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

Fall Home Improvement Section Inside

Residents call for lifting trespass order on parent

By Taylor Boyd

Several residents urged the Patrick County School Board to lift a trespass notice against Leo White during the board's meeting on Wednesday, Sept. 18.

White said "the unjust and illegal trespass" was placed on him by Schools Superintendent Jason Wood on August 14, after "I came into this building (Patrick County School Board Office) to exercise a fundamental right that we have in this country ... to do some FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) requests. I came in this building, and I recorded in the public property, public lobby, I didn't go anywhere I wasn't supposed to," he said.



Leo White requested the trespass notice against him be lifted.

White said he questioned Wood and Amanda Holt, the school division's FOIA officer, about a previous FOIA request that was denied. "So, again that's another fundamental right, under the First Amendment that's publicly addressing the government," he said.

White told the board that Wood issued the trespass notice on Aug.

14, after White visited the school board office to submit FOIA requests. White said he recorded footage in the public lobby without going into restricted areas and that his actions were within his rights.

At no time was he disorderly. White said he also did not curse or threaten anyone. He also let Wood

(See Trespass Order p.3)



Stuart Town Manager Bryce Simmons

Council tables potential change to noise ordinance

By Taylor Boyd

The Stuart Town Council postponed any changes to its noise ordinance during its meeting on Wednesday, Sept. 18, opting to gather more information before proceeding. The noise ordinance, enacted earlier this year, remains in effect for now.

Town Manager Bryce Simmons addressed concerns raised after a local law enforcement officer questioned the constitutionality of the ordinance. Simmons consulted

Commonwealth's Attorney Dayna Bobbitt, who assured him the ordinance is constitutional.

"The deputy that made that comment was misinterpreting the conversation that either he had with her, or whatever. She let me know of a case named Tanner v. The City of Virginia Beach," he said.

The case, Simmons said, is a noise ordinance case where a club owner was open late until 1-2 a.m., and cops would be called regarding

(See Noise Ordinance p. 3)

Alzheimer's Group to Celebrate 20th Anniversary on Oct. 5

By Taylor Boyd

The Patrick County Alzheimer's Group, LLC will celebrate its 20th anniversary with a walk on Saturday, Oct. 5, from 1 to 5 p.m. at DeHart Park in Stuart. Registration for the walk is \$25 per person.

Sally Smith, executive director of the group, said the event will feature food, music, face painting, booths, free T-shirts, and a color powder party. "You can be red, you can be green, you can be blue," Smith said, referring to the vibrant festivities planned. Participants who pay the \$25 fee will also receive a free meal.

"This celebration is a way of saying thank you to the people of Patrick County and the surrounding 60-mile area," Smith said, noting the group's partnership with the Ararat Ruritan Club for the event.

The collaboration with the Ruritan Club was sparked after both organizations faced low turnout for their respective walks—one for Alzheimer's and one for mental health. "They came back and said, 'how about we do a walk for both?'" Smith said. "If more groups worked together, we could accomplish so much more."

The establishment of an Alzheimer's group in Ararat would mark the third in Patrick County, Smith added. The Vesta-Meadows of



The Patrick County Alzheimer's Group, LLC provided information during the recent agricultural fair. The group will celebrate its 20th anniversary on Saturday, October 5.

Dan Alzheimer's Group, which meets at the Vesta Community Center, was formed about three years ago. The Stuart group was founded in 2004, inspired by Smith's personal experience with her mother's Alzheimer's diagnosis.

Smith shared that when her mother was diagnosed, the family approached the disease head-on. "We didn't keep it a secret," Smith said. "We just told people, 'Mom has Alzheimer's, what do we do now?'" The group began with the goal of helping others facing similar challenges and worked to connect families with resources.

In its early days, the group invited Alzheimer's expert Teepa Snow to speak, drawing about 80 attendees. Smith believes that many people were initially hesitant to acknowledge Alzheimer's publicly. "People were ashamed to say they couldn't remember things," she said. "But we wanted to make sure people knew what Alzheimer's does."

Since its inception, the group has assisted hundreds of residents and those within a 60-mile radius. Smith noted that Alzheimer's is an expensive disease to manage, with many costs not covered by Medicare. The group helps provide patients and caregivers with supplies like Ensure, diapers, gloves, and more. Currently, the group supports about 30 patients.

For more information, contact the Patrick County Alzheimer's Group at (276) 693-2089. Donations can be mailed to P.O. Box 1301, Stuart, VA 24171.

Tom Talks History, Book Release set for Sept. 29



The lives of William Alexander Stuart, John Dabney Stuart, and James Ewell Brown "Jeb" Stuart will be discussed on Sunday, September 29, at 2 p.m., in Ararat Ruritan Club, 4711 Ararat Highway, Ararat.

Historian Tom Perry will discuss the lives of William Alexander Stuart, John Dabney Stuart, and James Ewell Brown "Jeb" Stuart, at 2 p.m. on Sunday, September 29, Ararat Ruritan Club, 4711 Ararat Highway, Ararat.

All born at Laurel Hill, Stuart's Birthplace, in Ararat. Perry will discuss Stuart and his brothers and their careers during the War Between The States. William Alexander Stuart ran the saltworks in Saltville, Virginia, one of the two

places that the Confederate States of America had for the vital natural resource. John Dabney Stuart was a doctor in the 54th Virginia Infantry in the Army of Tennessee. James Ewell Brown "Jeb" Stuart rose to the rank of Major General and commanded all of the cavalry in Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia.

This is a fundraiser for the Perry Family Scholarship. Admission is free. Donations for (See Tom Talks History p. 12)



Dozens of Patrick County residents attended a Q&A session with Burton and Wood Brothers Racing.

Burton Reflects on Securing Wood Brothers' 100th Win

By Taylor Boyd

Wood Brothers Racing celebrated its milestone 100th win on Sept. 17 at the Wood Brothers Racing Museum in Stuart, following Harrison Burton's victory at the August 24 Coke Zero Sugar 400 at Daytona. The celebration featured a Q&A session and an autograph signing.

Burton narrowly edged out Kyle Busch by less than a second to secure the win, marking Wood Brothers Racing's first victory since 2017.

Burton said his main goal had always been to earn a spot on the Wood Brothers Wall of Fame, which honors every driver who has won a race for the team. "To be able to look out there and see my face—it's not

the best-looking one, but it's okay—and to know it's up there forever is amazing," Burton said. "That was my main goal when I got hired to drive the Wood Brothers car."

During his first visit to Stuart, Burton toured the museum and the Wood Brothers' homeplace, gaining a deeper appreciation for the team's storied history. "Now, to be a small part of that—to have one of the 100 wins—it feels pretty unreal," he said. "It's burned into my memory when Len [Wood] said, 'We've got your spot here if you win,' and glanced at the wall. I thought, 'Okay, we've got to make that happen.'"

(See 100th Win p.12)

Calling all Scarecrows and Monsters to annual contest

It's that time of year. The last remainder of the garden is being harvested. The Scarecrows have done their job all summer, now it's time for them to visit businesses and

public locations around the county. The Patrick County Chamber of Commerce is encouraging all local businesses, organizations, homeowners and churches to decorate a

scarecrow or monster for display. Tailor the theme to your business, your favorite movie character or just create a good old fashioned scarecrow or monster.

through October 31.

Scarecrows must be visible from the road. If your business or organization does not have roadside frontage, call the chamber and the staff there will work to locate a spot for you.

Entry forms are available online at the chamber's website, www.patrickchamber.com. For more information, call the chamber office at (276) 694-6012.

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Pets of the Week



This black female was picked up on Holly Tree Lane in Ararat.

The black and tan female was found on South Fork Loop in Stuart.

If you recognize either, please contact the Patrick County Public Animal Shelter (PCPAS) at (276) 694-6259. Visit the shelter in person to meet available pets, or visit its Facebook page. Adoption fees are \$10 and include spay/neuter and a rabies vaccination.

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Trespass Order

(cont. from page 1)



School administrators and others posed with board members to celebrate learning that every school in the county was fully accredited this year. Patrick County High School was also accredited but is not pictured.

know he recorded the cameras outside and inside the School Board Office. At the time, he was not told by Wood that filming the location of the security cameras was against the law or a crime.

White said he was later informed via email that the school division considered his recording of surveillance cameras at the building as “concerning behavior,” leading to the trespass order. “I didn’t break the law, I did nothing wrong, and yet I’m being treated like a criminal by this gentleman right here,” White said, pointing to Wood.

White argued that the trespass order prevents him from being involved in his son’s school life, including attending his football practices. “My son is suffering because I can’t be there. What’s being done to him is wrong,” he said, urging the board to overturn the notice.

Valerie Loy, speaking on behalf of herself and others, called White’s situation “appalling,” and questioned why his child should suffer for what she described as a legal request. “What does the administration have to hide?” she asked, and alleged hearing about mismanagement within the school division from several other sources.

“It’s already out there. We already know it,” she said. “But to tell this gentleman here he cannot go see his child at school for no more than going up and asking for something is definitely wrong,” Loy said. “It was filmed that he was not a threat to anybody. We as the public have a right to know about the children in these schools. We pay tax dollars,” she said.

Trena Anderson also spoke in support of White, accusing Wood of using trespass orders to retaliate against parents filing legal FOIA requests. “Transparency in government is essential,” she said, warning that citizens will not stand for having their rights denied.

After the meeting, Wood reminded students, families, staff, and community that the school system’s first priority is to maintain the safety of all students and staff.

“The comments stated that someone should not receive a trespass notice unless they break the law,” but he noted “when people break the law they’re fined or arrested, which is entirely different than a trespass notice.”

Wood said a trespass notice “is intended to prevent any behavior that could jeopardize the safety of students and staff. As school employees, we cannot attempt to diminish or rationalize someone’s behavior; we must act out of an abundance of caution. I would hate to think we failed to act, and a situation escalated, and at that point, it was too late.

“We want people to understand that in the event someone receives a trespass notice, the school system may make concessions if that individual is a parent/guardian,” Wood said. “For example, a parent or guardian could be allowed to bring their student to school late or pick them up early as long as the parent/guardian contacted the school prior to their arrival.

“In addition, a parent/guardian could be granted permission to pick up their child at their school in case of an emer-

gency. I have approved many concessions to ensure parents/guardians do not bear any hardships when dealing with their student attending school,” he said.

Regarding FOIA requests, Wood said the school division complies with the Code of Virginia and fulfills appropriate FOIA requests.

“Certain types of records and information are exempt from release under FOIA, such as personnel records or student records. Records relating to the security of public buildings are also exempt from FOIA when its disclosure would jeopardize the safety or security of any person or facility,” Wood said.

In other matters, the board:

*Heard from Dr. Matt Hurt, who works for the Comprehensive Instructional Program (CIP), a consortium of public-school divisions in Virginia that work together to improve student achievements measured by the Standards of Learning (SOL) testing. Hurt praised Patrick County schools as being impressive, particularly in its dedication to teaching its students and SOL scores, given that the division has a high relative poverty rate.

*Heard the superintendent’s report.

*Approved the consent agenda.

*Approved proposed revisions to the division’s gifted plan.

*Approved the 2024 annual comprehensive plan review.

*Approved policy updates as presented.

*Approved the personnel report as amended.

*Approved RE2024-2025-5313.

Noise Ordinance

(cont. from page 1)

the noise. Police officers would then have the determination to make if they were within the rights of the noise ordinance.

Tanner v. The City of Virginia Beach has been challenged, and Simmons said therefore the noise ordinance itself is being challenged.

“But what is being challenged in the noise ordinance is the subjugation of an officer. So, where we wanted to give our officers some leeway to determine if it is in compliance with the noise ordinance or not, they now want that to be a defined number. Essentially, they want us to define what decibel level is considered a nuisance,” he said.

Town Attorney Chris Corbett said it doesn’t have to be considered a nuisance, but instead a violation of the ordinance.

“Correct,” Simmons said. “But that is essentially what Dayna has told us that we need to do with our noise ordinance is put a decibel level that cannot be gone over. If we do violate that decibel level, then they would be out of compliance with our noise ordinance.”

Corbett said Tanner v. The City of Virginia Beach is the leading case in Virginia on noise ordinances, and one of the leading cases in the county.

“I mean, they really walked through the constitutionality of things in 2009 when this thing was released. But if the Commonwealth’s Attorney, unless she delegates it to the town attorney for misdemeanors as jurisdiction to prosecute all misdemeanors within the county,” he said. “If she’s a number person, it’s either numbers or not I suppose.”

Simmons believes formally establishing a decibel level takes out the gray area and the policing out of law enforcement’s hands and into a defensible instrument.

“Look at it this way, it’s the difference between drunk driving and not. There is a strict number that they have to say is defensible in court. It’s what is defensible in court,” Simmons said. His research has shown that 50 decibels is the natural number for a quiet street.

In his opinion, Mayor Ray Weiland said the council created a noise ordinance to appease

two people in town. “To waste more of our time on it is kind of not in the best interest of the town at large. Ours is constitutional. Is it defensive? Maybe, maybe not,” he said.

Council member Erica Wade said there are decibel ranges in the town’s noise ordinance.

“It just doesn’t have a solid, ‘if you’re over x you get a ticket.’ We just have the policing option,” she said.

