

The Lebanon News

Russell County's Family Newspaper Since 1880

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LEBANON, VIRGINIA | \$2

Flock cameras will not be activated by sheriff's office

By SHAWN STREET
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The Flock cameras that have been installed have not and will not be activated by the Russell County Sheriff's Office.

That was the announcement of Sheriff Bill Watson during the August 3 meeting of the Russell County Board of Supervisors.

Flock cameras are set up on private property and are used by law enforcement, homeowners associations and private businesses to track vehicle movement.

The cameras are designed to capture specific features of vehicles such as dents, stickers, etc., as well as color and

license plate information. The cameras time stamp images and the vehicle's description while uploading the information to Flock Safety cloud servers.

There are currently three Flock cameras in Russell County. One is near the Highway 19 and Route 80 intersection. The second is just south of the Route 58 and Highway 19 intersection. The third is just west of the Route 58 and Highway 19 intersection.

The cameras were installed in February and March. They were fully paid for by a grant from the Virginia State Police's HEAT program. Each camera was \$3,000.

"I can see the public safety aspect in it," Watson stated. He said the camera could prove useful in tracking the whereabouts of a missing person or a fleeing suspect.

Watson objected, however, to the fact that information gathered by the cameras is sold to third parties.

"I don't feel like it's appropriate," he said. "I'm just not going to participate in it."

In responding to a Freedom of Information Act request on the subject, Major William Puckett said, "At the direction of Sheriff Watson, the Russell County Sheriff's Office terminated the Flock Safety program in the early implementation stage prior to all requirements being met for the Russell County Sheriff's Office to access the Flock Safety cameras. The Russell County Sheriff's Office has not accessed or searched any data from the Flock Safety cameras."

SEE **FLOCK CAMERAS** | 2A



Officials and volunteers celebrate the opening of the Isaiah 117 House in Lebanon.

Isaiah 117 House now open

By SHAWN STREET
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The Isaiah 117 House that will serve the foster care system for Russell County and Dickenson County is now open.

An estimated 200 people were on hand in Lebanon on Aug. 2 to celebrate the grand opening of the home that will provide physical and emotional support in a safe and loving environment for children awaiting foster care placement.

"This is an overwhelming moment," stated Isaiah 117 House Expansion Coordinator Acacia Nunley.

She shared a story from her own life to illustrate what Isaiah 117 House will mean for children. Nunley said in March she was going through one of the most trying weeks of her life. Upon arriving at her grandmother's house, she found warm food, a bedroom that was made ready for her and a welcoming environment.

"All my anxiety and stress melted away," Nunley said. I felt so at peace and I thought to myself, this is what Isaiah 117 House is for. This is what I want to do for kids on a really hard day."

Brian White, the Isaiah 117 House Director of Finance, said so many in the schools are going through difficult times that many people will never know about.

Speaking of his years at Lebanon High School, White said, "Throughout that time in my life, teammates, friends and classmates were walking through things I had no knowledge of."

White praised the work of Nunley and all the volunteers who made the facility a reality, as well as God. "Russell County, what a great God we have. You guys said 'yes' and God took off."

Russell County Family Services Supervisor for Foster Care Nick Williams stated, "I feel something that is rare in child welfare. I feel relief, hope and gratitude."

Williams added that Isaiah 117 House will offer compassion when it is needed most – when a child is taken away from their home and placed into foster care.

He said there are currently 62 children in the foster care system in Russell County. "Those numbers are not just statistics," Williams said. "They are faces, voices and stories we carry with us every single day."

Williams said he saw firsthand what an asset Isaiah 117 House can be on Oct. 9. A child was removed from their home and placed into the foster care system. Williams said Isaiah 117 House volunteers sprang into action. "They brought gifts, support, we had prayers and tears," Williams said.

SEE **ISAIAH 117 HOUSE** | 2A

Man objects to prayer at supervisors' meeting

By SHAWN STREET
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It is customary for the Russell County Board of Supervisors to begin its meetings with prayer. That tradition came under fire on August 3 when one individual voiced his disapproval.

Shortly after Chairman David Eaton called for the opening prayer and asked those praying to remember students, faculty and staff as they return to school, James Emmell announced he was offended.

"Excuse me, I do not consent to you using a religious tradition, practice or belief or anything else in a meeting involving my governance," he said.

"You are out of order right now," Eaton replied, again calling for the prayer to begin.

Emmell walked out of the meeting room and returned after the prayer had concluded.

The matter was brought up again by Emmell during the citizens' comments portion of the agenda.

Emmell said prayer was "inappropriate" and made him uncomfortable. "May I ask why you feel you have the authority to open a government meeting in a prayer?" he asked.

Eaton explained that the citizens' comments portion of the agenda was not a question and answer session and the board could not answer any questions put to it by any speaker regarding any issue during that time period.

Emmell wanted to know what gave the board the authority to open the meeting with prayer. The answer is, the United States Supreme Court.

In the landmark 1983 case Marsh v. Chambers, the Court ruled that the Nebraska Legislature's practice of opening meetings in prayer does not violate the United States Constitution's Establishment Clause.

The ruling stated that prayer before government meetings is "deeply embedded in the history and tradition of this country," dating back to the First Congress.

In 2014, the Court made a similar ruling in the case Town of Greece v. Galloway. In that case, Susan Galloway and Linda Stephens sued the town of Greece, New York. They claimed since the prayers were Christian, it violated their constitutional rights.

The Court ruled 5-4 that legislative prayer is rooted in American historical tradition and does not require prayers to be entirely nonsectarian, and it does not coerce public participation.

This means if the board elects to pray, they have the right to do so. Should someone object, they have the right to leave the room.

During his address to the board, Emmell said Christian prayer makes him as uncomfortable as an Islamic prayer would make Christians feel. He asked how the board would react if someone started a prayer of "Allahu Akbar."

SEE **MAN OBJECTS** | 2A

Drill trash site to close at end of September

By SHAWN STREET
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The trash drop-off site located in Drill will close at the end of September. That was the decision of the Russell County Board of Supervisors during the board's August 3 meeting.

The vote to close the site came after a letter was received from property owner Harvey Gent of Gent Royalty Partners. Gent informed the board that the rent has increased \$500 per month.

"Effective July 1, 2026, the monthly rental rate will increase from \$100.00 per month to \$600 per month," Gent wrote. "This adjustment reflects the continued use of the

property, and the value of providing a convenient location for this public service."

District 1 Supervisor Andrew Hensley suggested closing the site.

"That's a big jump," responded District 3's Tara Dye to the price increase. She expressed concern on what would happen to those who use the site. "If we close it, it will affect a lot of people really quickly. I don't think we can do that to the people."

Russell County Administrator Lonzo Lester reminded board members of a discussion that was held in June about a new site located in the Putnam area. "We are looking at Putnam," he said. Lester added that the Virginia Department of Transportation is currently looking at the drainage easement at the Putnam site. "Entrance and

sight distance is there," he added.

During a June meeting, Chairman David Eaton informed the board that he was working with a property owner to open a manned site in the Putnam area. Referring to Lester's report on VDOT activity on the property, Eaton added, "It shouldn't take long on the easement according to VDOT."

Lester said much of the trash currently held at Drill is "coming from another county."

"If we close it, we'll have to announce it in the Buchanan County paper," joked Hensley.

The board ultimately voted to close the site with the targeted date being September 30, 2026. The board also voted to pay the rate of \$600 per month until the site can be closed and the new site at Putnam opens.



OBITUARIES

Jack Lewis Blankenship

JACK LEWIS BLANKENSHIP, 98, passed away on Wednesday, August 5, 2026 at Johnston Memorial Hospital in Abingdon, VA.

Jack was a U.S. Army Veteran and served during the Korean War. He retired after thirty-two years of service from the Appalachian Power Company plant in Carbo.

He was a loyal member of Green Valley Baptist Church and loved singing in the church choir and with the Green Valley Boys Quartet. Throughout his lifetime, he was an active member of his community, always willing to serve others.

Jack enjoyed raising a garden, cutting wood, and spending time with his family. For those who knew him, Jack will be remembered as a man of God, a good storyteller with a sense of humor, and someone you could always rely on when you needed him.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Kelly Blankenship and Flora Campbell Blankenship; his wife of seventy-five years, Wilma Jean Blankenship whom he loved and cherished deeply; daughter, Janet Blankenship Hawkins; siblings, Lois Blankenship, Gains Blankenship, Phyllis Kennedy, and Jerry Blankenship; grandson,

Joshua Hawkins; great-granddaughter, Stella Blankenship; and nephew, Trevor Blankenship.

Survivors include his son, Ron Blankenship and wife Denise; sister, Sally Sutherland; grandchildren, Amanda Richardson and husband Jayson, Travis Blankenship and wife Erika, and Daniel Hawkins; son-in-law, Gene Hawkins; sister-in-law, Sandy Blankenship; and nine great-grandchildren. Several nieces and nephews also survive.

The funeral service was conducted at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, August 7, 2026 in the Combs-Hess Funeral and Cremation Service chapel with Pastor Justin Blankenship officiating. The family received friends from 6 p.m. until 7:30 p.m. at the funeral home. The committal service was conducted at 2 p.m. on Saturday, August 8, 2026 at Ketron Memorial Gardens. Those who attended met at the cemetery.

Expressions of sympathy may be made on the Combs-Hess Funeral & Cremation Service Facebook page and our website at www.chfunerals.com. Combs-Hess Funeral Service, 291 Highway 71 Fincastle Road, Lebanon, VA 24266, (276) 889-4444.

Donald Lee Holmes

DONALD LEE HOLMES, age 72, of Lebanon, Va. and formerly of Itasca, River Grove, and Chicago, Ill., passed away on Friday, July 31, 2026, at his residence. He was born October 1, 1953, to the late Thomas Holmes and Lois Jean Ray Holmes. He was an avid bowler; sometimes bowling five leagues a week with several 300 games at Stardust Bowl.

In addition to his parents, Donald was also preceded in death by his brother, Darrell Holmes.

He is survived by his wife of 38 years, Linda Marie Holmes; his twin brother, Tommy Holmes and wife, Sandy, of Arizona; additional brother, Norman Holmes and wife, Paula, of Florida; sister-in-law, Susan, and husband, Eric, of Illinois; two nieces, Rose and husband, Jin, of Virginia, and Iris, of Illinois; and nephew, Jake Holmes, of Florida.

The family of Donald Lee Holmes is being cared for by Perry Cremation & Funeral Alternatives, 1000 W. Main St., Abingdon, Va. 24210 (276) 776-5950.

ISAIAH 117 HOUSE

FROM PAGE 1A



A huge crowd was on hand to celebrate the opening of the Isaiah 117 House.

“They made that day special, not just for the foster family and for the child but for Russell County DSS.”

Also on hand were General Assembly members Senator Todd Pillion and Delegate Israel O’Quinn.

“Israel and I attend a lot of ribbon cuttings but it is a rarity that we can come

to a ribbon cutting that is one like this, that celebrates hope, healing and a brighter future for the children of our community,” Pillion said.

As Chairman of the Opioid Abatement Authority, Pillion said funding from the opioid settlement helped make the Lebanon

facility possible. “Because of the leadership and vision of this project, all Isaiah 117 Houses throughout the entire Commonwealth of Virginia will benefit from those funds as well,” he said.

O’Quinn said the house will make the transition so much smoother for chil-

dren who are in the lowest points of their young lives. Having been a supporter of the facility since its inception in 2024, O’Quinn said, “It is very heartwarming to watch this process.”

FLOCK CAMERAS

FROM PAGE 1A

In the FOIA response, Watson added, “The decision to terminate participation in the Flock Safety Camera Program was not made lightly. The program was evaluated based on its effectiveness, operational needs, and the interest in the community we serve. While the program could provide some beneficial information, [No change — text is inside a direct quotation] After weighing these factors, it was determined that terminating the program is in the best interests of the public we serve.”

MAN OBJECTS

FROM PAGE 1A

That too has been decided in federal court.

In 2005 the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit heard the case of Simpson v. Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors. Cynthia Simpson had sued the Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors because she had been excluded from opening the meetings with a Wiccan prayer.

The Court ruled that the Chesterfield board was not required to include Wicca or other traditions outside the scope of its nonsectarian Judeo-Christian oriented prayers.

Calendar of Events

SUPPORT GROUP FOR FEMALE SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

Women survivors of sexual assault are invited to attend regular support group meetings or individual support if they prefer. Survivors meet in a safe environment with other women who have had similar experiences. Clinch Valley Community Action, Inc. Family Crisis Services knows and understands what a survivor is going through. The fact that you are alive and reading this means that you are incredibly strong, courageous and intelligent. We are here to aid in the recovery process with individual support sessions. Please call and let us help. We are a confidential service. For information, call Ranetta Davis (276) 889-8206 or Haley Slade at (276) 988-5583.

