rain date is Aug. 10. The cost is \$60 per person or \$240 per team and includes 18 holes of golf. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. There is a \$25,000 hole in one prize. Mulligans are available for purchase on the day of event. Prizes awarded for closest to the pin on all Par 3s. Cash prizes for top 3 teams. For more information or to pre-register a team contact Brian at (276) 732-7036 or Andy at (276) 340-3972.

Wednesday, Aug. 14
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.

Saturday, Aug. 17
New Hope Church of the Brethren will have music by The Churchmen from 4-7 p.m. There will be food, games, and a prayer tent. People are encouraged to bring their own lawn chairs.

Ongoing

Free Community Meal, every 4th Wednesday, 5 p.m., Raven Rock Wesleyan Church, 1912 Raven Rock Road, Ararat. Take out or dine in. Call Scott or Nann Phillips at (276) 773-6004 or email pastor@ravenrockchurch.org.

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

The Patrick County 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 Stuart Elementary School Running Club will hit the pavements along the sidewalks in town on Mondays and Wednesdays from 3:30-4:30 p.m.

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

The Patrick County Veterans Memorial

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

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

The Carroll County Genealogy Club is open 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

The Willis Gap Community Center Members Meeting, the first Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m.

The Willis Gap Community Center "Appalachian Acoustic Open Jam" is every Friday. Doors open at 6 p.m. for food. Music and dancing is 6:30-9 p.m.

The Willis Gap Community Center "Golden Oldies Open Jam" is the last Tuesday of the month. Doors open at 6 p.m. for food; music and dancing from 6:30-9 p.m.

The Carroll County Genealogy Club is open Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Lodge honors Bryant with award, banquet



Lemont Bryant (left) was awarded the Community Builders Award from the Grand Lodge of Virginia. Roger Hall, master of Mountain Home Lodge, made the presentation. Bryant serves as manager of WHEO radio. This award recognizes individuals for their community service efforts. A banquet was held to honor Bryant at the Lodge.

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Weekly SUDOKU
by Linda Thistle

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DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦♦

♦ Moderate ♦♦ Challenging
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Pizza Shop

(cont. from page 1)

ered purchasing Leonardo's on Main Street first, but decided to look into Tony's instead after starting contract negotiations.

The closed on the property in February, "so it's been five months of renovations we're doing, trying to get everything up to the new code because we're not grandfathered in anymore," Fuimara said.

The eatery received its food license about two weeks ago and was able to open in early July, Fuimara said.

"We tried to do kind of a soft opening because we really didn't want to be overwhelmed. We really didn't post anything online, or there's no sign out front that says we're open. Our first day was Wednesday, July 3, and we've been slammed ever since," he said, with a laugh.

So far, Fuimara said he believes everyone's been happy with the food, and the community response has been positive.

"We've been open five days and we've seen people come in three times already. It's great. It's nice to see the same person" come back to try different things, Fuimara said.

"A lot of repeat customers," Frankenbach added.

"The community's been great. For us not advertising I just couldn't believe the amount of people that came in," Fuimara said.

The restaurant offers a variety of 16-inch pizzas, slices of pizza, hot and cold subs, salads, appetizers, desserts, and drinks.

Fuimara said the pizzeria's top sellers include the steak and cheese sub and meat lovers' pizza.

"Lot of meat," he said.

Fuimara noted owning the eatery as similar to what he remembers growing up in his family's pizzeria.

"Nothing is really different. People order pies and we box and set it out. It's all the same," he said.

However, he said in Long Island pizzerias sold a lot more individual slices of pizza.

"We're trying to get people used to that where if you're waiting for a pie, or maybe too busy for a pie, maybe a few slices. We decided to do one size pie because of the slices, so if you want about

two small pies then you could order three different slices and that takes care of it," he said.

A happy issue is running out of food due to the high demand.

"We ran out of dough on Saturday, it's hard to believe. We didn't know what to expect," Fuimara said, adding that the two are continuing to work out the kinks in terms of organizing when the food is being delivered and stocking up on enough supplies.