Simmons believes input on a revised noise ordinance should be sought from the commonwealth’s attorney.

If a decibel number is decided upon, Weiland asked if the council should purchase decibel meters for the sheriff’s office and the town.

“I think that’s the direction that has been indicated they would like to go,” Simmons said.

Council member Dave Hoback said the way he sees the situation is the council invested a lot of time and months of discussion as it presumably thought the noise ordinance was worth doing.

“Now that our chief law officer has given us a definitive recommendation on what needs to be adjusted to make it defensible,” he said.

Weiland said the council now needs to establish what number the ordinance’s upper limit would be to trigger a violation.

While he doesn’t have a number in decibel form, Corbett said the City of Danville prohibits the usual noises that are plainly audible at a distance of 50-feet or more from the building or the property line, or whatever is further. He also recommended that town staff should do its research and bring a suggested ordinance back to council.

In other matters, the council:

*Approved the meeting minutes.

*Approved the transfer of two pump stations to the Patrick County Public Service Authority (PSA).

*Adopted a collection of forms relating to the Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD) Downtown Revitalization project.

*Paid the bills.

*Heard an update on public works.

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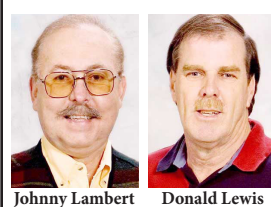
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God Bless You

VT North Endzone

For those who go to Virginia Tech football games, you will notice jerseys that hang in the north endzone of Lane Stadium.

The numbers signify the retired jersey numbers and names in the history of Virginia Tech football.

Everybody knows #7, Michael Vick.

As a Hokie, Vick finished sixth in the Heisman Trophy voting for the 2000 season. He was selected as the number one draft pick in the 2001 NFL Draft by the Atlanta Falcons and still has the most career rushing yards at 6,109 by a quarterback in NFL history.

Then there's coach Frank Beamer, who is the most winning coach in Virginia Tech's history, with 280 career victories, ranking 13th most by a college football coach in all NCAA divisions. He is a member of the College Football Hall of Fame.

Beamer played for the Hokies from 1966-1968 before becoming Virginia Tech's head coach from 1987-2015. Beamer's #25 is worn every week by one VT special teams player to pay tribute to his legacy of excellence.

Coach Bud Foster owns the lunch pail tradition. He moved to Blacksburg with Beamer and coached the Hokies from 1987-2019, making him the longest serving assistant coach at the same school. Foster was recognized as the 2000 American Football Coaches Association Defensive Coordinator of the Year after helping Virginia Tech to the 1999 Sugar Bowl.

Those names everybody knows, but what about the rest?

The first retired number in Virginia Tech athletic history belongs to #84, Super Bowl champion Carroll Dale. Mr. Dale, from Wise County's very own J.J. Kelly High School, played 14 NFL seasons and amassed 52 receiving touchdowns and 438 receptions for 8,277 receiving yards.

He was an integral part of the 1960's Green Bay Packers, winning two Super Bowls alongside Vince Lombardi and Bart Starr. In 1979, he was inducted into the Packers Hall of Fame. He still lives in Wise County.

Frank Loria, #10, was a defensive back for the Hokies from 1965-1967. He started every game the Hokies played throughout his three-year career and was known as a "coach on the field" due to his remarkable ability to recognize opposing team's plays during a game. He tragically died as a coach with the Marshall football team in the 1970 airplane disaster.

Another defensive legend, Bruce Smith was a defensive end for VT from 1981-1984. As a Hokie, he was known as the "Sack Man."



Morgan Griffith

Representative

Smith entered the 1985 NFL Draft, where he was the first overall pick selected by the Buffalo Bills. Smith played 19 seasons in the NFL and remains the all-time career leader in sacks with 200.

In 2009, Smith was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

#73 Jim Pyne was a guard and center for Virginia Tech from 1990-1993. Pyne was Tech's first player to be unanimously selected as All-American. In the NFL, Pyne played nine seasons before becoming an assistant coach for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and the New Orleans Saints in the early 2000s. Pyne is on the ballot for the 2025 College Football Hall of Fame along with Vick.

Cornell Brown claims #58. Brown attended VT and played football as a linebacker for the Hokies from 1993-1996. The Baltimore Ravens selected Brown in the 1997 NFL draft and he earned a Super Bowl ring with Baltimore when the Ravens defeated the New York Giants in Super Bowl XXXV.

#64 belongs to Jake Grove. Grove attended Virginia Tech and played football as a center from 2000-2003. While at Tech, he won the Rimington Trophy for being the best center in college football and he was recognized as a unanimous All-American. In the second round of the 2004 NFL draft he was selected by the Oakland Raiders and later played for the Miami Dolphins. In 2006, Grove was honored by being inducted into the Virginia Tech Sports Hall of Fame.

Corey Moore was a linebacker for the Hokies from 1996-1999, and he became Virginia Tech's most honored football player following the 1999 season. Moore received the Lombardi Award, which goes to a collegiate player who best embodies the spirit and values of Vince Lombardi, and the Bronko Nagurski Trophy, awarded to the best defensive player in college football according to the Football Writers Association of America. Moore was selected by The Buffalo Bills in the third round of the 2000 NFL draft and later played for the Miami Dolphins. In 2010, Moore's #58 was inducted into the Virginia Tech Sports Hall of Fame.

And now you know a little of their stories.

Letters to the Editor

Cats and dogs on the menu?

When I first heard this, at the Patrick County Agricultural Fair, a lot of Vets I know laughed. They'd seen it in Southeast Asia but not in Haiti, certainly not in Ohio. Cat consumption has been outlawed in Vietnam but its popularity persists, according to Humane Society International. The dog meat trade is similar, mostly in China and Southeast Asia.

Here, a lot of us eat venison – Bambi, for cryin' out loud. And there are those who claim to have eaten possum. Some say it's still considered a delicacy for a few. Historically, it's from the Great Depression, when food scarcity made unconventional sources more appealing.

How about horse? There's a lot in its favor: a protein level similar to beef but much leaner, sweet and soft. Most North Americans don't eat it, but not out of sentimentality. Horse meat is considered unfit for human consumption because of all the drugs and other substances injected into the animals.

So maybe you've never eaten horse.

Maybe you have: menus often label it "chevaline." That's French. And thereby hangs a tale. In 2013, an investigation in Europe revealed that frozen lasagne and spaghetti bolognese, made by French manufacturer Comigel and sold by grocers Tesco, Aldi and Findus, were up to 100% horse. Ikea discovered that a batch of its signature Swedish meatballs contain traces of horse meat. So did Taco Bell: three British outlets had been selling products containing horse meat. All shelves were swept clear.

And then there are cows – beef, which shares all-American status with pork, cooked any way you can imagine and maybe a few you can't

– chocolate-dipped bacon, anyone? McDonald's has acknowledged that some of its ground beef comes from processors of dairy beef: it's leaner and creates a "chewier" patty.

Nor are all beef cuts destined to be BBQ, steaks and hamburgers. In Canada and the Rocky Mountain states, there's a delicacy called prairie oysters – bull testicles, usually sauteed or fried and served with a dash of hot sauce. Italian, Chinese and Turkish cooks do much the same with lamb testicles.

That may rattle some of the Hindu and Buddhist faiths. As I understand it, this is not because cows are worshiped but because, kept alive and healthy, they are a steady long-lasting source of sustenance.

Goat, chicken and other fowl are popular domesticated delicacies around the world, chiefly because they're small enough to manage. And there's plenty of wild game for those who own adequate weaponry.

But Haiti's national dish? Rice and beans. Many of the variations call for meat – usually cubed goat, pork or beef, marinated in onions and lemon or orange juice, then fried. For griot, pork cubes are slowly simmered in a marinade of chile peppers, onions, and orange, lime, or lemon juice until tender, then fried.

No cats. No dogs.

And on New Year's Day, when many here in Patrick County serve hoppin' john (black-eyed peas, rice and pork), Haitians traditionally serve Joumou (pumpkin soup) to celebrate their liberation from slavery on January 1, 1804. Until then, Joumou was a delicacy reserved only for their masters, while the slaves who prepare it were forbidden to eat it.

Judy Ferring,
Stuart

KAMALA HARRIS AGENDA ITEMS

(Fox, Daily Signal, The Federalist, MRCTV, American Action Forum, George Mason University, Tax Cuts and Job Act, Daily Signal, Washington Post, Bill O'Reilly)

Explanation of how the following items would affect our country if Kamala Harris got elected and her following plans are passed by Congress and signed into law by the President.

Grocery Prices: National ban on price gouging for food and groceries. It is a sweeping set of government-enforced price controls across every industry, not only food. Supply and demand would no longer determine prices or profit levels. Washington bureaucrats would. The FTC would be able to tell, say, a Kroger in Ohio the acceptable price it can charge for milk. Would lead to shortages, black markets and hoarding. Who pays? You do – increased taxes. -- socialism

Housing costs: Kamala plan is to give \$25,000 in downpayment assistance to working families who have paid their rent on time for two years. The government will take the \$25,000 from people who already own a home they paid for, and from people who don't yet own a home but who don't meet the qualifications for a new home and give it to people who didn't earn it and want to buy a home anyway. There are no reimbursements for people who have worked their tails off to scrape up a down-payment on their own. You just get to now pay for someone's else. Harris estimates a million people will be able to purchase a home under this plan. That is a cost of \$100 billion over 4 years. This plan will further inflate the housing themselves?

The idea of putting to print words that I'm not sure didn't come from someone else's mouth for thousands to read leaves a bad taste in my mouth.

In my experience, I've found stories I've written using emailed answers tend to be of a lower quality than those where I actually talked with people. Emailed answers are also more clinical and lack the humanizing characteristics that readers want when they pick up a newspaper.

What makes this situation even

market and put the U.S. in further financial deficit. Who pays? You do – increased taxes.

Green Energy: Harris is totally committed to Bidens Green New Deal. Calls for a massive new infrastructure plan, nationwide network of high-speed rail, basic income programs, government jobs guarantee. Upgrading all existing buildings in the U.S. to green energy, rebuilding the electric grid, trillions in wind and solar development, ending use of gas-powered cars, oil, natural gas, and other reliable energy sources in 10 years, and transformation of U.S. agriculture, including an end to the cattle industry. The estimated cost would be \$94 trillion and would cause inflation to skyrocket. Who pays? You do – increased taxes.

Medicare-for-all: Newborns and uninsured would automatically be enrolled. It would abolish all public and private insurance plans. A national health budget would dictate payments for goods and services. Patients would pay nothing, but the program would be funded by tax increases. Washington would credential and license care providers. From a physician perspective, thousands of senior physicians will retire or quit. It would extend wait times into months or years and result in not enough people to train future physicians. Would lead to rationing care to manage costs. Will cost taxpayers \$32 trillion in 10 years. The plan amounts to a centrally controlled economy, a market with no free-market forces – socialized medicine.

Pray for our country.
William Salser,
Stuart

more interesting is the fact that all current members of the board of supervisors ran for their positions with transparency at the forefront of their campaign platforms.

The fact that the board as a unit hasn't addressed this issue despite knowing it is not only a hard pill to swallow, but also disappointing.

So, my main concern is why the sudden change in attitude? Why is there pushback now on something I've done dozens of times before for multiple years?

Transparency or not

By Taylor Boyd

As my editor has told me throughout my journalist career, the role of media is to unbiasedly educate and inform the public of the ongoings of the locality and its government. Because of this, transparency and the ability to openly and honestly talk with people are key factors in my ability to do my job. It's my bread and butter so to speak.

Therefore, when transparency becomes even the slightest bit opaque, I get curious, and in some cases worried.

Let me set the stage: At the Monday, September 9 board of supervisors meeting, two new county employees were announced – a Facilities Director and Transfer Station Manager. While the board was in closed session, I scheduled interviews with the new employees for profile interviews later that week.

Imagine my surprise when upon calling both men, I was asked to email them my questions as that was "Beth's policy." Beth as in County Administrator Beth Simms, the highest-ranking county official who only answers to the five board of supervisors' members.

When talking to one of them during our scheduled interview time to figure out why this change was happening not even 48 hours later, he told me when he informed Simms about the interview, she told him not to do it.

"Don't. I don't want you to do an interview. I want you to have them email you the questions," he said, quoting Simms.

For clarification, during the profile

interviews I wasn't planning on asking questions that could potentially endanger their jobs or get them to spill government secrets. The questions I had in mind were along the lines of why they applied for their jobs, what their goals are, and how they're liking their new jobs so far.

The purpose of the interviews was to create stories to introduce them to the community so county residents could be aware of the new additions to the Patrick County payroll. And, to a lesser but equally important reason, help satisfy the nosiness everyone feels when something new happens.

Throughout my almost five-year tenure with The Enterprise, I've easily written over 50 profile stories on a variety of people including local candidates seeking elected office, board of supervisor members, school board members, Patrick County Administration employees, and Congressmen.