SONS OF CONFEDERATE VETERANS MEETING

Sons of Confederate Veterans Capt. John F. McElhenry Camp 840 meets 4th Thursday each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Russell County Public Library, Lebanon, Va.

SINGING

There will be a singing on Aug. 14, 2026 at 7 p.m. at the Church of Jesus Christ on Stoots Street, Lebanon, Va. Featured singers will be Jimmy Hess, Sam & Wilma Deskins and the Spirit and Truth Singers. Everyone come out and worship with us.

HONAKER HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 1966 REUNION

The Honaker High School Class of 1966 will hold its 60th Reunion on Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026, at the Russell County Conference Center in Lebanon. Details about the time, as well as the cost per person will be forthcoming. Also, the Class of 1968 has asked to join us. It’ll be a great time for us to reconnect!

Contact Jim Baldwin for more information at the following: Phone/Text: 276-608-7186, Email: jimbaldwin2@outlook.com



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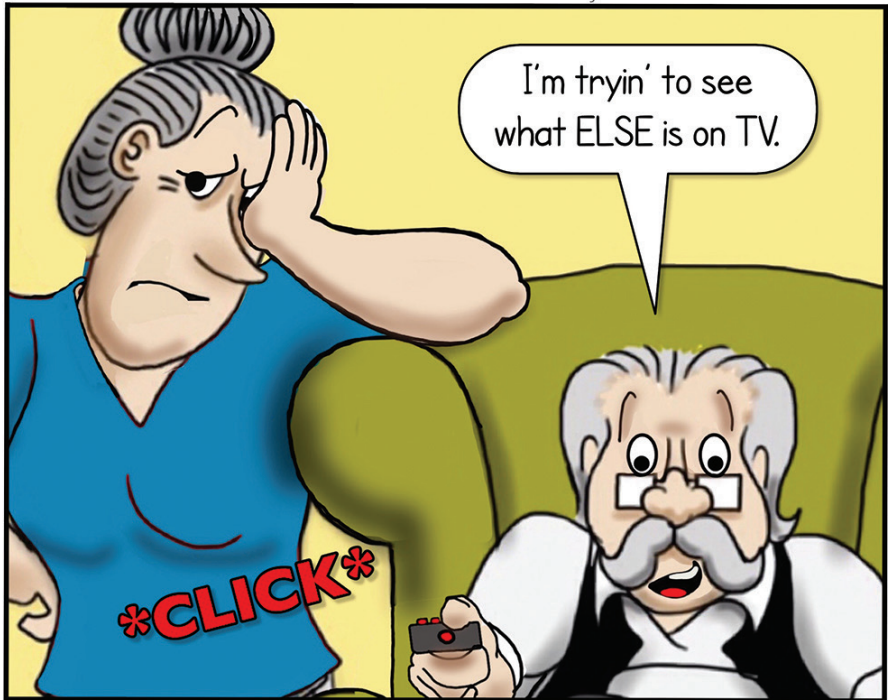
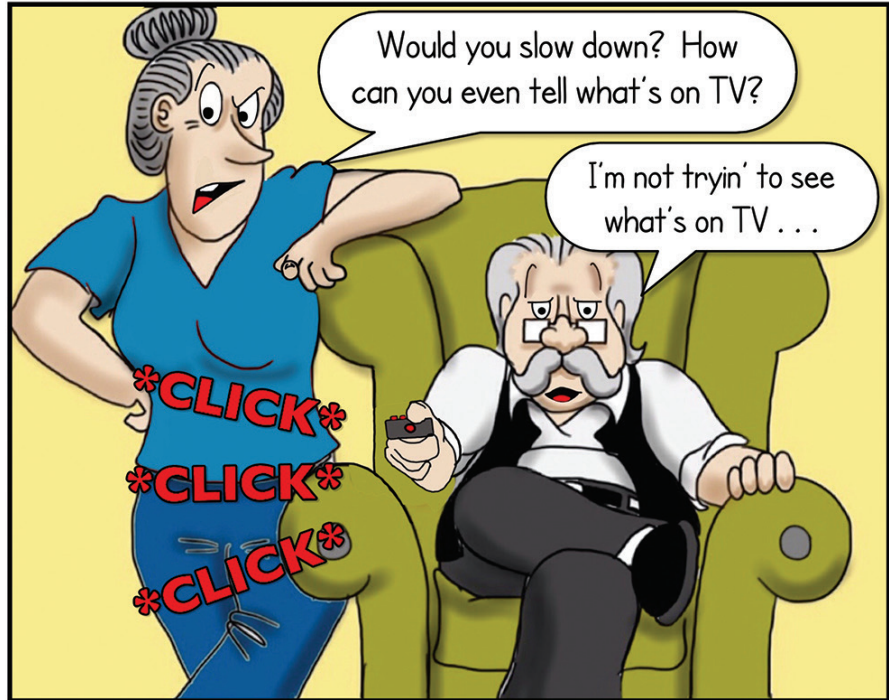
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By R.G. Holmes © 2026



Farmer wins Shining Star-Tourism Executive of the Year

By SHAWN STREET
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Shane Farmer, the director of The Russell Theatre, has won the Shining Star-Tourism Executive of the Year award. Farmer was honored as part of the Celebrate Tourism Summit at the Wytheville Meeting Center last week in Wytheville. The event was presented by Visit Wytheville, Virginia Tourism Corporation, and Friends of Southwest Virginia. During the convention, Friends of Southwest Virginia hosted the Southwest Virginia Tourism Awards Ceremony. The ceremony honored the exceptional work within the region's tourism industry. The awards were open to tourism organizations, individuals in tourism and economic development, and tourism-related businesses. They recognize the contributions to tourism marketing, visitor services, events and leadership. "These awards recognize the people and organizations who help make Southwest Virginia a welcoming place to live and visit," said Kim Davis, executive director of Friends of Southwest Virginia. "The partnerships across our region are what make this work possible, and we're proud to celebrate the individuals and communities that continue to invest in tourism and work together to move Southwest Virginia forward." More than 70 nominations were submitted. Winners were selected by a panel of tourism industry professionals from across the Southeast United States. Farmer's award marks the second straight year that the theatre and events in Lebanon have been honored. In 2025, Cedar Fest won the award for Outstanding Festival of the Year (2 or More Days, Less Than 10,000 Attendees). Also in 2025, The Russell Theatre tied with another business for Outstanding New Tourism Business of the Year. The other honoree was Squabble State Hard Cider and Spirits in Bristol.



Shane Farmer was named the Shining Star-Tourism Executive of the Year

Wallace mourns loss of Lily Mae Mabry of Dante

By SHAWN STREET
shawn@virginiamediainc.com



Near the conclusion of each meeting of the Russell County Board of Supervisors, board members are allowed time to address anything that was not included on the agenda. This is the board discussion portion of the agenda. On Aug. 3, District 2 Supervisor Lou Wallace used her time to mourn the passing of one of Dante's most well-known citizens, Lily Mae Mabry. "I'm very saddened to report tonight that Miss Lilly Mae Mabry, of Sawmill Holler, in Dante passed away," Wallace said. "She passed away on July 31. She was 101 years old." She added, "I want to send my condolences to my friends in Sawmill Holler and say Miss Lily Mae is being remembered tonight at this board meeting." To celebrate her 100th birthday, the board honored Mabry last year. The board's proclamation honored her "exemplary life and contributions to our community." Mabry was born in Wilder, Va., and moved to the Sawmill Hollow area of Dante at the age of eight. Her modest, three-room home was expanded over the years by her late husband, James H. Mabry. Wallace said their efforts in expanding the home while raising seven children was, "...a testament of their enduring legacy in the community." Mabry was a member of the Dante Lives on Board and her faith in God and work in her local church earned her the title of "Mother of the Church" at First Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Dante.

Family is Everything

ARE YOU A KINSHIP CAREGIVER?

The Kinship Navigator Program can help kinship families locate available community resources and help provide individual support to kinship families via telephone, on-line, support group or newsletters that can be emailed or mailed directly to their homes.

KINSHIP NAVIGATOR SUPPORT GROUPS

Join us for a beverage and snack as we support each other in parenting a new generation of children. There are informal monthly gatherings for kinship caregivers to meet and connect.

DICKENSON COUNTY
Every third Wednesday of each month from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Higher Education Building, Room 210, upstairs at 818 Happy Valley Drive, Clintwood, VA 24228.

.....

BUCHANAN COUNTY
Every second Wednesday of each month from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Buchanan County Library, 1185 Poe Town St., Grundy, VA 24614.

.....

CITY OF NORTON, LEE, SCOTT AND WISE COUNTY
Every third Thursday of each month starting at 11 a.m. at MEOC, 1501 3rd Ave. East, Big Stone Gap, VA 24219.

Dates are subject to change: Contact a Kinship Navigator or check our Facebook page for updated information.

KINSHIP NAVIGATOR PROGRAM

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1280 Browning Hollow Clintwood, VA 24228

Facebook "Kinship Navigator Program" <https://www.kinshipnavigator.com>

Scan our QR code to learn more!

WHAT IS THE KINSHIP NAVIGATOR PROGRAM?

About 2.5 million children are being raised by relatives or close family friends. In Virginia, more than 74,000 children are in Kinship Care.

The Kinship Navigator Program helps kinship caregivers connect with resources, services, and support to meet the needs of both the children they are raising and themselves.

Since launching in Virginia in 2018, the program has expanded across the Commonwealth to serve more families in need.

There is NO COST for this program.

HERE TO HELP YOU

The Kinship Navigator Program has 4 major areas of focus:

INFORMATION: Connects families with local, state, and federal services, community programs, and activities.

EDUCATION: Provides workshops and resources on parenting, child development, trauma, internet safety, discipline, and caregiver self-care.

CONNECTION TO RESOURCES: financial, legal, medical, educational, and community support services. **ADVOCACY** Offers personalized support through phone consultations and in-person visits.

"Families are the compass that guides us. They are the inspiration to reach greater heights, and our comfort when we occasionally falter."
— Brad Henry

THERE ARE MANY FACTORS THAT LEAD INTO KINSHIP CARE, INCLUDING:

- Parental Substance Use
- Illness and Death
- Extended Military Deployment
- Financial Hardship
- Incarceration
- Mental Health Issues of Parents

HERE ARE SOME RESOURCES THE KINSHIP NAVIGATOR PROGRAM CAN HELP DIRECT YOU TO:

- ✓ Physical/Dental Health Services
- ✓ Benefits (SNAP, Medicaid, Child Care, TANF, WIC)
- ✓ Housing
- ✓ School Information
- ✓ Transportation
- ✓ Urgent Funds (if eligible)

Congressman Griffith: What is an ombudsman?

The end of our schools' summer break means children return to school in Virginia's Ninth District.

A new school year represents new opportunity for students to develop friendships, connect with fellow classmates, recount family summer vacations and more. For some, it means changing to a new school.

Connections in school are important for a child's development. As the son of a schoolteacher, I like to stimulate classroom conversations by visiting schools and talking with students.

For my school visits this year, I went to Council High School in Buchanan County, Cornerstone Christian Academy in Washington County, Floyd County High School and Patrick County High School.

This May, I had the privilege to address the graduates of Thomas Walker High School in Lee County.

These settings are opportunities for me to engage our student populations and educate them on the duties of lawmakers.

As a Congressman, I share my experiences as a policymaker and as an ombudsman.

I clarify that my role as a policymaker focuses on matters of drafting legislation, committee debate discussing proposals, amendment recommendations and the final votes on bills.

But what is an ombudsman?

An ombudsman is one who interfaces with the federal government on behalf of others.

I act as an ombudsman for you on many occasions.

Thus, my office communicates with scores of federal agencies to address agency issues that constituents ask us about.

These issues vary by agency. But among the matters that demand our attention include passport requests and renewals, Internal Revenue Service (IRS) disputes and Social Security assistance.

In 2025, my office opened more than 1,175 constituent cases. Through this casework, we worked with more than 40 federal agencies.

There are multiple ways for us to open a case for you. An easy route is for you to give one of my district offices a



MORGAN GRIFFITH

WEEKLY REPORT FROM THE CAPITOL

phone call and speak with a representative in my office. Please refer to the end of this e-newsletter to access those phone numbers.

However, I recognize that you may prefer an in-person alternative.

Every month, my staff travels to all corners of Virginia's Ninth District, which happens to span more than 10,000 square miles.

You can view when my staff next visits your locality by checking on my website at <https://morgangriffith.house.gov/> or my Facebook page at Congressman Morgan Griffith.

These pages help people stay engaged on issues impacting my work in Congress and on behalf of the Ninth District.

My leadership on issues includes federal funding for Ninth District communities.

One program that I champion at the federal level is the Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization (AMLER) program. As the leading Virginia advocate, AMLER projects identify idle mine land property and explore potential improvements and site redevelopment.

