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THE NEW CASTLE RECORD



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Reimbursement resolution for capital project approved by school board

Aila Boyd
aboyn@mainstreetnewspapers.com

The Craig County School Board unanimously approved a reimbursement resolution Dec. 16 declaring its intent to repay the school division for certain capital improvement costs using future state grant funds.

The resolution, identified as R2026-01, allows Craig County Public Schools to reimburse itself for expenditures related to a capital project with proceeds

from one or more grants expected to be awarded by the Commonwealth of Virginia. The resolution applies to qualifying expenses paid on or after Oct. 17, 2025.

According to the resolution, the school division has already advanced funds to cover project-related costs and expects those funds to be available only temporarily. The board determined it is necessary to reimburse the division using grant proceeds once they are received.

The capital project covered by the resolution has a maximum expected cost of \$122,400. All expenditures associated with the project are considered properly chargeable to a capital account under federal income tax guidelines.

The resolution also establishes a timeline for reimbursement, requiring the school division to formally allocate grant proceeds to reimburse eligible expenses within 18 months after the later of when the expense is paid

or when the project is placed into service or abandoned. In no case may reimbursement occur more than three years after an expenditure is paid.

The measure took effect immediately upon passage.

Vice Chair Darren Gilreath, representing the Simonsville District, made the motion to approve the resolution. It was seconded by Heather Matheny of the Craig Creek District and approved unanimously by the board.

School board approves \$503K budget amendment for emergency shelter upgrades



SCREENSHOT

Members of the Craig County School Board are pictured while discussing the resolution.

Aila Boyd
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The Craig County School Board unanimously approved a budget amendment at its Dec. 16 meeting to incorporate \$503,000 in state and local funding awarded through Virginia's Emergency Shelter Upgrade Assistance Fund.

The funding will be used to secure permanent standby generators and retrofit emergency shelters to improve emergency preparedness within Craig County Public Schools.

Of the total award, \$337,010

comes from the commonwealth, with a local match of \$165,990 to be appropriated by the Craig County Board of Supervisors.

The board amended the fiscal year 2025-26 budget to reflect the new revenue, allocating the full \$503,000 to capital outlay within operations and maintenance expenditures.

The motion was made by New Castle District representative Walter Marsden and seconded by Simonsville District representative Darren Gilreath, vice chair. The resolution took effect immediately upon adoption.

Virginia Western's CCAP accepting applications through February 1

ROANOKE – Thanks to the private-public community partnership that funds the Community College Access Program (CCAP), 484 students are attending Virginia Western Community College tuition-free this fall.

Since 2008, public localities and private donors have united in support of CCAP, which is the largest "free college" program at a Virginia community college. CCAP provides up to two years of tuition for recent high school graduates who meet program requirements, as funding allows. More than 4,800 Roanoke Valley students have participated in the program as of fall 2025.

"We are so grateful to all of the CCAP donors – municipal, corporate and private – for helping thousands of students further their education at Virginia Western over the past 17 years," said Russell Ellett, Chair of the Virginia Western Community College Educational Foundation, a nonprofit affiliated with Virginia Western Community College that administers

the program.

Roanoke region high school seniors may apply for the fall 2026 CCAP scholarship now through Feb. 1, 2026, at virginiawestern.edu/ccap. Applicants must also apply to Virginia Western and submit the Free Application for Student Financial Aid (FAFSA) by the same date.

Students who are ineligible to complete the FAFSA can complete the Virginia Alternative State Aid (VASA) application as an alternative, also by the Feb. 1 deadline. The VASA provides state aid only and is for Virginians who have certain nonimmigrant visas, are undocumented, have Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status or are otherwise ineligible to file a FAFSA.

Those interested in learning more about CCAP are invited to attend a Zoom information session on Jan. 15, 2026, from noon to 1 p.m. To register, visit virginiawestern.edu/CCAP.

To stay up-to-date on important CCAP



COURTESY PHOTO

Virginia Western Community College

application deadlines, financial aid workshops and more, sign up for text alerts by texting "2026 ccap" to 877-235-2279. (Reply STOP to cancel, HELP for help; message and data rates apply.)

Recipients of the CCAP scholarship for 2025-26 are:

CRAIG COUNTY

First-year students:

Justin Boitnotte, Hayden Bradley, Emma Cole, Maggie Mays, Jamie Ratliff, Talon Ritter and Erin Snider

Second-year students:

Matthew Lucas, Seth Parsons and Hayden Reynolds

Third-year students:

Ashton Early

For more information about CCAP, see virginiawestern.edu/ccap or contact Annie Fentress, CCAP Coordinator, at (540) 857-6371 or afentress@virginiawestern.edu

-The New Castle Record

Keep the holidays festive, fun and safe

RICHMOND—With holiday gatherings and festivities in full swing, experts are urging caution to keep celebrations safe for everyone.

Garlands, Christmas trees and twinkling lights are hallmarks of the season. But for all the cheer they bring, it's important to decorate responsibly. The National Fire Protection Association reports that U.S. fire departments respond to around 835 home fires per year that begin with holiday decorations.

Safety experts advise using nonflammable decorations when decking the halls, and keeping lit candles well away from anything that can burn.

Before stringing lights, ensure they're in good working order. Replace strands with worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections and follow manufacturer guidelines for indoor or outdoor use. Use clips instead of nails to hang lights to avoid damaging wires.

"Be careful with lighting," cautioned Kim Price, Virginia Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Co. farm field underwriting manager. "Don't overload circuits, check light strands for frayed areas, and always turn them off when you're away and at night when you're asleep."

The centerpiece of holiday décor also deserves special attention. Between 2018 and 2022, fire departments responded to an annual average of 155 home fires caused by Christmas trees. While uncommon, these fires can grow fast and become serious.

"Keep those live Christmas trees watered and away from vents," Price advised.