"Now, we know we need 10 boxes of steaks for steak and cheese," he said. "Also, we're prepping a lot of food, so that's also part of the kind of judgment right now with how much food should we be prepping. That's been a little bit of a challenge that I think we're starting to figure it out."

Frankenbach said they didn't expect to be as busy as they are. The volume of customers "threw us off a little, that's why we didn't advertise too much. We're trying to pump the break for ourselves and our employees. We don't want to overwhelm everybody."

Fuimara said everything that's made at Tony's is fresh.

"That's the one thing I don't want to give up. We make our own meatballs, we don't use frozen meatballs; our own chicken cutlets, our own eggplant. The dough we're making, the sauce we're making, the marinara sauce we're making. I'm a real stickler of that, I taste the difference right away, and I hope the community appreciates it," he said.



Tony's Pizza will be open five days a week.

Fuimara said providing fresh food costs more, but "I want to try and keep the good food, but if a pie is too expensive, that's why we have slices. Try to keep it to serve everybody."

Fuimara said the potential next venture for the business is expanding into the side room with a sports bar.

"We'll have more draft beer, TVs everywhere, a few games - like a pool table, dartboard, we'll see how that shakes out," he said.

While they are unsure about holding a grand opening, Franckebach said he knows the Patrick County Chamber of Commerce wants to hold a ribbon cutting in the future.

The eatery is open Wednesdays and Thursdays from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., Fridays and Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., and on Sundays from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. To order online, go to tonyspizzas-tuart.com. For more information, go to [Facebook.com/Tony'spizza](https://www.facebook.com/Tony'spizza).

Study shows songbird habitats benefit monarch butterflies

Establishing a songbird habitat benefits at-risk birds and plays an important role in helping conserve other vulnerable species.

According to the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, a study conducted by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania found that managing habitats of songbirds like the golden-winged warbler also provides co-benefits to other birds and pollinators.

One of those pollinators is the vulnerable monarch butterfly, which has faced significantly declining populations in North America.

"We're implementing strategies for the golden-winged warbler, but it's important for us to understand how those efforts augment or provide potential benefits to these other species," said researcher Jeffery Larkin during a webinar about avian-focused conservation outcomes.

The study examined conservation efforts to manage early successional habitats for golden-winged warblers

in the Appalachian Mountains and Great Lakes regions. While these habitats are vital to songbirds' breeding success, the study demonstrated they serve as important nectar and forage sources for monarchs. They also promote the growth of milkweed—a plant pivotal to monarchs' survival.

Early successional habitats are open areas typically covered in young trees, shrubs, grasses and wildflowers that support a variety of wildlife species. Ecologically diverse, the habitats form after a disturbance, like wildfires, severe weather and timbering.

If not properly managed, the habitat will become a mature forest with tree canopies blocking sunlight from reaching the understory plant species that support wildlife.

But managing these habitats is expensive. The NRCS' Working Lands for Wildlife initiative provides landowners with financial and technical assistance to conserve and create the diverse habitats.

The USDA said research from this

study will strengthen conservation solutions for the monarch butterfly and other pollinators. It also will provide valuable information for more multi-species approaches.

"Contributing to the recovery of another species is wonderful news," Larkin said.

The iconic monarch butterfly is known for its migration from overwintering sites in central Mexico and coastal California to as far north as Canada. But populations are facing stressors, including reduced milkweed and nectar plant availability due to habitat loss and land conversion.

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, eastern monarch populations declined from 384 million in 1996 to 60 million in 2019. The western monarch population declined from around 1.2 million in 1997 to less than 30,000 in 2019.

To read a report on the study, visit bit.ly/3RZnwhs. Learn more about creating or enhancing monarch butterfly habitats at bit.ly/3VYE765.

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Local agricultural state cost-share funding sign up announced

By Patrick County Soil and Water Conservation District Office

The Patrick County Soil and Water Conservation District (Patrick SWCD) announce a voluntary sign-up period for the 2024/2025 Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practice (BMP) State Cost-Share Program.

Agricultural producers who farm in Patrick County can sign up now. To make an appointment for a field visit to see how the District can assist you in your farming operation, please contact the Patrick SWCD office at 276-694-2911.

The state cost-share program supports the use of various practices in conservation planning to treat cropland, pastureland, and forested land, which often helps production while also contributing to the health of the waters in Patrick County. Some BMPs are paid for at a flat rate or straight per-acre rate while others are cost-shared on a percentage basis. These practices can also help boost farm productivity and profitability.

Because demand for cost-share assistance is great, the Patrick SWCD supports the implementation of only those plans that meet local water quality guidelines. Since some requests can't be satisfied, priority rank-

ing of practices will be used to make sure funds are spent wisely.

Soil and water conservation districts were established in the 1930s after approximately 35 million acres of formerly cultivated land were destroyed for crop production because of poor land management practices. SWCDs develop programs that conserve soil resources, control and prevent soil erosion, and conserve, develop, utilize and dispose of water. With the Commonwealth of Virginia's Department of Conservation and Recreation state funding and oversight, Districts target millions of dollars annually to address significant agricultural water quality problems in high priority hydrologic units.

To learn more about the Virginia Agricultural State Cost-Share Program, please feel free to contact Tony Collins or Sandra Heath at the District office at 276-694-2911 to schedule a field visit. With their combined 50 years of service, they look forward to assisting you. The Patrick SWCD office is located at 104 Via Avenue, Stuart. Learn about all the Patrick County Soil and Water Conservation District's programs and resources at patrickswcd.org as well.

Unique and traditional varieties of Virginia-grown produce are abundant now

Virginia's true colors are exposed in the summer, as farmers harvest fresh produce that intrigues consumers perusing farm stands and grocery shelves.

John Cromwell of Cromwell's Produce in Virginia Beach grows both heirloom and hybrid tomatoes that showcase the summer's color spectrum.

In addition to traditional Roma and cherry tomatoes, he grows roadsters, a hybrid variety ideal for slicing. Dusky rose-colored Cherokee Purple heirloom tomatoes boast rich, smoky flavors, while multicolor Berkley tie-dye heirlooms blend spice and sweetness with acidic balance.

German Pink is another popular, meaty heirloom tomato offered among the farm's seasonal inventory. Cromwell also grows pineapple tomatoes, an heirloom beefsteak variety with the low acidity of a yellow tomato and the tangy taste of red ones.

Snap peas, curly and Tuscan kale, cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower add more pops of color and texture to the summertime lineup.

"And the best thing that's growing in this heat is sweet corn, and cowpeas—black eye, pink eye and crowder peas," Cromwell said. "But there's more demand for the white corn than anything else."

While there is no official difference in sweetness among yellow, bicolor and white corn varieties, the choice is based on preference.

"People around here are white corn fans, which is more traditional in this area," Cromwell said.

Now is prime time to preserve this season's flavors.

"Stock up while it's here, at the height of the season through the end of July, to get things to put in the freezer," Cromwell continued.

In the fall, customers can appreciate a different array of seasonal items when the farm harvests red and gold beets and sells pickled cucumbers by the jar or bushel.

Across the Chesapeake Bay on the Eastern Shore, David Hickman's grandkids recently bagged and sold red, white and yellow potatoes to customers at Dublin Farms, a large-scale potato operation that has been in business for 50 years.

Though consumers can buy freshly harvested potatoes on site, Dublin Farms' tubers are distributed to Walmart and Food Lion stores across Virginia. Potatoes harvested today are typically washed, sorted, packaged and shipped within a day or two.

Eighty percent of Virginia potatoes are grown on the Eastern Shore.

"About half that acreage on the shore goes to potato chips, which are contracted pre-season at a set price, and loaded loose into trucks," explained Hickman, who represents farmers on Virginia Farm Bureau Federation's state board. "Our potatoes are more for the daily market."

Find local seasonal produce on the Virginia Grown website, administered through the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, at vdacs.virginia.gov/vagrown.

Youngkin's new order calls for cell phone-free education in public schools

Given the increasing evidence of the impact cell phone and social media usage has on education and youth mental health, Gov. Glenn Youngkin issued Executive Order 33, which directs the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to draft guidance for public school divisions to adopt local policies and procedures establishing cell phone-free education.

The EO directs VDOE to initiate a robust public engagement effort with parents, students, teachers, local school leaders and other stakeholders to develop collaboratively policies and procedures that establish the age-appropriate restriction or elimination of cell phone use during instructional time, as well as to establish protocols allowing parents to contact their children in emergency and other important situations.

In addition, the Governor announced today that the VDOE and the Department of Behavioral Health and Development Services (DBDHS) will make a combined \$500,000 available from existing funds to support implementation of this mental health and safety initiative.

"This essential action will promote a healthier and more focused educational environment where every child is free to learn. Creating cell phone and social media-free educational environments in Virginia's K-12 education system will benefit students, parents, and educators," said Governor Glenn Youngkin. "Today's Executive Order both establishes the clear goal to protect the health and safety of our students by limiting the amount of time they are exposed to addictive cell phones and social media and eliminates clear distractions in the classroom. It also kicks off the robust conversations among parents, students, teachers, and school and community leaders necessary to design and implement these policies and procedures at the local level."

Implementing cell phone-free education in Virginia's K-12 public schools is critical, especially given youth chronic health conditions, such as depression and anxiety, that are driven in part by extensive social media and cell phone use. Children spend an average of 4.8 hours a day on social media, and recent studies indicate that spending more than three hours a day on social media doubles the risk of poor mental health for adolescents. Most alarming is the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention data from 2019-2021, reporting that the rate of suicide has increased 167% since 2010 for girls and 91% since 2010 for boys. In the same time-frame, boys and girls experienced a spike in depression of 161% and 145%, respectively.

"The data is clear, and it is time for Virginians to come together to address the damage of social media and screens to healthy childhoods. Government cannot be the sole solution to this crisis; school communities – especially parents and teachers – must work together to discuss and develop common sense approaches to limit screen time, prioritize open channels of communication, and re-establish norms that reinforce healthy and vibrant learning communities," said Secretary of Education Aimee Guidera. "Many parents and teachers struggle to balance

socializing and social media, play or learning time and screen time, and true human connection and internet connection," said Secretary of Health and Human Resources Janet Kelly. "The more we learn, the more we know that too much screen time - especially time spent on addictive apps - is harmful to kids' physical and mental health. A few weeks ago, the Surgeon General of the United States issued a formal advisory suggesting that tech companies be required to put a warning label on social media apps. Governor Youngkin's Executive Order 33 complements that advisory well. Too many childhoods have ended because of the wild west of addictive apps, and it is time we work together to bring childhood back."

The Executive Order directs VDOE to publish their draft guidance by August 15. After considering feedback from stakeholders, VDOE will issue final guidance in September for local school divisions to adopt cell phone-free education policies and procedures by January 1, 2025.

Nothing in this Executive Order is intended to prohibit school divisions from adopting age-appropriate policies and procedures ahead of this date or that are more comprehensive than the guidance issued by VDOE.

The Department of Education will facilitate listening sessions and other stakeholder engagement opportunities over the next six weeks to solicit public input on this policy, gather feedback on best practices currently underway in Virginia public schools, and receive input for the draft guidance establishing cell phone-free education in K-12 public schools.

"Cell phones and digital media have caused pre-teens and teens to disconnect from the real world, have increased mental health challenges, and have caused significant disruption in the important daily learning opportunities in their classrooms," said Superintendent of Public Instruction Lisa Coons. "Parents and teachers understand the importance of creating cell phone-free education in our schools so that students can focus on instruction and learning during the school day. We look forward to faci-

tating conversations around the danger to our children of cell phones, social media, and the impact of screen time and will focus on creating guidance that protects the health and safety of our students."

Funding from VDOE and DBDHS will support state and local efforts to facilitate family nights and community engagement on the youth mental health crisis and cell phone use best practices as well as enable school divisions in need of assistance to receive microgrants to help implement best practices in their local community. As part of the Back-to-School Season, there will be a series of Commonwealth Conversations across Virginia to provide opportunities for discussion on how schools and communities can build new norms around phone usage.

While some school divisions in Virginia have already implemented cell phone limitation protocols, this Executive Order is the first statewide effort to enhance the learning environment by eliminating or severely restricting cell phone devices during instructional time. Recent studies indicate that students who use their phones during class learn less, achieve lower grades, and can face a cumulative, lasting, and detrimental impact on their ability to focus and engage in their studies.

Arrests Reported

The Patrick County Sheriff's Office reported the following:

*Christopher Wayne Bowman, 36, of Stuart, was charged July 6 with probation violation. Master Deputy M.T. Rorrer was the arresting officer.

*Chrystal Gayle Hough, 37, of Meadows of Dan, was charged July 8 with unauthorized use of vehicle. Inv. F.M. Hubbard was the arresting officer.

*James William Turner, 34, address unavailable, was charged July 9 with probation violation. Pittsylvania County made the arrest for Patrick County.

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FRIDAY

PIANO MUSIC LIVE

Heritage Festival Celebrating Colonial Heroine Returns to Virginia's New River Valley



Ostenaco



Kim and Jimbo Cary



Trulove reenactor



Mary Draper Ingles Statue

A festival rooted in the story of America's westward migration returns to Radford City and Pulaski County, Va., this month. Named for the colonial legend Mary Draper Ingles, the upcoming celebration runs July 26-28 at several area venues.

In 1732 Ingles was born in Philadelphia to immigrant parents from Donegal, Ireland. Eventually the family traveled down the great Valley of Virginia and settled in Draper's Meadow (today's Blacksburg, Va.). There in 1755 Native Americans attacked Mary's settlement, and she and other family members were taken to Ohio. She later escaped and completed a treacherous trip back to her home on the New River. That journey was made famous by the "New York Times" best-seller, "Follow the River."

Something new to this year's event is a Chautauqua-style presentation by West Virginian Doug Wood, who will interpret the life of Ostenaco, a Cherokee military leader during the French and Indian War. In fact, Ostenaco led an army of Cherokees

against the Shawnees, the tribal nation responsible for the attack on the settlement in Virginia. Also new to the line-up is the entertaining duo Kim and Jimbo Cary, who will present traditional music of early America on a variety of instruments including mandolin, fiddle, guitar and gourd banjo. The audience will be treated with authentic old-time banjo tunes, flat-pickin' bluegrass, gospel and southern mountain music.

Headlining Saturday's literary activities will be award-winning Southern writer Sharyn McCrumb, best known for her Appalachian "Ballad" novels. She will discuss her book, "King's Mountain," that is set in the same era as the Mary Draper Ingles saga and tells the story of one of the important battles of the Revolutionary War. McCrumb will be joined by another "New York Times" bestselling author Kathleen Grissom, who has written "Crow Mary," about a strong indigenous woman caught in a clash of cultures in 19th-century North America.

Also on Saturday, Kathleen

Harshberger, a local playwright and actress, will present a living history interpretation of Mary. Harshberger has played the role of the colonial heroine in some form for the last several decades.

All total, the festival's three days will feature more than 75 activities, including old-time crafts and skills, art exhibits, vendors and a petting zoo. The Long Way Brewing, a craft beer company whose name is a take on the frontierswoman's journey, will showcase live music, historical dancers, food trucks and a children's play zone. The brewery also will sponsor a short reenactment of the Ingles play, "Long Walk to Freedom," featuring Radford University and local actors.

Two historic landmarks, Ingles Tavern and La Riviere, also known as Ingles Castle and built by Mary's great-grandson, will be open for tours. Wilderness Road Regional Museum in Dublin is also sponsoring 18th century living history interpretations by the Fincastle Company and music by such regional musicians as

W i l - l a r d G a y - h e a r t .

If you are looking to cool off on one of the oldest rivers in the world, reservations for floats, tubes and paddles are available with the outfitter, Radford On The River, at Bisset Park.