In late 2025, I attended an AMLER check presentation to support a nearly \$2 million project in Buchanan County. This project will create the Southern Gap Office

Park Building, a commercial office space within Buchanan County's Regional Office Park. I left DC at 8:30 pm to make it to Grundy the next day because I considered the announcement so important.

AMLER delivers millions of federal dollars to our regions every year. With new projects set to be announced later this year, I will continue to fight for additional AMLER opportunities that benefit Virginia's Ninth District.

A second federal program targets brownfields, which are properties or sites whose redevelopment is complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Brownfields Program delivers various federal grants to clean up these polluted sites.

When I served as Environment Subcommittee Chairman earlier in the 119th Congress, I held a hearing to spotlight the EPA Brownfields Program. As part of this, I invited Duane Miller of Scott County, who serves as Executive Director of the LENOWISCO Planning District Commission, to testify.

Since then, the EPA Brownfields Program continues to deliver funds for local projects in our communities.

This June, the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission, Giles County and the City of Martinsville received EPA Brownfields grants.

I believe in serving the constituents of Virginia's Ninth District. Accordingly, my office remains ready to help you access the support, resources and opportunities you need from federal agencies.

Whether I am in the classroom or in a DC committee room, I will continue to remind people that you can always count on my voice and my office as a resource.

Further, if your local high school wants me to speak to students, please have them contact our office.

If you have questions, concerns, or comments, feel free to contact my office. You can call my Abingdon office at 276-525-1405 or my Christiansburg office at 540-381-5671. To reach my office via email, please visit my website at <https://morgangriffith.house.gov/>.

A Button, a Bride, and a Story Worth Keeping

It could have been my imagination, but I sensed fall in the air yesterday. Could it be that I can smell the autumnal change before it happens; or might it be that I am wishing for sweater weather with such a longing that I am already there in my mind? Whatever the cause, I felt my beloved season approaching. I marked the occasion with the purchase and consumption of an apple.

I had gotten up early in pursuit of yard sales, and by 10 o'clock I had purchased cast off pots and pans for the college girl who is leaving on Wednesday. I had also found a \$2 skirt that made me smile, and met some friendly people who wanted me to carry their castaway items home with me. Some I obliged, and some I thanked anyway.

My neighbor and I revel in these early morning jaunts. Most of the time these items are in the yard, sometimes they are nestled in a garage or basement; and occasionally someone is selling everything in a house for one reason or another. We stumbled upon an estate sale yesterday, and I have been thinking about the contents of that house ever since.

It is daunting to walk into someone's home and everything they owned and loved is for sale. Yesterday's house was the home of a war bride. That war was WWII, and this bride had come from England. Her taste in dishes and glassware was exquisite. Her love for collectible plates and intricate bird figurines was obvious. A gilded portrait of the Duchess of York, Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, hung in the dining room.

As I was admiring the picture and checking out the details, the granddaughter of the woman whose house was being sold told me her grandmother's story.

As old age often necessitates, this dear beloved grandmother's health had forced a move to a nursing home. There was no sound of relief in this granddaughter's voice. The decision had not been made lightly or joyfully.

We spoke about the ways that life sometimes deals us hard blows and unfathomable choices, and as we spoke this English war bride came to life for me. I went back through the house one last time, armed with more of the story. It made me sad.

As we were leaving the residence, the gentleman who was taking the money for purchases and monitoring jewelry sales told me that there was a war bride button for sale inside. I went back in and asked about it, and the



DEBBIE GIBSON

granddaughter pulled it from her pocket. It was no longer for sale. The pin, or button, showed the silhouettes of the United States and Europe with two airplanes crisscrossing the ocean; one coming, one going depending on where you had begun your journey. I would have happily paid the \$8 asking price. Actually, I would have paid much more than \$8 to have it, but I understand that treasures tucked away in pockets are not for sale. I did not even ask. I just admired the button and thanked her for sharing it with me.

After our return home, I spent some time looking for a similar button on the Internet. I found a treasure trove of books, pictures, love stories, tales of disappointment, and acute descriptions of homesickness. I was unable to find a replica of the button I had briefly held in my hand. It made me wish that I had taken a picture.

That tiny button was so symbolic. Two countries had become allies during a horrible war. Two strangers had found each other and allied themselves in love. Two cultures had kissed and blessed their union, and in the strangest synchronicity I found evidence of those things during an autumnal, bargain-hunting day in August.

The fruit of love is always evident, friends. The juice of a life well lived lingers long after we are gone, and the origins of where we are from can even be evidenced by strangers. I wish that I had that button, but much like its owner what I have are memories and stories. If I knew where she was, I would go and thank her for coming to the United States with her soldier husband. I would tell her how beautiful Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, the Duchess of York, was hanging on her dining room wall. I would also tell her that her war bride button was in safekeeping. It's tucked tightly in a granddaughter's pocket and is nestled in close proximity to the memories that reside in that granddaughter's heart.

Adult education connection



BEVERLY PRATER ASHBY

Leadership is not just reserved for managers, executives, or business owners. It is a skill that anyone can develop, regardless of age, career, or educational background. Adult education provides an excellent opportunity for learners to strengthen leadership abilities while gaining valuable knowledge and confidence that can positively impact both their personal and professional lives.

Many adults return to school with goals such as earning a diploma, learning new job skills, changing careers, or continuing their education. Along the way, they often discover that leadership skills naturally develop through the learning process. Every assignment completed, discussion participated in, and challenge overcome helps build qualities that strong leaders possess.

One of the first leadership skills developed in adult education is effective communication. Classroom discussions, presentations, and group activities encourage learners to express their ideas clearly while listening respectfully to others. These communication skills are essential in the workplace, where leaders must provide direction, solve problems, and collaborate with diverse teams.

Adult education also promotes critical thinking and decision-making. Learners are encouraged to analyze information, evaluate different perspectives, and make informed decisions.

Another important leadership quality fostered through adult education is confidence. Returning to school can be intimidating, especially for adults who have been away from the classroom for many years. Successfully completing courses, mastering new concepts, and achieving educational milestones demonstrate that growth is possible at any stage of life.

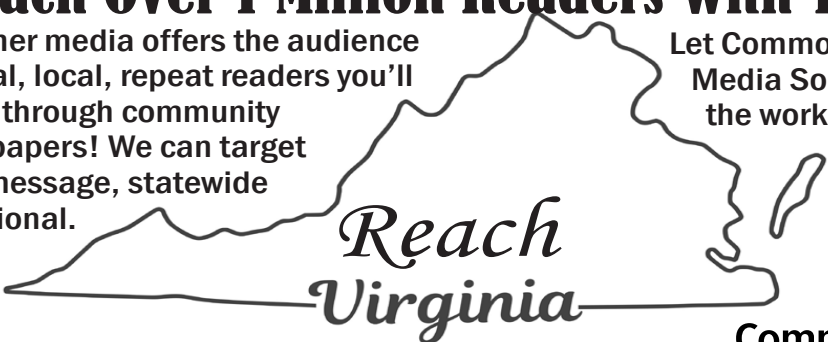
Leadership also requires adaptability. Adult learners frequently balance work, family responsibilities, and education, learning how to manage changing schedules and unexpected challenges. These experiences teach flexibility and resilience, which are qualities that help leaders remain calm and effective during times of change.

If you are interested in building your leadership skills through adult education, there are many opportunities available in our area. Please call Southwest Regional Adult Education at 276-889-5424 for more information.

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Hard Work and Generating Passive Income

Creating passive income is lingo that you probably have heard or thought about more than once. Generating an ongoing flow of cash that keeps coming is welcome by most of us. Seminars are often held by different entities explaining their technique for how to build a steady stream of income. All of us need money so it's usually a topic of interest.

Years ago, a friend influenced me to sign up for Amway. He was doing great things and lived well. I signed up. That lasted maybe a month or two. I didn't make any money from it but I admit I gave up quickly. Later, I was influenced by another friend to sign up for a telephone pyramid scheme.

Supposedly, people were making money. After about two months, I lost interest. On another occasion, I signed up to sell vitamins. On this occasion someone was reporting about how it helped people with multiple sclerosis. My wife was very sick from the disease and I was willing to buy or try anything that would help her. The vitamins did not help her and I gave up on the vitamin business.

The old adage that if it's too good to be true then it probably is, is accurate most of the time. Occasionally someone wins the lottery and occasionally someone is struck by lightning.



DR. GLENN
MOLLETTE

When I was 18 years old, I was working for a little country church. My only deacon, whose name was Harold Rice, said, "Glenn, we are going to enroll you in the annuity program operated by the Annuity Board of our Southern Baptist Convention."

Today, it's called Guide-stone. "We are going to put six dollars a month into your account," he said. That contribution probably occurred approximately 12 times. I moved on to college. About 13 or 14 years ago I remembered that and called to see if an account like that even existed. The account did and it had grown to \$30,000. I was shocked.

A year or so later I took the fund out and invested it into an index fund which at that time was Ameritrade and now Schwab. The account has grown to \$90,000. Yes, I am talking about over 50 years of growth. The dividends were reinvested every year. The dividends from that little fund today are an ongoing passive in-

come. The best way for you to develop passive income is to work a job and put some money into an Individual Retirement Account every year. I like a Roth IRA best because once you have paid tax on it and invest it into the Roth then it will generate income that you never have to pay tax on again.

At age 25, if you start putting \$5,000 in a Roth IRA every year until you are 60, your fund could easily total about \$1.2 million. At the young age of 60 that account could easily produce \$12,000 or more of income for you. This is really passive income. Then, you can keep working or play golf every day.

Nothing is free and easy but you don't have to make a huge sum of money to put \$5,000 a year into a Roth IRA. You may have to skip eating out some or pass on a few vacations. You might have to drive an old car longer and avoid credit card purchases. Any sacrifice you make will be worth it later in life.

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HELP US TO HELP YOU AND YOUR CHILD

As a parent, you are naturally curious about your child's growth and development. You may find yourself watching the child of a relative or neighbor to determine if your baby is talking when she "should" be or if your son is learning to read as well as other children his age can.

Children of all ages sometimes experience academic, behavioral, physical or health problems which make it difficult for them to learn age appropriate skills or have successful learning in a regular classroom. The Russell County Schools' Special Services Department wants to help you determine if your child may be in need of special education services. Please take a moment to ask yourself the following question, "Do I have a child who"

- "has difficulty talking and pronouncing words properly?"
- "has trouble seeing people and objects?"
- "has difficulty hearing sounds or remains unusually quiet for long periods of time?"
- "moves about with difficulty when crawling, walking or running?"
- "learns slowly or has difficulty understanding directions and assignments?"
- "has trouble playing with other children or getting along with adults and peers?"
- "continues to show reversals in reading and writing beyond age 9?"
- "has other special health problems or medical needs?"

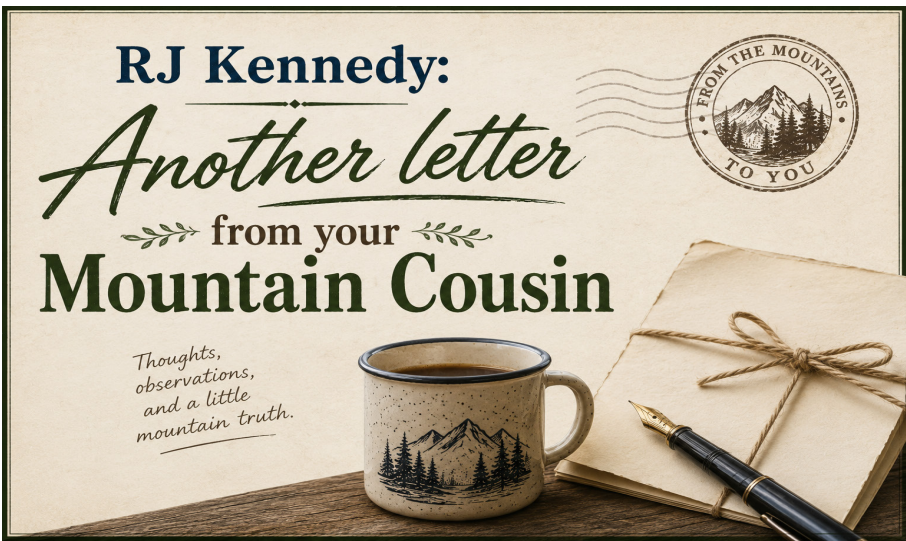
If you can answer "yes" to one or more of the above questions, your child may be in need of special help. Please call the Russell County Schools' Special Services Department at 276-889-6500 and let our staff assist you with your questions

The Russell County School System is committed to providing a free, appropriate public education for all children between the ages of two through twenty-one who have been identified as eligible for special education and/or related services. Special programs are offered for students identified as:

- Autistic
- Developmentally Delayed
- Learning Disabled
- Intellectually Disabled
- Multiple Disabilities
- Emotionally Disabled
- Visually Impaired
- Hearing Impaired
- Speech/Language Impaired
- Orthopedically Impaired
- Other Health Impaired

Services can be provided for students needing speech and language therapy. Physical therapy and/or occupational therapy may be provided as a related service.