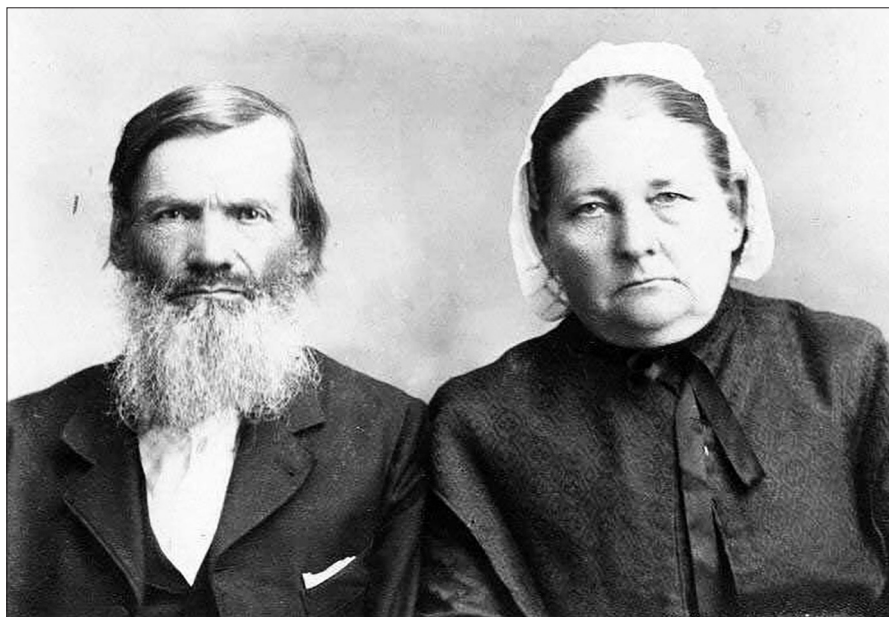
I even did a profile story on Simms herself about a year ago when she first started as County Administrator. For that interview, we chatted over the phone. No emails were ever exchanged.

I know some will ask why I couldn't just email the questions and do my job that way. The answer is simple: emailing interview questions isn't The Enterprise's policy.

And unlike "Beth's policy," ours is in writing.

Secondly, and perhaps a more pessimistic answer to the question, is the fact I can't be 100 percent certain the answers I receive back aren't edited by someone else. Who's to say someone else didn't write the answers

Patrick Pioneers



John Wesley Hooker and Margaret Derency Akers Hooker. (Photos courtesy of Katherine Hooker Boaz)

John Wesley Hooker and Margaret Derency Akers Hooker, Part I

By Beverly Belcher Woody

Last week, we took a look at the life of Horace G. Brown and his wife, Minnie Maude Hooker Brown. For the next couple of weeks, we will learn more about Minnie's grandparents, John Wesley and Margaret Derency Akers Hooker, and their children's many contributions to Patrick County.

John Wesley Hooker was born on the 22nd of December 1833, the second child born to Elizabeth Hooker. On John Wesley Hooker's marriage license or death certificate, no father's name is given. Elizabeth's first child, Mary, was born on the 15th of February 1830. Elizabeth Hooker married again on the 22nd of May 1836 to John Martin, and they had two children, Crawford Martin and Eliza Ann Martin Burgess.

John Wesley Hooker married Miss Margaret Derency Akers on the 30th of June 1857, he was twenty-three and she was fifteen years old. Margaret was the daughter of John and Elizabeth Adams Akers of the Elamsville district of Patrick County. John and Elizabeth Akers' other children were William Tyler, John Abram, Isaac Nathaniel, Exony Akers Conner, and Samuel Reed Akers.

William Crawford "Bill" Hooker was the first child born to John Wesley and Margaret Derency on the 15th of April 1858. One year later, Mary Ellen Hooker was born to the

couple, followed by Ruth Josephine on April 12, 1861, which interestingly was the day that troops first fired on Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina.

Nancy Alma Hooker was born on the 15th of September 1862, followed by Ida Belinda was born on the 26th of July 1864. Eight sons came next, John Abram on the 29th of April 1867; Robert Lee on the 17th of April 1869; Samuel Hairston on the 4th of April 1871; James Murray on the 29th of October 1873; Isaac Tilden on the 22nd of March 1876; George Wesley on the 30th of May 1879; Charles Perry on the 21st of November 1880; and Henry Lester born on the 25th of April 1885.

John Wesley and Margaret Derency raised their family alongside Buffalo Creek, in the community described on the census as Elamsville, but locals would probably describe as Buffalo Ridge, not too far from where the Hanesbrands/ Apex textile plant is located today.

I am sure John Wesley and Margaret Derency must have worked incredibly hard to provide for their family of nine sons and four daughters, instilling a tremendous work ethic into their children. The oldest son, William "Bill" Crawford Hooker married Miss Mary Alice Ross on the 25th of January 1877. Mary Alice was the daughter of Harden D. Ross and Martha Jane Conner Ross. Bill and Mary Alice had two daughters, Margaret Ella Hooker who married



William Crawford Hooker and family at Elamsville home.

Sparrell Tyler Rakes and Minnie Maude Hooker who married Horace G. Brown and was featured in our Fayerdale story last week.

Bill Hooker ran a successful store and post office in Elamsville for many years and served as treasurer of Patrick County from 1903 through 1910. According to the History of Patrick County, Virginia, Bill served as chairman of the Republican Party in Patrick County while his brother, James Murray Hooker served as chairman of the Democratic Party in Patrick County!

Mary Ellen, the second child of John Wesley and Margaret Derency married James Tyler Houchins on the 10th of May 1877. James Tyler was the son of Isaac Columbus Houchins and Nancy Elgin Houchins. Mary Ellen and James Tyler had five sons and two daughters: John Columbus married Rosa Lee Grogan of Leaksville, N.C., and was a foreman in a cotton mill; George Lafayette Houchins, DVM married Azula Ollie Salmons of Woolwine and set up a veterinary practice in Martinsville; William Abram married Louisa Weaver of Floyd County and moved to Leaksville to work in a cotton mill; Walter Lee who was widowed twice, went into a career in finance, and lived in Northern Virginia and Florida; Laura Elizabeth who never married and settled in Leaksville; Margaret Alice married Walter Reed DeHart of Raven's Den along Rock Castle Creek; and James Robert



James Tyler Houchins and Mary Ellen Hooker.

Houchins, DVM married and settled in Henderson, North Carolina.

According to the History of Patrick County, Virginia, Dr. George Lafayette Houchins was still vaccinating dogs when he was 100 years old and lived to be 102! He and Azula's only child, Daphne Houchins Blackwell passed away June 9th of this year at the age of 99.

Next week, we will look at the contributions of some more of John Wesley and Margaret Derency Akers Hooker's children. I am so grateful to Katherine Hooker Boaz for her willingness to share her wonderful collection of family photographs and information! 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 – Should my Husband File and then Suspend His Benefits?

Dear Rusty: My financial advisor used a computer program which told my husband to take his SS at age 68, then suspend it after a few months. What I understood was if my husband started and then stopped taking distributions, he would earn delayed retirement credits and thus get more at age 70. I know waiting increases SS amounts, by 8% a year, but does purposely starting and then stopping SS increase distributions even more? Signed: *Confused*

Dear Confused: Suspending re-

ceipt of one's SS benefits after their FRA (as in your husband's case) does result in him earning Delayed Retirement Credits (DRCs), but the DRCs earned accumulate at the same rate as if he simply waited longer to claim his SS benefit in the first place. DRCs are earned up to 70 years of age, at which point your husband's maximum SS benefit is attained (FYI, DRCs earn .667% of additional benefit for each month benefits are delayed or suspended, or 8% per year). But I see no advantage to your husband starting his benefits now (at 68) and then suspending them several months later to earn DRCs – the number of DRCs earned are the same in either case, so he could simply wait to apply for his Social Security benefits until he is 70 to get his maximum amount.

The only rationale I can think of to claim and then suspend after doing so is to get a few months of his benefit payments before suspending. But the few months he received benefits before suspending will be considered when he later unsuspends his benefit, so that his total payment amount will be a bit less at 70 than it would otherwise be if he simply waits longer to claim SS. And, just for information, he can't "file and suspend" his benefits so that you can receive a spousal benefit from him. That option (to file and suspend, enabling a spouse to receive benefits) was eliminated by the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 - while your husband's benefits are suspended, you cannot receive a spousal benefit from him.

So, frankly, I see no advantage to

your husband claiming his benefit now and then suspending them a few months later. If his goal is to maximize his SS benefit, then the best way to do that is simply wait longer to claim.

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

How Hobbies Make You Happier and Healthier – Part 2

Hobbies have a way of enriching your life, work, and relationships. They give you something new to talk about, and they make life (or dare I say, you) more interesting. And they can be as unique as you are.

Choosing the Right Hobby for You

Some people need intensity and excitement to feel engaged. But it's also true that a thrill-seeking person who loves to jump out of airplanes may also crave calligraphy. Research indicates that any healthy hobby that you enjoy is good for you, so choose based on appeal and the kind of experience you'd like to have.

As you hunt for a hobby, clues can be found in your childhood. What did you migrate toward as a tot? Do your favorite memories suggest an activity that you could take up again?

If a hobby initially sounded good but you find it harbors a dread factor, then dump it. You have plenty

of things in life that you must do, so your hobby shouldn't be overwhelming or boring. That said, it's important to note that hobbies are like any other pursuit in life: you get out what you put in. Before you move on to something else, really give your hobby a chance through passionately engaging it and trying to learn something new.

Here are some ideas that might inspire you:

- Creative & Classic**
 - reading: improves your vocabulary and your mind; reduces stress
 - owning a pet: may lower blood pressure; sure to increase smiles
 - crafting: eases stress, anxiety, and depression; decreases inflammation and chronic pain; increases happiness and protects the brain
- Challenging & Adventurous**
 - skiing/snow-boarding or kite-winging (skiing plus "flying"): experience an adventure and a workout at the same time
 - playing an instrument: im-

proves fine motor skills; raises IQ

- surfing: offers an amazing workout and an escape from stress

- learning a language: makes you smarter; connects you to a new community

- chess: engages both sides of the brain; develops strategic thinking
- horseback riding: uses muscles you didn't know you had; can lead to bonding with people—and horses

- Enriching & Inspiring**
 - cooking: can jumpstart a healthier lifestyle through better nutrition; saves money; encourages bonding with family and friends over home-cooked meals
 - gardening: indoors or out, spending time in the soil is good for the body and soul
 - podcasting: allows you to share what you know; topics that you're passionate about
 - writing: journal your thoughts, write poetry or letters, or work on a memoir
 - making ordinary days special:

pack picnics for every season, camp in your backyard, create a mini art studio for yourself, or start a new daily ritual that inspires you

- Frivolous & Fun**
 - tree shaping: try bonsai, or check out Axel Erlandson's work for large-scale inspiration
 - duct tape creations: craft shoes, cards, and sculptures, like duct tape artist Melody Williams
 - juggling: improves mental focus; even increases certain areas of the brain
 - Rubik's Cube: solving the colorful cube is back—for an extra challenge, try setting a timer
 - geocaching: gets you out in nature, and who doesn't like a treasure hunt?
- (Submitted by Betty Dean. Written by Michele Deppe. Used by permission from www.lifeandhealth.org. Reposted with permission from Vibrant Life magazine. Courtesy of LifeSpring – Resources for Hope and Healing Stuart, VA)*

Lady Cougars sweep Floyd County



Jayden Callahan had 17 kills in the Lady Cougar win.



Journey Moore with one of her 16 digs.



Before the game, the team presented Lauren Worley with a gift basket. Worley, a 2024 PCHS graduate, has battled back from the severe injuries she sustained in a December car crash.

By Pat Delaney
Patrick County High School's Lady Cougars Volleyball Team upped their record to 7-1 following their three-set sweep of Floyd County on September 17. The Lady Cougars won 25-15, 25-17, 25-18.

The Lady Cougars jumped out to a fast start in the first set. With runs of 6-0 and 5-0 during the set, they never trailed. Big hitting from Jayden Callahan and solid serving from Brooke Collins and other Lady Cougars kept Floyd County from mounting any big runs to cut the Patrick County lead. The Lady Cougars took the first set 25-15.

"Tonight was her night, that's for sure," said Lady Cougar head coach Heidi Moore of Callahan's big hitting. "She is unstoppable when she's on and it's fun to watch. This is probably her best hitting game she's had."

Of Collins' serving performance, Moore said,

"she's been doing that the last few weeks. She's been doing really good with her job of serving. She looks like she's enjoying it and she's going after it."

The second set started strong for the Lady Cougars, who took a 13-4 lead with the help of two 5-0 runs. While a Floyd County 4-0 run closed the gap to 13-8, Patrick County didn't allow them to get any closer, taking the set 25-17.

It was Floyd County that got off to a fast start in the third set, taking a 10-12 lead and forcing a Patrick County time out. Following the timeout, the Lady Cougars responded with a 12-2 run that gave them a 21-14 lead, helping them to the 25-18 set win and the match win.

Leading the way for the Lady Cougars on the night was Jayden Callahan with 17 kills, 7 digs, and 3 aces. Camille Gonzalez had 23 assists, 3 aces, 3 kills and 7 digs. Journey Moore had 16 digs, 4 aces and 4 assists and Lily Hazelwood



Eliza Clifton hits one past the Floyd County blocker.

had 4 kills, 3 blocks and 3 aces.