Art exhibits are also part of the festivities with shows at the Radford University Museum on Tyler, The Highlander Hotel and Glencoe Mansion. The hotel will also feature a meet and greet with Mary Draper Ingles descendants and reenactment actors.

For the full schedule, go to www.glencoe mansion.org/mdifestival or phone (540) 731-5031. The Highlander Hotel is the festival's official hotel and is offering a special lodging promotion.

The event is funded in part by grants from Virginia Tourism Corporation, the Virginia Commission for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Heroes honored for efforts



The "Tuggle's Gap Heroes" were celebrated for their exceptional dedication during the October/November Fire on June 23 by the Woolwine Community Ruritans. This reception was marked by heartfelt recognition for all of those involved, ensuring each received a well-deserved plaque. Special thanks were extended to Patrick County Tourism for their invaluable support in making this tribute possible.

Modern bluegrass to be showcased July 20 at Blue Ridge Music Center

Fireside Collective and Liam Purcell & Cane Mill Road will perform as part of the Deep Roots, Many Voices: Summer Outdoor Concert Series at 7 p.m., Saturday, July 20, in the Blue Ridge Music Center's outdoor amphitheater on the Blue Ridge Parkway just south of Galax, Va.

Fireside Collective draws on folk, blues, funk, and a wide variety of bluegrass sounds to create a distinctive body of work. Blending the characteristic interplay of bluegrass instrumentation and harmonies with strong original material and exuberant energy, band members Joe Cicero (guitar), Jesse Iaquinto (mandolin), Tommy Maher (resonator guitar), and Carson White (upright bass) bring authentic voices to their instruments and the unique contributions of different lead and harmony vocalists complement the variety in the group's songs.

Fireside Collective has been on a roll since emerging from the vibrant roots music scene of Asheville, N.C. In quick order, the group won the band contest at MerleFest in 2016, released its debut album in 2017, earned a nomination for New Artist of the Year from the International Bluegrass Music Association in 2022, and embarked on an ambitious touring schedule that has earned an enthusiastic reception from traditional bluegrass fans and eclectic music festival audiences alike.

Liam Purcell & Cane Mill Road will open the show. The group has been recognized as one of the fastest



Fireside Collective



Liam-Purcell Cane Mill Road

rising bluegrass bands in the industry, including being named Momentum Band of the Year by the International Bluegrass Music Association in 2019.

Purcell deftly leads Cane Mill Road as the group interprets musical traditions and boldly writes original music in the fertile spirit of bluegrass, old-time, and Americana. Their powerful arrangements and dynamic stage presence have landed the group main stage slots at legendary festivals across the country.

Purcell grew up just down the road from Doc Watson and was raised on traditional bluegrass. He was the first musician to win three contests in the same year at the RockyGrass

music festival in Colorado, taking home first place in the mandolin, banjo, and guitar categories in 2023. He graduated from the Berklee College of Music with a degree in string performance this year.

Joining Purcell in Cane Mill Road are Ella Jordan (fiddle), Rob McCormac (guitar), Jacob Smith (bass), Zack Vickers (banjo), and Alex Naismith (audio).

Tickets are \$25 for adults. Children 12 and younger are admitted free of charge. Advance tickets are available at BlueRidgeMusicCenter.org. Tickets can be purchased on the evening of the show at the admission gates.

Parking opens at 5:15 p.m. and is free. The gates open at 5:45 p.m. The concert begins at 7 p.m.

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The Bluffs Restaurant will offer homestyle food and beverages for purchase during the concert. Visitors may bring their own food and beverages into the amphitheater. Alcoholic beverages are not permitted.

The presenting sponsors for the series are W.L.A. Trucking and Yadkin Arts Council.

Cucurbits - Plant Them Now for Autumn's Feasts and Fun

By Dee Nolan, Patrick County Master Gardeners Association

There's a family of chiefly-herbaceous tendril-bearing vines that can both help elevate dinner to a feast and dress the front steps in autumnal glory.

They're all closely related members of the cucurbit family (scientific name, Cucurbitaceae), including pumpkins, summer and winter squash, melons, gourds and cucumbers. Winter squashes include acorn, butternut, buttercup/kabocha, delicata, turban, Hubbard and Lakota. Summer squash, also known as zucchini, is eaten as immature fruit, while winter squash and pumpkins are harvested as mature fruit.

Pumpkins are especially versatile. Some varieties are grown strictly for eating and their popularity has extended well beyond the traditional pie; others, for seed; still others, for ornamentals. Pumpkins come from two different species. Cucurbita pepo are most jack-o-lantern pumpkins. C. maxima are extremely large pumpkins that are grown for competition and decoration.

Pumpkins grown for culinary delights include Kabocha, Cinderella, Calabasa, Red Kuri, Sugar Pie, and Buttercup, to name a few. The pumpkin flesh is usually pureed and used in sauces, soups and pies. The pumpkin seeds, known as pepitas, can be used as salad garnishes or as a healthy snack.

Pumpkins are rich in vitamins, minerals and antioxidants are amazingly healthy. Also, the low-calorie content makes it a weight-loss-friendly food. Its nutrients and antioxidants may boost your immune system, protect your eyesight, lower your risk of certain cancers and promote heart and skin health.

Gourds, on the other hand, are mostly inedible, come in a wide range of sizes, shapes and colors, and are mainly grown for ornamentation.

When you are looking at seed packets, read variety descriptions carefully to assure you are getting what you desire.

Planting Preparation

Have your soil tested.

The soil pH range for vine crops is between 6.0 - 6.5, which is slightly acidic.

Apply phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) according to soil test recommendations.

Unless your soil test report specifically recommends additional phosphorus, use a low- or no-phosphorus fer-

tilizer.

You can improve your soil by adding well-rotted manure or compost in the spring or fall. Do not use fresh manure as it may contain harmful bacteria and may increase weed problems.

The soil should be moisture retentive, yet well drained.

Forming raised beds will ensure good drainage, which these crops require.

Side dress (add) with fertilizer when the plants begin to spread out their vines, using ½ cup of 46-0-0, or 1 cup of 27-3-3, or 3-½ cups 10-3-1 for each 100 feet of row.

Do not use "Weed and Feed" type fertilizers on vegetables. They contain weed killers that will kill vegetable plants.

Choosing Pumpkins and Squashes:

People do not usually eat pumpkins grown for jack-o-lanterns as the flesh is bland and stringy as pie pumpkins are often smaller and have sweeter fruit. Some pumpkin varieties, such as spaghetti squash, delicata and acorn squashes, produce "naked" or "hulless" fruit, and the seeds are especially nice for roasting as there are no hard shells to crack. These are more difficult to grow, particularly in cooler soil.

Edible winter squashes belong to three different species: C. moschata (butternut types), C. maxima (Hubbard, kabocha and buttercup types) and varieties that produce small squashes for individual servings such as sweet dumpling, butterscotch and bush delicata, while others produce enormous fruits, such as Red Kuri averaging 8 pounds, Long-Island Cheese (5 to 10 pounds) and Banana Squash and Banana Squash 12 to 15 pounds or more).

Gardeners are often surprised to discover that squash and pumpkins have separate male and female flowers on the same plant, and, only female flowers will form fruit via insect pollination; mainly bees.

Are You Ready to Plant...

Remember, you can always start the seedlings indoors at least 4 to 6 weeks before the last frost date in your area.

Seeds can be planted directly into the garden when the soil maintains 70 degrees, or a minimum of 65 degrees at a two-inch soil depth, to germinate properly.

Plant pumpkins and winter squashes three-fourths of an inch deep and 24 to 36 inches apart. If using a bush variety,

use the closer spacing. Row spacing should be 5 to 6 feet apart to allow for growth and air flow, heedless of variety.

Gourds prefer full sun and well-drained, nutrient-rich soil that is rich in organic material. You can plant them directly in the garden in hills or rows, or you can grow them in mounds. Mounds can help prevent disease by maximizing airflow and minimizing humidity. Plant seeds with edge facing downward, per the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service. For an average sized gourd (an apple or a cannonball variety) you can yield 15 or so gourds per plant with attention to details. Smaller types yield more, and large types yield less per plant, according to the American Gourd Society.

A common fallacy is that planting squash and/or cucumbers near gourds can cause abnormal fruit. Summer squash, gourds and some types of pumpkins and winter squash can cross-pollinate each other. While true, the result will only impact the seed and the resulting plant the following year, it will not impact the current season's fruit. Unless you plan on seed saving, these vegetables can be planted next to each other without ill effects.

Containers are Also an Option...

Pumpkins and winter squash vines run, or grow along the ground, and use quite a large amount of garden space. An alternative is to use a bush-type variety in smaller gardens as it is easier to trellis. Choose the variety that most suits your needs and available space.

A 5-gallon pot can be the beginning of your container gourd garden. Begin with a pot with at least one drainage hole. Place some rocks, broken clay pot pieces, or gravel on the bottom of the pot, then add soil and compost. Plant only one (1) small variety (Jewelry, Mini Nigerian Bottle or Liliputz) gourd per 5-gallon pot.

A mature and well-tended vine can yield 3 to 5 gourd Gourds and can be planted in containers, with a five-gallon pot being the smallest sized container. Due to their excessive vines, trellising is recommended for gourds, according to experts at the American Gourd Society. A trellis can be plain and ordinary (a simple stake) to quite elaborate (shaped wrought iron). Use your imagination!!

Water and Weeds...

Vine crops need rainfall or irrigation

watering of at least one (1) inch of water each week during the growing season.

Always soak the soil thoroughly.

Sandy soil needs more frequent watering, but lower amounts more often.

Water at ground level so as to not wet the leaves. Do not use a regular hose or a sprinkler; utilize a watering can.

Plants that are vertically trellis-trained will require more water more often.

Frequent and shallow cultivation, using a hoe or hand tool, will keep weeds under control before they become unmanageable.

The majority of vine crops have roots that are close to the soil. Be mindful when weeding to avoid getting too close to the plant or digging deeply. Scratch the soil with a hoe to cut just deeply enough to remove weeds from below the soil.

Continue weed removal as long as you are able to get close to the stem without causing damage to the vines. When no longer able to use a tool, remove weeds by hand.

Note: If using straw or mulch to assist with weed control, do not apply it until the soil temperature reaches a continued temperature of 75 degrees as these mulches can slow soil warming.

BOLO...

Be on the look-out... as there are several pests that will damage your plants.

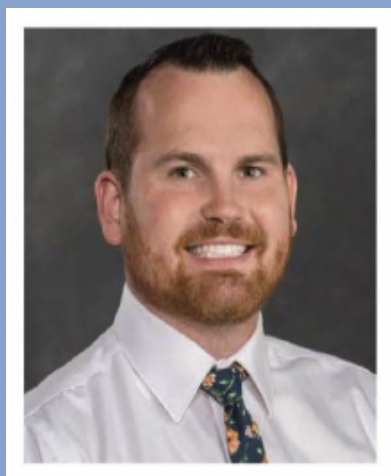
Squash Bugs feed on foliage and can harm young plants. In high numbers they can inject a toxin that kills the foliage or wilts the plant. They often congregate under lower leaves that are touching the ground.

Striped Cucumber Beetles damage plants by eating leaves, stems and fruit. They are also a potential vector of bacterial wilt and squash mosaic virus.

Squash Vine Borers can kill plants as they tunnel through vines. Sometimes a vine can be saved by slitting the stem enough to remove the larvae at soil level and heaping moist soil over the crown and nearby leaf nodes to encourage new roots to form.

Several sources for additional information: <https://www.thespruce.com/how-to-dry-or-cure-gourds-1403445> \ <https://seedsnsuch.com/.../crafting-with-gourds-4-easy-ways-to-use-home-grown-gourds/> <https://www.americangourdsociety.org/>, <https://extension.sdstate.edu/pumpkins-squashes-and-gourds-how-grow-it>

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