As a parent, you must be able to recognize a child's needs in order for your child to develop his/her abilities. The earlier that learning, behavioral, physical problems or developmental delays are identified, the sooner a special education program can be developed to enable your child to learn skills to compensate for his/her disability. Again, we encourage you to contact us if you have any questions or concerns about your child.



Dear Cousin

You know sometimes cuz there are those folks in life that are just hard to deal with. Essie Summers called them "members of God's awkward squad." We have a saying "you can't fix stupid" cuz.

In addition, as Senator Kennedy says, you start out the day trying to live a good Christian life, but by lunch-time, you want to sack the ____ out of some people. Well that's how the past couple of weeks have been cuz.

You work hard, you break your back trying to make things nice for other people, and then the "entitled ones" whine and complain and want their own way, and want you to work harder. They wouldn't care if they ran the hard working people of America to death. They feel they deserve more with no working for anything, no paying for anything, they're like the devil, spoiled through and through.

The good folks of the good ole USA are tired of backing down. I'm seeing heroes popping up everywhere. They are no longer standing back waiting for someone else to do the job. They're wading in fist barred and guns blazing.

They're tired of this "entitled generation" of losers and namby pamby momma boys, robbing old folks and shooting innocent people and beating cops. They're stopping to help police, they're pulling their concealed carries and putting

druggies in headlocks and good old arm bars. They are holding them until police can cuff them. They're tripping those fleeing from cops and using their tractors and trailers to block in the crazies that are on the highways running from state police.

On the Fourth of July, there was an uprising of young people who went jogging clean across the USA with flags shouting their patriotic pride to all who will listen. People are sick and tired of dead beats and folks who put down America and ex-presidents who bow to foreign dictators or rulers. The shouts of USA rang aloud on the 4th of July as folks all over the country watched the air force fly over their parades and gatherings.

America is tired of wimpy boys who want to play girls sports because they want to run over little girls to make themselves "feel like a man" because they're too big a sissy to play against their own sex. God made them male and female, whiny boys are rebelling against God and their parents, SIN is their problem.

Now here on the farms, we have found that you can neuter a bull, ban him, and make him a steer, but he will never be a heifer cow, and he will never have a calf, and he'll never give milk (not that I've seen cuz). A rooster is a rooster, and he won't give eggs, and by the way, cuz, a nice family

came and got those three big boys the other day. Just because some of these boys are the runt of the litter, their still boys whether they like it or not. Better half had a steer he put on Mom and Dad's property once. They put him in with the heifers and lo and behold, he made a calf, only because the "job" was not done completely well. And that's just what the prison system is finding out, and they're putting the sissy boys (who said they identified as women) back into the men's prison as they were making babies in the women's prison, they were definitely men not girls.

Now back to the awkward squad, they need to remember Jesus said, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." If you don't want a ton of boulders dropped in your front yard, you had better not go trash someone else's hard worked for property.

This is the result of a generation that was not spanked in school or at home at times and shown pain comes from disobedience and disrespect of authority. This "you can't touch me generation" have a rude awakening ahead when God himself sends tribulation and judgment, and they're not stopping him!

Until next week, just try not to slap the silly people crazy cuz!

RJ Kennedy

PS: and to those wanting a kitten, the email is Colum-nistrjkennedy@gmail.com, got it wrong last week cuz



The Russell County School Board is already planning how to fund the next field turf replacement at Honaker.

School board seeks capital improvement account

By SHAWN STREET
shawn@virginiamediainc.com

The Russell County School Board hopes to create a capital improvement account for future projects.

During the August 4 meeting of the school board, District 3's J.J. Eaton said he would like to see such an account set up with the county's board of supervisors. Eaton said surrounding counties have such an account while Russell County does not.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kim Hooker pointed out that the account would be for all schools.

Eaton agreed that the account would be for all schools but he had a specific future project in mind.

He said the account would hold "any moneys that we may incur or the county may incur that would be put toward a turf field at Honaker High School in the future."

Eaton said, "I probably won't be here when that is, if this one lasts as long as the old one did. At least that board won't have the same issues we've had. We're just lucky we had that ESSER money come in, that reimbursement money, or we'd been in big trouble. We need to plan for this in the future."

The turf field recently installed at Honaker's football stadium was estimated to cost \$416,000. The new field replaces the former field that had been in place for 18 years.

In other action from the August 4 meeting, board members recognized members of the 2026 Virginia High School League baseball championship team, the Lebanon Pioneers.

Team members recognized included: Brady Cole, Brock Keen, Cannon Barton, Charlie Lawson, Dawson Rasnake, Ethan Horne, Isaac Godsey, Jacob Campbell, Jake Hilton, Lake Baldwin, Luke Garrett, Maddox Barton, Parker Cole, Sam Crabtree, Toby Baker, Head Coach - Cody Compton, and Assistant Coaches - Will Stamper, Wade Compton, Brandon Taylor, Paul Hess, and D.J. Hall.

The Teacher of the Year honor went to Wanda Gent, of Honaker Elementary School. Dustin Presley, also of Honaker Elementary School, was named the Employee of the Year.

Neither Gent nor Presley was able to attend the August meeting. They will be formally recognized during the September meeting of the school board.

Tenure was granted for Brittany Lovelace and Roy Sanders of Castlewood High School. Tenure was also granted to Honaker High School's Travis Shawn Matney.

Board members also voted to change the meeting time for monthly meetings. Executive session will get underway at 5 p.m. and the regular meeting will begin at 6 p.m.

The board will continue to meet on the first Tuesday of each month.



Kristiana Mullins: Kristanne Mullins and Aaron Jacobs opened K&A Customz, LLC to provide property rehabilitation and renovation through site clean-outs, debris haul-off and job site prep all aimed at getting vacant housing back on the market.

VCEDA grant approved for K&A Customz, LLC

Property rehabilitation, renovation through site clean-outs, debris haul-off and job site prep aimed at getting vacant housing back on the market are at the core of K&A Customz, LLC's activities according to Kristanne Mullins, who co-operates the business with her spouse, Aaron Jacobs.

K&A Customz, LLC is a recent recipient of a \$10,000 Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority Seed Capital Matching Grant. Seed capital grants are funded from regional funds received by VCEDA which are paid by the natural gas industry.

"K&A Customz, LLC operates as a construction-related trade business through a set of unique services designed to rehab property to help it to sell while at the same time salvaging, refurbishing and reintroducing usable materials recovered during property clean-outs," said Jonathan Belcher, VCEDA executive director/general counsel. "The business projects four full-time employees and four part-time employees within five years."

In addition to the clean-out side of the business, Mullins said they also take some items from the clean-outs to refurbish and then to re-sell at their 16610 Russell Street, Suite 4 location in St. Paul, VA (the former Piggly Wiggly building). Materials recovered during cleanouts and refurbished reduce construction debris and support property rehabilitation and use. The storefront is open Tuesday-Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Saturdays, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

"One of the benefits of our business to the community is opening up more housing availability, getting items out of the landfill and repurposing items," Mullins said. "We specialize in estate properties and homes that require clearing prior to listing on the real estate market."

Mullins said she and Jacobs came up with the idea for the business after assisting family members with a large estate cleanup where the previous owners had accumulated a significant number of belongings over many years, creating what she said was an overwhelming situation for the family responsible for preparing the home for sale.



Dr. Mackenza Harris: Dr. Mackenza Harris works with students at the ACP summer pharmacy camp held at the SWVA Higher Education Center in Abingdon.

Students participate in ACP summer camp experiences

Middle school, high school and college students from across the region took part in three recent summer camp experiences offered by the Appalachian College of Pharmacy as part of an expanded effort to reach students interested in learning more about a career in pharmacy.

Those attending had the opportunity to learn more about the profession of pharmacy through hands-on activities supervised by ACP faculty members and at the same time had the opportunity to experience what it is like to be a college of pharmacy student.

The three camps were held on the ACP campus at Oakwood; at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center in Abingdon, Va.; and at the Roanoke Higher Education Center in Roanoke, Va.

Students taking part in the free camps learned from ACP faculty members who are experts in their fields. Hands-on activities included conducting patient assessment techniques; discovering pharmacy compounding techniques; practicing pharmacotherapy on a human simulator; hearing from ACP students about their

pharmacy school experience; and attending an admissions workshop session. Those attending the camp at ACP's Oakwood location also toured the ACP campus.

"This was a unique opportunity for students to learn a little more about the college of pharmacy and through a series of interactive events, to learn a little more about what the profession of pharmacy is all about," said ACP provost and dean Susan Mayhew. "We were pleased to have the summer camp students on our campus and to have the opportunity to interact with students in our camps held in Abingdon and in Roanoke."

"Sharing information about our school and advancing the profession of pharmacy is always a worthwhile experience," said ACP director of admissions Jason McGlothlin. "We hope the participants gained valuable knowledge about career opportunities in the field."

Both Mayhew and McGlothlin expressed their appreciation to faculty members and staff for taking the time to assist with the summer camp programming.

Mullins said she and Jacobs came up with the idea for the business after assisting family members with a large estate cleanup where the previous owners had accumulated a significant number of belongings over many years, creating what she said was an overwhelming situation for the family responsible for preparing the home for sale.

"During this experience, we recognized two key challenges many families face – the emotional difficulty of sorting through personal belongings and the time constraints faced by family members who often live outside the area," Mullins said. "These barriers frequently delay homes from entering the real estate market for sale or lease."

She added, "K&A Customz provides a compassionate and efficient solution by contracting with estates and property owners to clear homes, transport items and prepare properties for listing. Items removed from homes, are sorted and those which can be refurbished or repurposed are transported to our thrift store for resale."

To date, K&A Customz, based in Dante, VA has provided services as far as Bluefield, VA. As the business grows, Mullins said plans are to add more cleanup crews to increase service coverage though the region and surrounding regions.

Mullins said the VCEDA grant is being used to develop a website to enable service bookings online, toward the purchase of a road tractor to be able to transport larger quantities of materials and debris in support of renovation and construction workflows and for operating expenses.

"The VCEDA grant is blessing," Mullins said. "It will allow us to provide good quality service to the community."

Mullins and Jacobs worked with the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Mountain Empire Community College (MECC) in developing their application to VCEDA. They received a letter of support from the Wise County Industrial Development Authority.

"K & A Customz is addressing multiple needs within our region through services that benefit both the community and the local economy," said Becki O'Quinn-Purdie, SBDC executive director at MECC. "Their clean-out services help families, heirs, landlords, and property owners prepare homes for sale, renovation, or reuse -- an important contribution in an area where housing availability remains a challenge. At the same time, their thrift store gives new life to quality items that might otherwise be discarded, offering affordable merchandise to residents while promoting reuse and reducing waste."

"MECC SBDC enjoyed working alongside K & A Customz throughout the grant process and this VCEDA Seed Capital award will help them continue making a meaningful difference in our communities," she added.

"The services provided by K&A Customz provide a much-needed addition to St. Paul and the surrounding communities," said Wise County IDA Executive Director Brian Falin. "By supporting property rehabilitation and renovation, K&A is well positioned to make a positive impact on both housing turnover and availability as well as contributing to the overall appearance and viability of the community through site cleanouts and debris haul-off. The Wise County IDA is proud to have supported this application and looks forward to seeing the company's positive community impacts."

For more information about K&A Customz, interested persons may visit or message their Facebook page or call 276-298-6899 or 276-344-8639.

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First Phase of VHSL Realignment Begins

By ANTHONY STEVENS
anthony@virginiamediainc.com

The Virginia High School League released its initial plans for the next realignment cycle last week. As reported in the July 29 edition of the Lebanon News, Lebanon will move from Class 2 to Class 1, where the Pioneers will join Castlewood and Honaker. The plan would take effect next fall, during the 2027-28 school year, and last through the 2030-31 school year. Schools had until Monday (Aug. 10) to appeal their placements to the VHSL, while opposition appeals must be submitted by next Monday (Aug. 17). In the current VHSL plan, Lebanon remains in the Southwest District, though it

would participate in Class 1 in the postseason, similar to Class 3 Abingdon, which plays its regular season in the Mountain 7 District. The Pioneers have appealed to be moved to the Hogoheegee District. That appeal could be approved, or they could be moved to the Cumberland District or remain in the Southwest District. Final appeals are scheduled for August 25, after which a final plan will be proposed to the VHSL's Executive Committee. The final determination will be approved in the VHSL September meeting, enrollment at 307 Grayson County (344) is the smallest Class 2 school, followed by Graham (345), Marion (352), and Tazewell (359), which are also on the lower end. It is possible some or all of these schools might petition to move to a lower classification.