Coach Moore was happy with the way her team responded to two tough losses by following them up with two solid wins. "They did good. They played hard."

Cross Country Boys Finish Strong

By Ashlee Mullis
The Patrick County Boys and Girls Varsity and Middle School Cross Country Teams competed in the Maroon Tide Invitational on Wednesday, September 18. The varsity boys team finished 4th overall with Noah Hiatt, Greely Terry, Fisher Martin, and William Overby all finishing in the top 20, individually.

The middle school boys' team was led by Levi Hankins and Asher Vaughn, both finishing in the top 20 individually. The middle school girls' team was led by Bella Wright who finished in the top 20.



Fisher Martin and Noah Hiatt finish in the top 20.



Captains sought for PCHS Fishing Team, annual fundraising raffle underway

Patrick County High School's Fishing Team had a great kick off meeting filled with excitement about the 2024-2025 fishing season. Currently, the team also is holding its annual fundraising raffle, and would like to thank everyone in advance for their support of the student anglers.

There are many benefits of being a part of the high school fishing team: It provides great fun, recreation and relationships at school and provides a pathway to a college education. It also gets students back into the great outdoors, introduces students to fishing while showing them potential career and educational opportunities through fishing, and adds to a student's education by giving them real life examples of how math, science, biology, technology and language arts are used by anglers every day out on the water. Joining the team also in-

creases environmental awareness and understanding of aquatic ecosystems with the complex balance of abiotic and biotic factors, and reduces stress while forming lasting relationships with like-minded peers in natural settings.

The team is actively looking for boat captains for the 2024-2025 season. Several new anglers have joined the team, both in the junior and senior division, and all would love to learn the "ins and outs" of bass fishing, but need a captain.

Boat captains are given gas money for each tournament and would be fishing Smith Mountain Lake and Philpott Lake for the 4 qualifiers this season for states. If interested or if you want more information, please contact Hylton or Melanie Scott (276) 229-1301 or Sandra Heath at (276) 694-2911.

Golf teams lose, win

By Ashlee Mullis
The Varsity Golf Team shot a 355 at the Olde Mill Golf Club on Thursday, September 19, during their loss to Franklin County, at 321. Chance Corns and Parker Roop both finished the day with a score of 81. Josh Freeman shot a 96 for the Cougars, and Kendra Worley shot a 97.

"It was a very wet and tough golf course today," said Coach Philip Steagall. "Chance and Parker led us in scoring today. We have 1 regular season match left to play next week with Floyd County."

The Patrick County JV Golf Team shot a 192 to beat the 196 put up by the Magna Vista Warriors at the Forest Park Country Club on September 18. Laine Errichetti shot a 44 on the 9-hole course to lead the Cougars. Caleb Vaughn shot a 47. Ben Joyce shot a 50, and Maddox Taylor shot a 51.

Coach Philip Steagall said, "It was a good win for our JV team. Laine shot a 44 to lead all scorers today for both teams."



Patrick County High School Varsity Golf Team member Chance Corns prepared to take a shot.

PCHS Varsity Football Gets Win over Chatham

By Ashlee Mullis
The Patrick County Cougars Varsity Football Team picked up a 34-21 road win in Chatham on Friday, September 20. Quarterback Avone Kidd was 2-5 in completions, rushing for 60 yards, and passing for 44 yards, scoring a TD in the win. Calvin Lancaster scored and had 53 yards on the ground. Jayden Corns put up 126 rushing yards and scored twice for the Cougars. Jackson Callahan had 37 receiving yards, and

Cameron Collins had 7 yards and a score for the Cougars. Callahan led the Cougars in tackles with 7. Noah Jessup and Conner Goad had 6 tackles each for PC. Corns and Seth Geiger had 4 tackles each. For special teams, Erick Martinez Tejada was 4-5 in PAT. Jessup had 34 yards on a kickoff return, and Callahan had 30.

The Cougars gear up to take on Carroll County on Friday, September 27, in the Homecoming game.

JV Volleyball Wins Two, Loses One

By Ashlee Mullis
The JV Lady Cougar Volleyball Team beat Martinsville 2-0 with set scores 25-11 and 25-13, Monday, September 16. Sheyan Lester had 4 kills. Ava Hiatt had 5 assists.

Jenna Woods had 9 aces, and Mariah Scott had 5 aces. PC defeated the Lady Buffaloes of Floyd, 2-1, with set scores of 25-13, 21-25, and 15-7, Tuesday, September 17, Meredith Wood had 4 kills, 11 digs, and 6 aces. Mariah Scott had 10 assists and 3 aces. Maddy Martin had 4 digs and 5 aces. Jenna Woods had 20 digs. Thursday, September 19, the Cougars traveled to Alleghany, losing in 2 sets, 16-25 and 11-25. Brooklyn Barner had 4 kills. Arionna Catron had 4 kills and 5 digs, and Kaylene Garcia had 7 digs.



Jenna Woods serves in the win.

Lady Cougars go 1-1 on the road

By Ashlee Mullis
The Lady Cougars traveled to Martinsville on Monday, September 16, winning 3 straight sets, 25-11, 25-13, and 25-11. Brooke Collins had 13 assists and 3 aces. Chloe Hubbard had 5 kills, and Sydney Tatum had 5 kills and 2 blocks.

On Thursday, September 19, the Cougars traveled to Alleghany, losing in 3 sets, 13-25, 22-25, and 16-25. Hazelwood had 6 kills and 7 digs. Gonzalez had 6 assists, 2 kills, and 9 digs. Moore had 14 digs, 2 aces, and 3 kills. PC is 7-3 overall.



Journey Moore gets the ace for the Cougars.

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Crossing the Lines

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

First property demolished as part of Ridgeway project



Demolition of a Phospho Springs Road property is part of Operation: Ridgeway, It's a Great Place to Live! The demolition started on Monday, September 16.

Operation: Ridgeway, It's a Great Place to Live! kicked off with a bang on Monday, September 16 with the demolition of a derelict property.

Removal of the Phospho Springs Road property was long overdue, according to Ridgeway Mayor Craig O'Der. He explained that the idea to start the project began in July when the Ridgeway Town Council had its first meeting with the new fiscal year budget.

"We took a riding tour around the town to look at some issues that we were having as far as buildings and properties that were overgrown, out of compliance with local ordinances, and so forth. Stuff that we had received complaints about," O'Der said.

After that, town officials started working with Henry County and the Henry County Department of Planning, Zoning, & Inspections, O'Der said. Town officials started making a list of properties they felt needed to be improved, with the Phospho Springs Road property being number one on the list.

"It had been burnt out many years ago and had been neglected by the owners who moved out of the area. So, we coordinated with Planning and Zoning with the county, and my counterpart who's the Ridgeway supervisor Travis Pruitt, and County Administrator Dale Wagoner and the Sheriff's Office to try



to force some of these building codes and so forth," O'Der said.

The property owners were contacted and told the town felt like the property was dangerous and was a public nuisance. By September 16, the property was demolished, and while that marked the beginning, others are in the process.

"We've been sending out notices to property owners that they need to get their properties cleaned up, mowed, and then we're going to start taking action," O'Der said.

The town started at the top of the list and now is working on the top three properties that were deemed to be nuisances or that need work. O'Der estimates there are about eight to nine properties on the list including one on Summit Ridge Road.

Harvest Moon Runners enjoy a festive atmosphere

The Harvest Moon Run held Friday, September 13, consisted of two races, a 5K and a 8K, with a festival atmosphere to entertain the runners and their family. The event was put on by the YMCA with the help of the Martinsville Arts and Culture Committee.

"It was the biggest Harvest Moon that we've ever had, probably 50 percent higher than average registration," said Joe Philpott, who helps promote the event. Philpott said that despite the weather looking cloudy, the weather held, allowing organizers to host their biggest year yet.

Most runners participated in the 5K version of the race, with a little under 100 runners. The 8K version had nearly 50 runners, making the two races a great competition for those hoping to win an award.

The 5K women's division was led by new Martinsville resident, Buffie Hill, with a time



5K awards - 1st, Buffie Hill; 2nd, Cindy Bement; 3rd, Rachael Hunsicker (Contributed)

of 22:36. The men's 5K was won by Caden Swisher of Reidsville, N.C. in 18:01. In the 8K, the women's division was won by Alice Kassens of Fincastle, VA, in 35:59. The men were led by Eli Rober-son of Stuart, with a time of 28:04.

Philpott said awards also were given to each age group in the two races, and noted how winning a medal seems to put everyone in a great mood, especially

if they had never won before. "Every picture that gets taken on the award stand is nothing but smiles," he said.

"The total registration was somewhere in the area of 170 to 175, and around 160 people ended up running," Philpott said. The festivities at the race also went well. Hugo's was on site serving food and Mountain Valley Brewery was selling beer for those old enough to drink.

School divisions look forward to new accreditation system

While she knows there's been a lot of concern raised from longtime Virginia educators about the new system, Henry County Schools Superintendent Dr. Amy Blake-Lewis said she's looking forward to the new system because it's similar to what she experienced while working in North Carolina.

"I'm not fearful of it. I think that what we're going to get from it is better data. There's going to be layering in of VVAAS (Virginia's Visualization and Analytics Solutions) data. In North Carolina they referred to it as EVAAS (Education Value-Added Assessment System) data," she said.

Blake-Lewis said VVAAS will give the school division individualized student data information that will help it serve its students more and at a better level. "I'm actually looking forward to this new system," she added.

Blake-Lewis said the new system will absolutely impact the school system.

"Typically, what you expect to see when you convert from one system of accountability to another inevitably, you're going to have some difficulty with disaggregating the data and being able to know exactly what it's telling you right out of the gate," she said.

Noting there will be a learning curve, Blake-Lewis said principals and division-level staff will have to learn how to look at the new data reports. However, she believes it will ultimately help them to be better at what they do and give them a better indication of the type of individualized instruction students need from them.

Blake-Lewis said also she feels positive about the new system because it will focus on the growth aspect in a different way.

"Using that VVAAS data is going to help us to determine which students are growing, which ones might be stagnant, which ones may



Henry County Schools Superintendent Dr. Amy Blake-Lewis

be falling behind, so that personalization aspect of the new data reports is really going to be something that can help us do better for our students," she said.

Martinsville City Schools Assistant Superintendent of Instruction Dr. Angilee Downing said the new accreditation system means that the state and federal accountability standards will align, which will make it easier for families and community to understand.

"Accreditation will now be based on compliance with the Standards of Quality, and schools will be given performance index measurements and ratings based on that performance index. The performance index is a weighted measure with many different components related to mastery, growth, and readiness," she said.

Downing said the Martinsville school division is looking forward to previewing its school reports under this new framework and is hopeful that it will provide its families and community with the information it needs about the schools.

Henry County Fair brings in popular shows and national acts

The Henry County Fair is set to return from September 25 to 28 at the Martinsville Speedway, and Roger Adams, director of Henry County Parks and Recreation, is excited for this year's line-up.

"We have some awesome attractions and shows at the fair," said Adams.

For instance, the Pompeyo Family Amazing Dog Show, which was seen on "America's Got Talent," and the Space Adventure Show, Adams said both shows will be part of the fair.

Bands will perform nightly he said, and in fact, that's "one of the things I enjoy. The national name bands we bring here."

Key West, a Jimmy Buffett Tribute band, is set for Wednesday; Thursday will be Jack & David Reid (B-99 Night), and Friday will be Jordan Feliz Adams (Spirit FM Night).

"I think we have the best line-up ever this year," Adams said.

Several games, food options, along with several rides also will be among the attractions.

"We have about 20 thrilling rides that are good for kids, teens, and adults," Adams said. Rides are being provided



The Henry County Fair returns September 25 through 28.

by Cole Rides, which provides state fair quality rides.

A petting zoo and competitive agricultural exhibits will also be on site. These exhibits will include Fresh Fruits and Vegetables, Miscellaneous Agricultural Products, Canned Fruits, Canned Vegetables and Meats, Pickles and Relishes, Bread, Bakes, Candy, Cookies and Pies, Flowers and Plants, Quilts, Crocheting, Knitting, and Textiles.

Participants who enter into the agricultural exhibit will be competing for ribbons. The winner of the 2024 Miss Henry County Pageant, MaKayla Sprouse will also be in attendance. Sprouse will be representing the fair at the January pageant in Williamsburg, Virginia.

Adams said the fair has replaced the July 4th celebration. "The Fourth

of July celebration is no longer offered since we are doing the fair," and a fireworks show is set for Saturday night.

The fair "is just such a great family-friendly event, and an affordable event," he said, adding the fair has grown each year.

"Friday night of the fair last year was the best we've ever had," Adams said, adding that the fair draws in a large crowd from out of town as well, which helps to bolster revenue and fund the fair.

"We advertise regionally" to help attract as many people as possible, Adams said. The fair is "just such a great family-friendly event, and an affordable event." There is a \$5 gate admission and separate ride wristbands. Discounted wristbands can be purchased from www.colerides.com/tickets.