According to NFPA, 35% of tree fires occur in January when Christmas trees become more flammable as they dry out. Trees should be kept well hydrated by adding water daily. They should be placed at least 3 feet from heat sources like fireplaces, radiators, candles, heat

vents or lights, and don't block any exits or doorways. Properly dispose of the tree after Christmas or when it's dry.

Safety also extends to preparing a holiday feast. NFPA reports that Christmas Day and Christmas Eve rank second and third for home cooking fires, with nearly double the daily average.

Unattended cooking is the leading cause of kitchen fires and fire deaths, so always remain in the kitchen while using the stovetop, and check on food frequently.

Items that can catch fire, like oven mitts, wooden utensils, food packaging and towels, should be kept well away from the stovetop. And always keep children a safe distance from hot surfaces, liquids, electrical cords, matches and lighters.

-Virginia Farm Bureau

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Charges certified in slaying case

Buchanan County man will likely waive grand jury

From the December 7, 1994 edition of *The New Castle Record*

A judge has certified charges against a Buchanan County man who is accused of murdering his wife and leaving her body in Craig County.

Dan Grigsby claims he did not murder his wife, but his brother testified at a preliminary hearing Friday that Grigsby admitted killing Dolly Grigsby and asked for help disposing of her body.

The testimony came in a preliminary hearing in Craig County Juvenile and domestic Relations court. Judge Dudley Emick certified the charges, which can now be sent to a grand jury, although Commonwealth's Attorney Thaddeus Cox said the grand jury will likely be waived and a trial date set.

Cox said he has not decided what sentence to

seek in court, although the charge of first-degree murder carries up to a life sentence.

The trial will also be in Craig County, with Circuit Court Judge Duncan Byrd presiding.

Dolly Grigsby's remains were found when a tip was given to state police. Cox said the evidence suggests she was killed in Craig, which is why the trial is located here.

The police informant was Mickey Breeding, who is charged with a misdemeanor offense of being an accessory to a crime. Because he was not part of the crime until after the murder was committed, the charge is a misdemeanor.

Grigsby's brother, Ken, who testified against him, has been charged with being an accessory to the crime before it was committed, a felony charge.

Both Ken Grigsby and Breeding will have to appear in court in Craig again. Breeding will go straight to trial, although no date has been set.

Grigsby will have to face a preliminary hearing, which is also unscheduled at this point.

In October, Breeding led police to two areas of Craig County where Dolly Grigsby's remains were found. She was last seen alive in July, then her husband filed a missing persons report in Mercer County, W. Va., telling police she had entered a Mercer County mall and had never returned.

*Update: On May 26, 1995 Grigsby was found guilty of 1st Degree Homicide and the use of a firearm in a felony. He was sentenced up to life in prison. He was eligible for parole in May of 2022 and it was denied. He was 71 years old and had served 27 years of his sentence. <https://www.southernfriedtruecrime.com/dolly-rose-grigsby> <https://vpb.virginia.gov/media/vnalhp2h/vpb-decisions-may22.pdf>

-Prepared by Shelly Koon

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GREETINGS

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Best wishes for a blessed Christmas and a happy New Year.

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HAVE A HOLLY, JOLLY CHRISTMAS!

Our sincere wishes for a glorious holiday that gladdens your heart and leaves you with wonderful memories to last a lifetime. Members like you have given us so much to be thankful for, and we greatly appreciate your patronage.

MANAGEMENT AND EMPLOYEES OF CRAIG BOTETOURT ELECTRIC CO-OP

Recipe of the Week



Shelly Koon
Contributing
Writer

Christmas and a movie

There's a lot to love about Christmas; food, family, friends, and all kinds of other words that don't start with the letter F. I think there's no better way to enjoy the holidays than by watching holiday movies. The Holiday movie has long been a family tradition; your nearest and dearest gathering together to enjoy a seasonal classic is as much a part of the festivities for many people as the opening of presents or grandpa falling asleep on the sofa shortly after finishing Christmas dinner. Americans rank watching holiday movies as one of their favorite traditions, above tree decorating and cookie baking. Hallmark's 40 new holiday movies this season is a drop in a bucket already filled with old holiday classics from A Christmas Story and White Christmas to new ones like Love Actually and the Christmas Chronicles. Yes, holiday movies are formulaic, predictable, and often cheesy. But they also offset the stress, family pressure, and gloom from shorter days and less sunshine. An evening spent watching a feel-good movie can be an easy, low-cost, and rewarding form of self-care.

Since very few of us have "Hallmark Christmas" lives, the movies provide a welcome escape from the pressures and demands of the real world. The holiday season can bring unwanted guests and annoying family members and the burdens of gift-giving and entertaining. Holidays can exacerbate financial strain and emphasize our loneliness and isolation. Images of Christmas can also make us aware when our lives, families, jobs, or friends don't live up to our hopeful ideals and desires. It's no wonder that depression and anxiety spike during the holidays. It also explains the relief we feel when holiday movies wildly exaggerate those holiday woes, like Christmas with the Cranks, Bad Santa, or Bad Moms Christmas.

There are several benefits from a journey into Christmas movie land.

There is comfort in predictability. It is the grown-up version of your kid watching the exact same video, or wanting the exact same book read every single time. We want that familiarity, but with dashes of novelty to keep us more engaged. No matter what happens, we know the two main characters will end up together. The world is messy but you know these will always have a happy ending. (Unless you are the jerk boyfriend).

People often turn to their favorite programs when feeling lonely. Just thinking about a favorite movie increases positive emotions, decreases stress, and

increases the sense of community.

Holiday movies tap into tradition and ritual, triggering nostalgia for "the good old days" when things seemed simpler, kinder, and slower. Nostalgia increases perceptions of social support and fosters mental health by amplifying positive memories and recalling when everything seemed possible. Holiday movies let us revisit that innocence, increasing our confidence while escaping our obligations, stressors, and realities and helping us reimagine our world as full of possibilities.

Whether laughing, crying, or going "awwww," holiday movies allow us to experience positive emotions, putting more psychological resources at our disposal and making us more able to combat negative emotions that raise blood pressure and increase the release of stress hormones.

It's an added benefit that most holiday movies are family-friendly, providing a way to create new traditions. Watching together creates traditions and strengthens bonds.

Also, they are good for drinking games or trope bingo. I don't drink alcohol but it works with hot cider too! I will include the rules later. Grab your beverage of choice and settle in for a fun time.

It's always fun to indulge in a bit of cringe around the holidays. It's like eating junk food. Empty but satisfying. There is enough stress in the world and this is a good escape. Even if we roll our eyes while watching.

In the years before on-demand services, Blu-Rays or DVDs, watching a Christmas movie was more of a shared experience, a time when a whole nation was beholden to the whims of the programmers working at the major broadcasters who decided what we watched and when. Mom would write notes on the calendar so we wouldn't forget to watch. My mom told me my 2nd grade school pageant was moved to an earlier time so we all could get home in time to watch Charlie

Brown's Christmas.

With Christmas on a Thursday the deadlines for all the papers are moved up and the days leading up to the holiday are very busy in our office. On Christmas Day, Betsy and I will stay in our pjs, watch movies, work a puzzle, and eat Christmassy foods. I started a new tradition a few years ago on Christmas of making myself nachos for dinner and watching The Holiday. I really look forward to my Christmas nachos and movie!



COURTESY PHOTOS

Loaded Sheet Pan Nachos

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
 - 1 pound ground beef (or turkey)
 - 1 (1.25-oz) package taco seasoning
 - 1 (16-oz) jar salsa
 - 1 (12-oz) bag corn tortilla chips (red and green ones, I get mine at Food Lion)
 - 1 (15-oz) can black beans drained and rinsed
 - 1 (8.5-oz) can corn drained
 - 1 small can sliced black olives drained
 - 1.5 cups shredded Mexican cheese blend (cheddar works too!)
 - 1 Roma tomato diced
 - 1 small red onion diced
 - 1 jalapeno thinly sliced
 - 1 avocado cubed
 - Chopped cilantro (if you like it)
 - sour cream for serving
1. Prep: Heat oven to 400°F. Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil

and spray with nonstick cooking spray. Brown beef: Add olive oil to large skillet over medium-high heat, then add ground beef and cook until browned. Drain if desired, then stir in taco seasoning and salsa. Assemble: Place tortilla chips in single layer on the prepared baking sheet. Top with ground beef mixture, black beans, corn, olives and cheese. Bake: Place into oven and bake until heated through and the cheeses have melted, about 5-6 minutes. Top with tomato, onion, jalapeño, avocado, cilantro and serve with sour cream.

Holiday Drinking Game

Google Christmas drinking games and several lists will show up.

The Rules:

Drink When...

Character's name related to Christmas

Reference to a dead relative

Hot cocoa, cider, or eggnog

Candy canes!

Snowball fight or ice skating

Adult bonds with an unrelated child

Ugly Sweater or tie

Baking, Caroling, Tree Trimming

Big City Person in Small Town

Widow/er or Single Parent

Scenic Snow Vista

Precocious child/pet

Gratuitous dramatic exterior

Take 2 Drinks When...

Outsider partakes in an old tradition

Near-miss/almost kiss

"Magical" Christmas item

Snowing on Christmas

Mistletoe!

Santa/Angel in disguise

Snowed-in or Flight Canceled

"Big Event" saves the day!

Montage

Someone says, "But, it's Christmas"

Finish Your Drink When...

The cynic is filled with the Christmas Spirit

The protagonist leaves town, only to return at the end

Community Tree Lighting Ceremony!

The movie ends with "The Kiss"

Grant will expand milk dispenser program in Virginia schools

BRIDGEWATER—The Virginia State Dairymen's Association has received a \$115,000 grant to expand the use of bulk milk dispensers in school cafeterias across the commonwealth.

The grant was made possible by the Van der Lely Foundation, an independent initiative contributing to a better world through entrepreneurship and innovation.

This investment marks a major step in helping more Virginia schools transition from single-use milk cartons to a more student-friendly way of serving milk, said Eric Paulson, VSDA executive director.

To date, the milk dispenser grant program has supported 54 schools across 19 districts, totaling 77 dispensers statewide. Starting in 2026, VSDA will expand the project to 18 additional cities and counties through July 2027.

"This support accelerates a project that's already proving its value in Virginia schools," Paulson continued. "We're seeing less waste, higher milk consumption, and an overwhelmingly positive

response from school staff and students. It's a simple change with a big impact."

Roughly three-quarters of children ages 2 to 18 do not consume the daily recommended amount of real dairy, according to the National Institutes of Health.

Switching to milk dispensers eliminates cartons, which lowers packaging waste. Meanwhile, access to dispensers significantly increases student milk consumption. At one of the pilot schools, milk packaging waste dropped by nearly 90%, while overall consumption rose more than 50%.

Homestead Creamery in Franklin County delivers milk directly to 30 schools and universities utilizing the dispensers.

"Kids love the independence milk dispensers give them to pick their flavor of ice-cold milk," said Erin Saacke, sales manager. "The dispensers keep it much colder than refrigerated cartons, which can be a challenge to open."

And some students don't like the taste of the carton, she added, which results in waste of unopened

containers.

"When serving themselves from the dispensers, we are finding that the kids actually are drinking it all and receiving the nutrients they need," Saacke said. "We look forward to expanding into more school systems and appreciate that the milk dispensers preserve our product quality."

Homestead Creamery's fall Farm Day connects families to the region's farming traditions and dairy sector.

"And they want to support local agriculture by drinking local milk," Saacke said.

Strengthening that connection between Virginia students and the local dairy farms feeding their communities is at the heart of this effort, Paulson added.

"We're grateful to the Van der Lely Foundation for believing in this work," he said. "They're helping us scale something that benefits kids, farmers and the environment."

-Virginia Farm Bureau

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OPINION

News from the 9th: A Dickens Christmas



Morgan Griffith
Representative

An iconic Christmas story that continues to resonate with my family and many others is Charles Dickens' Christmas classic A Christmas Carol.

While the book was first published in 1843 in London, Dickens' writings captivated audiences on both sides of the Atlantic.

Because of his popularity in the United States, Dickens visited numerous American communities for reading tours.

During his 1842 travels, most of which were spent in the Northeast, Dickens even visited Richmond, Virginia!

More than two decades later, Dickens would return to the United States.

In an 1868 performance, President Andrew Johnson watched a Dickens performance at Carroll Hall in Washington, DC. Days later, Dickens and Johnson would meet at the White House.

American audiences were eager to watch the magnificent Charles Dickens in action! While plenty was

desired during these performances, perhaps nothing was desired more than a rendition of A Christmas Carol.

But that is not the only Dickens Christmastime story.

Another Dickens Christmastime piece that drew acclaim was The Cricket on the Hearth.

Under less-than-ideal circumstances, the characters in the story seek to find peace in the world. Many people felt like they could connect to the story's key message.

Although the story does not have any connection to Christmas, The Cricket on the Hearth became a popular Dickens Christmas tale!

This is not totally uncommon in American pop culture.

The hit 1934 song "Winter Wonderland" is written by Felix Bernard and Richard Smith. The song continues to play in public squares, malls and stores.

Yet, the song does not actually celebrate Christmas, just the winter season and snow!

Likewise, while not focused on the theme of Christmas, The Cricket on the Hearth is an uplifting story that gained widespread appeal in the 19th century. However, it received much more attention in the United Kingdom than in the United States.

Accordingly, Dickens described The Cricket on the Hearth as a "quiet and domestic" novel. The story resonated

more with UK audiences seemingly because of its parallels with UK life.

Therefore, American audiences were more likely to catch a Dickens performance of A Christmas Carol.

The many iterations of the Christmas classic's main character, Ebenezer Scrooge, is displayed in American literature, cinema and theater.

Scrooge is a contemptible, bitter and divisive figure who lacks feeling and empathy for others.

Throughout the story, Dickens employs different spirits to visit Scrooge. Each spirit tries to compel Scrooge to reflect on his wrongs and change his ways for good.

As we know it, Scrooge undergoes a personal transformation. He becomes a more respectful, humane, and compassionate figure. It is evident to see his generosity at the end of A Christmas Carol as he delivers wonderful gifts to those who are less fortunate!

Scrooge's personal growth is a story that compels the heart, body and soul. To some, his transformation is a miracle!

A Christmas Carol challenges us all to strive to be better human beings in our homes, our communities and our lives.

The teachings from this Dickens story strike a similar tune with other cultural and religious readings at this time of year.

For me and my family, we also join Christians around the world to celebrate the joyous story documenting the birth of Jesus Christ!

His birth is a miraculous moment. It serves as a gift from God to save His children from sin and remodel our lives in His image and name.

Jesus teaches us we can be transformed through faith in Him.

Further, Jesus inspired our communities to deliver gifts, such as kindness, charity and humanity.

His miracles and teachings also continue to draw large audiences around the world! This season, many churches will be full of joy, inspired to pray and spread His gifts to others.

This time of year is not just a special time for Christians, but it presents opportunity for people of all backgrounds to come together with their families and celebrate their blessings.

That is why I show appreciation and respect for people of all faiths, religions and beliefs.

As is the case every year, I look forward to reflecting on these impactful and spirited Christmas stories.

We have many blessings to celebrate, especially those that come from the birth of Jesus Christ.

And in the words of Dickens' beloved character from A Christmas Carol, Tiny Tim, "God bless us, everyone!"

THE NEW CASTLE RECORD

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The New Castle Record (USPS 378-080) is published weekly for \$46 a year in Craig County, \$50 elsewhere in Virginia, and \$54 out of state by Virginia Media Inc., 1633 W Main St., Salem, VA 24153. Periodical postage paid at New Castle, VA. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE NEW CASTLE RECORD 1633 W. Main St., Salem, Va. 24153

The New Castle Record encourages letters from our readers on topics of general interest to the community and responses to our articles and columns. Letters must be signed and have a telephone number where you can be reached to be considered for publication. All letters will be verified before publication. The Record reserves the right to deny publication of any letter and edit letters for length content and style. News of public interest is solicited from all sections of the county.

Guest religion column: *Four views on Christmas: Part 2 of 2*

Last week we began to look at the four Gospels, and the story each tells us to introduce us to the birth of the Savior Jesus Christ. (if you missed it, be sure to look for last week's paper!)

We pick up today with Luke's message.

The Gospel of Luke was written by Dr. Luke, a physician and a companion of the Apostle Paul. As a doctor, he was very detail oriented in his writing! The book was likely written between 60 and 80 AD, and it is considered by many to be a two-volume work with the Acts of the Apostles.

His Message? Jesus is the Savior for All Peoples (Luke 1-2). Jesus is the perfect man!

Luke gives the most detailed historical and personal account: Angelic announcements to Zechariah and Mary (Luke 1), Mary's genealogy to prove again who Jesus descended from, and Mary's beautiful song (Luke 1:46-55) - called The Magnificat.

Luke captures Mary's initial

fear, her thoughtful questions, and ultimately her beautiful surrender: "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true" (Luke 1:38, NLT).

He also details John the Baptist's birth, the census under Quirinius (Luke 2:1-2) and the shepherds in the field (Luke 2:8-20). Luke introduces two very old people Simeon and Anna (Luke 2:25-38) elderly saints who had waited their entire lives, finally see God's salvation with their own eyes.

Luke's audience was a Greek audience. Greeks valued human excellence and philosophical inquiry, (they invented the Olympics and gave birth to western philosophy - Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle). Luke presents Jesus as the perfect human being - the ideal man who represents all humanity before God.

Luke's nativity account is rich with human emotion and divine wonder. He begins with the angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary: "Don't be afraid, Mary, for you

have found favor with God! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus" (Luke 1:30-31, NLT).

Then, Luke expanded his text to include ordinary folks, responding to God's extraordinary grace. Elizabeth, (the mother of John the Baptist) was filled with the Holy Spirit, and recognized Jesus even while He's still in Mary's womb. The shepherds, society's outcasts, became the first evangelists.

So, Luke tells us, "She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them" (Luke 2:7, NLT).

The Creator of the universe entered His creation not in a palace, but in a stable. He was not announced by trumpets, but by angels appearing to the shepherds.

Why do we need Luke's perspective? Because it shows us that God's plan included becoming one of us completely. Jesus knows what it's like to be a

See **Guest Religion Column** page 5

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

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- CLUES ACROSS**
- Product or ___ (abbr.)
 - Zodiac sign
 - S. China seaport
 - Former OSS
 - Early English printer
 - Aphid genus
 - General's assistant (abbr.)
 - Aussies
 - Dissuades
 - Make law
 - Drench
 - Soak in a liquid
 - Male child
 - It cools your home
 - Small constellation
 - To call (archaic)
 - Explores beneath the Earth
 - Commercial
 - W. hemisphere organization
 - You can find it in a can
 - "Land of the free"
 - Footwear
 - Footwear
 - Challenges
 - They hold things together
 - Of I
 - Partner to flow
 - Not connected by kinship
 - Worries
 - Garlic mayonnaise
 - A way to take by force
 - Legendary English rockers
 - Your consciousness of your own identity
 - Fencing swords
 - Silly
 - Actor DiCaprio
 - Encircles with a belt
 - Mails a message
 - Longing
 - CLUES DOWN**
 - Horse mackerels
 - It can be viral
 - Prickly plants
 - Consciousness
 - Type of sarcoma
 - Tax collector
 - Sun up in New York
 - One who scorches
 - Influential psychotherapist
 - Situated at an apex
 - Communicative
 - Forearm nerve
 - Former CIA
 - Folk singer DiFranco
 - Employee stock ownership plan
 - Large-scale
 - School environment
 - Remove
 - Male parents
 - Large rodent
 - Weighed down
 - Held tightly
 - ___ route: going there
 - Explains again
 - Exclamation of surprise
 - Courteously
 - Lying down
 - Judge
 - Forcefully took
 - Loosely compacted sediment
 - High mountain
 - Portable conical tents
 - Cereal grass
 - Dining utensil
 - Thoughtful
 - Helps you walk
 - Indicates near
 - Midway between northeast and east
 - Local area network

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Guest Religion Column from page 4

Jesus knows what it's like to be a baby, a child, a teenager, and an adult.

He experienced human growth, human relationships, and human emotions. When we face struggles, we can know that our Savior truly understands because He walked the same path of human experience.

Luke's Christmas message is that Jesus is the Savior for all kinds of people, from shepherds to kings.

John's Message

The Book of John (the Gospel) was written by John the Apostle, one of Jesus' twelve disciples, and the youngest one. He was probably just a young teen when he walked with Jesus. John wrote five of the New Testament books, about 20% in total. He was also a son of Zebedee who refers to himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" but never by name. John's gospel was the last written, around 90 AD.

The Gospel of John message is this - Jesus is the Eternal Word of God - Made Flesh (John 1:1-18).

If Matthew shows us Jesus as King, Mark as Servant, and Luke as perfect Man, John reveals Jesus as the eternal God. And like Mark, John includes no traditional Christmas story. Instead, he takes us back before time began. John has a totally different approach. John gives no shepherds, no manger, no genealogy—but he opens the heavens: "In the beginning was the Word... and the Word was God." (John 1:1)

"In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him" (John 1:1-3, NLT). John doesn't start with Jesus' human birth - he starts with His eternal existence. Before Bethlehem, before Mary, before time itself, Jesus was.

But then comes the most stunning verse in all of

Scripture: "So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unending love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son" (John 1:14, NLT).

Why do we need John's perspective? Because it reminds us that Christmas isn't just about a baby being born - it's about God becoming flesh. The infinite became finite, the eternal entered time, the invisible became visible. This is the mystery of the incarnation that no human mind can fully comprehend,

yet by faith we embrace it as the cornerstone of our salvation.

John's Christmas Message is that Jesus is the incarnation—fully God, fully man, dwelling among us to bring grace and truth.

God's Perfect Plan Was Revealed in Christmas.

The four gospels together paint a complete picture of our Savior and Lord. It's like assembling a jigsaw puzzle - each piece is essential, and only when all pieces are in place do we see the full image.

Matthew shows us that Jesus is the promised King - the fulfillment of every Old Testament prophecy

Mark presents Jesus as the perfect Servant - the One who came not to be served but to serve.

Luke reveals Jesus as the ideal human being - the Second Adam who succeeded where the first Adam failed.

John unveils Jesus as eternal God - the Word who became flesh.

Together, these four perspectives give us a complete understanding of Jesus.

- Jesus is Prophet (revealing God's truth),
- Priest (mediating between God and humanity),
- and King (ruling over God's kingdom).
- He is fully God and fully man, the bridge between heaven and earth, the answer to humanity's

deepest need.

But here's the beautiful thing about God's plan - it's not just about who Jesus is, but what He came to do. Each gospel writer shows us different aspects of Jesus' mission.

- Matthew emphasizes His role as Messiah bringing God's kingdom.
- Mark focuses on His works of power and service.
- Luke highlights His compassion for the marginalized and lost.
- John reveals His Divinity and His purpose to give eternal life to all who believe.

God's plan, unfolding through these four distinct yet harmonious accounts, shows us that salvation is available to all people - Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, powerful and powerless, young and old. The wise men and the shepherds, Mary and Elizabeth Simeon and Anna - all represent different segments of humanity finding hope in the Christ child.

Every Gospel draws us to worship Christ, and Christmas reveals the Savior we all need. Let's all remember this year that Christmas is about the Christ child, who came to save us from our sins.

If you don't know Jesus as your savior, and would like to speak with someone, feel free to call us or come to worship with us on Sunday morning. We would love to tell you more about Jesus!

Merry Christmas!

Craig Valley Baptist Church, at 171 Salem Ave in New Castle, welcomes you to visit and share in the love of God we have experienced. We meet Sundays at 11AM, with an upbeat service of music, sharing and preaching. You don't need to dress up, and you won't be asked to speak, so just come and hang out and meet new and old friends! Questions? Call 540-864-5667 or email pastor@cv-bc.com.

- Pastor Scott Gabrielson

VDOT Roadwatch

INTERSTATE 81

Exit 162 Acceleration Ramp Extension, Botetourt County (Updated Dec. 12, 2025) – Work continues to extend the on-ramp from Route 11 to northbound I-81 about 1,000 feet. The ramp is open. The project includes installing drainage structures and constructing a retaining wall alongside the slope. Barrier wall is installed along the right shoulder of northbound I-81 at exit 162. Additional ramp and lane closures may occur during nighttime hours. Electronic message boards will alert drivers to closures or schedule changes. Expected completion: late 2026.

• Lane closures: Nighttime right and left lane closures possible on I-81.

Exit 156 Bridge Work, Botetourt County (Updated Dec. 12, 2025) – Milling and paving of the bridge deck on northbound and southbound I-81 at exit 156 is underway. Work begins on northbound lanes, then moves to southbound.

Temporary traffic barriers are in place on westbound Route 640 under I-81 bridges with lanes narrowed to 11 feet.

• Lane closures: Nighttime outside and inside lane closures 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. on I-81 mile markers 155–157.

• Slow roll operations and flagging may occur during barrier wall placement on Route 640. Expected completion: fall 2026.

Acceleration Ramp Extensions, Mile Marker 94 Pulaski County & Mile Marker 105 Montgomery County (Updated Dec. 12, 2025) – Southbound entrance ramp at MM 94 and northbound entrance ramp at MM 105 are being extended. Work begins at MM 94, then moves to MM 105.

• Lane closures: Nighttime lane closures 7 p.m. to 6 a.m., Sunday–Thursday.

• Shoulder closures throughout work zone.

• Ramp closures: Possible.

• Ramp narrowing or shifts: Possible during

nighttime hours. Expected completion: summer 2026.

Exit 89 Bridge Rehabilitation, Pulaski County (Updated Dec. 12, 2025) – Bridge work at exit 89 underway. Shoulder closure in place; ramp and lane closures possible. Drivers should monitor message boards for updates.

• Ramp closures: Exit 89B on-ramp from Draper Valley Road to northbound I-81 and off-ramp from northbound I-81 to Draper Valley Road closed. Detour via Exit 94 (Pulaski) and Route 11 recommended.

Lane Widening Project, Exit 137 to Exit 141, Roanoke County & Salem (Updated Dec. 12, 2025) – \$179 million design-build project widening I-81 from two to three lanes in both directions between mile markers 136.6–141.8. Work includes bridge replacements, sound barrierwalls, interchange lighting, and ramp improvements.

• Ramp closures: Exit 137 northbound off-ramp closed Dec.

15–19, nightly. Exit 140 southbound on/off ramps may close.

• Lane closures: Nighttime left/right lane and shoulder closures 8 p.m.–6 a.m., Sunday–Thursday; lane widths reduced to 11 feet.

• Traffic shifts: Possible on I-81 at exit 140 and on Wildwood Road.

• Flagging operations: Route 635 and Route 619.

• Uneven pavement possible.

• Work zone speed: 60 mph posted. Expected completion: early 2026.

I-81 Widening, Mile Marker 143–150 (Updated Dec. 12, 2025) – Survey and preparation work underway. Shoulder strengthening may require lane closures. Barrier walls planned.

• Traffic shift: Southbound traffic

shifted to right shoulder from exit 150 to 146.

• Lane closures: Nighttime right and left lane closures 9 p.m.–6 a.m.

• Shoulder closures: In place; additional barrier walls to be installed.

• Traffic impacts: Ramps may be narrowed at exits 143, 146, 150. Flagging on Belle Haven

Road. Detour signs for incidents only.

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CRAIG VALLEY BAPTIST
Pastor Scott Gabrielson, church phone 864-5667, 171 Salem Avenue, Noon Pantry available (M,W,F) 9am-noon. Sunday School 10am, Worship 11am, Mondays 6:30pm Men and Ladies Bible Study, Wednesday: Bible Buddies 6:30pm, Bible Study 7pm. craigvalleybaptist@gmail.com

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Corner of Main Street & Boyd Ave., New Castle. Church phone 864-5919. Sunday School 10:00AM, Sunday Worship 11:00AM and 6PM. Wednesday Evening Bible Study 7PM, Youth Group 7:00PM, Reformers Unanimous Addition Recovery every Friday evening at 7PM.

GRACE ASSEMBLY OF GOD
5530 Catawba Valley Drive, Catawba, VA, (540) 384-7075, Rev. Dr. Loraine Taylor, agladypastor@msn.com. Sunday

Service @ 10:30 a.m. Wednesday Adult Bible Study @ 7:00 p.m. Youth (Ages 13-18) & Super Church (Ages 4-12) 7:00 p.m. Facebook Livestream each Sunday morning @ 10:30 a.m. www.graceassemblycatawba.org

GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH
159 Old Railroad Ave, New Castle, 540-864-PRAY, Sunday School 9:00AM, Sunday Worship Service 10:00AM.

LEVEL GREEN CHRISTIAN CHURCH
3388 Cumberland Gap Rd. Newport, Duane Wente, Minister, 540-544-7179. Sunday School 10:00am, Sunday Morning Worship 11:00am, Children's Church 11:00am. Choir Practice, bi-weekly 7:00pm, Ladies meeting first Monday of each month at 7:00pm.

LIGHTHOUSE BAPTIST
Pastor Lee Looney, Rt. 311 N., New Castle, 540-5257662. Sunday: Sunday School 10AM, 11AM, & 6PM. Wednesday Bible Study 7PM.

MOUNTAIN VIEW CHRISTIAN
4199 Craig Valley Drive, New Castle, Jonathan Lee, pastor, 864-6622. Sunday: Worship Service 9:00 a.m., Children's Church 9:15 a.m., Sunday School 10:30 a.m.

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Brian Hoffman



Another Christmas Story

Merry Christmas everyone!!

It's the most wonderful time of the year. That is if you don't mind being cold, slipping on ice, shoveling snow or worrying about how you're going to get your car up that hill to go to work. Or, sometimes, if you work for the newspaper.

You may notice I don't have our usual sports coverage in the paper this week. There's a reason for that, and it's called Christmas.

I have early deadlines this week so my colleagues at the paper don't have to work Christmas Eve. I was given a deadline of Monday morning to have all my sports finished when I usually get until Tuesday night or Wednesday noon, depending on the paper.

Same thing happens at Thanksgiving, and I was in the office for most of the day Saturday and Sunday to get the games in. I even managed to get home in time to watch the Eagles blow a 21-0 lead against Dallas in the late game that Sunday.

For Christmas, it's a little different. Same deadlines, but last weekend I took my wife and two grandsons to Pennsylvania to celebrate Christmas. We left Friday, visited that night, went to the Sixers game against Dallas on Saturday night and returned Sunday. So, a Monday morning deadline left little time to catch up on the many games played over the weekend. Rest assured I'll catch you up in next week's paper.

It's always a chore juggling the work schedule around the holidays, as I'm the only guy in the sports department for four papers. I just wouldn't feel right not visiting the relatives for Christmas, so it takes some planning.

When I was a kid it was easy. Get up Christmas morning and enjoy the most Wonderful Time of the Year. When I went to college, 400 miles away, it got a little tougher.

I was at Roanoke College back when Charlie Moir was the basketball coach for the Maroons. It doesn't seem like that long ago but, in reality, it was over 50 years ago. Time flies, especially when you get older.

When I was in school I did the statistics at Roanoke College basketball games and also worked for the Sports Information Department. Roanoke always hosted a Christmas Tournament at the Salem Civic Center so it was important that I was there. I would drive home to Pennsylvania after exams, celebrate Christmas, drive back to RC for the basketball tournament, then back to PA until second semester began.

To make things more complicated the dorms were closed over Christmas and the heat was turned down. I had to sleep somewhere, and one year I snuck into the fraternity house for the days I was in Salem for the basketball tournament. One night I was awakened

by Harold McCann, who some of you may remember, who was head of security at the time. He told me I couldn't sleep there, but luckily Harold was a big basketball fan so he said I could stay as long as no one else was in there with me.

Once I started working for the paper, in 1974, I never failed once to get home to Pennsylvania for Christmas. When I was single it was no problem, because Pennsylvania WAS Christmas. However, once I got married I had Christmas at two places, and every year I had to juggle it around sporting events to cover like high school and college winter sports. So, forgive me if the Friday night results aren't in this week's paper. Like I said, I'll catch you up next week.

Christmas brings back lots of memories. I still remember getting my first bicycle, and that was a big deal in the '60s because that was my mode of transportation for many years. I can still see in my mind those two red bicycles, one for me and one for my sister, on Christmas morning.

I was talking about bikes with my wife the other day. You don't see kids riding them like you did when I was growing up. Most of the people I see on bikes these days are adults wearing leotard pants, shirts with all kinds of advertisements and helmets. Where are the kids?

We rode our bikes everywhere. It wasn't unusual in the summer for me to take off on my bike at 10 o'clock in the morning and not come home until supper time at 5 pm. Then I'd eat and be off again, usually to the pool or the baseball field.

And I never wore a helmet. I'm not saying that's good, I'm just saying it's a fact. And I never knew anyone who got a head injury from falling off their bike. Were we just tougher, luckier or what?

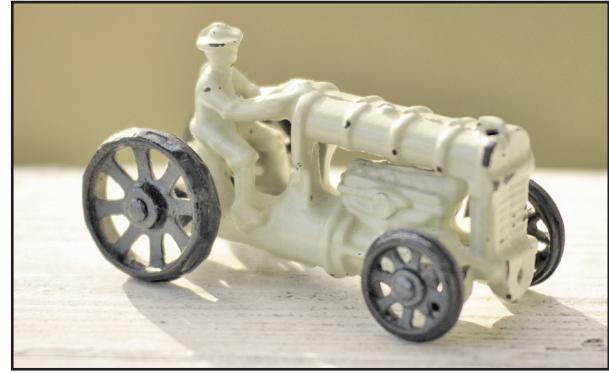
Another clear memory is receiving my electric football game. I wanted one SO BAD and on Christmas morning it was not under the tree. I was certainly disappointed, but didn't want to sound ungrateful because my parents always made sure my sister and I had a nice Christmas.

Then my grandparents, God bless their souls, came over for Christmas dinner. I could see "Gramps" carrying a package wrapped in holiday paper about the size an electric football game might be. It was a top-of-the-line model, with three dimensional players and a cool scoreboard. It had magnetic balls, not the felt ones like the cheaper models. You felt special if you had magnetic balls.

As I mentioned, my parents always made sure we had a nice Christmas. They weren't rich, but they weren't poor, either. They were hard-working Pennsylvania German folks who earned everything they had.

My dad came from a family of 14 kids, although four of them had died before he was born, three in the flu epidemic of 1918 and one of a heart defect. My dad was born in 1926, the 13th of 14, and he would have been 99 Thanksgiving week if he was still with us.

When you're one of many and growing up on a farm in the depression, Christmas could be tough. He never talked about it but I know he didn't get a lot of Christmas presents as a child. In fact, I still have one of his presents in my corner cupboard at our house. It's a small wrought-iron tractor that was his favorite Christmas present when he was a kid. It was the only thing Santa brought on Christmas morning, but it was



Above is my dad's favorite Christmas present when he was a kid. Actual size is about five inches long. Below is one of the many Hess Trucks I found under the tree.



special.

My dad joined the Navy during World War II, came home and got a good union factory job and married the love of his life, who I called mom. He made a good life for our family and that tractor always reminded me of how lucky we were.

Have you ever seen those "Hess Trucks" the oil company puts out every year? Well, my dad would buy one of those trucks for me, and himself, every Christmas. He was too old to play with it, but he still got excited when he'd stop for gas and the new Hess Trucks, in the green and white boxes, were neatly stacked by the register. He'd buy two, but I'd never get mine until Christmas morning.

That tradition lasted until he passed away in the summer of 2018. I was 65 years old and still finding a gift-wrapped Hess Truck under the tree when we went to visit at Christmas.

I have several of those big plastic tubs you can get at Wal-Mart filled with Hess Trucks, still in the box. I kept getting them a few years after my dad died, because it had been such a tradition at our house. As I grew older I realized he loved those trucks so much because his dad couldn't afford stuff like that when he was a kid. Obviously they didn't have Hess Trucks back then, but they did have toy trucks and fire engines and the like. As an adult, he was making up for lost time.

And you know what? I have a bunch of grandchildren and even great-grandchildren and among the group are three little boys age five and under. My wife and I decided we would start a new tradition this year and buy them Hess Trucks. And really, they're pretty cool. This year's edition is a two-car stock car set that would make Michael Jordan stand up and take notice.

Merry Christmas to all, and keep on truckin'.

Salem-Roanoke Baseball Hall of Fame announces Class of '26

Four area baseball greats will be inducted into the Salem-Roanoke Baseball Hall of Fame at the 34th hot stove banquet and induction ceremony. The banquet will be held at the Salem Civic Center on Sunday, February 1st, 2026.

This year's inductees include Drew Bailey, Allen Lawrence, Wes McMillan and Donald Minnick. In addition, Roy Lower has been selected to receive the Wayne LaPierre, Sr. Community Service Award.

Drew Bailey was a three-sport athlete at Christiansburg High School where he threw two no-hitters as a senior pitcher. He was a two-time all-WVIAC selection from 2008-10 at Concord University where he was inducted into the school's Hall of Fame in 2017.

Drew became the first Concord pitcher selected in the MLB Amateur Draft when he was taken in the 35th round in 2010 by the Oakland Athletics. He played two seasons in the Athletics' organization and reached the Class A level for the Vermont Lake Monsters in 2011, finishing with a 5-0 record and a 2.34 ERA.

Bailey began a collegiate head coaching career at Averett University before leading Bluefield State to a pair of HBCU National Championships and compiling a 95-79 won-lost record from 2021-24. He is currently the head baseball coach at his alma mater, Concord.

Allen Lawrence has built a distinguished career in professional baseball operations in the Roanoke Valley where he currently is the general manager of the

Carolina League's Salem RidgeYaks. A 1996 graduate of North Cross School and a 2004 graduate of Elon University, he began his career as a game-day employee of the Colorado Rockies' Class A affiliate, the Salem Avalanche, advancing through roles including food and beverage director, director of stadium operations, vice president of sales, and assistant general manager.

Allen served as interim general manager of the Salem Red Sox before being named general manager in 2019. Recognized for his leadership and impact, he has been named one of the "Ten Most Outstanding Young Professionals in the Community," reflecting his dedication to Salem and the Roanoke Valley.

Wes McMillan built a legacy of excellence and consistency over nearly four decades of coaching baseball and softball in the Roanoke Valley. Beginning with the North Roanoke Rec Club (1984-1999), he guided countless young players before leading a 1992 softball team to a Dixie League state championship and national tournament appearance.

After baseball assistant coaching roles at Northside and Salem High, Wes became Salem's head baseball coach in 2011. As Salem's head coach for 12 years, he never posted a losing season. During his tenure Salem made six regional appearances and four Class 4 state tournaments, winning the VHSL championship in 2018 with a 2-1 walk-off victory over Jamestown. He was a two-time River Ridge District Coach of the Year and Timesland baseball Coach of the Year in 2018.

Donald Minnick starred as a left-handed pitcher at Liberty High School and at East Tennessee State before playing three seasons of Minor League baseball. At Liberty from 1974-77, he compiled a 34-5 career pitching record, was a first-team Seminole District selection and led the Minutemen to the 1977 VHSL Group AA state championship. He also was the winning pitcher in the VHSCA East-West

All-Star game.

Minnick was chosen by the Cincinnati Reds in the 19th round of the 1977 Amateur Draft but opted to play at ETSU, where he helped the Buccaneers to the Ohio Valley Conference title. He was taken in the second round of the 1979 January Draft by the Seattle Mariners. He played for three seasons for affiliates of the Mariners and Baltimore Orioles, helping the Hagerstown Suns to the 1981 Carolina League championship.

Roy Lower has made his mark in baseball as a player, coach, administrator and school booster for more than 50 years. He was a two-sport athlete at Cave

Spring High School, graduating in 1976. He played baseball at East Tennessee State, graduating in 1980.

Lower coached baseball for nine years at the Little League level, four years in AAU, seven years in American Legion baseball and two years of Cave Spring High baseball and basketball. He served on the Cave Spring Little League board of directors and served on the booster boards at Cave Spring and Hidden Valley high schools.

The Salem-Roanoke Baseball Hall of Fame was founded in 1991 and honors players and contributors from the counties of Alleghany, Roanoke, Bedford, Botetourt, Craig, Floyd, Franklin and Montgomery and the independent cities located within the boundaries of those counties. The Hall of Fame building is located on the grounds of the James E. Taliaferro Complex, next to the Salem RidgeYaks administrative office behind the third base seating area of Salem Memorial Ballpark. It is open to the public on selected nights.



PHOTO BY BRIAN HOFFMAN

Allen Lawrence, here announcing the Carolina League baseball team's new name as "RidgeYaks," has been selected to be a member of the Salem-Roanoke Baseball Hall of Fame Class of 2026.