Brunner Houchins (62) and the Castlewood defense work on the line of scrimmage to stop a Phelps ball carrier. Natasha Mullins | For the Lebanon News

Q&A with new Castlewood head football coach Cody Smith

By ANTHONY STEVENS
anthony@virginiamediainc.com

This is the second of our three-part series with Russell County football coaches. Cody Smith was named the head coach at Castlewood, among the many changes. Lebanon News Sportswriter Anthony Stevens spoke with Smith recently about the upcoming football season.

Q: A young man from Castlewood, taking over the Blue Devil football program. You're just getting started. How have the first few days of official practice gone?

A: It's been a lot of mental challenges. The team hasn't won in four or five years. It's really gone downhill over the last few years. It's the mental challenges—a lot of them. It's a team that hasn't really won much. So changing the mentality and the culture has been the key. I feel like we've got a little more umph and a little more pep in our step now. And the simplicity—going back to fundamental football.

Q: What was the biggest surprise you encountered?

A: How well the kids have taken to everything. Like, the football IQ has come up a little bit. And we've been able to go out, run our practices, and complete the steps in our practices. And just how excited the kids are. That's been my biggest surprise.

Q: Who will be on your staff as assistant coaches this fall as you work to turn things around?

A: I've got Jonah McMican, Steve Justice, Mckinley Dale, Kenny Hamm, Brandon Coffey, and Aaron Woods. I brought in Matt Jordan and Ryan McCall. Also T.J. Hall, Ethan Whitt, and Trey Hamm. These guys have been around this type of football, the type of offense we're running. We don't have to teach each other anything. We're all in with this offense, so everybody's on the same page. It makes it simple.

Q: The number of kids participating in football has often been a problem. How many do you have this fall?

A: Right now, we've got 25. When school starts, a few may trickle in. During my freshman year here, in Matthew Saunders' first year, we had 17 players. During my senior year, which was David Scammels' first year, we had 19 players. So it's always been a numbers game here. It really has. We're gonna play—I've been there. We've all had that type of sit-

uation.

Q: Who will you expect big contributions from?

A: Brunner Houchins. He's put in the work this summer. He's got some colleges looking at him. Jacob Farmer. He had 888 rushing yards from quarterback last year. So I've got him in the backfield. Hunter Hileman and Austin Burke—they're all gonna contribute to the run game. My line—Austin Hayes, Tavi Gomez, Grayson Gomez, Dylan King, Brady Hall—I mean, I can keep naming them, but they're all athletes.

Q: You've mentioned before you want to run the football. Who are you looking to be 'packing the mail'?

A: Jacob Farmer's gonna get a bulk of the load. My fullbacks are pretty stout and have good vision. Jacob Farmer and Braden Stone—I think they're gonna do well.

Q: You graduated from Castlewood and are familiar with Cumberland District football. It's known for being extremely tough. What do you anticipate?

A: We're in one of the toughest districts, in my opinion, in Class 1 football. You've got Rye Cove and

Eastside. That's a state runner-up, and both were in the regional finals, too. It's tough. It ain't sunshine and rainbows, let's put it that way. J.I. Burton's gonna always be tough. Thomas Walker, Twin Springs—they've got a new coach down there. So we'll see how all that unravels. But I feel like we can compete. We're not just competing by quarters or trying to win quarters. We're trying to win downs. That's our goal—to win downs.

Q: Finally, a season isn't solely about wins and losses. What is the main goal you aim to achieve in your first year?

A: You can't really go any lower, so it's all up from here. These guys have been working hard to get on a positive note, and we're working to shift that mentality and change the culture here so we have something to build on. We're really focusing on our youth program—stuff like that. That's the future. We can't really look at the first two or three years. We gotta look at the next five to ten years.

Next week, Honaker head coach Aaron Lowe will wrap up our chats with Russell County football coaches.



Austin Hayes (75) battles for the Blue Devils last season. Natasha Mullins | For the Lebanon News

Exodus continues at Castlewood

By ANTHONY STEVENS
anthony@virginiamediainc.com

CASTLEWOOD, Va. – Head baseball coach Hunter Neece recently submitted his resignation. The Blue Devils will have a new football coach (Cody Smith), basketball coach (Barry Ruff), and a new baseball coach to be named. There is also a new athletic director (Ruff), and outdoor track, indoor track, JV baseball, and JV basketball coaches to be named.

Neece took over the program before the first game of the 2023 season. He compiled a 46–33 record in his four years at the helm. Powerhouse Chilhowie ended Castlewood's season three times in regional play.

Blue Devil baseball never posted a losing record under Neece's tenure.



Coach Hunter Neece talks with his team at Eastside last season. April Glover | For the Lebanon News



Virginia moves toward regulating self-driving vehicles amid safety and liability concerns

Work group expected to issue final report to the General Assembly no later than Nov. 1.

BY NATHANIEL CLINE
Virginia Mercury

Virginia is closer to regulating self-driving vehicles, which have steadily increased nationwide despite continued concerns over safety.

Despite crashes that have led to restrictions in some areas, other states, such as Arizona and Texas, have continued to permit testing and deployment. With interest in the technology growing in Virginia, lawmakers are trying to get ahead of some of the issues that have arisen.

Last year, Virginia leaders signed off on a plan to bring transportation officials, law enforcement, state lawmakers, and various experts together in a work group to consider rules around the use of autonomous vehicles, such as safety, liability, privacy and cybersecurity, and operational rules.

Much of the time at the group's July 24 meeting focused on maintaining a consistent, statewide approach to permitting and operations, warning against a fragmented regulatory environment, often referred to as "balkanization," where individual localities might create conflicting rules for AV companies.

"I think we pride ourselves in having a very uniform Department of Transportation across the entire commonwealth and so, therefore, with the exception of maybe Dulles and DCA, I don't think that we want to go down the path of allowing localities to determine where, when, or how autonomous vehicles are going to be used,"

Del. David Reid, D-Loudoun, said at the meeting. He added, "We need to kind of adhere to what we have proven already works and not try to have 133 different thoughts and jurisdictions about how we are going to implement autonomous vehicles."

Virginia's participation in the AV market is of interest to the public because some advocates have said the technology can make transportation more affordable and provide more access. Experts are still studying the safety, traffic, and labor implications of AVs.

Safety

Work group staff and consultants recommended a multi-stage regulatory framework and permitting process to evaluate the safety of autonomous vehicles before and during their operation on Virginia's public roads.

Staff recommended that legislation should focus on two levels of automation: conditional and high automation. Conditional automation is when a human driver is required to take over driving if the system can no longer operate, and high automation is when a human driver is not needed since the system is fully responsible for driving.

The work group also recommended limiting permits to commercial AVs, giving time for further testing and deployment of commercial vehicles before personal vehicles are authorized for permitting.

Liability

Right behind safety is liability, especially during crashes. Staff said the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles should have the authority to deny, suspend or revoke permits for violations or if operations pose a public danger.

Two options the work group will consider are proof of coverage with options for standard or higher pilot-phase insurance limits. The standard limit is \$50,000 per person, \$100,000 per incident for all bodily injuries and \$25,000 property damage. If the self-driving vehicle is being used as a for-hire vehicle, it may need up to \$5 million in insurance coverage.

Privacy and cybersecurity

Virginia will also have to consider measures to protect privacy and cybersecurity, because AVs depend on large amounts of data and digital systems to operate and make safety-critical decisions.

Staff said Virginia could enact new privacy provisions in addition to its Virginia Consumer Data Protection Act, which gives consumers more privacy and control over their digital information like location, driving and passenger information.

Staff said the law seems to apply, but is limited to companies that collect personal information from 100,000 or more Virginia residents in a year, or 25,000 or more Virginia residents in a year and make more than half of their revenue from selling personal data.

Operational rules

Virginia lawmakers will also decide when and where the commonwealth will allow self-driving vehicles to operate as part of the regulation development process.

Staff recommended lawmakers avoid introducing new types of permits and certificates. Instead, they said establish general rules for all businesses that use AVs so the regulatory framework stays workable.

This keeps the process simple, avoiding unnecessary steps and saving time and paperwork for both the AV industry and the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Currently, the DMV issues permits and certificates to different types of businesses that transport passengers or property for hire, like household moving companies. The DMV does not regulate food and personal delivery transportation.

Bradley Calhoun, founder of disability service provider Ember Initiatives, was the only speaker at the July work session. He urged the working group to incorporate accessibility planning at the beginning of the design process, saying existing transportation often creates barriers for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, such as restricted destinations and unreliable pickup windows.

"I respectfully ask the work group to include people with intellectual disabilities, developmental disabilities, sensory communication, physical disabilities, and the providers who support them in Virginia's pilot permitting accessibility and data reporting discussions," Calhoun said last month. "This technology should expand independence while creating and strengthening human support roles, not simply eliminating them."

The workgroup is expected to issue a final report to the General Assembly no later than Nov. 1.

Virginia's disability services gap persists despite progress, leaves young adults vulnerable

State has met 86% of DOJ's requirements in settlement over ADA compliance

By NATHANIEL CLINE
Virginia Mercury

Medicaid waiver slots have increased in Virginia, expanding services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities who have lost school-based special education services.

Even so, thousands of disabled Virginians are still waiting, because demand continues to outpace available slots.

When people with certain disabilities graduate or reach age 22, they face a "services cliff," as they lose school support but do not automatically transfer to adult services like in-home supports, personal care, respite for caregivers, or job coaching. Waivers help them live more independently at home and in communities instead of institutions.

On Monday, advocates highlighted the issue at a summit sponsored by Specially Adapted Resource Centers (SPARC) at George Washington University, focused on advancing inclusion for adults with disabilities who have significant support needs.

There, parents said supervised opportunities can disappear and be replaced by low-quality, unsafe adult programs once their children age out.

"My daughter was attacked ... her arm was broken," said Mark Coles, a Fairfax County father to a daughter who needs one-on-one support.

In another case, Coles said his daughter was left at a bus stop by the company assuming she would get home.

"That was the last day of her employment with that organization," he said.

Eventually, Coles said his family found SPARC, a "safety net" offering social connection, life skills and community outings to disabled people. Still, they are seeking integrated employment support, reflecting how challenging it is for these Virginia families to find services and work opportunities.

For nearly 18 years, Virginia has worked to address the services cliff, after an investigation and settlement with the U.S. Department of Justice. The federal agency and court relaxed oversight as the state made progress.

Judge John Gibney, Jr. and DOJ counsel Kyle Smiddie acknowledged Virginia has made strides to address the services gap but noted substantial work remains, according to a Jan. 15, 2025 hearing transcript.

"What the commonwealth did, and what the consent decree has done, is to reverse a battleship and turn it around so it is going in a different direction," Gibney said.

He later added that, "(The commonwealth) still has some shortages in terms of hiring or getting people to perform services for families with disabled people."

The services cliff

Hannah Irsfeld, SPARC board vice president, said when students with disabilities age out of school, they have no guaranteed right to equivalent community or social programs as under IDEA.

Families can wait years, and unless they have private resources, may have to leave work, pay for support for their adult child themselves, or risk their young adult becoming isolated.

She said the biggest problem is that Medicaid was designed to pay for medical care, not for social integration.

"The cliff is falling into an (adult) system that wasn't designed to meet the social needs of the very population it is attempting to help," Irsfeld said, "not because anybody's trying to be mean or trying to screw it up, but because it just wasn't set up for that; that was an off-shoot."

Background: Virginia's federal ADA investigation and settlement

In 2008, Virginia was investigated by the DOJ for its compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Olmsted decision. Both laws protect the rights of people with disabilities to live, work and participate in their communities — and prevent them from being unnecessarily separated or excluded because of their disabilities.

Then in 2011, the DOJ found that the commonwealth kept too many people with intellectual or developmental disabilities in institutions when many could have lived in regular community settings with the right support, as required by disability rights law.

A year later, Virginia settled on an agreement that, in part, required the commonwealth to meet certain obligations, including addressing the services cliff and helping more disabled people transition to adult services in the commonwealth.

Where the state stands now

State data show Virginia closed four of five state-run training centers for adults with disabilities and shifted to community-based services. One center in Chesapeake remains open, downsized and redesigned for those needing intensive support.

In addition, Virginia funded 1,720 new Medicaid waiver slots in fiscal year 2025 and 1,720 in fiscal year 2026, dropping the number of people on the waiting list from about 15,500 to 14,300 as of November 2025, according to data collected by the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services.

Virginia has met about 86% of its 2012 settlement requirements, as of 2024.

In January 2025, the Justice Department and Virginia agreed to end the consent decree, replacing it with a narrower injunction after substantial progress. Some requirements, like crisis services and dental care, remain unmet.