1-3-5-7-9PM

1-3-5-7-9PM

1-3-5-7-9PM

1-4-7-9:15PM

\$5 tickets

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Martinsville 278-858-3458

PCHS Sports Schedule

The Patrick County High School Cougars Sports Schedule for the week of Sept. 27 through Oct. 3:	9/30	6pm Volleyball at North Stokes	
	10/2	4pm Cross Country at Eastern Montgomery H.S.	
9/27	7pm Football vs Carroll County	10/3	7pm Volleyball at Glenvar

Clark's latest book selected People's Choice winner



"The Plinko Bounce," by Martin Clark, won the Library of Virginia's People's Choice Award for Fiction on Saturday, Sept. 21 at the 27th Annual Virginia Literary Awards.

A retired circuit court judge from Patrick County, Clark's novels have appeared on numerous bestseller lists, and the audio version of his book "The Substitution Order," was a number one national bestseller. Additionally, his novels have been chosen as a New York Times Notable Book, Editors' Choice and Best Thriller of the Year; a Best Book of the Year by the Washington Post Book World, Bookmarks magazine and the Boston Globe; a Book-of-the-Month Club selection; a finalist for the Stephen Crane First Fiction Award; and the winner of the Library of Virginia's People's Choice Award for Fiction in 2009, 2016 and 2020.

The Library presented the awards in front of 250 attendees at its annual dinner and gala, presented by Dominion Energy and supported by Carole and Marcus Weinstein. Additional award and event sponsors included the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and William and Mary Libraries. The annual gala also raised significant funds for the Library's conservation, education and community outreach initiatives.

"This event brings together the best in Virginia literature and gathers Library friends and supporters to raise critical funds for the Library's mission," said Scott Dodson, Executive Director of the Library of Virginia Foundation. "Support from the event and silent auction help ensure that the Library continues to be a vital institution for those seeking to connect with their history at a trusted source."

Be proactive, and think ahead for winter preparation

While the weather is still pleasant, now is the time to start preparing your home for the winter using a seasonal maintenance checklist.

Virginia winters can range from mild to severe, and whether you live in the mountains or along the coast, it's important to prep your home to ensure comfort.

"Maintaining a home should be done year-round," said Laurie Gannon, vice president of claims for Virginia Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Co. "Take care of your home, and your home will take care of you."

If you rely on a fireplace or woodstove during chilly days, Gannon advised scheduling an annual chimney inspection and cleaning. Creosote, a highly flammable byproduct of burning wood, can accumulate inside chimneys and lead to fires if not cleaned properly.

Next, check your smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors, and replace batteries if needed. With more indoor heating, the risk of fire and carbon monoxide exposure increases, and functioning alarms can save lives.

"As soon as the weather starts to get cooler and there is a chill in the air, fires are our No. 1 cause of loss," Gannon cautioned.

Additionally, maintaining an energy-efficient home is key to keeping warmth in and heating

bills down. In older homes, cold drafts can seep inside, so replace worn weather stripping, seal gaps, and caulk around windows and doors. Insulating exposed pipes in crawl spaces and basements can prevent freezing and lower the risk of bursts.

Whether you have a furnace or a heat pump, make sure it's in good working order before the first frost. Clean or replace filters to keep the system running efficiently, and schedule a professional inspection to catch any issues early.

Virginia's unpredictable weather also means preparing the exterior of your home. Clear fallen leaves and debris from gutters to prevent clogs and ice dams. Clogged gutters can cause water to leak inside, leading to costly repairs. While checking the gutters, inspect the roof for any loose or damaged shingles.

Trim tree branches that overhang the house or driveway, as heavy snow and ice can cause them to snap and damage property. Also, drain outdoor faucets and hoses to prevent freezing and cracked pipes.

Finally, if planning a winter-time trip away, "maintain your heat as though you are home," Gannon advised.

"When pipes freeze, water will fill the structure. No one wants to come home to a house full of water."

Ted M. Greer



Mr. Ted M. Greer, age 76 of Stuart, Virginia passed away at his home on Friday, September 20, 2024. He was born in Tennessee on February 5, 1948, to the late Edmund Reeves Greer and Pansy June Grindstaff Greer. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by one brother, Bart Greer. Ted was an avid muzzleloader enthusiast and held several National Rifle Association shooting records both nationally and internationally. He shared his love of rifle through the Patrick County 4-H Marksman Shooting Club where he coached and mentored the members. Ted was given the title of honorary Girl Scout because of all of his volunteer efforts, as he worked alongside his wife, Polly, in Girl Scouts for many years. He loved to travel with Polly and went on many trips with the

five great-grandsons, Dylan, Nathan, Adrian, Jordan, and Abram; two brothers, Jim Greer (Nancy) of Georgia and Tracy Greer of Lynchburg; and several nieces, nephews, great-nieces, and great-nephews.

Girl Scouts. He dearly loved his family, and the light of his life was his five great-grandsons; watching them grow and play sports brought him so much joy. Being their Papa Ted was his greatest privilege.

Mr. Greer is survived by his devoted wife, Polly Flippin Greer of the home; three daughters, Wendy Greer of Roanoke, Cindy Greer (Samuel Reynolds) of Stuart, and Tina Greer (Chad Lane) of Colorado; one granddaughter, Maigan Hazelwood (Andrew) of Stuart;

A memorial visitation for Mr. Greer will be held Tuesday, September 24, 2024, from 6:00 until 8:00 p.m. at Moody Funeral Home Chapel in Stuart. A private memorial service will be held at a later date. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to Patrick County 4-H Shooting Club, C/o VCE-Patrick 4-H, Attention Leigh Ann Hazelwood, P.O. Box 408, Stuart VA 24171 or 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.

Betty Rorrer Peal



Mrs. Betty Rorrer Peal, age 78 of Stuart, Virginia passed away at her home on Friday, September 20, 2024. She was born in Patrick County on January 26, 1946, to the late Harold Oakley Rorrer and Mozelle Chaney Rorrer. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by one sister, Barbara Rorrer Wood, and one sister-in-law, Rodaliah "Sissie" Gilley Rorrer. Betty was a lifetime member of New Hope Church of the Brethren where she sang in the choir. She was a 1965 graduate of Woolwine High School. She retired with 38 years of service from Bassett Walker V.F. She volunteered with the Girl Scouts for many years. Betty treasured her family and truly loved

art, Larry W. Rorrer of Bassett, and Verna Rorrer Shepherd (Ernie) of Bassett; several special nieces, nephews, great-nieces, and great-nephews; and two lifetime friends, Doris Turner of Stuart, and Carol Chaney of Stuart.

cooking for the family gatherings held every Sunday at the home place. She will be remembered as a devoted wife, loving mother, caring sister, adoring aunt, and faithful friend.

Mrs. Peal is survived by her loving husband of 60 years, William Eldridge Peal of the home; one son, Steven Dwayne Peal of Stuart; four siblings, Sue Rorrer Carter of Fieldale, Elwood H. Rorrer (Faye) of Stu-

A funeral service for Mrs. Peal will be held on Tuesday, September 24, 2024, at 2:00 p.m. at New Hope Church of the Brethren with Pastor Rick Randall officiating. Burial will follow in the Rorrer Family Cemetery on Heidelberg Road. The family will receive friends Monday evening from 6:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. at Moody Funeral Home in Stuart. Online condolences may be sent by visiting www.moodyfuneralservices.com.

Important deadlines for November election

Patrick County Registrar Susan Taylor is reminding voters that early voting for the upcoming November 5, General and Special Elections will continue during regular office hours through November 2.

The office will be open on Saturday, October 26, and Saturday, November 2, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. for early voting. If you need to receive a ballot by mail, a Virginia Vote by Mail Application Form must be received on or before Friday, October 25 at 5 p.m. A request to receive a ballot by mail may be done online at <https://vote.elections.virginia.gov/Voter-Information>.

Virginia law requires all voters to present an acceptable form of identification when voting early or on Election Day. Information about acceptable forms of identification can be found at <https://www.elections.virginia.gov/casting-a-ballot/in-person-voting/>.

Any registered voter who does not possess an acceptable ID, may sign an ID Confirmation Statement. The deadline to register to vote or to update your address on your existing voter registration for the upcoming November 5 elections is Tuesday, October 15. Any citizen needing to register to vote or update their address may do so by appearing in person at the

Registrar's Office, mailing a completed application to Post Office Box 635, Stuart, VA, or going online at <https://vote.elections.virginia.gov/VoterInformation>.

The Registrar's Office is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday - Friday. It is located in the Patrick County Veterans' Memorial Building, 106 Rucker St., Room 216C, Stuart. For additional information, or to request a Virginia Vote by Mail Application Form to be mailed to you, contact the Registrar's Office at (276) 694-7206 or staylor@co.patrick.va.us or visit the Patrick County Registrar's website at <https://www.co.patrick.va.us/206/Registrar>.

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Terri S. Wood, Manager

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Contractors must submit their application on the electronic M7B bidding site at https://plow4va.vdot.virginia.gov. All new and returning Contractors must be active in the Virginia eProcurement Portal (eVA) in order to do business with the Commonwealth of Virginia (https://eva.virginia.gov).

Applications received by 7:00 PM on Wednesday October 2, 2024, may be eligible for a bonus payment. See the EVA posting for additional information, including contract requirements.

Questions can be directed to the Martinsville from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM Monday - Friday. Phone: 276-629-2582 Email: SalemDistrictSnow@vdot.virginia.gov

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Editor (Name and complete mailing address) Debbie Hall 129 N. Main St. Stuart, VA 24171					
Managing Editor (Name and complete mailing address) Michael Showell PO Box 429 Lewinsburg, WV 24801					
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NOTICE OF DELINQUENT TAXES AND JUDICIAL SALE OF REAL PROPERTY

On November 1, 2024, or as soon thereafter as may be affected, actions will be commenced under the authority of Virginia Code §58.1-3965, et seq., to begin proceedings to sell the following parcel of real estate for the payment of Patrick County delinquent real estate taxes:

Full Name	Tax Map No.	Debtor Number
ALBERT HENRY HICKS	4010-19(-)-8-	948868
ANDREA MARTIN HELMS & SARAH MARTIN BRYANT	4109(-)-11-	948864
BEBE GEORGETTE RAKES	5016(-)-17-	948875
BEBE GEORGETTE RAKES	5016(-)-16-	948875
CARLENE OGLE	3810(-)-9-D	948872
CHRISTOPHER B JULIAN OR RENEE G JULIAN	3811(-)-174-A	878228
CHRISTOPHER B JULIAN OR RENEE G JULIAN	3811(-)-174-C	878228
CHRISTOPHER B JULIAN OR RENEE G JULIAN	3811(-)-174-D	878228
CHRISTOPHER B JULIAN OR RENEE G JULIAN	3811(-)-174-	878228
CHRISTOPHER B JULIAN OR RENEE G JULIAN	3811(-)-174-B	878228
COVA DOBSON C/O LILLIE VERNON	4110(-)-185-	878229
DARIAN R TATUM	5211(-)-100-F	948879
DARRELL K DALTON TRUST C/O GARY J MILLS	4408(-)-51-A	948210
DEBRA ANN AMOSC/O ANDREW HILL	4709-07(-)-12-	948865
ILENE R PITTS C/O RANDY STEELE	4808(-)-132-	948873
ILENE R PITTS C/O RANDY STEELE	5108(-)-132-	948873
LARRY T CROTTS OR PATRICIA CROTTS	5315(-)-9-	948211
LINDA BEASLEY OR HENRY WAYNE BURTON	5015(-)-83-	878227
LINDA BEASLEY OR HENRY WAYNE BURTON	5015(-)-81-	878227
LINDA BEASLEY OR HENRY WAYNE BURTON	5015(-)-82-	878227
MICHAEL WAYNE HUGHES	5008(-)-37-	342694
RANDY EUGENE NESTER & MELISA ET AL	3910(-)-78-B	948870
RANDY J LARGEN	5016(-)-105-	878226
ROBIN FAYE VANCE	5017(-)-112-	948880
RODNEY F HORTON ET AL	4208(-)-52-	948209
ROGER DALE GEORGE OR TAMMY LYNN GEORGE	5011-09(-)-323-	898828
SADIE I GAMMONS ESTATE C/O SHANNON W GAMMONS	4810(-)-17-	948212
TIMMY D PACK	4308(-)-47-	878236

Properties subject to delinquent real estate taxes may be redeemed by paying all accumulated taxes, penalties, interest, costs and fees. Payments should be made payable to **County of Patrick** and mailed to **Taxing Authority Consulting Services PC, Post Office Box 31800, Henrico, Virginia, 23294-1800**. Interested bidders and inquiries regarding the above-listed property should be directed to TACS at (804) 545-2500, taxsales@taxva.com or www.taxva.com or by mail to:

Re: Patrick County Delinquent RE Taxes
Taxing Authority Consulting Services, PC
Post Office Box 31800
Henrico, VA 23294-1800

Meetings

Tuesday, Sept. 24

The Patrick County Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) will meet at 4 p.m. at the Patrick County School Board in the Conference Room.

Events

Thursday, Sept. 26

Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC) will hold a career fair at P&HCC Stone Hall Gym from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Fairy Stone Park: Whiskey Run Hike, 8:30 a.m., Iron Mine Parking Lot; Fairy Stone Hunt, 11:30 a.m., Visitor's Center; Turtle Time, 1 p.m., Visitor's Center; Who Made Those Tracks While You Slept, 3 p.m., Shelter 4.

Friday, Sept. 27

The Stuart Farmers' Market will be from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. Patrick County Master Gardeners will be onsite to provide information.

Spaghetti supper at the Doby's Community Building, from 4 to 7 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 28

New Hope Community Church will hold a music and fellowship by Philip Adams starting at 7 p.m. There will be refreshments to follow.

The Lord's Acre sale will be held at Rotary Field in Stuart from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. There will be church booths filled with a variety of harvested and canned crops, hand-made crafts, and goodies. All proceeds go to support The Penny House and other local ministries offered through the Lord's Acre Fellowship member churches.

The Patrick County Democratic Committee will meet at 11 a.m. at the Patrick County Library in Stuart.

Friday, Oct. 4

The community food truck will be at Woolwine SRRS from 3-4:30 p.m.

Saturday, Oct. 5

The Woolwine Methodist Church will be making apple butter, and there will be a yard sale in the social hall beginning at 9 a.m.

Jeb Stuart Volunteer Rescue Squad will hold a community breakfast from 7:30-10 a.m. at its building. Plates are \$8 and dine in, carry out, and curb service options are available. Orders can be placed by calling (276) 694-6171.

Saturday, Oct. 5-Sunday, Oct. 6

Annual Civil War Encampment & Living History Weekend, Laurel Hill, 1091 Ararat Highway, Ararat. Opens at 9 a.m. Free parking. Admission is \$8 per person. Under 12 free.

Sunday, Oct. 6 - Wednesday, Oct. 9

Sycamore Baptist Church will hold a fall revival at 7 p.m. Brother Wayne Poplin will be preaching, with special music each night.

Thursday, Oct. 10

The Patrick County Senior Citizens Group will hold its October monthly meeting at 11 a.m. in the Hooker Building at Rotary Field in Stuart. Entertainment will be provided by Johnny Joyce and Friends. Attendees are requested to bring their favorite foods and desserts to share with the group. Beverages will be provided.

Ongoing

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

The Patrick County 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.

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.

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.; Appalachian Acoustic Open Jam, every Friday. Doors open at 6 p.m. for food. The music and dancing are 6:30-9 p.m.; Golden Oldies Open Jam is on the last Tuesday of the month. Doors open at 6 p.m. for food, music and dancing from 6:30-9 p.m.

Upswing in initial claims for unemployment insurance

According to Virginia Works, 2,164 unemployment insurance weekly initial claims were filed during the week ending September 14, 2024, which is 1.6 percent higher than last week's 2,129 claims and 45.5 percent higher than the comparable week of last year (1,487).

Nearly 83 percent of claimants self-reported an associated industry; of those reported, the top five industries (58 percent) were Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (251); Administrative and Support and Waste Management (217); Health Care and Social Assistance (186); Manufacturing (173); and Retail Trade (170).

Continued weeks claims (14,749) were 1.7 percent lower than last week (15,006) and were 11.0 percent higher than the comparable week of last year (13,286). Nearly 93 percent of claimants self-reported an associated industry; of those reported, the top five industries (60 percent) were Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (2,402); Administrative and Support and Waste Management (2,031); Health Care and Social Assistance (1,430); Retail Trade (1,222); and Manufacturing (1,116).

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.

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Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

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DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦♦♦

♦ Moderate ♦♦ Challenging
♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

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Tom Talks History

(cont. from page 1)

the scholarship are accepted.

The event is sponsored by the Ararat Ruritan Club.

Contact Tom Perry at freestea-teofpatrick@yahoo.com or (276) 692-5300 for more information.

The Perry Family Scholarship: Betty, Erie, and the Student Essays will be released the same day as the talk.

Author and Historian Thomas D. Perry started the Perry Family Scholarship in 2021 when his parents died within two months of each other. Since then, eight students from Patrick County High School in Stuart, Virginia, have received \$500 each. This book is divided into three parts. In Part One Perry writes about his mother, Betty Jane Hobbs Perry, who gave Tom his love of books and history. In Part Two Perry writes about his father, Erie Meredith Perry, an educator for thirty years in Patrick County. In Part Three the student re-

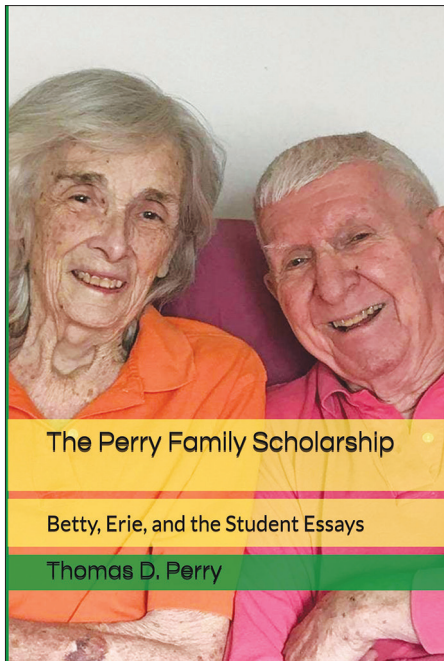
ipients write a 1,000 word essay about the topic of their choosing from the Civil War in Virginia to the Holocaust. Recipients are required to write an essay to be considered for the scholarship. Funds from this book will go to the Perry Family Scholarship.

Scholarship recipients and their essays include:

- * The Renaissance by Whitley Manns
 - * Transportation by Sydney Presa
 - * Nazi Leadership by Laurel Puckett
 - * The Holocaust was mass murder by Macy Hall
 - * Daniel Boone by Cole Snyder
 - * An Excursion to the White Sulphur Springs by James Caudill
 - * The History of Religion in the Middle Ages by Irene Smith
 - * The Civil War and Virginia's Role In It by Nate Large
- The 300 page book is available



The lives of William Alexander Stuart, John Dabney Stuart, and James Ewell Brown "Jeb" Stuart will be discussed on Sunday, September 29, at 2 p.m., in Ararat Ruritan Club, 4711 Ararat Highway, Ararat.



The event is a fundraiser for the Perry Family Scholarship, which Tom Perry started in 2021, after the deaths of his parents.

on Amazon for \$19.99 at <https://www.amazon.com/Perry-Family-Scholarship-Student-Essays/dp/B0DG8G2FNJ>.

100th Win

(cont. from page 1)

Burton also believes the 100th win came in true Wood Brothers fashion. "When everyone counted you out, when no one believed in you, your group, your family, your race team kept fighting," he said. "To win that way, and in Daytona, is hard to beat."



Harrison Burton clinched Wood Brothers Racing's 100th win on August 24.



Hundreds lined up to get autographs from Harrison Burton.



THANK YOU FOR READING THE ENTERPRISE

Clean Water Farm Award program announced

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation is sponsoring the Clean Water Farm Award and the Bay Friendly Farm Award. Virginia farmers who implement conservation plans and are doing their part to preserve water quality. They deserve recognition and thanks. These individuals are role models who encourage others to do their part as well.

Farmers spend time, energy and hard-earned money implementing conservation practices, but others also benefit from their treatment of the land. When nutrients, pesticides and chemicals are kept out of local waterways, quality of life is maintained and even

improved for many people and wildlife.

Farmers and landowners who receive the Virginia Clean Water Farm Award progressively manage their operations and have adopted and implemented innovative conservation tools, technologies and practices.

In Patrick County, contact the Patrick County Soil and Water Conservation District office at 276-694-2911 or stop by the office located at 104 Via Avenue, Stuart. Virginia's 47 soil and water conservation districts decide local winners, who can represent any of the 94 counties and 18 cities Soil and Water Conservation District's serve.

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School System Spotlight

Below is the inaugural segment of a new, monthly feature titled, "School System Spotlight," which will serve as a platform for transparent dialogue about Patrick County Schools, and allow concerns to be addressed directly by school officials. Schools Superintendent Jason Wood and other school officials fielded questions about several pressing topics, including school funding, the acquisition of the new CTE Marketplace and School Board Office, the use of pandemic relief funds, the deployment of county vehicles, and specific queries regarding the district's policies on homebound instruction. These issues were selected based on recent inquiries from community members and stakeholders.

Budget Amendment

Wood provided a detailed explanation of how the schools' budget is structured and why a recent budget amendment was necessary, as well as reiterating that the "amendment was purely procedural and did not involve any request for additional local taxpayer dollars beyond what was already required."

He explained that "the budget is formulated using the Virginia Department of Education's (VDOE) Calculation Tool, which calculates the required State and Local funds needed to meet the district's financial obligations, specifically the Required Local Effort and Required Local Match.

"After receiving the final Calculation Tool in June, the School Board finalized its budget and presented it to the Board of Supervisors in July," Wood said. "The budget amendment, approved on August 12, did not seek additional local funding but requested the Board of Supervisors to increase the school budget to account for grant funds received during the year or carried over from the previous fiscal year."

This increase was necessary because the school division is legally prohibited from spending more than the total amount approved by the Board of Supervisors.

Purchasing the new Career and Technical Education (CTE) Marketplace and School Board Office

The funds used to buy the new CTE Marketplace and School Board Office came from a 1 percent sales tax earmarked specifically for school capital projects.

Funds from that revenue stream "cannot be used to offset operational costs and are strictly limited to capital expenditures," Wood said. "The decision to purchase the building was strategic, allowing the school system to use a combination of a construction grant and a Career and Technical Education (CTE) grant to renovate the facility. This building will serve multiple functions, including housing the CTE Marketplace, technology department, food service department, and school board office."

The advantages of consolidating these departments under one roof include improved efficiency and better use of resources, Wood said. Additionally, the facility includes a new server room and a large meeting space that will host school training sessions, regional meetings, and possibly Board of Supervisors meetings. This renovated building is expected to enhance the district's technology infrastructure and provide a venue that can be showcased to promote economic devel-

opment.

"The CTE Marketplace will offer high school students a real-world opportunity to apply their skills by creating and selling products, an initiative aimed at fostering entrepreneurial skills and community engagement," Wood added.

Allocating and spending pandemic funds

When providing an overview of how pandemic funds were allocated and used in the school district, Wood said that "like other districts across the country, Patrick County Public Schools received pandemic relief funds designed to address challenges brought on by COVID-19. These funds were distributed following public hearings and consultations with both staff and community members to ensure transparency and input. The spending plans were reviewed and approved by the VDOE and made publicly available on the district's website."

He added that the school system "recently underwent an audit of its pandemic relief fund" expenses and "received positive feedback, confirming that the funds were used appropriately," and outlined a wide range of initiatives supported by the funds, including summer school, stipends for staff members, MiFi hotspots to families, technology devices for students, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), sanitization supplies, hire additional staff (teachers, teacher assistants, student success coaches, finance/grant assistant, at-risk interventionist, custodian and maintenance staff), instructional curriculum, water fountain filling stations, thermometers stands, SMART TVs, portable sound systems for outside activities, towable lift, after school tutoring funds, CTE classroom upgrades (classroom with HVAC added to shop areas), school painting, flooring upgrades, bleachers at three schools, ceiling tiles, awnings at two schools, storage buildings, professional development, library furniture, cafeteria tables, lobby furniture, classroom furniture, outdoor learning spaces, band equipment, digital radios, weight room equipment, and cleaning equipment.

"The funds also supported infrastructure improvements such as upgrading air quality in classrooms through filters, air purification, and HVAC upgrades, security access updates, new playground equipment, restroom renovations, new buses, and multi-passenger vehicles," he said, and emphasized the significant impact the funds had on facility upgrades and, "most importantly, in closing learning gaps and helping the district return to pre-pandemic levels of academic performance."

The use of county vehicles

"All vehicles purchased by the district since 2021, including buses between 2021 and 2023 and multi-passenger vehicles, were funded through pandemic relief grant funds," Wood said, adding that the Suburban, "a particular focus of public interest, was purchased in 2021 using pandemic funds at a discounted government rate."

The vehicle is primarily used for transporting staff and students for school-related activities, including athletic events and conferences. It is also used to visit schools, he said. In two years, the vehicle has only accu-

mulated 8,844 miles, which was cited as evidence of its appropriate use.

"The school board did offer Mr. Wood a school car to drive daily since he is always on call," Walter Scott, vice-chairman of the Patrick County School Board, said. "Wood turned down a school car because he stated he knew how it would cause negative public perception."

Rob Martin, chairman of the school board, explained "the board instructed Mr. Wood to drive a school vehicle home when he anticipates inclement weather, and I know he often drives the truck with a snow plow. He has even used the truck to push the school's parking lots instead of calling maintenance staff into work. Mr. Wood has responded to multiple schools during a crisis and had to drive his personal vehicle because he does not drive a school car daily."

Martin added that he doesn't know "of other superintendents who drive bus routes or field trips for schools, like Mr. Wood. With that said, I feel Mr. Wood is doing a great job, and based on school staff surveys of his performance, we extended his contract to the maximum of four years."

"To ensure proper usage of school vehicles, employees document the date and the time they leave and return when using a school car," Wood said. "Employees also complete professional leave requests for professional development and conferences where they would be assigned vehicles. These measures add additional layers of accountability to our existing practice of documenting mileage when vehicles are fueled."

Homebound instruction

"Homebound instruction is granted based on strict criteria, including a physician's certification that a student is confined to their home due to a medical condition," Wood said. "If a physician does not confirm that a student is confined to their home, the district may consider intermittent homebound instruction as an alternative. This option is used when a student's condition does not require constant home confinement but may occasionally prevent the student from attending school."

Wood said the school system is committed "to working with families to ensure that students receive the support they need" and noted that "in-person learning remains the most effective way for students to reach their full academic potential and receive all the physical, social, and emotional support our division can provide."

Out-of-District and Virtual Students

Patrick County has a current enrollment of 2,227, and the budget presented to the supervisors was 2,225. Of the 2,227, 214 are out-of-district students, which includes many Virtual Students.

The Virtual Agreement was formed in 2012 to increase school revenue without asking the locality for money beyond the Required Local Effort (RLE) and Required Local Match (RLM). For example, the 2021 RLE and RLM report shows that Patrick County received \$267,148 above minimum funding, while Floyd County received \$2,620,648.

"Our funding above the minimum is calculated after the end of the fis-



Patrick County School Superintendent Jason Wood.

cal year and takes into consideration how funds were utilized in specific categories, such as Food Services," Wood said. "Any funding above the minimum shown on this report also includes funds" we used from the 1% sales tax, which can only be spent on capital expenses.

"Even though that number shows \$267,148 above minimum funding," the system is only budgeted the minimum according to the Calculation Tool from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), Wood said, and cited the 2024-2025 Henry County budget as another example. That document shows more than \$5 million above minimum funding.

The 2023 JLARC Report at <https://jlarc.virginia.gov/landing-2023-virginias-k-12-funding-formula.asp>, details the need for better funding for all schools, especially small and rural schools, Wood said, and encouraged residents "to contact our representatives and senators to help voice these issues."

Public questions, privacy concerns

The difficulty in addressing public concerns, particularly in the age of social media, where opinions are often mistaken for facts about specific cases, is due to privacy laws, Wood said.

"These laws prevent the district from disclosing details that could justify its actions. This confidentiality, while essential, can lead to misunderstandings when the system is unable to disclose details like personnel files or student records.

"I hope the community knows we are doing our very best to make the right decisions to keep our students and staff safe while providing our students a high-quality education," he said, adding the school system "wants to continue to be a blessing in our county and be a part of the solution to bring economic growth while preparing our students to be successful community members."

He also expressed optimism about the upcoming state accreditation process, which will soon factor in student growth from spring 2023 to spring 2024. Wood said he anticipates this will lead to even more positive news, "further highlighting the hard work and dedication of the entire" school community.

Wood said he looks forward to sharing more successes in next month's segment, particularly because "the district's SOL pass rates are expected to improve when student growth is included in the calculations."

Agencies partner on Saturday's Barter Bazaar

The Virginia Department of Corrections' (VADOC) District 37, Rocky Mount Probation & Parole, is partnering with Goodwill Industries, STEP Inc. (which also serves Patrick County), and other community partners to present the Barter Bazaar, a large yard sale-like event with a special twist.

The event is scheduled for Saturday, September 28 from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the District 37 office, located at 155 Grassy Hill Road, Rocky Mount, VA 24151.

This is the second Barter Bazaar this year at District 37. The event was created to collect food and hygiene items to support VADOC supervisees in need.

The Barter Bazaar operates as follows: Event attendees bring District 37 wish list food and/or hygiene items (including easy-open, non-perishable foods, peanut butter, personal hygiene products, laundry detergent, small bags or cans of pet food, and bottled water) to the event. Each item

donated earns the donor one "Barter Buck." These "Barter Bucks" are used to select items from community-donated goods, such as clothes, furniture, knicks-knacks, books, and more. Overall, one item equals one "Barter Buck," although some variations may occur.

Please note that District 37 cannot accept monetary donations. STEP Inc., a nonprofit community action agency for Franklin and Patrick counties, has been invited to participate. Those wishing to purchase a "Barter Buck" may do so via a monetary donation to STEP Inc. at a rate of \$3 (or more) for each Buck.

"Barter Bazaar is a great event for both our supervisees and the public," said District 37 Probation and Parole Chief Stephanie Coughlan. "This event will really help our supervisees in need and give the public the chance to be a part of a good cause."

The backup date for Barter Bazaar is Saturday, October 5. Pets are not allowed at the event.

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Applications for Leadership Patrick County Class now accepted

In partnership with the Patrick County Chamber of Commerce, Virginia Tech's Reynolds Homestead recently announced that applications for Leadership Patrick County are now available. The eight-month professional development opportunity will engage up to 12 individuals in a program designed to enhance leadership skills, civic engagement, and knowledge about Patrick County.

Participants will meet one full day a month and will travel to different communities in the county where the group will visit businesses, historical sites, nonprofit organizations, and schools to learn about the incredible opportunities in and around the county as well as specific needs in each community. Additionally, participants will attend a community meeting each month to gain a greater perspective of government and other organizations committed to improving the lives of Patrick County residents.

As individuals move through the program, they will collaborate with their team to implement a community project to address an identified need. Participants should expect to gain skills in team building, collaboration, consensus building, design thinking, and project management. An overnight trip to Richmond provides an opportunity to tour the Capitol, sit in on sessions, meet their senator and delegate, and enjoy a meal with members of the Reyn-



olds family.

Learn more about the program and download the application at bit.ly/rhlpc2024. Information may also be found in hard copy at the Reynolds Homestead and Patrick County Chamber of Commerce. All applications should be submitted by Sept. 27, and orientation will take place Oct. 8.

Tuition for Leadership Patrick County is \$200; Patrick County Chamber members are

\$150. Tuition covers all materials, some meals, and travel. Full payment or arrangement for payment should be made upon acceptance. Scholarship funding is available, please request more information if needed.

Any individual or business owner looking for an incredible professional development opportunity for themselves or an employee should consider applying today. Contact Sarah Wray at wrayse88@vt.edu with questions.

Blue Ridge Potters Guild sets annual show

The Blue Ridge Potters Guild will hold its 25th Annual Show & Sale on Saturday, October 26 and Sunday, October 27 at Patrick Henry High School, 2102 Grandin Rd SW, Roanoke.

This is the largest all-pottery show in Virginia. Functional and decorative works from over 40 ceramic artists will be on display and available to purchase. Demonstrations by BRPG artists of various pottery techniques including hand-thrown, hand-built and sculpted clay art will be held throughout both days. Door prizes made by BRPG members will be announced hourly. A special gallery of the potters' finest works will be on exhibit. These pieces will be judged, and some will be for sale. Cash, checks and credit cards accepted.

The event is free, open to the public, and parking is free.

For more information, contact Mary Winston at mcwinston@gmail.com.



Raku lamp

Gift Basket Winner announced

The winner of the Patrick County Master Gardeners is Robin Anthony. The Gift Basket, displayed during the Patrick County Agricultural Fair, was full of various gardening supplies for both the physical garden and the gardener.

The Patrick County Master Gardeners wishes to thank everyone who stopped by our booth to ask insightful questions, inquire about a specific plant or tree issue, or receive further information regarding our training program.

The Patrick County Master Gardeners



Robin Anthony (center) is pictured with the gift basket. The presenters are Master Gardeners Robin Reichelt (left) and Sherry Easterbrooks (right).

wishes to thank everyone who stopped by our booth to ask insightful questions, inquire about a specif-

ic plant or tree issue or receive further information regarding our training program.

Financial Literacy Program Launched for Student Athletes

ValleyStar Credit Union is partnering with Patrick & Henry Community College to offer a financial literacy program tailored specifically for student-athletes. The program, "Financial Fundamentals for Beginners," aims to equip these young adults with essential financial knowledge and skills to support their academic and athletic careers.

The six-week sessions will comprehensively introduce critical financial concepts and practices, including banking basics, budgeting, debt management, credit scores, online banking, and financial aid. Designed to be accessible and engaging, the sessions will feature online presentations and quizzes to ensure participants gain practical skills and confidence in managing their finances.

"Partnering with Patrick & Henry Community College to offer this financial literacy program represents a significant step in our commitment to supporting the community," said Mike Warrell, ValleyStar Credit Union CEO. "We believe that by empowering these students with financial knowledge, we are helping

them build a strong foundation for their future."

Dr. Greg Hodges, president of P&HCC, expressed enthusiasm about the collaboration. "This initiative aligns perfectly with our mission to provide students with valuable resources. We are excited to see how this program will benefit our student-athletes, helping them navigate their financial futures more easily and confidently."

"Student-athletes today are expected to make decisions at an early age that can have a significant impact on their lives," said Brian Henderson, P&HCC Assistant Vice President of Student Engagement and Athletic Director. "That is why creating this partnership with ValleyStar Credit Union is so important and timely. It offers students and their parents the education and resources to help them make informed financial decisions now that will be crucial to their futures."

Enrollment details will be provided soon, and the sessions will be available to all Patrick & Henry Community College student-athletes.

Grant will help Tri-Area expand behavioral services

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has awarded Tri-Area Community Health, which serves Patrick County, a \$599,996 grant for behavioral health service expansion. U.S. Congressman Morgan Griffith (R-VA) issued the following statement:

"Tri-Area Community Health consists of dedicated healthcare professionals that provide comprehensive health care services," U.S. Rep. Morgan Griffith said of the health provider that is based in Laurel Fork.

"This grant for almost \$600,000 helps Tri-Area Community Health support community healthcare

needs for mental health services," Griffith, R-Salem, added.

According to the American Medical Association, behavioral health generally refers to mental health and substance use disorders, life stressors and crises, and stress-related physical symptoms.

Behavioral health services offered by Tri-Area Community Health include professional counseling, psychological assessments, mental health prescriptions by referral and wellness classes.

Health Center locations include the counties of Grayson, Carroll, Floyd, Franklin and the city of Galax.

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ACCEPTING SEALED BIDS
 Accepting sealed bids on 2013 Ford Focus, grey, 80,358 miles. May be viewed by appointment only - call 276-694-2239 for more information or to schedule appointment. Sold as is/where is, and buyer must remove within agreed upon time. Bid forms are available at STEP, Inc. 4559 Wayside Rd, Stuart, VA 24171. Sealed bids due by 4:00 p.m., Wednesday, October 9 at: STEP, Inc., Attn: Sealed Bid, 4559 Wayside Rd, Stuart, VA 24171.

Wilderness - Stuart, Inc.
 Buying Logs
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 Contact Ronnie Bolt at
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Patrick County Alzheimer's Group
YARD SALE
 September 26th, 27th & 28th
 8 am until 5 pm
 Alzheimer's office on Woods Brothers Drive in basement of Hill Tax Service
 COME ONE AND ALL AND GET MAGNIFICENT BUYS!

Apple Dumpling Festival
 Downtown Stuart, VA
 Saturday, October 19
 10am - 4pm
 Music • Crafts • Games
Music By:
 11:00 - 11:45 am Marcie Home and Mike Pendleton
 12:00 - 12:45 pm Face 2 Face - Christian Rock Band
 1:00 - 2:15 pm Hutchens
Sound By: August Heat Audio
Apple Dumpling 5-K
 Early registration through Oct 5 - \$25.00
 Oct 6 through Day of Festival - \$30.00
 Contact Patrick County Chamber of Commerce- 276-694-6012 • director@patrickchamber.com
 Registration at 7:00 am Race at 8:00 am
 Outdoor Entertainment
 For additional info, contact: Billy Gammons or Susan Slate @ 276-694-3811 or susan.slate@stuartva.org

PCHS senior recognized by National Merit Scholarship Program

Bryan Clark, a senior at Patrick County High School (PCHS), was named a Commended Student in the 2025 National Merit Scholarship Program. Clark is the son of John and Loren Clark, of Stuart.

A Letter of Commendation from the school and National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC), which conducts the program, was presented by the PCHS administrative team to this scholastically talented senior.

About 34,000 Commended Students throughout the nation are being recognized for their exceptional academic promise. Although they will not continue in the 2025 competition for National Merit Scholarship awards, Commended Students placed among the top 50,000 students who entered the 2025 competition by taking the 2023 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT).

“Those being named Commended Students have demonstrated outstanding potential for academic success,” a spokesperson for NMSC said. “These students represent a valuable national resource; recognizing their accomplishments, as



Bryan Clark

well as the key role their schools play in their academic development, is vital to the advancement of educational excellence in our nation. We hope that this recognition will help broaden their educational opportunities and encourage them as they continue their pursuit of academic success.”

Fair attracts elected officials, some candidates



Del. Wren Williams, R-Stuart, was among state government officials stopping by the Republican booth. Williams is pictured with his family. Ninth District Rep. Morgan Griffith (not pictured) also stopped by for a meet and greet with constituents.



Karen Baker, of Floyd County, also visited the fair and talked with supporters. Baker, a democrat, is running against Griffith in the November election. (Photos by Lynne Bogle)

Hospice agency receives honors award

Mountain Valley was named a 2024 Hospice CAHPS Honors Award recipient by HEALTHCAREfirst, a leading provider of CAHPS and bereavement survey programs for home health and hospice agencies.

This prestigious annual review recognizes agencies that continuously go above and beyond in providing high-quality care for patients and compassionate caregiver experiences. It acknowledges the highest performing agencies by analyzing the performance of the Hospice Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) survey satisfaction and quality measures.

To be considered for this award, the hospice agency must have scored above the HEALTHCAREfirst National Performance Score on the Hospice CAHPS Willingness to Recommend question. If

that criteria is met, performance is evaluated utilizing a set of 23 additional quality indicator measures. These scores are then compared on a question-by-question basis to a national performance score calculated from all partnering hospices contained in HEALTHCAREfirst's Hospice CAHPS database.

“We began our annual Hospice Honors Award program more than ten years ago as a way to highlight those agencies that are truly leading the way in providing and demonstrating quality patient care,” said Jeremy Crow, Head of RCM and CAHPS Survey, Home Health and Hospice.

Mountain Valley is a nonprofit organization providing high quality end-of-life care in 18 counties in North Carolina and Virginia. For more information, visit www.mtn-valleyhospice.org.

Ribbon cutting held at Dynamis Jiu Jitsu



The Patrick County Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon cutting at Dynamis Jiu Jitsu in Downtown Stuart on Sept. 19. Located at 302 Patrick Ave., the business offers classes for youngsters and adults. For more information, call (276) 692-5080, email Dynamisw@gmail.com, or visit.

Arrests Reported

The Patrick County Sheriff's Office reported the following:

*Ethan Elijah Foley, 19, of Patrick Springs, was charged Sept. 11 with drive while intoxicated. Sgt. J.G. Pickerel was the arresting officer.

*Nyzah Antonio Bradley, 22, of Martinsville, was charged Sept. 11 with uttering. Danville PD made the arrest for Patrick County.

*Kelly R. Humble, 33, of Claudville, was charged Sept. 13 with two counts of fail to comply with court order. Deputy H. Hylton was the arresting officer.

*Melissa Ann Simmons, 47, of Patrick County Jail, was charged Sept. 13 with two counts probation violation. Deputy Brian J. Fields made the arrest for Carroll County.

*Gary Lee Koger, 61, of Patrick Springs, was charged Sept. 14 with drive while intoxicated. Deputy C.L. Adkins was the arresting officer.

*Mitchell Steve Slate, 49, of Stuart, was charged Sept. 14 with assault. Master Deputy M.T. Rorrer was the arresting officer.

*Brikk Michael Bennett, 35, of Spencer, was charged Sept. 15 with two counts violation of protective order. Master Deputy M.T. Rorrer was the arresting officer.

*Brandon Austin Bailey, 23, of Pine Hall, NC, was charged Sept. 15 with warrant of extradition. Sgt. L.K. Carroll, Jr., was the arresting officer.

*Steven Markley Morrison, 68, address unavailable, was charged Sept. 15 with one count each object sexual penetration by force/threat and sodomy by force/threat or intimidation. Inv. T. Jessup was the arresting officer.

*Ross McNeil Kinder Coleman, 44, of Bassett, was charged Sept. 16 with drive on revoked license, alcohol related. Senior Deputy A.

Kinney was the arresting officer.

*Ronnie Lee Reed, 33, of Martinsville, was charged Sept. 16 with possess Sch. I or II drugs. Senior Deputy A. Kinney was the arresting officer.

*Katelyn Briona Dunn, 19, of Stuart, was charged Sept. 16 with possess Sch. I or II drugs. Senior Deputy A. Kinney was the arresting officer.

*Russell Dale Wimbish, 75, of Patrick Springs, was charged Sept. 16 with assault. Senior Deputy J.C. Fortner was the arresting officer.

*Tina Marie Shinault, 54, of Claudville, was charged Sept. 17 with obtain money by false pretense. Senior Deputy M.R. Hodges was the arresting officer.

*James Tracy Goins, 57, of Stuart, was charged Sept. 17 with three counts identity theft and one count embezzlement. Inv. J.W. Kruse was the arresting officer.

*Samuel Thomas Riely Henderson, 26, of Cana, was charged Sept. 17 with drive while intoxicated. Trooper D. Bryant was the arresting officer.

*Kimberly Ann Bradner, 41, of Stuart, was charged Sept. 18 with petty larceny. Sgt. J.G. Pickerel was the arresting officer.

*Catlin Joe Moncus, 39, of Ararat, was charged Sept. 19 with one count each threat to bomb/burn, petty larceny, and probation violation. Senior Deputy B. Fields was the arresting officer.

*Thomas William Taylor, 37, of Patrick Springs, was charged Sept. 19 with one count each probation violation and possess Sch. I or II drugs. Senior Deputy M.R. Hodges was the arresting officer.

*Daniel Edward Thucker, 63, of Critz, was charged Sept. 19 with three counts of bail/pretrial violation. Senior Deputy H. Hylton was the arresting officer.

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Fall Home Improvement 2024



7 Fall Tips for Readyng Your Outdoor Power Equipment for Winter

After your lawn gets its last cut before winter, it will be time to put away spring and summer outdoor power equipment, like lawn mowers, leaf blowers, and trimmers. It's also important to ready snow throwers, generators and other small engine equipment for winter use. How and when you prepare your equipment for seasonal changes can save you time and money later, says the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI).

"Readyng your equipment for winter needs is important as the weather changes," says Kris Kiser, President and CEO of OPEI. "It's also important to put your fall equipment away correctly. What you do now when you put away your equipment, sets you up for an easier start in the spring."

Here are seven tips from OPEI to ensure snow throwers will be ready when the flakes fly and chainsaws, generators and other equipment are ready for winter storms. Also, your lawn mower and other spring equipment will be available and ready for use when warmer temperatures return.

#1 - Review owner's manuals. Re-familiarize yourself with how to handle equipment safely. Lost manuals can be found online. Save a copy on your computer if possible, so it can be consulted when needed.



Be familiar with your equipment, and all its features, including how to turn it off quickly and safely.

#2 - Service all equipment. Before storing spring and summer equipment, clean and service it or take it to a small engine repair shop. Change engine oil and safely dispose of the old oil. Service the air filter, and do other maintenance as directed by the owner's manual. Check winter equipment and see if any maintenance and repairs are required.

#3 - Handle fuel properly. Unused fuel left in gas tanks over the win-

ter can go stale and even damage equipment. Before storing equipment, add fuel stabilizer to the gas tank, then run the equipment to distribute it. Turn the engine off, allow the machine to cool, then restart and run until the gas tank is empty. For winter equipment, buy the recommended type of fuel no more than 30 days before use. Use fuel with no more than 10% ethanol in outdoor power equipment. Use a fuel stabilizer if recommended by the manufacturer. Get more information on safe fueling for outdoor power equipment at LookBeforeYouPump.com.

reYouPump.com.

#4 - Charge batteries. Remove and fully charge batteries before storing. Don't store batteries on metal shelves or allow them to touch metal objects. Store them on a plastic or wood shelf in a climate-controlled structure.

#5 - Shelter equipment from winter weather. Store spring and summer equipment in a clean and dry place such as a garage, barn or shed. Winter equipment should be kept away from the elements, but be easily available for use.

#6 - Prepare, prepare, prepare. Make space in the garage or basement before the weather changes, so there is room to store larger yard items. Remove sticks, debris, dog and kid's toys and other items from your yard that can damage or destroy equipment. Clear the paths used regularly, especially during the winter when snow can "hide" things.

#7 - Have the right weather appropriate extension cord for your generator. Keep heavy duty outdoor-rated extension cords on hand. Ensure the cord is the right length to operate the generator a safe distance from the building. Never operate a generator indoors, in a garage, breezeway or under an open window or near any air intake for a building.

How to make renovation projects go smoothly

Homeowners are spending big bucks on home renovations. According to the Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University, home improvement project spending continues to increase. It's predicted to go from \$472 billion spent in 2022 to \$485 billion in 2024.

Those targeting a specific home renovation likely know there is much that goes into the process from start to finish. Patience is a requisite virtue with any remodel, as even a thoroughly conceptualized plan can encounter a few bumps along the way. Although there is no way to completely remove renovation-related obstacles, there are ways to make projects go more smoothly.

Establish a clear plan from the beginning. Now is not the time to be on the fence about details. A vision for the renovation is essential, and should include details about layout, materials, colors, and design.

Manage your expectations. Again, this speaks to a need for patience with a project but also involves flexibility. Being too rigid when choosing materials can require waiting for back-ordered supplies to come in. Wanting contractors to bend to your schedule

can delay the project even further. Creativity and flexibility are key.

Establish a budget. It can be easy to spend beyond one's means, especially when issues crop up. Black House Real Estate stresses the importance of creating a budget before starting a renovation, which may involve working with a local professional to help. Houzz advises preparing for worst-case scenarios by adding anywhere from 1 percent to 20 percent to the budget. Commit to sticking to the budget no matter what comes down the pike.

Assemble a good team. Thoroughly research all contractors who will be involved with the renovation. These include designers, architects, builders, and more. Be sure they come highly recommended and research online reviews. A good team removes some stress from the project because you'll know the work is in experienced hands.

Prepare the space for the remodel. Any work you can do will help save on labor costs and make it easier for the team to get started on the project. Clear out clutter and personal items. Ask if it would be helpful for you to handle some demolition, whether



that's pulling up old tile, removing drywall or another task.

Have an escape hatch at the ready. Home renovations can cause upheaval to daily life, and that can mean stress on top of already chaotic schedules. If money and the situation allow, plan a getaway during a particularly tough stretch of the project so the noise,

mess, and disruptions will not induce headaches. Consider spending a few nights at a hotel or at a friend or relative's house to escape the constant grind of the project.

Home renovation projects add value and functionality to homes. Such undertakings can go more smoothly with some sound planning.

Tips when hiring a contractor

Contractors perform important work for millions of homeowners every day. Home improvement projects are complicated undertakings, and the experience of skilled contractors can ensure jobs are completed on time and within homeowners' budgets.

Homeowners have undoubtedly heard horror stories from neighbors about projects that have gone awry. Projects can go sideways for a number of reasons, but a skilled contractor can help homeowners navigate such situations successfully. That underscores how important it can be to find the right professional for the job. The following are some tips homeowners can consider as they look to hire a contractor.

Identify which professional you need. Some contractors are of the jack-of-all-trades variety, but many specialize in a particular line of work. It's important that homeowners identify which type of contractor they should work with prior to starting a project. This requires homeowners to define the goal of the project (i.e., new wood floor installation), which can serve as a springboard into finding the right type of contractor.

Prioritize building safety. Safety should be the utmost priority for homeowners and contractors alike. Prior to hiring a contractor, homeowners should identify any safety restrictions that might be enforced by local governments and take note of all the permits necessary to get a job done. Homeowners can then discuss those restrictions and permits as they inter-

view contractors. Projects that do not adhere to code are illegal and can compromise homeowners' ability to sell their homes in the future. So, it's vital to work with contractors who are familiar with local codes and aware of which permits are necessary to ensure a project can go forward.

Insist on written estimates. Handshake agreements offer no protection to homeowners or contractors, so estimates indicating what will be done and how much the project will cost should be provided. Homeowners should insist on receiving written estimates and interpret an unwillingness to provide one as a significant red flag.

Know your rights. Laws vary by region, but in general homeowners have a right to a written contract and contractors are obligated to provide a copy of that contract signed by both parties. That contract

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Keep your HVAC unit running strong

Heating and air conditioning units are a lifeline, whether in the dog days of summer or frigid winter lows, and maintaining your unit ensures it will be there to keep your family comfortable when the mercury rises or falls. The following are some steps homeowners can take to keep their units in tip-top shape this summer.

- Replace the air filter on the unit. Dirt, dust, debris, and pollen in summer can quickly fill the filter. Replacing these filters can make the unit operate more efficiently and keep air circulating throughout the house no matter the season. Some filters are more expensive than others, but the cost is still low, and the energy savings can be substantial. Ask your professional for advice when needed.

- Schedule annual maintenance on the unit. Routine maintenance performed by a local HVAC technician is another way to ensure the unit is running at peak capacity when it's most needed. HVAC tech-

nicians can identify problems and recommend services that homeowners may not recognize they need until the outside temperatures fluctuate - up or down. Annual maintenance appointments also give HVAC professionals a chance to assess a system compared to the previous year, which can help them identify if a unit is nearing its end. That can ensure homeowners are not caught off guard when the unit needs to be replaced.

- Help the unit make it through the season. Whether it's a typical summer or winter, or a season that is marked by a handful of heat waves or cold snaps, HVAC units can use a little help. Closing curtains throughout the house on hot afternoons is a natural way to keep a home cool during a heat wave, and also can help block cold winds, which means savings on home cooling and heating costs while protecting a unit from being overworked. Ceiling fans also can be installed to circulate air, regardless of the season.

- Use a programmable thermostat. Programmable thermostats allow homeowners to set the temperatures inside their homes throughout the day. If no one is home during the afternoon, there's no reason to have the HVAC wide-open. Program the thermostat so the house is comfortable when people are home, but raise or lower the desired temperature when no one is around. That gives the HVAC unit a break and can help to dramatically reduce cooling and heating costs.

HVAC units will not last forever, but some simple maintenance can improve their life expectancy and keep homes comfortable.



The following are some steps homeowners can take to keep their HVAC units in tip-top shape, no matter the season.

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