A June consultant report found Virginia achieved compliance with four more conditions of the agreement and sustained compliance with two others, but 10 terms remain "not achieved" and 10 "deferred."

The report said the commonwealth deserves "commendation for its considerable efforts," but added "more work remains until the commonwealth can accomplish its unachieved goals."

Local leaders — including Fairfax County Supervisor Walter Alcorn, who represents one of the wealthiest counties in Virginia — said the services cliff impacts the entire state. Alcorn said the issue is pervasive and remains unresolved.

"We all have these needs, and they have not been fully addressed anywhere in the commonwealth — or, as far as I'm aware, anywhere in the country," Alcorn said. "This is a new frontier for inclusion and for conversations about inclusion. Much of this work hasn't happened, in large part because of the potential costs involved."

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Kaine pitches reforms for drug pricing program supporting underserved patients, safety net providers

Bill would prescribe new annual reporting requirements for 340B participants and give the Department of Health and Human Services auditing authority

By **CHARLOTTE RENE WOODS**
Virginia Mercury

After years of bipartisan deliberation, U.S. Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., has introduced legislation to strengthen and protect a federal drug pricing program.

Known as 340B, the program has helped Virginia hospitals and clinics and others nationwide care for underserved patients by requiring pharmaceutical companies offer prescription discounts to qualifying providers.

By purchasing drugs at steep discounts while charging insurers full prices, participants are meant to pocket the difference, which helps providers stretch their dollars and invest in additional clinics, staff or programming.

But some hospital chains were caught taking advantage of the program to shortchange patients, and state and federal lawmakers have spent years weighing potential reforms.

To strengthen the program, Kaine's new bill would prescribe new annual reporting requirements for participants and give the Department of Health and Human Services auditing authority.

HHS would also be authorized to remove noncompliant entities who do not implement corrective action plans.

A pillar of the bill, Kaine said, is protecting up-front discounts for participating providers rather than the rebate model some of his colleagues and President Donald Trump have favored.

While larger hospital chains that utilize 340B may have the cash flow to manage a rebate model, smaller entities that primarily serve low-income or uninsured patients are "not providers that tend to have bank accounts with money sitting around unused," Kaine explained.

"If you require them to pay fully up front and then get a rebate sometime down the road, you really jeopardize their operations," he said.

Earlier this summer, outgoing Louisiana Sen. Bill Cassidy, a Republican, introduced a model policy that diverges slightly from Kaine's proposal and would implement a rebate model.

The question of whether 340B's growth should be scaled back is another key part of the debate.

To qualify for 340B and increase the scope of the program in their operations, hospitals sometimes partner with contract pharmacies to improve access for patients or purchase outside clinics, branding them "child sites."

Kaine's bill would put "reasonable limitations" on contract pharmacies without specifically capping how many of them hospitals can have. It would also subject health systems with large numbers of such pharmacies to audits.

Additionally, the bill offers guidance for child sites by requiring they be wholly owned and integrated into the parent system. HHS would have registration and oversight procedures.

The move is meant to disincentivize hospitals from purchasing child sites solely to expand their 340B foot-



print to increase savings.

Federally Qualified Health Centers and clinics have long been subject to reporting requirements to ensure their 340B savings are being utilized properly, but hospitals haven't.

Health systems' inflated participation in the program over the years "led to this odd situation where they had less requirements," Kaine said.

If it becomes law, his bill would also establish a clearinghouse operated by a third-party entity to catch and prevent duplicate discounts or diversion discounts, when discounted 340B drugs are routed to ineligible patients for entities to try to glean additional savings.

"I think we've really tried to grapple with the two big issues," Kaine said, naming cost growth and misuse of the program as the biggest challenges the legislation seeks to address. "We've done it in a way to preserve the core intent of what 340B is."

Kaine's cosponsors on the legislation include Republicans Jerry Moran from Kansas, Shelley Moore Capito from West Virginia and John Boozman from Arkansas. Democrats Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin and John Hickenlooper of Colorado are also joint sponsors.

Congress tackling the measure before the end of the

year could be a legislative win for both parties and the president, Kaine said. But even if the bill doesn't advance quickly, he said the lawmakers pressing for its passage "aren't going anywhere."

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The Cumberland Plateau Company is seeking qualified individuals or firms for the provision of janitorial and cleaning services for offices located at 224 Clydesway Drive, Lebanon, Virginia. To obtain a copy of the requested Scope of Services, contact the Cumberland Plateau Company between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. 276-889-1778. Submission Deadline: August 25, 2026 at 2:00 p.m. Proposals received after 2:00 p.m. on that date will be considered late and not acceptable. The Cumberland Plateau Company is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Anyone with questions or wishing to make an appointment to view the building may contact Kelly O'Quinn at 276-889-1778. LN-8-12,16;2026

TRUSTEE'S SALE 6002 Mew Rd Castlewood, VA 24224

In execution of the Deed of Trust dated March 20, 2023 and recorded on March 20, 2023 in Instrument # 230000393 of Russell County land records, Trustee Services of Virginia, LLC, the appointed Substitute Trustee, will offer for sale at public auction at the front of the Courthouse of the Circuit Court for Russell County, 53 East Main Street, Lebanon, Virginia on September 14, 2026 at 11:00 AM the property more particularly described in the aforementioned Deed of Trust, located at the property address listed below and briefly identified as follows: All that certain lot or parcel of land, with all the appurtenances thereto belonging, being the northwest portion of Lot No. 24 in the subdivision of the John S. Miller Farm, which said portion fronts on Secondary Highway No. 66 a distance of 86 feet and runs back a depth or distance of 200 feet, as more fully shown on that certain map of the Subdivision of the John S. Miller Farm of record in Deed Book 179, page 290, of the Clerk's Office of the Circuit Court of Russell County, Virginia. And being that same property conveyed unto Paul Michael Dylan Mullins and Alexis Jade Mullins by Deed dated March 20, 2023 recorded in the Russell County Circuit Court Clerk's Office as Instrument Number 230000392. Tax No.: 156L E 3510 Property address: 6002 Mew Rd, Castlewood, VA 24224 The property will be sold "AS IS," WITHOUT REPRESENTATION OR WARRANTY OF ANY KIND AND SUBJECT TO conditions, covenants, restrictions, reservations, easements, rights of way, and all other matters of record taking priority over the Deed of Trust, if any. Pursuant to Code of Virginia § 55.1-321(A2), if the property is being sold subject to another priority security instrument(s), purchaser must certify that purchaser shall pay off any priority security instrument(s) no later than 90 days from the date the trustee's deed conveying the property being sold is recorded in the land records. TERMS OF SALE: A non-refundable bidder's deposit of \$15,000.00 or 10% of the sale price, whichever is less, by cashier's or certified check required at time of sale, except for the party secured by the Deed of Trust. Risk of loss is on the purchaser from date and time of auction. Balance of the purchase price must be paid by cashier's check within 14 days from sale date. Except for Virginia Grantor tax, all settlement costs and expenses are purchaser's responsibility. Taxes are pro-rated to the date of sale. Purchaser is responsible for obtaining possession of the property. If purchaser defaults, deposit may be forfeited and property resold at the risk and cost of the defaulting purchaser who shall be liable for any deficiency in the purchase price and all costs, expenses, and attorney's fees of both sales. If Trustee does not convey title for any reason, purchaser's sole remedy is return of deposit without interest. This sale is subject to post-sale audit of the status of the loan secured by the Deed of Trust including but not limited to determining whether prior to sale a forbearance, repayment, or other agreement was entered into, the loan was reinstated or paid off, or whether the property became subject to an automatic stay under the U.S. Bankruptcy Code prior to the sale; in any such event this sale shall be null and void and purchaser's sole remedy shall be return of deposit without interest. Pursuant to the Federal Fair Debt Collections Practices Act, this law firm is a debt collector attempting to collect a debt and any information obtained will be used for that purpose. (26-01769) FOR INFORMATION CONTACT: BROCK & SCOTT, PLLC (Attorney for TRUSTEE SERVICES OF VIRGINIA, LLC) 484 Viking Drive, Suite 203 Virginia Beach, VA 23452 (757)213-2959 LN-9-12,19;2026

PUBLIC NOTICE APPLICATION FOR RENEWAL OF NPDES PERMIT NO. 1301786/0081786 UNDER CHAPTER 19, TITLE 45.2 OF THE CODE OF VIRGINIA PUBLICATION NUMBER: 04RSY26 APPLICATION NUMBER 1011934

Harold Keene Coal Company of P.O. Box 189, Lackey, KY 41643, is applying for the Renewal of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) of Dock No.2 concerning Permit No. 1301786/0081786 located in Russell County 0.25 miles E of Swords Creek on the Clinch River, on the 7.5 minute quadrangle of Honaker, at Northing of 3,554,926.92 and Easting 10,487,035.71 as provided by 4 VAC 25-130-774.17 of the Virginia Coal Surface Mining Reclamation Regulations. The existing discharge points for this operation are outfalls 001 and 002, discharging into the Clinch River. All are located within the facility. No new discharge points are being added in this renewal. The discharge points may be seen on the Renewal Map in Sections 21.2 and 21.5. Any person with a valid legal interest which might be adversely affected by this proposal, or an officer or head of any federal, state or local government agency or authority, may within 30 days of (August 12,2026) submit written comments or objections concerning this application, and may also request, in writing, that the Mined Land Repurposing Program hold an Informal Conference concerning this application. A copy of the application materials is available electronically for public inspection at https://www.energy.virginia.gov/dmrlinquiry/frm-Main.aspx?ctl=4. All correspondence concerning this application should be submitted to the Mined Land Repurposing Program (Attention: Permit Section), 3405 Mountain Empire Road, Big Stone Gap, Virginia 24219. Telephone (276) 523-8160. Written comments and a request for informal conference may be e-mailed to the Division at repurposingpublicnotice@energy.virginia.gov. LN-08-12;2026

VIRGINIA: IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE COUNTY OF RUSSELL COUNTY OF RUSSELL, VIRGINIA, a Political Subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Complainant, v. T M MULLEN, ET AL. Case No. CL26-683 ORDER OF PUBLICATION

The object of this suit is to enforce the lien of the Complainant, County of Russell, Virginia, for delinquent real estate taxes against certain real property located in the County of Russell, Virginia, described as follows: Tax Map No. 165R-176 Account No. 6283 All that certain tract, piece or parcel of land, situate, lying and being two (2) miles west of Mew, in Castlewood Magisterial District of Russell County, Virginia, on the north side of and adjacent to Virginia State Primary Highway No. 66, and described more particularly as follows: Beginning at an oak on north side of the State Highway, following State Highway in a southwesterly direction to top of hill; thence following the State Highway in a northwesterly direction to the line of the tract of land now or formerly owned by George Hall; thence following the line of the George Hall tract straight up the hollow to the corner of the tract of land now or formerly owned by J. T. Osborne; thence following the line of the J. T. Osborne tract in a northeasterly direction to the State Highway; thence following up the State Highway south to starting point at oak tree, and containing 18.6 acres, more or less. Being the same property conveyed to T. M. Mullen and Blanche Mullen, his wife, by Deed from Luellen Bush Kennedy, widow, dated September 14, 1962 and recorded among the land records of the Circuit Court of Russell County, Virginia on October 24, 1962 in Deed Book 183 at Page 418. This description is made subject to all easements, conditions, agreements, restrictions, and reservations of record which affect the property herein described including but not limited to those recorded in Deed Book 256 at Page 182, and Deed Book 257 at Page 680. IT APPEARING that an Affidavit has been made and filed stating that due diligence has been used, without effect, to ascertain the identity and location of certain parties to be served, that the last known addresses for the Respondents herein are as follows: T M Mullen also known as Tarleton M. Mullen, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is 100 Shockoe Slip, Richmond, Virginia 23219; Blanche Mullen also known as Virginia Blanche Mullen, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Jennifer Mullen Harrison, whose last known address is 792 Terra Alta Drive, Aylett, Virginia 23009; and that any officers, heirs, devisees, and successors in title of the Respondent named herein are made parties Respondent to this action individually and/or by the general description of Parties Unknown, it is hereby ORDERED that the parties herein and all Parties Unknown and/or whose location cannot be ascertained appear on or before September 8, 2026 in the Clerk's Office of the Circuit Court of the County of Russell, Virginia, and do what may be necessary to protect their interests in this cause. Entered on the 20th day of July, 2026. Carlee Horton Master D. Clerk I Ask For This: John A. Rife, Esq. (VSB No. 45805) Jeffrey A. Scharf, Esq. (VSB No. 30591) Mark K. Ames, Esq. (VSB No. 27409) Andrew M. Neville, Esq. (VSB No. 86372) Gregory L. Haynes, Esq. (VSB No. 37158) Seth R. Konopasek, Esq. (VSB No. 97065) Garrett W. Patton, Esq. (VSB No. 98345) Michelle W. Clayton, Esq. (VSB No. 81365) Laurelei K. Singsank, Esq. (VSB No. 100611) G. Andrew Hall, Esq. (VSB No. 24114) Taxing Authority Consulting Services, PC P.O. Box 31800 Henrico, Virginia 23294-1800 Phone: (804) 506-3102 Facsimile: (804) 545-2378 TACS No.: 158549 LN-07-29,08-5,12,19;2026

PUBLIC NOTICE APPLICATION FOR

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way in a southwesterly direction to top of hill; thence following the State Highway in a northwesterly direction to the line of the tract of land now or formerly owned by George Hall; thence following the line of the George Hall tract straight up the hollow to the corner of the tract of land now or formerly owned by J. T. Osborne; thence following the line of the J. T. Osborne tract in a northeasterly direction to the State Highway; thence following up the State Highway south to starting point at oak tree, and containing 18.6 acres, more or less. Being the same property conveyed to T. M. Mullen and Blanche Mullen, his wife, by Deed from Luellen Bush Kennedy, widow, dated September 14, 1962 and recorded among the land records of the Circuit Court of Russell County, Virginia on October 24, 1962 in Deed Book 183 at Page 418. This description is made subject to all easements, conditions, agreements, restrictions, and reservations of record which affect the property herein described including but not limited to those recorded in Deed Book 256 at Page 182, and Deed Book 257 at Page 680. IT APPEARING that an Affidavit has been made and filed stating that due diligence has been used, without effect, to ascertain the identity and location of certain parties to be served, that the last known addresses for the Respondents herein are as follows: T M Mullen also known as Tarleton M. Mullen, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is 100 Shockoe Slip, Richmond, Virginia 23219; Blanche Mullen also known as Virginia Blanche Mullen, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Jennifer Mullen Harrison, whose last known address is 792 Terra Alta Drive, Aylett, Virginia 23009; and that any officers, heirs, devisees, and successors in title of the Respondent named herein are made parties Respondent to this action individually and/or by the general description of Parties Unknown, it is hereby ORDERED that the parties herein and all Parties Unknown and/or whose location cannot be ascertained appear on or before September 8, 2026 in the Clerk's Office of the Circuit Court of the County of Russell, Virginia, and do what may be necessary to protect their interests in this cause. Entered on the 20th day of July, 2026. Carlee Horton Master D. Clerk I Ask For This: John A. Rife, Esq. (VSB No. 45805) Jeffrey A. Scharf, Esq. (VSB No. 30591) Mark K. Ames, Esq. (VSB No. 27409) Andrew M. Neville, Esq. (VSB No. 86372) Gregory L. Haynes, Esq. (VSB No. 37158) Seth R. Konopasek, Esq. (VSB No. 97065) Garrett W. Patton, Esq. (VSB No. 98345) Michelle W. Clayton, Esq. (VSB No. 81365) Laurelei K. Singsank, Esq. (VSB No. 100611) G. Andrew Hall, Esq. (VSB No. 24114) Taxing Authority Consulting Services, PC P.O. Box 31800 Henrico, Virginia 23294-1800 Phone: (804) 506-3102 Facsimile: (804) 545-2378 TACS No.: 158549 LN-07-29,08-5,12,19;2026

LEGAL NOTICES

REVISION TO COAL SURFACE MINING/ NPDES PERMIT NO. 1302285/0082285 UNDER CHAPTER 19, TITLE 45.1 OF THE CODE OF VIRGINIA PUBLICATION NUMBER: 05RSY26 APPLICATION NUMBER: 1011925

Blackjewel, L.L.C. of 1051 Main Street, Milton, WV 25541 is applying to the Virginia Division of Mined Land Repurposing for a Revision of Permit 1302285. This revision concerns changing part of the permit area to a post mining land use of Industrial – Manufacturing Area. The presently approved land use and acreage is 51.68 acres of hayland/pastureland. The revision proposes land uses and acreages as follows: 5.14 acres of hayland/pastureland and 46.54 acres of Industrial – Manufacturing Area. The revision application also proposes to keep sedimentation structures #001, #002, #003, #004, Basin 6, and Basin 7 as permanent structures after mining permit release. This Facility is located approximately 3 miles West of the town of Swords Creek, off Virginia Rt. 67, in Russell County, VA located on the 7.5-minute Honaker Quadrangle map at SPC N 3,552634.760 and E 10,479,651.953 (Virginia NAD83 South Feet Coordinates). The Permit covers 51.68 acres. Drainage and waste water resulting from the permitted operation will be discharged as follows: Discharge points 003, 004, and 006 discharge into unnamed tributaries into the Clinch River. No new discharge points are being added in this revision. The Post Mining Land Use Map showing the permit area is attached in Section 21.2 of this application. The NPDES discharge locations may be viewed on the Surface Water Hydrology Map in Section 21.2 in this application. Any person whose interests are or may be adversely affected by the proposed revision, or an Officer, or Head of any Federal, State, or local government agency or authority may within 30 days of (August 12, 2026

LEGAL NOTICES

submit written comments or objections to the Division of Mined Land Repurposing Program concerning the proposed revision; and may also request, in writing, that the Division hold an Informal Conference concerning the application. A request for an informal conference shall follow the requirements of 4 VAC 25-130-773.13c of the Virginia Coal Surface Mining Reclamation Regulations. A copy of the Application materials is available electronically for public inspection at https://www.energy.virginia.gov/dmrlinquiry/frmMain.aspx. All correspondence concerning the application should be submitted to the attention of the Mined Land Repurposing Program (Attention: Permit Section), at 3405 Mountain Empire Road; Big Stone Gap, Virginia 24219. Written comments and a request for an informal conference may be e-mailed to the Division at repurposingpublicnotice@energy.virginia.gov. Questions concerning the application review process may be directed to the Permit Section at (276) 523-8160. LNREV - 07-22, 29, 08-5, 12;2026

SERVICES

DIVORCE-Uncontested, \$525.00 + \$89.00 court cost. WILLS-\$295.00. No court appearance. Estimated completion time twenty-one days. Hilton Oliver, Attorney (Facebook). 757-490-0126. Se Habla Espanol. BBB Member. https://hiltonoliverattorney-va.com

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REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS NOTICE

The Town of Lebanon Request for Proposals for Sanitation Truck.

A Request for Proposal with specifications may be obtained at the Town Hall at 405 West Main Street, Lebanon, Virginia 24266. All proposals must be submitted by 12:00 Noon on September 14, 2026.

For more Information, please contact Andrew Shortt, Town Manager at (276) 889-7200.



We are pledged to the letter and spirit of Virginia's and HUD's equal opportunity housing policies. Virginia's fair housing law makes it illegal to advertise any preference, limitation or discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, elderliness, familial status or handicap. This newspaper (**The Lebanon News**) will not knowingly accept advertising for real estate that violates the fair housing law. Our readers are hereby informed that all dwellings advertised in this newspaper are available on an equal opportunity basis. For more information about Virginia's Fair Housing Law or to file a fair housing complaint call the Virginia Fair Housing Office at (804)367-8530. Toll free call (888)551-3247/ For the hearing impaired call (804)527-4290.

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WELLNESS

WORD SEARCH

Y I M L B R E A T H E D V Y H X H N C G
A M N O I T A R D Y H A G F L G H N Y B
H E A L I N G W E N U T R I T I O N H D
Y B X F S B R E A B M U L S D B N T U E F
R A A F S I B A X M M E D I T A T I O N
D N D L B C A S E R E N I T Y H W I F G
E I M H A R L R B U B C T M A T E X B W
W M R R M N S M E Y T F Y D I A L B D N
T A E E A I C V S C M G M G A M L S F M
E T L A C E N E Y X O O A Y H Y B A W T
N S A S R N X D D G C V H X Y T E A H T
E W X S H L E V F H X A E N F I I F O W
R E A E O L T I O U R X R R S L N E L T
G S T N H V L A L M L H H E Y A G N I X
Y N I T A Y U B O I S N W H A T W I S B
Y A O I L F S N D Y S E E V V I A T T G
G E N F O T Y V H L Y E G S A V X U I F
N L G R A T I T U D E U R B S H S O C H
X C L A I S E X T V A T A T E Y N R O M
W W W O X G N X H T G N E R T S E M G H

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.

WORDS

BALANCED
BREATHE
CARE
CLEANSE
ENERGY
FITNESS
GRATITUDE
HARMONY
HEALING
HOLISTIC
HYDRATION
MEDITATION
MINDFULNESS
NUTRITION
RECOVERY
RELAXATION
RESILIENCE
ROUTINE
SERENITY
SLUMBER
STAMINA
STRENGTH
VITALITY
WELL-BEING

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13
14 15 16
17 18 19
20 21 22
23 24 25 26 27
28 29 30
31 32 33 34 35 36 37
38 39 40 41
42 43 44 45
46 47 48 49 50
51 52 53 54 55 56 57
58 59
60 61 62 63 64
65 66 67
68 69 70

CLUES ACROSS

1. Midway between south and southeast
4. Fathers
9. Wine grape
14. Al Bundy's wife
15. Derived from ammonia
16. Venezuelan state
17. Interest rate
18. Experts
20. Vascular tissues
22. Smooth and glossy
23. Administrative region in S. Korea
24. One from Damascus
28. Special interest group
29. It cools your home
30. Oh, God!
31. Intestinal pouches
33. Men
37. Twelfth star in a constellation
38. Former CIA
39. Arrange in grades of size
41. A baglike structure in a plant or animal
42. "The Great Lakes State"
43. Having earlike appendages
44. Momentarily stop
46. Ancient kingdom
49. Of I
50. White clerical vestment
51. Songs to one's beloved
55. Charges
58. Computer application originator
59. A place to dock a boat
60. One guided by reason
64. Slang for cigarette
65. Sailboats
66. "Jerry Maguire" actor Zellweger
67. Screen type
68. Country legend Haggard
69. Puts together in time
70. When you anticipate arriving

CLUES DOWN

1. Involuntary muscular contraction
2. Eastern US transit agency
3. Leaves a place
4. Cease to participate
5. Current units
6. Cease to exist
7. General's assistant (abbr.)
8. Earth vibration
9. Very strong winds
10. For each one
11. A bog
12. The creation of beautiful or significant things
13. Affirmative
19. Pie ____ mode
21. Nonclerical
24. Indonesian island
25. Educational environment
26. Namibian peoples
27. Bring out or develop
31. Moves into a place of thought
32. Out of the way
34. Loads a ship
35. Beloved Hollywood alien
36. Distinguishes
40. The ancient Egyptian sun god
41. Secondary or explanatory title
45. Relating to a wing
47. One who gives a speech
48. In the middle
52. Loop with a running knot
53. Airborne (abbr.)
54. Sweet persons
56. Put into play
57. Small cattle breed
59. Millisecond
60. Revolutions per minute
61. They ____
62. Moon crater
63. A place to stay the night

PUZZLE SOLUTION

S S E D A D A S G A M A Y
P E G I M I D E A P U R E
A P R S P E C I A L I S T S
S T E L E S S L E E K
M A S A N D A M A S C E N E
S I G A C E G A D
C A E C A M A L E S M U
O S S G R A D A T E S A C
M I E A R E D P A U S E
E D O M M E A L B
S E R E N A D E S R A T E S
A D O B E M A R I N A
R A T I O N A L I S T T A R
P R O A S R E N E E L C D
M E R L E S Y N C S E T A

SUDOKU

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

Level: Intermediate

WORD SCRAMBLE

Rearrange the letters to spell something pertaining to wellness.

E R A H B T

Answer: Breath

GUESS WHO ?

I am an actor born in Massachusetts on August 12, 1975. I attended Columbia University and majored in physics. But I went into acting like my older brother, playing many supporting roles. I went on to win an Academy Award for a starring role.

Answer: Casey Affleck

CRYPTO FUN

Solve the code to discover words related to wellness. Each number corresponds to a letter. (Hint: 4 = E)

A. 7 16 4 7 12 11 25
Clue: Well visit

B. 24 20 7 10 20 14
Clue: Medical expert

C. 4 17 4 14 7 15 8 4
Clue: Physical activity

D. 24 15 4 10
Clue: The foods one eats

Answers: A. checklist B. doctor C. exercise D. diet

Y I M L B R E A T H E D V Y H X H N C G
A M N O I T A R D Y H A G F L G H N Y B
H E A L I N G W E N U T R I T I O N H D
Y B X F S B R E A B M U L S D B N T U E F
R A A F S I B A X M M E D I T A T I O N
D N D L B C A S E R E N I T Y H W I F G
E I M H A R L R B U B C T M A T E X B W
W M R R M N S M E Y T F Y D I A L B D N
T A E E A I C V S C M G M G A M L S F M
E T L A C E N E Y X O O A Y H Y B A W T
N S A S R N X D D G C V H X Y T E A H T
E W X S H L E V F H X A E N F I I F O W
R E A E O L T I O U R X R R S L N E L T
G S T N H V L A L M L H H E Y A G N I X
Y N I T A Y U B O I S N W H A T W I S B
Y A O I L F S N D Y S E E V V I A T T G
G E N F O T Y V H L Y E G S A V X U I F
N L G R A T I T U D E U R B S H S O C H
X C L A I S E X T V A T A T E Y N R O M
W W W O X G N X H T G N E R T S E M G H

SUDOKU SOLUTION

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

Horoscopes

ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20
You have been burning the candle at both ends, Aries. You can't run on caffeine and grit all of the time. Find a day to rest before your body makes that decision for you.

TAURUS – Apr 21/May 21
Someone is testing your patience this week, Taurus. Before you stick to your guns, ask yourself if this is a battle worth fighting and then proceed.

GEMINI – May 22/Jun 21
It's time to mute as much internal noise as possible, Gemini. Focus on one project and make a concerted effort to finish it before jumping to the next thing on your to-do list.

CANCER – Jun 22/Jul 22
Cancer, the stars are washing over your emotional sector, making you confront what you have been sweeping under the rug for some time. Trust your feelings.

LEO – Jul 23/Aug 23
Leo, the universe is asking you to give others a shot to shine and for you to step into the background. Use this week to refine your talents out of the spotlight.

VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22
Virgo, keep your eyes open for a chance encounter mid-week that could spark a great new idea. Let go of the need to control the outcome and just go with the flow.

LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23
Collaboration is your superpower this week, Libra. If you've been stuck on a professional problem, run it by a colleague. The answer may lie in a perspective you haven't considered yet.

SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22
Your financial intuition is incredibly sharp, Scorpio. Trust your instincts right now. It's a great week to pitch a big idea, ask for a raise or re-evaluate your budget

SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21
Sagittarius, you are feeling an itch to break free from your routine but don't know where to begin. Don't drop everything just yet. Explore little adventures first.

CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20
There are a lot of ideas floating around in your head, Capricorn, but none have solidified into action just yet. Seek the opinions of others to identify a path forward.

AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18
Aquarius, every time you think you have a plan in place, the variables change. That's alright because you always have a backup idea should different scenarios present themselves.

PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20
You can't predict where a relationship will go, Pisces. This week it is best to simply maintain the status quo. Things will be revealed soon enough.

FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS

AUGUST 9
Bill Skarsgard, Actor (36)

AUGUST 10
Kylie Jenner, Reality Star (29)

AUGUST 11
Chris Hemsworth, Actor (43)

AUGUST 12
Sir Mix-a-Lot, Rapper (63)

AUGUST 13
Sebastian Stan, Actor (44)

AUGUST 14
Steve Martin, Actor (81)

AUGUST 15
Jennifer Lawrence, Actress (36)

Powers, Mizusawa win primaries

By SHAWN STREET
shawm@virginiamediainc.com

Joy Powers and Bert Mizusawa won their respective parties' primaries last week, earning themselves a place on the November 2026 ballot.

Powers, a Democrat, will challenge Republican incumbent Morgan Griffith for the Ninth District seat in Congress.

Republican Mizusawa will face incumbent Democrat Mark Warner for one of Virginia's seats in the United States Senate.

Powers received 51.65 percent of the vote across the Ninth District. Adam Grayson Murphy was a distant second with 36.11 percent and third was Douglas E. Crockett with 12.24 percent.

Locally, the results virtually mirrored the district's totals. In Russell County, Powers won 52.25 percent of the vote. Adam Grayson Murphy received 36.68 percent and Douglas E. Crockett was third with 11.07 percent.

Approximately 2 percent of the county's voters participated in the Democratic primary, with 290 votes cast.

The Moccasin District gave Powers 13 votes. Adams received 8 and Crockett 3.

Copper Creek awarded Powers 7 votes with 3 going to both Murphy and Crockett.

Powers carried South Castlewood with 18 votes. Murphy received 4 and

Crockett 3. North Castlewood gave Powers 15 votes, with Murphy receiving 9 and Crockett 5.

Powers received four of the five votes cast in Dante. Murphy received the other vote.

Cooks Mill saw three people voting. Two voted for Powers, one voted for Murphy.

Powers received all seven votes cast in Daughtery. New Garden gave Powers 10 votes. Murphy received 5 and Crockett 1.

Elk Garden saw Powers receiving 21 votes. Murphy gained 7 and Crockett 2.

Powers won 4 votes in Honaker, with Murphy and Crockett each receiving 2.

Powers won Swords Creek with 6 votes. Murphy received 3 and Crockett 1.

Drill was a tie. Powers and Murphy both received 5 votes.

Murphy won the precincts of Cleveland, East Lebanon and West Lebanon.

The count in Cleveland saw Murphy with 6 votes and Powers with 5.

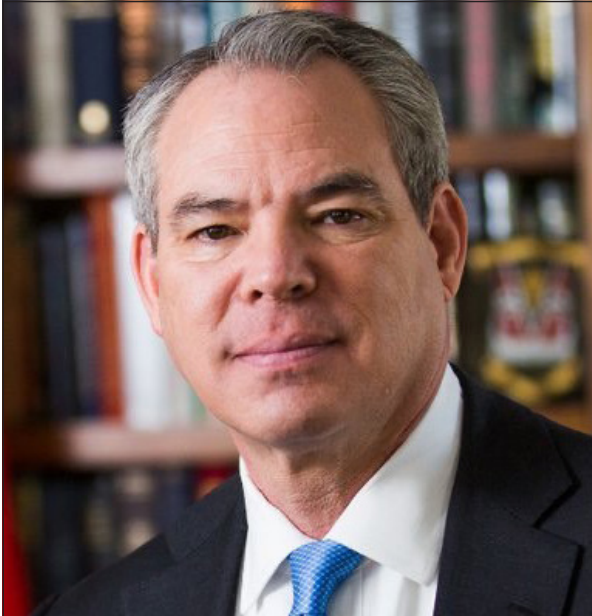
Murphy gained 21 votes in East Lebanon. Powers had 10 and Crockett 3.

West Lebanon went to Murphy with 31 votes. Powers received 24 and Crockett 9.

The Republican primary saw Bert Mizusawa winning with 51.47 percent of the statewide vote. David Williams was second with 28.91 percent. Kim Farington was third with 19.61 percent.



Joy Powers



Bert Mizusawa

Locally the Republicans saw a slightly larger turnout. Three percent of voters cast ballots, for a total of 521.

Mizusawa carried the county by receiving 49.13 percent of the vote. Williams was second with 35.45 percent and Farington was third with 15.41 percent.

Mizusawa won Moccasin with 26 votes. Williams received 7 and Farington 6.

Mizusawa carried South Castlewood with 15 votes. Williams received 11 and Farington 3.

North Castlewood gave Mizusawa 44 votes, Williams 19 and Farington 13.

Dante saw 10 votes going to Mizusawa. Williams received 4 and Farington 2.

Mizusawa won Daughtery with 13 votes. Farington received 5 and Williams 4.

Swords Creek found Mizusawa winning with 23 votes. Williams received 19 and Farington 5.

West Lebanon was won by Mizusawa with 45 votes. Williams won 30 votes and Farington 6.

Mizusawa won 28 votes in East Lebanon. Williams received 21 and Farington 7. Mizusawa also won Elk Garden by receiving 23 votes. Williams gained 13 and Farington 8.

In Honaker 11 ballots were cast. Williams received 10 of them and Farington received the other.

New Garden gave Williams 11 votes. Farington and Mizusawa each received 7.

STATZER REUNION

The Statzer Reunion will be Saturday, August 15th @ the Oak Grove Community Center. Lunch will be served around noon. Family & Friends....please join us.

Corn Cheese: Halfway Around the World, Right at Home

One of the many things I find fascinating about food is the throughlines of different cultures. Korean Corn Cheese sounds exotic, but it's just corn casserole's Asian cousin, and it shares a lineage with Mexican elote and other similar dishes across the world. Turns out corn, some sort of fat, and cheese work the same magic whether you're in Seoul, Oaxaca, or Summersville.

Corn Cheese is a staple of Korean bar food, the kind of dish you'd order alongside a cold beer at a pojangmacha, or food cart, in Seoul. I'll never forget reading the recipe the first time I stumbled across it, and thinking this sounds like something memaw would have set out on the Sunday supper table, right next to the deviled eggs.

Just like half & half, the recipe is in the name. Sweet corn, mayonnaise, butter, and a whole lot of melted cheese, cooked in a skillet until the edges catch a little color and the top turns bubbly and golden. It's usually served straight from the pan, just make sure to put a pot holder or towel on the table first.

I love how this is a dish served over 6,000 miles away and is still about as Appalachian as it gets. We've been making some version of that combination for potlucks and holidays for generations. Mexico's version is elote, corn slicked with mayo, cotija cheese, and a squeeze of lime. Peru's version, choclo con queso, pairs big Andean corn kernels with slices of fresh queso fresco. Turns out good food logic doesn't care much about borders.

This one comes together fast, and it travels well from stove to table, so don't dress it up too much. Let the corn do the talking.

Of course, fresh corn is going to be best, and 'tis the season. But frozen and canned works well, too. Here's how we build it.

KOREAN CORN CHEESE

Yield: 4 to 6 servings, as a side or shared appetizer
Time: 20 minutes

4 C	Corn Kernels (fresh, frozen, or canned and drained)
3 T	Unsalted Butter
½ C	Mayonnaise
1 T	Sugar
½ t	Salt
1½ C	Mozzarella Cheese, shredded
½ C	Sharp Cheddar Cheese, shredded
2 ea	Scallions, sliced thin

MIX CORN: In a bowl, stir together the corn, mayonnaise, sugar, and salt until the corn is evenly coated.

COOK CORN: Melt the butter in a small cast iron or other oven-safe skillet over medium heat. Add the corn mixture and cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 to 7 minutes, until warmed through and starting to caramelize slightly at the edges.

TOP AND MELT: Heat your broiler. Sprinkle the mozzarella and cheddar evenly over the corn. Slide the skillet under the broiler for 2 to 3 minutes, watching it closely, until the cheese is melted, bubbly, and beginning to brown in spots.

FINISH: Remove from the broiler, top with the scallions, and serve immediately, straight from the skillet, with crackers, bread, or just a spoon.

Enjoy, friends. Proof that good food speaks the same language everywhere, whether it's cooked in Seoul or in a cast iron skillet right here in West Virginia.

Off Road Events

RUSSELL COUNTY FAIR MOTOCROSS

DIRTBIKE RACE

BIG AIR. FAST LINES. REAL RACING.

MONEY CLASS \$1,000 PAYOUT!

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 5TH, 2026

CASTLEWOOD, VA

RUSSELL COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS

MULTIPLE CLASSES FOR ALL AGES AND SKILL LEVELS!

BIG AIR. FAST LINES. REAL RACING.

CASH PRIZES TOP PAYOUTS IN EACH CLASS!

\$1,000 PAYOUT FOR MONEY CLASS!

DUST. SPEED. COMPETITION.

LET'S RACE!

FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK FOR UPDATES, RULES & REGISTRATION INFO!

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RUSSELL COUNTY FAIR 4X4XU

TRUCKS * JEEPS * BRONCOS * 4X4S

AUTO SHOW & SHINE

JOIN US SEPT 7TH

FOR A COUNTRY FAMILY TRADITION IN A 4X4XU SHOW

AWARDS | FAMILY FUN | GOOD MUSIC | GREAT FOOD | AUTO SHOW & SHINE | BIG RIGS & GOOD TIMES!

RUSSELL COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS

COME FOR THE SHOW - STAY FOR THE MEMORIES

RUSSELL COUNTY FAIR SXS & ATV

SHORT COURSE RACE

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12TH, 2026

CASTLEWOOD, VA

RUSSELL COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS

SXS & ATV CLASSES MULTIPLE CLASSES FOR ALL SKILL LEVELS!

SHORT COURSE RACING FAST-PACED ACTION ON A BUILT SHORT COURSE!

CASH PRIZES TOP PAYOUTS IN EACH CLASS!

MONEY CLASS \$1,000 PAYOUT!

DUST. SPEED. COMPETITION.

LET'S RACE!

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RUSSELL COUNTY FAIR 4X4

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MUD PITS * ROCK CRAWLS * LOGS * RUTS * & MORE!

TEST YOUR MACHINE CONQUER THE COURSE!

DOWNHILL BARBIE POWER WHEELS RACE!

JOIN US SEPT 7TH

FAMILY FUN * GREAT FOOD * LIVE MUSIC * VENDORS * PRIZES & MORE!

RUSSELL COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS