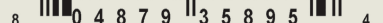


TWO SECTIONS PLUS SUPPLEMENTS | \$2



OBITUARIES

Christine Hess Elswick

CHRISTINE HESS ELSWICK, age 92, of Abingdon, went to be with the Lord peacefully surrounded by her loving family on Wednesday, June 10, 2026.

Christine was born to Walter and Ethel Herndon on March 16, 1934 in Logan, WV. After lovingly raising her children, Christine pursued her passion for caring for others and earned her Licensed Practical Nurse degree. She also was the owner and operator of Anderson Trailer Park for 42 years.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Walter and Ethel Herndon; husbands, Dr. Ralph W. Hess and Jay C. Elswick; son, Ralph W. Hess Jr.; 1 infant grandson; 1 infant great-grandson; and 7 siblings.

Christine's greatest pride was her family. She is survived by her chil-

dren, Curtis Hess (Eleanor), Danny Hess, Sam Hess (Chandra), Cindy Jackson (Don), Candy Blankenship (Mike), Sandy Whittington (Jeff), "adopted son", David Phillips (Lucille), and 1 step-daughter, Robin Justus (Randy); 16 grandchildren; 29 great grandchildren; 1 great-great grandchild; and 1 brother, Carl D. Herndon (Helen); and many dear nieces and nephews.

In the words of her oldest grandson, Matt: "What a wonderful life to have lived. No matter how long you have with someone it never seems long enough. 92 years of loving and watching over all of us had to be exhausting at times. You somehow had enough love for each and every one of us and I hope you felt the love we all had for you."



Christine Hess Elswick

Online condolences may be sent at www.christiansells.com
Christian-Sells Funeral Home, Rogersville, TN is honored to serve the Elswick family.



Courthouse News

By **CHAD COOPER**
coopkam@gmail.com

Marriages licenses

Joshua Andrew Anglin, 25, and Kortnie Alexsis Gibson, 25, both of Grundy, June 12, 2026.
Bobby Junior Sargent, 31, and Kristen Renee Sisk, 28, both of Raven, June 13, 2026.
Dennis Eugene Endicott, 45, and Amanda Lynn Boyd, 40, both of Vansant, June 14, 2026.
Zane Alexander Monday, 28, and Brittany Dawn Cline, 29, both of Grundy, May 30, 2026.
Laurence Wesner Vanstavoren, 27, and Deanna Nicole Dale, both of Pikeville, Kentucky, June 6, 2026.
Corey Randall Compton, 33, of Abingdon, and Kimberly Richelle Potter, 33, of Grundy, June 6, 2026.
Dylan Michael Roberts, 27, and Amelia Grace Hunt, 21, both of Hurley, May 23, 2026.

Deeds recorded

Changes to the Buchanan County Circuit Court record-keeping system have made the weekly electronic deed report currently unavailable. Deed transfer information for the prior month will be provided during the second week of each month.

Elmer Stiltner

ELMER STILTNER, 66, of Prater section of Vansant, VA, passed away Sunday, June 7, 2026, at the Heritage Hall Nursing Home following an extended illness. Born in Buchanan County, he was the son of the late Roscoe Stiltner Jr. and Lousie (Coleman) Stiltner. He was a lifelong resident of Buchanan County and was of the Christian faith. Elmer enjoyed fishing, hunting, camping and watching westerns.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by Brother: Franklin Stiltner; Sisters: Francis Stiltner, Loretta Yates and Fayetta Yates; Half-Brother: Kenny Stiltner.

Those left to cherish his memory

include Sisters: Rosetta McCoy of Prater, VA, Glennia Justice (Danny Elswick) of Slate Creek, VA, Emretta (Stanley) Stacy of Slate Creek, VA; Half-Brother: Ernie Stiltner; Half-Sister: Wanda Ratliff.

Also, survived by several nieces and nephews.

Special thanks to his niece, Amber Coleman for her care during his sickness. Also, to his nephew James McCoy and niece Sandra Coleman for being there for him.

"You will be truly missed."

Due to his wishes, Elmer is being cremated.

Grundy Funeral Home of Grundy, VA, is honored to serve the family of ELMER STILTNER.



Elmer Stiltner

VCEDA FUNDS

FROM PAGE 1A

port future growth at Southern Gap, one of the county's largest economic development sites. The development continues to be a focal point of Buchanan County's long-term strategy to attract new businesses, industry, housing and commercial investment.

The project comes as development activity continues in the Southern Gap area, which is already home to Southern Gap High School and remains the site of ongoing commercial, residential and infrastructure planning.

The board also approved an up to \$80,000 grant to the Buchanan County IDA to finance a feasibility and economic impact study along with a pilot test related to the manufacturing of Small Vertical Wind Turbine Energy Recovery Systems in Buchanan County.

The study will examine whether the county could become a location for manufacturing small-scale vertical wind turbine systems and determine the potential economic impact such an operation could have on the local economy. The project is designed to evaluate whether Buchanan County could capitalize on opportunities in the growing renewable energy sector while creating manufacturing jobs and diversifying the county's economic base.

In addition to the two larger projects, four Buchanan County businesses received seed capital matching grants through VCEDA's business startup program. Each business was awarded \$10,000.

The Buchanan County recipients were DMG Sewing LLC, RKB Enterprises LLC, Rice Construction Services Inc. and Southern Gap Enterprises LLC.

The seed capital matching grant program is designed to help entrepreneurs and small businesses with startup costs and expansion efforts. The grants require matching investment from business owners and are intended to encourage the creation of new businesses and jobs throughout the coalfield region.

VCEDA Executive Director and General Counsel Jonathan Belcher told board members that manufacturing, information technology and startup businesses remain among the most active sectors currently being pursued throughout the region.

"Manufacturing, information technology and seed capital -- small business startups -- are currently the most active sectors as far as active projects," Belcher said.

Belcher also updated board members on regional marketing and business recruitment efforts.

A new regional image booklet has been completed, while updated sites and buildings brochures are currently being developed.

"Timmons Group continues to work on the study to identify new industrial sites in the region," Belcher said. "The new lead generation campaign for the Intersection Business Park is now underway and a new site brochure for that location has been developed."

Buchanan County also benefited from action involving Breaks Interstate Park.

The board approved an up to \$95,000 grant from the VCEDA Civil Penalties Fund to the Breaks Interstate Park Commission for improvements at the Ratliff Hole River Access Area. The project includes renovation of restroom facilities, repaving the entrance road and parking lot, bank stabilization work and other infrastructure improvements.

In a separate action, board members approved a request from the Buchanan County IDA to expand the eligible uses of an up to \$100,000 tourism capital improvement matching fund grant previously approved in 2024.

The modification allows the grant funds to be used for construction of trails, bridges and other improvements associated with the Grassy Creek Trail Project at Breaks Interstate Park. During the meeting, it was noted that the project is located on property owned by Breaks Interstate Park.

The board also approved an extension for a previously funded Buchanan County project involving infrastructure for the Southern Gap medical campus. The disbursement deadline for that project was extended to June 20, 2028.

Outside Buchanan County, VCEDA approved an up to

\$360,000 loan to the Russell County Industrial Development Authority for the purchase of real estate in the Hansonville area.

The board also approved workforce development and training grants totaling more than \$675,000.

An up to \$404,930 grant was awarded to the Southwest Virginia Community College Educational Foundation through the VCEDA Coalfield Workforce Development and Training Fund. The funding will support scholarships, instructional costs, customized workforce training, work-based learning opportunities, career readiness testing and workforce assessments. The grant will also fund the purchase of orbital welding units for training programs and provide support for the Small Business Development Center at Southwest Virginia Community College.

An additional up to \$196,667 grant was approved for the Mountain Empire Community College Foundation to support workforce development programs and operations of the Small Business Development Center at Mountain Empire Community College.

VCEDA also approved an up to \$75,000 grant to the Napoleon Hill Foundation to assist with continued development of an online entrepreneurial skills course for high school students throughout the coalfield region.

Nineteen seed capital matching grants were approved during the meeting for businesses across the seven-county VCEDA region. In addition to the four Buchanan County businesses, grants were awarded to companies in Dickenson, Lee, Russell, Scott, Tazewell and Wise counties.

Board members established Oct. 15, 2026, as the application deadline for the next round of seed capital grants and agreed to continue work on a seed capital training academy in partnership with the Small Business Development Centers at Southwest Virginia Community College and Mountain Empire Community College. Participation in the training program is expected to become a future requirement for eligibility in the seed capital matching grant program.

The board approved VCEDA's Fiscal Year 2027 budget and established annual marketing stipends of up to \$10,000 for each industrial or economic development authority in the region.

Members also approved \$250,000 for the VCEDA Coalfield Jobs Investment Project workforce training grant program for Fiscal Year 2027 and adopted the VCEDA/Southwest Virginia e-Region Business Development Plan for Fiscal Year 2027.

In other business, the board agreed to forgive and convert into a grant the remaining \$99,854.86 balance on a 2016 loan to Trailhead Lodging LLC after the company exceeded job creation requirements outlined in its amended loan agreement.

Several project deadlines were extended across the region, including projects involving Tempur Sealy in Scott County, an inpatient substance abuse rehabilitation facility in Dickenson County, the Haysi Trails Center, the Three Rivers Destination Center project and economic development projects identified as Project Franklin and Project Delta.

The board also approved a contingent request involving the Russell County Industrial Development Authority and Simmons Equipment Company to restructure several loans associated with industrial buildings leased by Simmons in Lebanon as part of efforts to utilize the federal New Markets Tax Credit program.

The meeting concluded with recognition of retiring economic development leaders.

Board members honored retiring VCEDA board member Tim Stuller, vice president of regional talent solutions and business outreach for the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, for his service to economic development and the authority.

The board also recognized Ernie McFaddin for his contributions as executive director of the Russell County Industrial Development Authority and welcomed Laura Gilmer as the agency's new executive director.

Paws and enjoy the sunshine



This sunny soul is a ten-month-old female kitten. Her short coat is colored gray and white with darker stripes. She has large gold eyes and a sweet pink nose. Her personality is gentle, social and affectionate. She shares her kennel at the shelter with one cute sister. These pawsome pets will be available for adoption at the Buchanan County Animal Shelter until Monday, June 29, 2026.

Also available for adoption, this two-year-old male cat. His soft coat is colored white and gold. He has beautiful green eyes and long white whiskers. His temperament is friendly and laid-back. The animal shelter is located at 1191 Dogpound Road. For more information about these animals, please call the shelter at (276) 935-4067.

Big Sandy SWCD to host community meeting June 29

By **CHAD COOPER**
coopkam@gmail.com

The Big Sandy Soil and Water Conservation District is inviting farmers, landowners and community members to attend a public meeting later this month to learn about conservation programs and opportunities available throughout the region.

The event, titled "New Beginnings," will be held at 6 p.m. Monday, June 29, at the Trey Adkins Gym in Hurley.

According to Big Sandy, the meeting is designed to provide updated information on programs and services available to farmers and homeowners. Officials said 2026 marks a year of new beginnings for the organization, and they are looking forward to sharing information about conservation initiatives and resources with the public.

The meeting will also provide an opportunity for residents to meet district staff, learn about available assistance programs and ask questions about conservation practices that can benefit their properties.

A free meal will be provided to those attending.

District officials are asking anyone planning to attend to RSVP by Thursday, June 25, by calling 276-935-7750.

The Big Sandy Soil and Water Conservation District serves Buchanan, Dickenson, Russell and Tazewell counties and works with landowners, farmers and local communities to promote conservation of natural resources through education, technical assistance and environmental stewardship programs.

The event is open to the public.



LOOKING BACK

From our files

50 YEARS AGO

JUNE 24, 1976

The Slate Creek Homemakers Extension Club met at the home of Mrs. Bettie Weller. Hettie Matney, president, called the meeting to order. Peggy Matney gave the devotional. Fay Yates read the minutes of the last meeting. The group was happy to hear that Josephine Rife and Linda Childers received their master's degrees.

Miss Sandra Lee Coleman, a student at East Tennessee State University, was recently elected to the Tennessee ETA Chapter for members in the National Social Science Honor Society Phi Gamma Mu. A 1973 graduate of Grundy High School, Sandra is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Bert Coleman of Vansant. She is currently home for the summer and will enter her senior year at ETSU this fall, majoring in Social Services.

45 YEARS AGO

JUNE 25, 1981

A sell-out crowd turned out last Saturday night for the star-studded boxing program at Grundy Senior High School. Four local fighters took wins, and two major upsets were recorded. Greg Rife of Grundy and Bobby Proffitt of Richlands, who boxes for the Buchanan Club, were both featured in main events and turned out to be absolute wars. Rife defeated Willie Richardson, ranked fourth in the All-Southern Rankings.

Arthur Stiltner, owner of Two-Way Radio Services of Grundy, received an award from Carl Insel, general manager, Radio Products Division, E.F. Johnson Company, recently in Denver, Colorado. Stiltner was one of the dealers selected to attend a Land Mobile Radio Dealer Advisor Council meeting arranged by the company.

30 YEARS AGO

JUNE 27, 1996

If two heads are better than one, how much better for Council and Whitewood are two football helmets for every one position? The combining of the Whitewood and Council football teams is now official, with the hiring of Whitewood boss Mark Cooper as head coach by the Buchanan County school board. Cooper, a former standout athlete at Hurley, takes on the task of leading the combined squad after guiding Whitewood for two of its four years of varsity football.

When Heavyweight and local favorite Elmer "The Fightin' Lumberjack" Jackson steps into the ring Saturday night, he is expected to put more than his perfect 7-0 record on the line. Jackson, of Vansant, headlining the local professional boxing card Saturday night at Grundy Senior High School, will be featured in a rematch against Duane "The Bull" Smith of New Albany, Indiana. Both fighters have agreed to a "winner take all" match.

20 YEARS AGO

JUNE 29, 2006

Jeremiah Lester and Kent Goodman played for a high school team that won 27 games last year. But the college program they hope to play for won just three of 31 games last season. The operative word, though, is play, as Bluefield State recently signed its second and third recruits from Twin Valley High School. Lester and Goodman joined former Panther teammate Logan Shortridge in signing letters of intent to join the Big Blues, an NCAA Division II school. Lester, the BDD, Region D and Group A Player of the Year, is a 6-foot-3 forward who will vie for playing time with both the 5-10 Goodman and the 6-2 Shortridge at Bluefield State, which has just six players returning next season.

Buchanan County Basketball Foundation President Ronnie Prater accepted a check for \$25,000 toward the BBF gym construction project from CONSOL Energy's Bill Meade, this week. Gerald Kowzan is BBF gym project coordinator and past BBF president, Robert Simpson was in attendance.

Less than 60 days away, SGHS ready to soar

By **CHAD COOPER**

coopkam@gmail.com

With less than two months remaining before students walk through the doors for the first day of classes, construction at Southern Gap High School remains on schedule and county officials say excitement continues to build as the massive new campus nears completion.

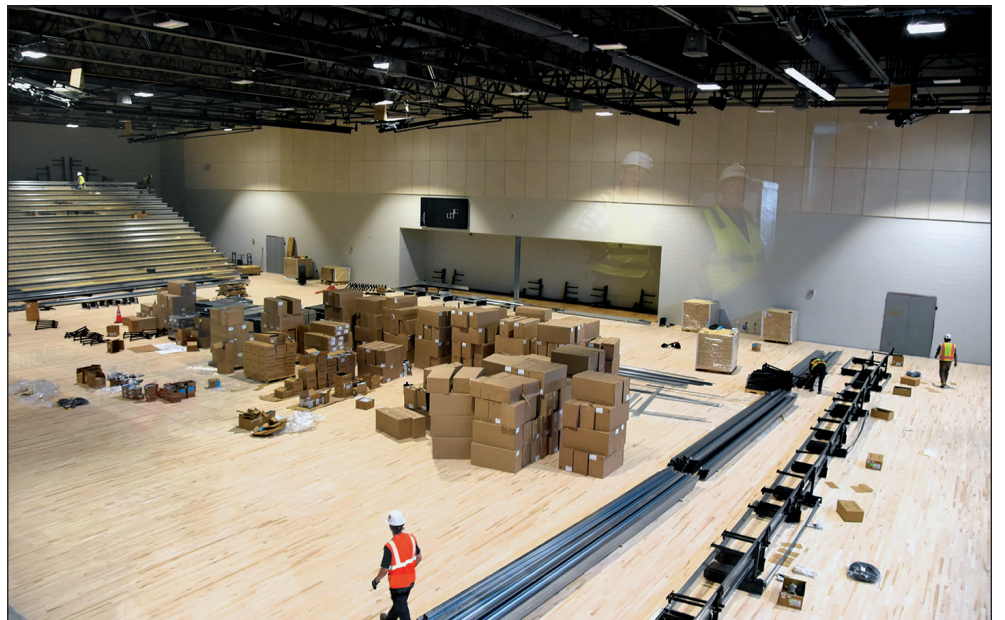
The new eighth-through-12th-grade school, located in the Southern Gap area of Buchanan County, is scheduled to open in August and will serve as the county's lone high school following the closure of Council, Grundy, Hurley and Twin Valley high schools at the conclusion of the 2025-26 academic year.

The more than 200,000-square-foot facility will also house the Buchanan County Career, Technology and Higher Learning Center, creating a centralized campus designed to provide students with expanded academic, career and technical education opportunities.

During a recent tour of the construction site, crews were busy completing interior work, installing final classroom finishes and putting the finishing touches on several key areas of the campus. Much of the building now resembles a completed school rather than an active construction project.

Principal Mark Cooper said construction continues to move forward smoothly and remains on schedule.

"Construction at Southern Gap High School is progressing smoothly and remains on schedule," Cooper said. "This state-of-the-art facility will provide an outstanding learning environment for our students and serve as a tremendous investment in their future. We are excited to see this wonderful school take shape and look forward to the opportunities it will



Photo's by Chad Cooper

The massive gymnasium at Southern Gap High School features three full-size basketball courts and ample seating for spectators. The facility will host athletic competitions, assemblies and community events.

offer for generations to come."

Cooper said the campus was designed to meet the needs of today's students while preparing them for future success.

"The new campus was built as a state-of-the-art facility with dedicated spaces for career and technical education, performing arts, athletics and collaborative learning," Cooper said. "Students will be learning in a modern environment designed specifically for current educational needs rather than older buildings that may have limited resources."

Construction Superintendent Tim Burge said the project continues to advance as expected and remains on track for its scheduled opening.

Burge said he is pleased with the progress

being made and the overall quality of the finished product as crews move into the final stages of construction.

Inside the school, spacious classrooms are nearing completion, dispelling rumors that instructional spaces would be small. Wide hallways and large open common areas create an atmosphere more closely resembling a college campus than a traditional high school.

The cafeteria equipment has been delivered, while installation of the gymnasium bleachers is underway. The gym floor has already been completed inside the massive athletic complex, which features three full-size basketball courts.

Outside, the new football stadium is rapidly taking shape. Turf installation has been completed, and work continues on finishing the stadium and surrounding athletic facilities. Construction of the baseball and softball fields is also nearing completion.

Other notable features include a large wrestling room, expansive storage areas for athletic equipment and a performing arts auditorium featuring a sizable stage that will host assemblies, concerts and other school events.

Career and technical education programs will occupy dedicated spaces throughout the facility. Areas designed for culinary arts, dental hygiene and other workforce development programs are nearing completion. A greenhouse pad is also being constructed behind the school, creating new opportunities for horticulture students.

Parking lots for both students and staff have been completed, and crews continue work on final site improvements across the campus.

As construction enters its final stretch, an-



Photo's by Chad Cooper

One of several modern science classrooms at Southern Gap High School. The new learning spaces were designed to support hands-on instruction and collaborative learning opportunities.

GOOD OL DAYS

Virginia Mountaineer

Greg Rife of Grundy catches his breath in his corner while Buchanan County Club coach Nathan Robinson gives him instructions during the main event of a sold-out boxing card on June 20, 1981, at Grundy High School during his match with Willie Richardson in the 132-pound division. Richardson, ranked fourth in the All-Southern rankings, was battered in the corner by the hard-hitting Rife before the bell ended the final round. Rife went on to win by decision and received a standing ovation from the crowd.



Buchanan County Club Coach Nathan Robinson
Instructs Greg Rife Between Rounds.

Celebrating the Nation’s
250th Birthday: Part 1

By **W.P. JACKSON KRUG**
America’s 250th anniversary is an exciting time for Virginia communities and the United States.

Because this is truly a big deal, I will dedicate two columns to honor this remarkable moment in our history.

Our 250th birthday is a historic milestone that inspires patriotic celebrations, festivities and traditions.

As the State at the epicenter of the independence movement, Virginia’s role cannot be understated.

VA250, a commission created by the Virginia General Assembly, was established to detail and commemorate the significant role that Virginia played in our country’s founding.

Numerous VA250 projects have been active in Virginia’s Ninth District.

The “Martinsville Missile,” a VA250 car project created in Martinsville, recently broke the world land-speed record for a stock car at 253 miles per hour!

I co-introduced a resolution with Senator Tim Kaine to recognize this tremendous feat. The resolution declares that the House of Representatives extends its congratulations to the VA250 Car Project.

While Virginia’s Ninth District continues to shape history in our 250th year of independence, we can examine the ways in which American independence is rooted in our communities and our region.

One of my favorite columns from past years relates to historic figures from the American Revolution era for which our communities bear names.

Such names include those who were key to our nation’s Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776.

Seven Virginians lent their names to this foundational document, including George Wythe, for which Wythe County is named.

Of the other 49 that signed the document, perhaps no figure enjoys as much acclaim as Benjamin Franklin. Franklin County is named in his honor.

Maryland’s Charles Carroll of Carrollton is credited for Carroll County’s namesake.

Virginia’s fingerprints are not just all over the Declaration of Independence, but also the battlefields where independence was won.



WEEKLY REPORT
FROM THE CAPITOL

Most notably is George Washington, the commander of the Continental Army that defeated the British Empire at Yorktown, Virginia. Washington County celebrates its namesake for the great revolutionary leader.

One of Washington’s aides, William Grayson, helped in the revolutionary combat. Grayson County pays homage to his service through its name.

Montgomery County gets its name from Richard Montgomery, who led the invasion of Canada and died at the Battle of Quebec in 1775. A belief that cultural and identity similarities existed between Quebec and America fueled prospects of a 14th American colony.

Meanwhile, militia leaders like Brigadier General Joseph Martin, for which Martinsville enjoys its name, helped preserve the frontier. At one time, Martin received a commission from then-Virginia Governor Patrick Henry to be a key diplomat on the frontier.

Henry, whose “Give me liberty, or give me death!” speech helped fuel the revolutionary spirit, has both Patrick and Henry Counties named in his honor.

Another future Virginia governor, Henry “Light-Horse Harry” Lee, was a former revolutionary officer who would earn a Virginia County, Lee, in his name. At Washington’s memorial

service, Lee eulogized our first president, “first in war, first in peace and first in the hearts of his countrymen.” Lee helped serve in campaigns that took place in the South.

Numerous frontiersmen and forces played vital roles in the South, including the Overmountain Men. These frontier units travelled from Abingdon to the Carolinas to fight the British at key battles such as Kings Mountain and Cowpens.

The Overmountain Men consisted of valiant soldiers like William Russell. Russell’s father by the same name served at the Battle of Point Pleasant, a conflict where Andrew Lewis helped lead American frontiersmen to defeat Chief Cornstalk and the Shawnee tribe.

The Russells fought with great resolve, and thanks to their revolutionary heroism, Russell County earns its name.

While American colonists sacrificed blood, sweat and tears on the battlefield, also meaningful were the contributions from foreign figures.

Polish count Casimir Pulaski was a European nobleman inspired by the American cause. Credited for saving George Washington’s life, he later died at the Battle of Savannah.

For Pulaski’s service, Pulaski County gets its name, and a U.S. Congressional resolution posthumously proclaimed Pulaski an honorary U.S. citizen.

Our country’s fight for independence took many forms that are immortalized in Virginia communities, history books and other materials. I will continue to honor and recognize the nation’s 250th birthday in next week’s edition.

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://morgan-griffith.house.gov/>. Also on my website is the latest material from my office, including information on votes recently taken on the floor of the House of Representatives.

The Watchman:
Reparation

Today, we hear the term “reparations” from the political left and many other groups almost every day. As a white American, I sometimes feel that people like me are under attack because of things that happened long before I was born.

I thank God I was born in America, the land of the free. I was not born with a silver spoon in my mouth, and my family and ancestors were not slave owners. I am a third-generation coal miner.

Part of my family roots on my grandfather’s side trace back to Matewan, West Virginia, in Mingo County.



THE WATCHMAN

Matewan was the site of the famous 1920 Battle of Matewan, often referred to as the Matewan Massacre. The battle was fought over coal miners’ rights.

On one side were Matewan citizens and members of the United Mine Workers of America. On the other side was the Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency, hired by coal companies that were determined to prevent miners from organizing unions.

The Battle of Matewan was a setback in the struggle for miners’ rights, but the fight continued until the early 1930s, when the federal government recognized labor unions and the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 was enacted.

Since I was a little boy, I have heard stories about how miners in Matewan were treated by the coal companies. The companies owned the houses where miners lived and the stores where they bought food and supplies. Many miners were paid in company scrip that could only be spent at the company store. They had little choice but to pay whatever prices the company charged for food, clothing and housing. In my opinion, that system resembled a form of economic bondage.

Many people have stories of hardship and suffering. I am not asking for reparations, but I do believe we should learn from the mistakes of the past and work to create a better future for our children, our families and our nation.

The real problem is the human heart. The Bible says in Jeremiah 17:9, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” James 4:1-2 asks, “From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?” Verse 2 continues, “Ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not.”

Jesus said in Matthew 24:37, “But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” What were those days like? Just look around and you will see. Matthew 24:38 says people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark.

Why are people marrying and giving in marriage? Jesus said in Matthew 19:8 that it is because of the hardness of their hearts. The heart problem is seen throughout Scripture. Genesis 6:5 says that God saw the wickedness of man was great upon the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. Verse 6 says it grieved God in His heart that He had made man. Verse 7 records God’s judgment, yet verse 8 declares, “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.”

That grace is the only hope for this generation. It is not reparations that mankind needs. It is the grace of God that comes through His Son. John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

God does not ask us to make reparations for the way we have treated Him and His Son. Instead, He offers forgiveness and a new beginning. If we repent, receive a new heart and follow Him, God promises in Ezekiel 36:26, “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.”

Isaiah 1:18-20 presents both a promise and a warning. Verse 19 says, “If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land.” Verse 20 says, “But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”

If we reject God’s plan of salvation, there will be a day of reckoning. First Timothy 5:24 reminds us, “Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after.”

As always, I encourage you to mark your calendars for the Generations United Revival, “Come Alive Virginia,” Aug. 6-8 at the stage at Poplar Gap Park in Grundy.

Speakers and guests will include Joel Horn and youth from his church on Thursday, Aug. 6; Steven and Lori Ward of the Living Room Program on Friday, Aug. 7; and J.T. Harman, youth singing groups, and Jeremy and Amy Mickles, founders of Youth Worship Night, on Saturday, Aug. 8. Steven and Lori Ward will be with us all three nights.

Many young people will be ministering each evening through music, testimonies and skits. We invite everyone to come and join us. Please bring a chair, as the services will be held outdoors.

It’s going to be an awesome time in the Lord.

Rocklick News

Hello Readers

I got to watch our church service live this morning. Brother Scotty Coleman brought the message. He read Mark 8:34-38, Romans 6:16-19, Romans 6:21-23, Colossians 2:6, Revelation 21:1-4 and Revelation 22:13. Good service!!

Harman Freewill Baptist Church has announced the dates for their upcoming Vacation Bible School. The theme is Glow Go Light Our World! It will be held July 26, 27 and 28th from 6:00 p.m. until 8:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

Prayers and condolences for the family of Johnny Mitcheum. Kathy, I’m so sorry...

Happy 49th anniversary to Ray and I.

We actually got out and had our anniversary lunch at Woodbooger in Pikeville. The food was so good, and we had enough left for supper.

I went to the store on Friday and left strict instructions for Ray not to leave the couch! Well, of course, he left the couch, but he did well. I got lunch, so I didn’t have to cook.

I made a Food City run Saturday afternoon. The Southern Gap Soaring Eagle Marching Band kids had a car wash/bake sale at Advance Auto Saturday afternoon, and I stopped and gave a donation. They found a little kitten in the trash! They rescued it, and one of the girls was taking it home. That’s a great bunch of kids!!

Feeding My Sheep had their food giveaway yesterday and today, and served 455 households!

Reminder: the mobile food truck, Feeding Southwest Virginia, an equal opportunity provider, will be at the Grundy Community Center on Wednesday, June 24th. The truck arrives about 9 a.m., and the giveaway starts about 10 a.m. This is a drive-thru event; stay in your car, and we will come to you.



DEBBIE
FOSTER

ROCKLICK AREA NEWS
276-935-8296

My prayer list is long: Shannon and Christine (needs urgent prayers!), Sarah, Maranda, Shawne, Brad, Joann, Michelle, Linda, Alvin, Mac, Gary, Jerry and Vicky, Betty and Arlene, Leroy, Linda and James, Martha, Amelia, Teresa, Gary and Tammy, Jacob, Shawn, Charles, Eugene, Melinda, Stanley (broken heel) and Crystal, Steve, Scotty, Brother Kenny, Freddie and Sheila, Darrell and Vicki, Hudson, Amber, Dennis (urgent prayers needed!) and Kathy, Courtland, Amy, Anthony, Henry, Jerry, Farley and family, Pastor Gene and Joyce Miller, Lilly, Clarence and Reba, Matt, Jerry and Lona, Brenda, Justin, Glenda (needs urgent prayers!), Shirley, JJ, Mike, Jack, Pastor Ronnie and Alma Sliger, Timmy, Riley, Darrell, Debbie (pray hard for my sweet friend!), Maryann, Brian, Miss Gertrude (keep praying for an-

swers for this sweet lady!), Patty, Bill, Charles and Von, Ann, Jack and Annette, Curtis, Susie, Carol (blood clot), Ronnie and Carol, Mike, Thelma, Kim, Judy, Malva, Gary and Linda, Randy, Tyler, Miss Jean, Jerry, D.C., June, Rachel, Jason, Lonie, Dean, Ralph, Blakely, Ashleigh, Jim, Brenda, Barbara, Rodney, Chris and family, Lillian, Geraldine, Colin, Snoda, Judy, Mike and Dee, Bryan and Tina PPTA, Pam, Phillip, Peggy and Family, Renee, Melissa, Charlie, Linda, Gordon, Miss Irene, Elmo, Teresa, Chris, Anthony, Miss Pauline,

Henson and his family (very urgent prayers needed!), Margie, Melinda, Archie and Cathy, Martha, Colton, Ira, Jennifer, Daniel, Tracy, Glenda, Anderson, Nicole, Dave, Hope, Liz, Barbara, Danny, Brenda, Nancy, Joe and Sherry, Gail, Bobby, Christie, Kenny, Baby Weston, Baby Leon, Sandy, Buck and Harriet, Raymond, Mary, Wanda, Hazel and Sammy, Lois, Darrell, Sue, Jeff, Shirley, little Zach (keep praying!), Bobby, Mary Lou, Dreama (holding her own, keep praying!), and Ray and I. God knows every need...

If any of my Rocklick neighbors have anything they want me to share, please call me at 935-8296 or email me at dfoster_59@yahoo.com

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 6:44 KJV
Until next week...
Jesus is coming soon...
Happy Father’s Day

THE VIRGINIA MOUNTAINEER

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STAFF

MICHAEL SHOWELL: President, Virginia Media, LLC
AILA BOYD: Executive Editor, Virginia Media, LLC
WENDI CRAIG: Advertising
CHAD COOPER: Editor
ANOTHY STEVENS: Sports Reporter

CONTACT

THE VIRGINIA MOUNTAINEER
Telephone: (540) 389-9355
Member
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Savvy Senior: Should You Get a Heart Calcium Scan?

Dear Savvy Senior,
I just turned 58 and heart disease runs in my family. My cholesterol has been creeping up, and I've been hearing about a scan that can show your actual heart risk. Is that something I should look into?
--Heart Worried

Dear Worried,
You're smart to be thinking about this now. For years, cholesterol numbers have been the main way to estimate heart disease risk. But there's another tool gaining attention that can offer a more direct look: a coronary artery calcium scan, or CAC scan.

This quick, non-invasive test looks for actual plaque buildup in your heart's arteries, not just the risk of developing it.
Here's why that matters. High cholesterol suggests you might develop heart disease someday. But calcium in your arteries means some disease is already present. The higher your calcium score, the greater your risk of a future heart attack or stroke. That makes this test especially useful for people like you with a family history and borderline numbers.



SAVVY SENIOR

How it works
A CAC scan is a specialized CT scan that takes about 10 minutes and doesn't require needles or dyes. You simply lie on a table while the scanner takes images of your heart. It uses a small amount of radiation, similar to a mammogram.
The result is a calcium score that reflects how much plaque is in your arteries:
A score of zero means no detectable plaque.
A score from 1 to 100 indicates mild plaque.
A score from 100 to 299 suggests moderate buildup.
A score of 300 or higher points to more serious disease.

This number gives you and your doctor something concrete to work with. Instead of guessing about your risk, you can make more confident decisions about whether to start a statin or focus on lifestyle changes alone.

Who needs it
Not everyone needs a CAC scan. It's most helpful for adults over 40 who have some risk factors, like high cholesterol, high blood pressure, or a family history of heart disease, but aren't clearly high or low risk.
If your risk level is uncertain or you're hesitant about taking a statin, the scan can help break the tie. It can also be a strong wake-up call. Many people who see plaque on their scan are more motivated to take medication, improve their diet, lose weight, and stay active.

Getting one
CAC scans are widely available at hospitals and imaging centers that offer CT services. You'll usually need a doctor's order, but some centers offer self-pay screenings you can schedule yourself.
The scan typically costs about \$75 to \$200 out of pocket and usually isn't something you need to repeat very often. Results are often available quickly, sometimes within a day or two.
A couple of caveats: A score of zero doesn't mean you have no risk, and the test isn't meant for diagnosing symptoms like chest pain. It's just one piece of the puzzle and should be considered along with your overall health picture.
Given your age, family history, and slightly elevated cholesterol, a CAC scan could be a very useful next step. It's worth having a conversation with your doctor to see if it makes sense for you.
Send your questions or comments to questions@savvysenior.org, or to Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070.

Adult Education Connection

Adult education plays a vital role in empowering some individuals who struggle with confidence to become effective self-advocates. Self-advocacy is the ability to understand one's needs, communicate them clearly, and take action to achieve personal goals. Through adult education programs, learners can gain the knowledge and skills necessary to speak up for themselves in educational, workplace, healthcare, and community settings.
One of the most significant benefits of adult education is the development of communication skills. Many adults return to education seeking opportunities to improve literacy, language proficiency, or professional skills. Once they become more comfortable expressing their thoughts and ideas as well as advocating for their needs and rights. Effective communication enables individuals to ask questions, seek assistance, and participate actively in decisions that affect their lives.
Adult education also promotes critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Adult learners are encouraged to analyze information, evaluate options, and make informed decisions. These skills are essential for self-advocacy because they help individuals identify challenges, understand available resources, and determine the best course of action. Whether negotiating workplace accommodations, accessing community services, or pursuing educational opportunities, informed decision-making strengthens a person's ability to advocate effectively.
In addition, adult education fosters self-confidence and independence. Many adults develop a higher level of self-reliance to overcome barriers such as previous educational setbacks, financial difficulties, or limited opportunities. Successfully completing courses and achieving educational goals can increase self-esteem and reinforce the belief that they are capable of influencing their own futures. This confidence often extends beyond the classroom and encourages learners to become more active participants in their families, workplaces, and communities.
Adult education serves as a powerful tool for developing self-advocacy skills. By enhancing communication, critical thinking, self-confidence, and knowledge of personal rights, adult education helps to empower individuals to take control of their lives and pursue their goals. As adult learners become stronger self-advocates, they are better prepared to contribute positively to their communities and achieve greater personal and professional success.
For information on adult education classes in our area, please call Southwest Regional Adult Education at 276-889-5424.



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SHOWS, EVENTS & TICKETS

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CAM Season Pass

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Purchase

Spotlight on The CAM Theatre Guild of Buchanan County The CAM's New Website Makes It Easier Than Ever to Stay Connected

By JESSICA SAVAGE

The Theatre Guild of Buchanan County is excited to announce a major upgrade to The CAM's website, making it easier than ever for community members to discover upcoming events, purchase tickets, and stay connected with everything happening at Buchanan County's home for arts and entertainment.
While our website has long been available at www.seeyouatthecam.com, visitors will notice a completely refreshed experience designed to serve as the central hub for all things happening at The CAM. Whether you're interested in live music, theater productions, family events, special performances, camps, or community gatherings, our website is now the first place you should look when planning your next outing.
One of the biggest improvements is the ability to purchase tickets directly through the website. In the past, many patrons relied on social media posts, word of mouth, or individual event announcements to learn about upcoming shows. Now, everything is conveniently located in one place, allowing visitors to browse events, learn more about performers and productions, and secure tickets with just a few clicks.
As The CAM continues to grow, so does the variety of programming we are able to offer. From nationally touring performers to local talent, family-friendly events to community theater productions, our goal has always been to bring high-quality entertainment and cultural experiences to Buchanan County and the surrounding region.
The new website helps us accomplish that mission by creating a single destination where patrons can easily see what's coming next. We encourage everyone to bookmark the site and make it a regular stop when planning weekend activities, family outings, date nights, or visits with friends.
A quick look at our upcoming schedule shows just how much excitement is on the horizon.
Our Third Thursday Summer Concert Series continues to bring outstanding musical talent to The CAM's outdoor courtyard. These concerts have become a favorite community tradition, offering a relaxed atmosphere where friends and families can gather to enjoy live music throughout the summer months.
The CAM is also preparing for upcoming theatrical productions that continue the Theatre Guild of Buchanan County's long tradition of bringing quality community theater to the stage. Whether you enjoy comedy, drama, musicals, or classic plays, our productions provide opportunities for audiences of all ages to experience live theater close to home.
Families will also find a variety of opportunities throughout the year, including youth programming, special events, camps, and educational activities designed to inspire creativity and encourage participation in the arts. Many visitors are surprised to learn just how much is happening at The CAM beyond traditional stage productions.
In addition to our own programming, The CAM regularly hosts special performances, guest artists, tribute shows, concerts, community events, and private rentals. The website now makes it much easier to keep track of these opportunities as new events are added throughout the year.
One of the challenges facing any growing organization is making sure people know what's available. We often hear community members say, "I didn't know that was happening," or "I wish I had heard about that sooner." The new website is intended to solve that problem by providing a reliable, up-to-date source of information that is available anytime and anywhere.
Visitors can quickly browse upcoming events, check dates and times, view ticket information, and learn more about performers and productions. The site is mobile-friendly as well, making it easy to check schedules from your phone while on the go.
The CAM has experienced tremendous growth since opening its doors in 2021. As we look toward the future, we want our website to serve as the digital front door to everything we do. Whether you're a longtime supporter who attends every production or someone who has never visited The CAM before, we invite you to explore the site and discover what interests you.
We encourage everyone to visit www.seeyouatthecam.com and explore the new event listings. Better yet, save the website to your favorites and check back often. New events are added regularly, and there is always something exciting on the horizon.
The next time you're wondering what to do this weekend, planning a family outing, looking for a unique date night, or searching for live entertainment close to home, make The CAM website your first stop.

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READY TO SOAR

FROM PAGE 3A

ticipation continues to grow throughout Buchanan County. Southern Gap High School represents one of the largest educational investments in county history and will soon welcome its first class of Eagles when doors officially open in August.

With classrooms nearly finished, athletic facilities taking shape and specialized learning spaces coming together, county residents are beginning to see the vision of Southern Gap High School become a reality.



Photo's by Chad Cooper

A view of the spacious auditorium inside Southern Gap High School. The facility features a large stage that will accommodate school performances, concerts, ceremonies and community gatherings.



Photo's by Chad Cooper

State-of-the-art dental chairs and equipment are in place inside the dental hygiene classroom at Southern Gap High School. The program is designed to provide students with hands-on career and technical education opportunities in the healthcare field.



Photo's by Chad Cooper

The football stadium at Southern Gap High School nears completion as crews put the finishing touches on the facility. The new stadium will serve as the home of the Eagles when the school opens in August.



Photo's by Chad Cooper

The front entrance of Southern Gap High School showcases the school's impressive design as construction nears completion. The more than 200,000-square-foot facility is scheduled to open in August.



Photo's by Chad Cooper

New cafeteria equipment has been installed at Southern Gap High School as construction continues toward completion. The modern kitchen will serve hundreds of students daily when classes begin in August.

STUDENTS GRADUATE

FROM PAGE 1A

a year of learning, service, and personal growth,” Coleman said. “The program has strengthened my commitment to environmental stewardship and has inspired me to continue making a positive impact through conservation efforts in the future.”

O’Quinn completed a pollinator garden near the apiary at the Southern Gap Elk Habitat. Her project included planting perennial pollinators and several varieties of annual flowers designed to attract bees, butterflies and other beneficial insects. Educator Rochelle Deel, who teaches at Grundy High School and was named the 2025 Virginia State Conservation Education Teacher of the Year, served as O’Quinn’s mentor.

Big Sandy Soil and Water Conservation District officials noted butterflies were already visiting the garden shortly after the project was completed. The district also thanked Leon Boyd for preparing the planting area.

Childress designed and built hummingbird feeding stations that were distributed throughout Buchanan County. His project focused on increasing food availability for hummingbirds while promoting public awareness of wildlife conservation.

“It meant a lot to me to get to be apart of something bigger and to help protect our environment,” Childress said.

“This past year has been a lot of work with both YCLI and Envirothon, however I learned a lot from both and had a great time with friends while learning to help protect the environment. It was challenging but very rewarding”

District officials also noted that Childress recently earned his certification with the Grundy Fire Department while participating in YCLI and other environmental education programs.

Although he was not eligible to participate at the state level this year because he completed the YCLI program previously, Keyston Hartford continued his conservation work through a project completed in conjunction with Big Sandy Soil and Water Conservation District. Hartford continued his efforts involving bat conservation under the mentorship of Jon Fuller.

The Youth Conservation Leadership Institute is sponsored through Virginia’s soil and water conservation districts and encourages high school students to develop leadership skills while completing hands-on conservation projects that benefit their local communities.

Other 2025-26 YCLI graduates included Annika Gross and Ariya Lee of Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District, Auset Drakeford of Blue Ridge Soil and Water Conservation District, Alex Fogle of Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District and Alexandria Martinez of Prince William Soil and Water Conservation District.



Photo courtesy of BSSWCD

Blake Childress displays one of the hummingbird feeding stations he designed and built as part of his 2025-26 Youth Conservation Leadership Institute project. The feeders were distributed throughout Buchanan County to help support hummingbird populations and promote wildlife conservation.



Photo courtesy of BSSWCD

Abigail Coleman, a Grundy High School student and 2025-26 Youth Conservation Leadership Institute graduate, presents her pollinator conservation project during the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts banquet at Randolph-Macon College in Ashland. Coleman showcased the bee hotels she designed and distributed throughout Buchanan County to provide habitat for pollinators.

Area Tae Kwon Do students advance in rank

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

Nine students from the Buchanan County Tae Kwon Do program participated in a rank advancement test on May 27 at the Buchanan County YMCA.

The Buchanan County Tae Kwon Do class focuses on more than physical training, emphasizing personal growth, discipline and respect.

“Our class teaches discipline, the value of hard work, and how to show self-respect to others and those in authority,” Sensei Billy Mullins said.

Classes are held each Wednesday from 5

p.m. to 6 p.m. at the YMCA.

“Our classes meet once a week, on Wednesdays, and last for one hour,” Mullins added. “Classes run from 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm. Class is open for ages three and up. We have a large open dojo on the second floor of the YMCA. We use pads and foam during drills. We believe confidence, discipline, and strength are the core of an outstanding martial arts school. We are dedicated to providing exceptional standards of practice through our facilities and classes. Sign up and join our class today.”

Those interested in joining the program may register through the Buchanan County YMCA by calling 276-935-8871.



Submitted photo

Students and instructors with the Buchanan County YMCA Tae Kwon Do program gather for a photo following rank advancement testing held May 27 at the Buchanan County YMCA. Pictured in the front row, from left, are Phoenix Helton (Yellow Belt with Green Stripe), Byron Dailey (Yellow Belt), Griffin Helton (White Belt), Samuel Matney (Red Belt), Jayce Reed (Green Belt), Alivia Ly (Blue Belt), Lexi Johnson (Blue Belt) and Ariana Ly (Blue Belt). Back row, from left, are Sensei Tori Hall, Sensei Emma Farmer, Sensei Braydon Farmer, Logan Johnson (Blue Belt), Sensei Billy Mullins, Eli Matney (Brown Belt) and Braxton Brookshire (Red Belt with Black Stripe). Nine students participated in the rank advancement testing event.

Area softball standouts earn All-Region 1D honors

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

The Virginia High School League has announced its 2026 All-Region 1D softball teams, with several athletes from the Black Diamond District recognized for their performances this season.

The all-region teams were selected on June 9 during a meeting at the Russell County Technical School. Coaches from the Cumberland, Hogohegee and Black Diamond districts participated in the voting process.

Eastside senior Emma Sartin was named Region 1D Player of the Year after helping lead the Spartans to another successful season. Eastside coach Suzie Atwood and her coaching staff were selected as Region 1D Coach of the Year.

The first-team all-region squad included pitchers Emma Sartin of Eastside and Makenzie Gillenwater of Twin Springs. Northwood’s Bailee Nutter was selected as the first-team catcher.

The first-team infield featured Zoe Hester of Chilhowie at first base, Sarah Sartin of Eastside at second base, Mallory Durham of Twin Springs at third base and Cadence Rose of Eastside at short-stop.

The first-team outfield consisted of Haley Frazier of Honaker, Madi Preston of Eastside and Lindsay Dean of Chilhowie. Aliyah Hilton of Twin Springs earned first-team honors as the designated player.

A trio of Buchanan County athletes was selected to the All-Region 1D softball second team, including Grundy High School senior third baseman Ryleigh Church and a pair of Council High School players, freshman outfielder Zoey McGlothlin and Ava Rose as the designated player.

Church had a .531 batting average with a .610 on-base percentage, .939 slugging percentage, 15 RBIs, 23 runs scored, only three errors on the season, and ended her career with a .527 career batting average.

Rose had a .403 batting average on the season to go along with 23 hits and 14 RBIs. McGlothlin finished the year with a .436 batting average for 24 hits and seven RBIs.

The second-team all-region pitchers were Emmaline Dowell of Chilhowie, Allison Akers of Rye Cove and Gracie Shelton of Honaker.

At catcher, Presley Hall of J.I. Burton was selected to the second team. Kylee Darcy of Chilhowie earned second-team honors at first base, while Olivia Crouse of Rural Retreat was selected at second base.

SEE **SOFTBALL STANDOUTS** | 2B



Council's Ava Rose was named second-team All-Region 1D as a designated player for the 2026 season.



Grundy's Ryleigh Church was named second-team All-Region 1D as a third baseman for the 2026 season.



Council's Zoey McGlothlin was named second-team All-Region 1D as an outfielder for the 2026 season.

In the Locker Room

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

For 53 years, New York Knicks fans waited. They endured heartbreaking playoff exits, perhaps none more painful than the Patrick Ewing era of the 1990s, when Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls repeatedly stood in the way of an NBA Finals appearance. There was also the agony of 1995, when Reggie Miller scored eight points in nine seconds to steal Game 1 of the Eastern Conference semifinals before the Indiana Pacers eventually eliminated New York in seven games, capped by a 97-95 victory in Game 7.

There were missed opportunities, questionable coaching changes, draft busts and front-office turmoil. Under controversial owner James Dolan, the Knicks spent decades as the punchline of the NBA. Through it all, Knicks fans kept believing that someday the championship parade would return to Manhattan.

Finally, the wait is over.

New York erased a fourth-quarter deficit and stunned the San Antonio Spurs, 94-90, in Game 5 of the 2026 NBA Finals, capturing the franchise's first NBA championship since 1973 and ending one of the longest title droughts in professional sports.

As the final seconds ticked away, generations of Knicks fans celebrated a moment many never thought they would see. Madison Square Garden erupted during a viewing party, and the streets of New York became a sea of orange and blue despite the game being played hundreds of miles away in Texas. I can only imagine what the city would have looked like if the Knicks had clinched the title inside “The Garden.”

The suffering is finally over, and the celebrities who regularly occupy court-side seats at “The Mecca” — Ben Stiller, Spike Lee, Tracy Morgan, Fat Joe, Jay-Z and Larry David, among others — now have a championship to celebrate.

This year’s team finally got over the hump with an incredible playoff run. Led by Finals MVP Jalen “Big Body” Brunson, along with fellow Villanova alumni Mikal Bridges and Josh Hart, the Knicks also featured star center Karl-Anthony Towns and playoff hero OG Anunoby. Since winning the title, the team has been making the rounds in New York, appearing on shows such as The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon and Good Morning America. Brunson and Hart even got the opportunity to throw out the ceremonial first pitch at a Yankees game.

When it came down to it, San Antonio’s youth became its Achilles’ heel. The Spurs had several opportunities to get back into the series but couldn’t capitalize. I never like to place a series loss on one player, but I do feel for De’Aaron Fox, who struggled on the biggest stage and at times looked out of sync in the backcourt



CHAD COOPER

IN THE LOCKER ROOM

SEE **LOCKER ROOM** | 5B

GHS long-distance standout Hartford signs with UVA

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

Few athletes have left a mark on Grundy High School athletics quite like Keyston Hartford.

The three-time state champion, 12-time all-state performer and one of the most accomplished distance runners in school history officially signed on June 16 at Grundy High School to continue his academic and athletic career at the University of Virginia, fulfilling a dream years in the making.

Surrounded by family, friends and teammates, Hartford made official a decision he said had been settled for months.

“It feels amazing; I am really excited,” Hartford said. “Beyond that, I just can’t get over how blessed I am; the Lord has truly led me through to this point. He blessed me with the best family, friends, coaches, and teammates I could have ever asked for.”

The opportunity places Hartford in one of the nation’s premier collegiate conferences, as he will compete in the

SEE **HARTFORD SIGNS** | 5B



Contributed photo

Grundy High School star long-distance runner Keyston Hartford signed a national letter of intent to continue his academic and athletic career at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville in the fall, during a Tuesday, June 16, 2026, ceremony at Grundy High School. Hartford was joined by from left (sit-ting) Michael Hartford (father), Hartford, Tina Michelle Justice (mother), and Cody Hartford (brother); (standing) Phillip Van-dyke (coach), Christina Bane (coach), Loni Webb (coach), and Alexis Webb (coach).

New Peoples Bank

PLAYER OF THE WEEK

KEYSTON HARTFORD

Recent Grundy High School graduate Keyston Hartford is the New People's Bank Player of the Week. Hartford, an All-American long-distance runner, recently signed a letter of intent to continue his running and academic career next season in the Atlantic Coast Conference at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville.

New Peoples Bank

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CONGRATULATIONS!

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VARSITY

Members of the inaugural Southern Gap High School varsity basketball cheerleading squad pose following tryouts June 17 at the Roger and Susie Rife Park gymnasium. Front row, from left, are Ava Bucklen, Karissa Hurley, Bree Looney, Kali Stiltner, captain Claire Griffey, co-captain Taylor Cook, Aubrey Rice, McKenna Justice and Myiah Bell. Back row, from left, are Lily Lester, Chloe Skeens, Tenley Stiltner, Kami Roark, Anna Conaway, Morgan Hagerman, Kenzie Deel, Holly Childress and Kira Boyd.

Southern Gap announces inaugural basketball cheer squads

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

Southern Gap High School took another step toward its historic opening this fall by announcing its inaugural varsity and junior varsity basketball cheerleading squads following tryouts held June 17 at the Roger and Susie Rife Park gymnasium.

The teams will be among the first athletic groups to represent the Eagles when Southern Gap High School opens in August. The new school will serve as the lone high school in Buchanan County and will accommodate students in grades 8-12 from the Council, Grundy, Hurley and Twin Valley communities.

Varsity coach Angie Wolford said she was impressed by the athletes who participated in the tryout process.

“I couldn’t be more proud of the effort, determination, and heart these athletes showed throughout the tryout process,” Wolford said. “The talent this year was incredible, making some very difficult decisions. Our new squad is filled with athletes who are eager to learn, willing to work hard, and committed to representing the Eagles with pride. This group has tremendous potential, and I’m excited to watch them grow together, support one another, and make this a memorable season.”

Claire Griffey was selected as captain of the varsity squad, while Taylor Cook will serve as co-captain.

“Being named Basketball Cheer Captain means so much to me,” Griffey said in an interview with the Mountaineer. “It is about more than cheering at games. It is about bringing energy, supporting our team, and representing Southern Gap with pride. Being the last Basketball Cheer Captain at Grundy and now getting the

opportunity to be the first Basketball Cheer Captain at Southern Gap High School is very special to me. I have worked hard for this since I was very young, and being able to reach this goal means a lot. I am so grateful for this opportunity and for everyone who has supported me along the way. I can’t wait to lead my teammates, cheer on our players, and make this basketball season one to remember.”

Members of the inaugural varsity basketball cheerleading squad are Lily Lester, Chloe Skeens, Tenley Stiltner, Kami Roark, Anna Conaway, Morgan Hagerman, Kenzie Deel, Holly Childress, Kira Boyd, Ava Bucklen, Karissa Hurley, Bree Looney, Kali Stiltner, Claire Griffey, Taylor Cook, Aubrey Rice, McKenna Justice and Myiah Bell.

Ashlyn Scammell was named captain of the junior varsity squad, while Cecilia Potter was selected as co-captain.

Members of the inaugural JV basketball cheerleading squad are Aubrey Hurley, Autumn Yates, Aleigha Reynolds, Chasity Farmer, Ariana Swiney, Madisyn Yates, Alyssa Wright, Angela Lin, Kylie Cline, Ashlyn Scammell, Cecilia Potter, Mercedes Hurley and Isabella Blankenship. The junior varsity squad is coached by Kourtney Justus.

The squads will cheer for Southern Gap basketball teams during the school’s first season of competition and will help establish traditions for the Eagles’ new athletic program.

Southern Gap will begin classes in August and becomes Buchanan County’s lone public high school, uniting students from four longtime county schools under one banner.



JV TEAM

Members of the inaugural Southern Gap High School junior varsity basketball cheerleading squad pose following tryouts June 17 at the Roger and Susie Rife Park gymnasium. Front row, from left, are Angela Lin, Kylie Cline, captain Ashlyn Scammell, co-captain Cecilia Potter, Mercedes Hurley and Isabella Blankenship. Back row, from left, are Aubrey Hurley, Autumn Yates, Aleigha Reynolds, Chasity Farmer, Ariana Swiney, Madisyn Yates and Alyssa Wright.

SOFTBALL STANDOUTS

FROM PAGE 1B

Church was named the second-team third baseman for Grundy.

Emma Ross of Twin Springs earned second-team honors at shortstop.

The second-team outfield included Kasey Robinson of Twin Springs, Autumn Parks of Patrick Henry and McGlothlin of Council. Rose was selected as the second-team designated player.

2026 VHSL All-Region 1D Softball First Team Selections

- Pitcher – Emma Sartin, Eastside (Sr.)
- Pitcher – Makenzie Gillenwater, Twin Springs (Sr.)
- Pitcher – Bailee Nutter, Northwood (Soph)
- Catcher – Payton Hester, Chilhowie (Jr.)
- First base – Zoe Sartin, Eastside (Soph)
- Second base – Sarah Davidson, Twin Springs (Sr.)
- Third base – Mallory Durham, Eastside (Soph)
- Shortstop – Cadence Rose, Honaker (Soph)
- Outfielder – Haley Frazier, Eastside (Jr.)
- Outfielder – Madi Preston, Chilhowie (Sr.)
- Outfielder – Lindsay Dean, Twin Springs (Sr.)
- DP – Aliyah Hilton, Honaker (Jr.)

2026 VHSL All-Region 1D Softball Second Team Selections

- Pitcher – Emmaline Dowell, Chilhowie (Sr.)
- Pitcher – Allison Akers, Rye Cove (Jr.)
- Pitcher – Gracie Shelton, Honaker (Sr.)
- Catcher – Presley Hall, J.I. Burton (Jr.)
- First base – Kylee Dancy, Chilhowie (Jr.)
- Second base – Oliva Crouse, Rural Retreat (Sr.)
- Third base – Ryleigh Church, Grundy (Sr.)
- Shortstop – Emma Ross, Twin Springs (Soph)
- Outfielder – Kasey Robinson, Twin Springs (Soph)
- Outfielder – Autumn Parks, Patrick Henry (Soph.)
- Outfielder – Zoey McGlothlin, Council (Fresh.)
- DP – Ava Rose, Council (Sr.)

2026 VHSL All-Region 1D Softball Honorable Mention Team Selections

- Grundy: Sophia Belcher, Savannah Childress, Jade Vencill, Leah Rasnake and Ava Ward
- Hurley: Keshia Hagerman and Brooklyn Owens
- Council: Candace Runyon
- Holston: Haleigh Dutton
- Chilhowie: Anna Ramirez
- J.I. Burton: Mayala McCurdy

Southern Gap Dirt Drags crowns June 6 winners



Photo courtesy of Southern Gap Dirt Drags

The Southern Gap Dirt Drags track in Grundy has become a popular destination for dirt bike, ATV and side-by-side racers from across the region. The facility hosts races throughout the season, with the next event scheduled for June 20, 2026.

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

Southern Gap Dirt Drags continued its 2026 season on June 6 with racers competing across youth, dirt bike, ATV, UTV and special divisions at the track located on Southern Gap Road.

The event featured a full lineup of classes, with winners crowned in both trophy and money divisions.

McKenzie Stiltner captured first place in the Power Wheels class, followed by Everleigh Lester in second and Kinsley Boyd in third. Hunter Bowman won the Ages 9-12 class, with Conner Quincey placing second and River Rasnake finishing third.

In dirt bike competition, Bowman also took first place in the 65cc-100cc trophy class, with Kolten Pigg finishing second. Clay Stalker won the 101cc-200cc money class, followed by Ayden Bowman in second and Jace Hurley in third.

Kobe Blankenship took the win in the 201cc-250cc money class, with Kaden Watkins finishing second and Andrew Dotson third. Taylen Clevinger won the 251cc and up money class, followed by Trey Taylor in second and Kentsten Sutherland in third. Watkins earned first place in the open trophy class, with Adam Justus second and Clevinger third.

Nick Lester had a strong showing in ATV competition, winning the 401cc-500cc money class, the 501cc and up money class and the ATV open trophy class. In the 401cc-500cc division, Matthew Jackson placed second and Gary Jackson finished third. Sebastian Clark was second in the 501cc and up class. In the ATV open trophy division, Gary Jackson was second and Zackery Peck finished third.

The UTV classes also featured several competitive runs. Justin Boyd won the 801cc and up non-turbo money class, followed by Tony Viers in second and Canaan McClanahan in third. Chris Horn won the turbo modified money class, with Danny Boyd placing second.

The turbo stock money class was corrected following the original posting of results. Dean Ward was the winner, followed by Homer Waters in second and Cody Dales in third.

McClanahan won the non-turbo open trophy class, followed by Justin Boyd in second and Haley Phillips in third. Ward added another win in the turbo open trophy class, with Dales finishing second and Shawn Looney placing third.

In the special classes, Kiersten Looney won the Powder Puff open trophy class, with Haley Phillips finishing second. Phillips won the ET bracket open money class, followed by Gary Jackson in second and Shannon Dotson in third. Phillips also won the ET bracket open trophy class, with Dylan Stanley placing second. Danny Boyd claimed the Outlaw Open money class.

All racers must have a number plate on their machine, and dirt bike front rims must be covered. Racers must sign a waiver before practicing, and racers under 18 must have a parent or guardian sign a waiver before practicing or racing.

The 2026 Southern Gap Dirt Drags schedule continues with races set for June 20, July 4, July 18, Aug. 1, Aug. 15, Aug. 29, Sept. 12, Sept. 26, Oct. 10 and Oct. 24. The Oct. 24 race is scheduled as the season finale. Organizers noted that the schedule is subject to change due to weather or unforeseen circumstances.

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An aerial view shows the crowd gathered for the 2024 Prater Fire & Rescue Independence Day celebration. The annual event featured family activities, entertainment and a fireworks display, bringing together residents from throughout the Prater community and surrounding areas.



VDOT announces traffic alerts for Buchanan County

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

The Virginia Department of Transportation released traffic alerts for Buchanan and the surrounding counties.

To keep motorists informed, VDOT provides weekly updates on highway construction and maintenance projects throughout Southwest Virginia.

The following are current VDOT projects in Buchanan, Dickenson and Tazewell Counties that may cause traffic delays from June 22 through June 28, 2026:

Buchanan County

Route 460/121 Poplar Creek Phase B: Be alert to a new traffic pattern on Route 460 at Grundy due to the construction of Route 460/121 Poplar Creek Phase B. The switch is approximately 1.1 miles west of the Route 460/Route 83 (Riverside Drive/Edgewater Drive) intersection in Grundy. Motorists should be alert to flaggers in the area. (Completion: Late 2027)

Dickenson County

Route 83 roundabout at Route 637: Construction continues for a roundabout and a new park-and-ride lot at the intersection of Route 83 and Route 637 in Dickenson County. Be alert to lane shifts and closures. Pay attention to flaggers, signs, and message boards in the area. (Completion: October 2026)

Route 619 (Skeetrock Road) bridge repairs: Repairs are underway on the Route 619 (Skeetrock Road) bridge over Pound River in Dickenson County, between Routes 607 and 695. The project includes using temporary traffic signals to control one-way traffic. Pay close attention to temporary construction signs. (Completion: June 2026)

Russell County

Route 600 (Ivy Ridge Road) bridge replacement: A portion of Route 600 (Ivy Ridge Road) is closed due to a bridge replacement project in Russell County. The closure is located 0.6 miles north of the intersection of Route 600 and Route 664 (Carbo Road) and 1.3 miles south of the intersection of Route 600 and Route 725 (Egg Farm Road). A detour is available using Routes 600, 664, 616, and 615. Be alert to signs and message boards. (Completion: July 2026)

Route 19 safety improvements: Safety improvements are underway on Route 19 northbound in the Rosedale area of Russell County. Lane closures will be in place starting 0.8 miles west of Route 80. The right lane is restricted to a width of 11 feet. Watch for signs and message boards. (Completion: November 2026)

Tazewell County

Route 19/460 and Route 610 intersection improvements: An intersection improvement project is underway on Route 19/460, from the intersection of Route 19 with Route 460 at Adair Drive to the intersection of Route 19/460 with Route 610 in the Claypool Hill area of Tazewell County. Anticipate shoulder and lane closures in the area. (Completion: December 2026)

Several interstate projects are also going on during this time on Interstate 81 and Interstate 77, including the following:

Interstate 81 – Exit 50 and mile marker 52 bridge rehabilitations (Smyth County): A project that includes bridge rehabilitation work on six bridges north and southbound at exit 50 and mile marker 52 in Smyth County is coming soon. Be alert to construction crews mobilizing in the area. Nighttime lane closures will be in place for the duration of the project. Also, Be alert to flaggers and/or lane closures on Kiawana Road and Nick's Creek Road. Pay attention to signs and message boards. (Completion: November 2027)

Interstate 81 – Exit 45 deceleration lane extension (Smyth County): A project to extend the deceleration lane at exit 45 northbound in the Marion area of Smyth County is underway. The project includes replacing the northbound I-81 bridge over Matson Drive. Be alert to periodic nighttime lane closures and shifted traffic over Matson Drive. (Completion: December 2027)

Interstate 81 – Bridge rehabilitation at mile marker 68 (Wythe County): Due to a bridge rehabilitation project on I-81 north and southbound over Reed Creek at mile marker 68 in Wythe County, be alert to periodic extended lane closures and a width restriction of 14 feet. Pay attention to signs and message boards. (Completion: September 2027)

Interstate 81 – Roadway improvements (Wythe County): A project is underway to construct an auxiliary lane southbound between exits 73 and 72. Be alert to periodic lane closures in this area. (Completion: Fall 2026)

Interstate 81/77 interchange at Wytheville: Due to improvements on I-81 and I-77 at the interchange at Wytheville, pay close attention to signs and message boards. Be alert to possible lane restrictions and traffic shifts. (Completion: Summer 2027)

Interstates 81 and 77 maintenance activities — be alert to the following lane closures:

Interstate 81

Nighttime bridge inspections north and southbound between mile markers 85 and 82 in Wythe County.

Nighttime sign inspections north and southbound between Exits 7 and 10 in Washington County.

Nighttime bridge deck repairs northbound Monday – Thursday between Exit 67 and mile marker 69 in Wythe County.

Nighttime bridge deck repairs southbound between exits 5 and 3 in Bristol.

A super load will be traveling northbound from Bristol to the West Virginia state line, June 22 – 27.

A super load will be traveling southbound from Exit 81 to Exit 72 in Wythe County, June 22 – 26.

Interstate 77

Nighttime paving operations northbound from Exit 29 to Exit 32 in Washington County.

Nighttime bridge inspections north and southbound near Exit 41 and mile marker 43 in Wythe County.

Knox and Prater Fire Departments to host fireworks celebrations

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

Two Buchanan County volunteer fire departments are inviting residents to celebrate Independence Day with family-friendly events featuring fireworks, entertainment and activities for children.

The first event will be hosted by the Knox Creek Volunteer Fire Department on Friday, June 27, at the Tommy P. Justus Elementary/Middle School track with festivities beginning at 5 p.m. The department announced the fireworks show will begin at dark.

The celebration continues the following week when the Prater Volunteer Fire Department hosts its annual Independence Day event on Wednesday, July 2.

In addition to a fireworks display, Prater Fire & Rescue will offer inflatable attractions for children and families from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. Organizers said the inflatables will provide entertainment for youngsters leading up to the evening fireworks show.

Both events are part of a series of community celebrations taking place across Buchanan County ahead of the Fourth of July holiday. The festivities also coincide with the nation's 250th anniversary celebration and Buchanan County's 150th anniversary observance.



Members of the Knox Creek Volunteer Fire Department shop for fireworks at Crazy Herb's Fireworks in Shady Valley, Tennessee, in 2024 as they prepare for the department's annual Independence Day celebration. The volunteer firefighters travel each year to select fireworks for the community display, which draws families from across the Knox Creek area.

SAVE OUR STREAMS

FROM PAGE 1B

macroinvertebrates. It was very exciting to see that the stream was pretty healthy."

During the training, participants identified several pollution-sensitive organisms living in the stream.

"We identified those living in the stream. There were caddisflies, hellgrammites and water pennies," Presley said.

Virginia Save Our Streams has monitored water quality throughout the Commonwealth since 1989. The program helps determine whether streams are safe for swimming, fishing, recreation and drinking water sources.

Volunteers collect, count and identify benthic macroinvertebrates — small aquatic organisms that live in streams and have varying levels of tolerance to pollution. The number and diversity of those organisms are used to calculate a stream health score, providing a snapshot of a stream's overall health.

The information gathered through the program is submitted to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and the Chesapeake Bay Program, where it can be used to identify pollution concerns, target streams for additional monitoring, track restoration efforts, and educate the public.

Presley said the new certifications will create opportunities to expand the program throughout Buchanan County.

"We would love to be able to train all of the students in Buchanan County to become monitors for Save Our Streams," Presley said. "We can now make that happen when we become trainers."

For Deel, the certification provides a new educational tool for students at Grundy High School.

"I wanted to become a Water Quality Trainer so that I could continue water quality monitoring with my science classes," Deel said. "As a certified trainer, I can train and certify water quality monitors, enabling them to complete the certification process themselves."

Deel said the program offers students hands-on sci-

entific experience while also helping them build credentials for future educational and career opportunities.

"While I am committed to continuing to monitor our streams and provide valuable environmental data, my primary goal is to benefit my students," Deel said. "This program gives them a unique, hands-on opportunity to learn about benthic macroinvertebrates and how they serve as indicators of water quality."

"In addition, earning this certification provides students with a valuable credential that can be included on their résumés and college applications, helping them prepare for future educational and career opportunities," she said.

"We completed the Save Our Streams training on June 11. I had participated in the program a few times before, but this training was much more in-depth and hands-on," Hartford said. "Mrs. Deel, Jeanne and I learned a great deal about macroinvertebrates and how to evaluate water quality by studying the density and diversity of those organisms in a stream using various tools and techniques."

"Macroinvertebrates are small spineless organisms that live in the water and can be seen with the naked eye, including mayflies, hellgrammites and crane flies," Hartford added. "We used nets to collect them, identified and counted each species, and then entered the data into a chart that assesses stream health and provides a water-quality score. We are very thankful to the Izaak Walton League and Maggie Dombroski for taking the time to travel here and provide the training. All three of us are excited to use what we learned to make a difference in Buchanan County and the region and to have a positive impact on our streams and local ecosystem."

With Presley, Deel and Hartford now certified, local students and residents will have greater access to water-quality monitoring training and opportunities to participate in environmental stewardship efforts across Buchanan County.

FIREWORKS SHOW

FROM PAGE 1B

and friends to enjoy the festivities and support local businesses during the holiday celebration.

This year's celebration carries added significance as communities across the country mark the upcoming 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. The event also coincides with Buchanan County's sesquicentennial celebration, marking 150 years since the county's establishment in 1875, after it split from Tazewell County. Both events are free to attend. Organizers encourage visitors to arrive early and plan for increased traffic in the downtown area as crowds gather for the celebration.



A large group of area residents enjoys a local band on Saturday, July 5, 2025, in Downtown Grundy.

KAMRYN COOPER | Virginia Mountaineer

FATHER'S DAY FUN

WORD SEARCH

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

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

WORDS

APPRECIATION
BARBECUE
BRAVERY
CELEBRATION
COACH
DAY
DEDICATION
DEVOTION
FAMILY
FATHERHOOD
FATHERS
FISHING
GENEALOGY
GENEROSITY
GRILLING
GUIDANCE
HERITAGE
KINDNESS
LEGACY
MENTORSHIP
PATERNITY
RELATED
RELIABILITY
RESPECT
TRADITION
TRIBUTE
WISDOM
WORDS



ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20
Aries, physical activity can boost your mood and clear your mind for some big decisions that are ahead this week. Tackle some larger projects.

TAURUS – Apr 21/May 21
Indulge in simple pleasures this week, Taurus. They will lead you to the happiness you deserve. You may discover a new favorite recipe or cozy nook to hang out.

GEMINI – May 22/June 21
Networking may feel less like a chore and more like a party this week, Gemini. A chance encounter could open a door to an excellent opportunity.

CANCER – June 22/July 22
Cancer, right now your home is filled with laughter and shared memories. It's a great week to host a small gathering or a movie night with close friends to share all the good vibes.

LEO – July 23/Aug 23
Leo, today you are a beacon of light and a source of inspiration. Use your unique position as a leader to spread positivity and watch good fortune multiply.

VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22
Virgo, you are often a master of finding practical solutions to tricky problems both at work and at home. Your reliable nature is a great gift to those around you.

LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23
Libra, some diplomacy this week can help you navigate a complex situation with ease. Find moments for mindful meditation so you can create a calm atmosphere wherever you go.

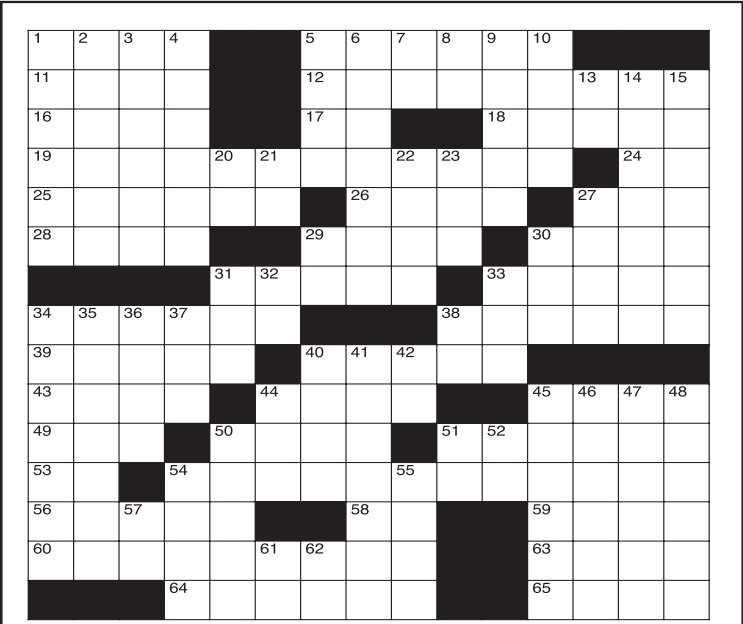
SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22
If you are brave enough to voice it, a secret wish just might come true, Scorpio. After some difficult days, you can use a bit of magic and mystery to change your perspective.

SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21
You're definitely a glass-half-full kind of person, Sagittarius. This optimism will open doors to a new horizon. A sudden urge to learn something new leads to an opportunity.

CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20
Discipline will be rewarded with a measurable success that can feel very uplifting, Capricorn. Your hard work is finally getting the recognition it deserves.

AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18
Be your most authentic self this week and watch how it attracts those you want in your circle, Aquarius. A weird coincidence may lead to a funny situation.

PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20
Pisces, calmer waters ahead allow you to reflect on yourself and recharge your emotional batteries. You may emerge at the end of the week centered and ready for anything.



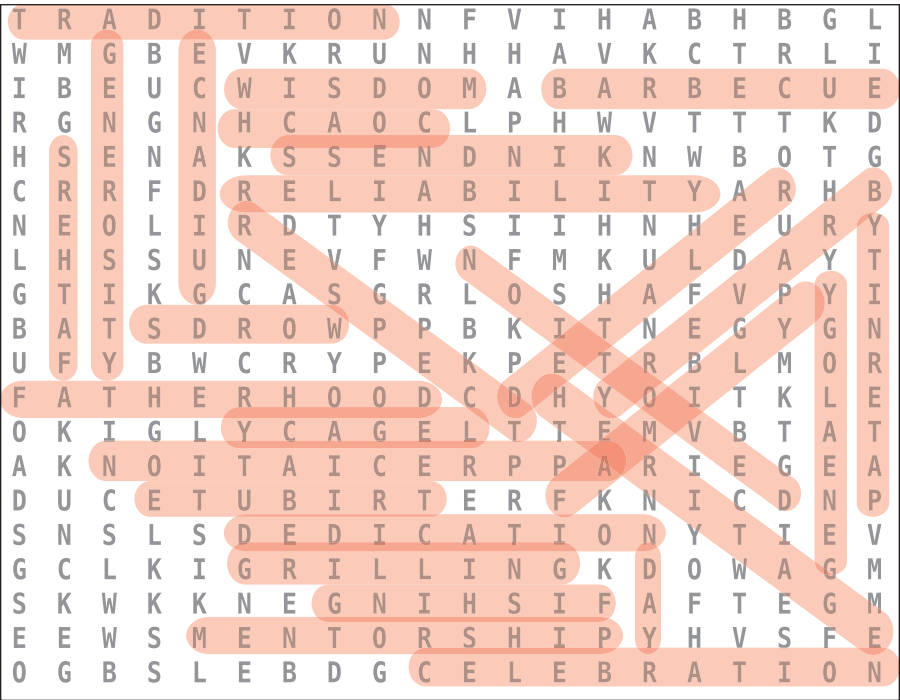
- CLUES ACROSS

1. Nocturnal S. American rodent
5. Requesting
11. Give temporarily
12. Excitedness
16. Armed Forces branch
17. Actor Harris
18. Middle Eastern capital
19. Air hostesses
24. Partner to "Pa"
25. Percussion instrument
26. Popular computers
27. Reduce light
28. Asian mountain range
29. Every one of two or more
31. A public announcement of a proposed marriage
33. Whittles
34. Impact
- CLUES DOWN

34. Snack food
35. Front part of a quadruped
36. Locate
37. Pitching statistic
38. __, myself and I
40. City in Utah
41. They play in the trenches
42. "Can't Touch This" rapper __ Hammer
44. Type of tree
45. Performers
46. Slang for mistake
47. More open
48. Most slick
50. Needles
51. University of Dayton
52. Atomic #11
54. Large fish of the mackerel family
55. Not any
57. __ and behold
61. Popular sports highlight show (abbr.)
62. "The Great Lakes State"

PUZZLE SOLUTION

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



SUDOKU

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

Level: Intermediate

WORD SCRAMBLE

Rearrange the letters to spell something pertaining to Father's Day.

R D R E A W

--	--	--	--	--	--

Answer: Reward

GUESS WHO ?

I am a singer born on June 22, 1953 in New York. I embraced bright hair and edgy clothing during my teen years. That paved the way for my style throughout much of my musical career. In addition to pop music, I created the soundtrack to a Broadway show and changed the history of World Wrestling Entertainment.

Answer: Cyndi Lauper

CRYPTO FUN

Solve the code to discover words related to the pollinators. Each number corresponds to a letter. (Hint: 26 = O)

A. 6 26 4 4 13 17 9 7 26 19
Clue: Carries pollen

B. 11 4 26 25 16 19
Clue: Contains petals

C. 22 19 26 25 7 23
Clue: Getting bigger

D. 24 4 26 26 5 8
Clue: Flowering

Answers: A: pollinator B: flower C: growth D: blooms

SUDOKU SOLUTION

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

FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS

JUNE 21
Lana Del Rey, Singer (41)

JUNE 22
Meryl Streep, Actress (77)

JUNE 23
Jason Mraz, Singer (49)

JUNE 24
Minka Kelly, Actress (46)

JUNE 25
Benson Boone, Singer (24)

JUNE 26
Jacob Elordi, Actor (29)

JUNE 27
H.E.R., Singer (29)

LOCKER ROOM

FROM PAGE 1B

alongside Stephon Castle and Dylan Harper. Still, if I'm in San Antonio, I run it back. The Spurs possess the ultimate X-factor in Victor Wembanyama, who seems to rise to every challenge placed before him. If he stays healthy, he has the potential to join the conversation with some of the greatest players the game has ever seen.

Now, let's switch gears. I recently had the opportunity to tour Southern Gap High School, and I cannot say enough about how impressive the facility is becoming. I've heard rumors that the classrooms are small, but nothing could be further from the truth. They are huge. The school is quickly taking shape and has the potential to become the premier high school facility in Southwest Virginia.

The auditorium is massive and resembles a professional performance venue. During my visit, bleachers were being installed in the gymnasium, and I was amazed by how high they already reached before construction superintendent Tim Burge informed me that five more rows would be added. The wrestling room will be outstanding, and the football stadium already has the look and feel of a small college venue. With its bowl-style design, elevated walkways and scenic surroundings, there truly won't be a bad seat in the house. I had the opportunity to step inside the press box, and the view was absolutely breathtaking.

Even though this is a sports column, I have to mention the Career and Technical Education (CTE) wing. It is unlike anything I've seen in a public school. The classrooms are enormous and filled with state-of-the-art equipment that will provide students with hands-on training opportunities.

HARTFORD SIGNS

FROM PAGE 1B

Atlantic Coast Conference at the NCAA Division I level while studying environmental science.

UVA has long been Hartford's top choice. "It has always been my dream school since I was young, both academically and athletically," he said. "I always thought it would give me the greatest opportunity for improvement in both fields, and the greatest opportunity in life."

Hartford said he expects to continue competing in many of the same events that made him one of Virginia's elite distance runners during his high school career.

"I will be sticking to a lot of the same stuff I did in high school," he said. "I think I will end up being more of a distance runner and run the longer stuff on the track, but only time will tell."

His athletic resume speaks for itself. During four years at Grundy, Hartford captured three state championships, including the VHSL Class 1 cross-country title as a junior. He also won state championships in outdoor track, the 3,200-meter run as a junior and, as part of Grundy's state championship 4x800-meter relay team, during his freshman season.

In addition, Hartford finished as state runner-up six times, earned all-state honors 12 times and claimed 14 regional championships across cross country, indoor track and outdoor track. He was named State of Franklin Runner of the Year and earned Grundy High School Runner of the Year honors in track all four years and in cross country three times.

While Hartford's accomplishments on the course and track are impressive, his success extended far beyond athletics.

He graduated as co-salutatorian of the Class of 2026 with a 4.11 GPA. Hartford was recognized as Student of the Year all four years of high school and earned the Citizenship Award as a senior. He also received outstanding student honors in mathematics, English and science.

A standout student leader, Hartford participated in numerous clubs and organizations, including Envirothon, Plant the Moon and Build the Moon, Key Club, Science Seminar, Prom Committee, Student Council Association, Recycling Club, SAVE, Youth Conservation Leadership Program, American Sign Language Club, Beta Club and National Honor Society. He also served as class secretary during his junior and senior years.

His success attracted attention from college programs across the region and beyond.

Hartford received scholarship offers from George Mason University, Virginia Military Institute, Radford University, the University of Charleston, Charleston Southern University and the University of North Carolina. He also had contact with programs including Georgetown University, the University of Georgia, East Tennessee State University and Appalachian State University.

Despite the attention from other schools, UVA stood above the rest.

Although he has not visited the campus recently, Hartford said previous trips left a lasting impression.

"The campus is beautiful, and the facilities are top-notch," he said. "They both provide everything to succeed academically and athletically."

Hartford, the son of Tina Justice and Matthew Hartford, lives on Slate Creek near Grundy. He credits much of his success to the support system around him.

"I want to thank my family for all the never-ending support they have shown me and the work ethic they have instilled in me," Hartford said. "I want to thank all my friends and teammates for always being there and pushing me to be better."

He also expressed gratitude to the coaches, teachers and community members who have supported him throughout his journey.

"Most of all, I want to thank God for allowing me the opportunities he has blessed me with and created for me," Hartford said. "I want to thank him for the ability to compete and just the ability to be where I am today. He deserves every ounce of glory because without him, nothing would ever have been possible."

As one of the final graduating seniors in Grundy High School history before the school's consolidation into Southern Gap High School, Hartford reflected on what the Golden Wave meant to him.

"Last of all, I want to thank Grundy High School for showing me support and shaping me over the past four years," he said. "It is bittersweet that we will never walk through the halls again, but I wouldn't change my high school experience for anything."

Looking ahead, Hartford hopes to make an impact both on the track and in the classroom. He plans to pursue a career focused on environmental stewardship and conservation.

"After college, I want to make a difference in this community and world by coming up with solutions to keep our environment and ecosystem clean, happy, and healthy for years and years to come," Hartford said. "There is no where else in the world like our mountains, and it is our job to keep it together and safe."

For a school that has produced its share of champions, Hartford's signing with one of the nation's most respected academic and athletic institutions adds another chapter to Grundy's rich athletic tradition.

The dental hygiene lab looks better than most professional dental offices I've visited. The equipment will be top-notch, and the automotive bays will give future mechanics a facility they can take pride in. The entire building impressed me.

The cafeteria, complete with an outdoor seating area and open-concept design, creates a college-like atmosphere that students are sure to enjoy.

I wasn't a fan of consolidation when talks began to heat up, even though I understood it was probably the best for the county.

As a member of the Hurley High School Class of 2000, I will always consider HHS my school. Over the years, however, I've grown attached to all of Buchanan County's schools and the communities they represent. I have made many new friends from all around the country and learned who I can count on.

Today, I'm all in.

Seeing our student-athletes together this summer, competing as one program, has also got me pumped about the one school. I look forward to seeing that massive trophy case begin to fill up.

Celebrate the history of our now-closed schools by building a shrine for yourself, as I have and cherish the memories and traditions that made each one special. But it's also time to look ahead. Start getting your SGHS gear because, as of Thursday, June 18, Southern Gap High School is only 61 days away from opening its doors.

The excitement surrounding Southern Gap High School is undeniable, and I can't wait to see the Eagles take flight. This is a school that all of Buchanan County can be proud of. Once students and families walk through those doors and see what has been built, I believe even many of the skeptics will come around. Southern Gap High School is here, and it's something special. You might as well embrace it—the future has arrived.

CLASSIFIEDS

LEGAL NOTICES

ORDER OF PUBLICATION
COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
Va. Code §§1-211.1; 8.01-316.317, 20-104
Case No. CL26-550
Buchanan County Circuit Court 1012
Walnut Street/PO Box 929
Grundy, VA 24614.
Nichole Elaine Palmer

LEGAL NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICES

v.
Richard Arthur Palmer

The object of this suit is to:
Obtain a divorce on the grounds of one-year separation. It is ORDERED that Richard Arthur Palmer appear at the above-named court and protect his inter-ests on or before August 4, 2026 at 9:00 a.m.
VM-6-25, 7-2,9,16:2026

PUBLIC NOTICE

Appalachian Agency for Senior Citizens will receive public comment on the proposed Area Plan for Aging Services for FY 2026-27. A 30-Day Public Comment Period will begin on Friday, June 26 and end on Sunday, July 26. In addition, a public hearing will be held prior to AASC's regularly scheduled Advisory Council meeting on Tuesday, July 7 at 12:00 PM. The hearing will be take place at AASC's central office, 216 College Ridge Road, Cedar Bluff, VA, located in the Wardell Industrial Park. To obtain information regarding the Area Plan and/or to submit public comments, contact CEO Brian Beck or CFO Carolyn Counts by: telephone at 276-964-4915; or email at bbeck@aasc.org.

Notice or Advertisement

The Buchanan County School Board is accepting applications for the following position(s):

- **Finance Director**
Minimum qualifications: Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration and a minimum of 5 years of financial administrative experience in a public agency.

Deadline: July 9, 2026 at 8:00 a.m. Interested person(s) may print a Professional Application from our website at www.bcpskl2.com or call to have an application sent to you. Return the completed application to Becky Harrison.

Buchanan County Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups.

The Buchanan County Public School System is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Notice or Advertisement Returning Substitute In-service 2026-2027

Buchanan County Public Schools has scheduled an in-service training for returning substitute teachers, instructional aides, cafeteria staff, custodial staff, nurses, coaching staff, and volunteers. If you would like to remain on the 2026-2027 substitute, coach, and volunteer list, you must attend the in-service scheduled for July 28, 2026 at 9:00 a.m. at Riverview Elementary/Middle School. This in-service is required for those who are returning substitutes, coaches, and volunteers.

The pay scale for substitute personnel is as follows:

- Bachelor's or Master's Degree Teacher possessing a valid Collegiate Professional license and working as a long-term substitute for an extended period of time- \$172.00 per day.
- Bachelor's or Master's Degree Substitute Teacher not working as a long- term substitute but working periodically for different teachers- \$107.25 per day.
- Associate Degree -two (2) years of college -64 semester hours -96 quarter hours \$98.25 per day.
- High School Graduate or Equivalent -\$95.78 per day.
- Cafeteria of Custodial Substitute -\$12.77 per hour.

****Please be advised that all substitute teachers will be paid on the high school pay scale until an official transcript is sent to Becky Harrison at the Buchanan County School Board Office. If you have any questions, please contact Becky Harrison, Human Resource Director, at 276935-4551.**

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Notice of Public Hearing Town of Grundy, VA

Tuesday, July 14, 2026, 6:50 pm
1185 Plaza Drive, Grundy, VA 24614

RE: Converting existing Loans from the
Town of Grundy
to the Town of Grundy IDA into a Grant.

Authorized By:
Dennis A. Ramey
Town Manager

Notice or Advertisement BCPS New Policy: Anyone attending the new in-service will be responsible for paying all in-service fees the day of the in-service.

Buchanan County Public Schools has scheduled in-service training for **new substitute** teachers, instructional aides, cafeteria staff, custodial staff, coaching staff, and volunteers. Please attend the in-service scheduled for July 29, 2026 at 8:30 a.m. at the Buchanan County School Board Office. **This in-service is required for those who are new substitutes teachers, instructional aides, cafeteria, custodial, coaching staff and volunteers.**

The following items will be needed for this in-service:

- \$27.00 Live Scan Fingerprint -You must go to the Buchanan County Sheriff's Office to get this scan and bring the scan with you on the in-service day. The fee for this service is payable to Buchanan County Public Schools.
- TB Screening -This service can be performed at the Buchanan County Health Department. The fee for this service is \$17.05 payable to the Buchanan-County Health Department.
- \$96.00 Lab Service (drug screen) payable to Buchanan County Public Schools.
- \$12.30 Central Registry Background Search payable to Buchanan County Schools.
- Two (2) proofs of identification (Driver's License and Social Security Card).
- Direct Deposit information (voided check).
- All fees will need to be paid the day of the in-service with cash. The total amount of fees payable to BCPS is \$135.30 (exact cash and change).
- If you have a college degree please bring an official transcript the day of the in-service.
- Please note: The next in-service training for new substitutes will be in January 2027.

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- Bachelor's or Master's Degree Substitute Teacher not working as a long- term substitute but working periodically for different teachers- \$107.25 per day.
- Associate Degree -two (2) years of college -64 semester hours -96 quarter hours -\$98.25 perday.
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Looking for the oldest American Flag

By **CHAD COOPER**
coopkam@gmail.com

The Levisa River Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution is asking the public for help locating the oldest American flag in the region.

In honor of the 150th anniversary of Buchanan County and the nation's upcoming semiquincentennial,

or 250th anniversary, the Levisa River DAR invites the public to submit a photo of themselves with their oldest American flag, along with the story behind it.

"If you have an old flag, tell us its story," said Ola Clevinger, chairman of the flag committee for the Levisa River DAR. "Tell us how you came into possession of it and what it means to you or your family. Also, please send a picture of the flag and identify everyone shown."

Clevinger said the community may be home to a re-

markable piece of history and that the group needs help finding it. The flag may be a personal possession or housed in a town or county building. The organization would like to know the flag's purpose, history, and what it means to those connected to it.

The deadline for submissions is June 26, 2026, by 5 p.m. Send photos of the flag and its history by email to Clevinger at olaclevinger@hotmail.com. For more information, contact Clevinger at 276-210-5409.409.

Storms leave 300 Buchanan customers without power

By **CHAD COOPER**
coopkam@gmail.com

Hundreds of Appalachian Power customers in Buchanan County remained without electricity last Friday morning as crews continued working to restore service following severe thunderstorms that swept through the region Thursday.

According to Appalachian Power, approximately 300 customers in Buchanan County were without power as of 9:15 a.m. on June 19. The outages were part of a larger storm-related impact that left about 3,700 customers without service across Virginia and more than 5,300 customers without power throughout Appalachian Power's service territory.

The utility said strong winds and heavy rain caused damage to power lines and equipment across Southwest Virginia, Northeast Tennessee and parts of West Virginia.

Buchanan County was among several Southwest Virginia localities affected by the storms. The hardest-hit counties in Virginia included Henry County with about 1,270 outages, Smyth County with 930, Dickenson County with 850, Russell County with 360, Franklin County with 315 and Wise County with 290.

In neighboring states, approximately 200 customers were without power in Sullivan County, Tennessee, while about 1,200 customers remained without service in West Virginia. The largest outages there were reported in Raleigh County with 420 customers affected and Mason County with 206.

Appalachian Power officials said crews and contractors have been working around the clock to assess damage and restore service. About 1,650 company employees and business partners are involved in the restoration effort, including mutual assistance crews from Alabama, Kentucky and Ohio.

Restoration efforts could face delays due to continued windy conditions. Appalachian Power noted that bucket truck operations must be suspended when wind speeds exceed 30 mph for safety reasons.

The company reported that repairs are needed at 179 locations across its service territory. Despite the widespread damage, officials expect more than 90% of customers affected by Thursday's storms to have power restored by 11 p.m. Friday. Some customers in the hardest-hit areas may remain without service into the weekend.

Appalachian Power is also monitoring additional storms forecast throughout the weekend, warning that new outages could occur if severe weather develops.

Officials urged residents to stay away from downed power lines and anything they may be touching, including tree limbs, fences and other

objects. Hazardous conditions should be reported immediately to 911 or Appalachian Power.

Customers can report outages and monitor restoration updates through Appalachian Power's outage reporting system and outage map.

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is just a click away!

LOCAL NEWS

SPORTS

OBITUARIES

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Local Coverage. Real Stories. Real People.

Your Community. Your Stories. Your Newspaper.

Find us online at **WWW.VIRGINIAMOUNTAINEER.COM**

Thank You!
TO ALL WHO HELPED MAKE OUR
BUCHANAN COUNTY HEAD START PRESCHOOL FAMILY FUN DAY
A HUGE SUCCESS!

NEARLY 280 ATTENDEES!

A DAY FILLED WITH FUN, LEARNING & CONNECTION!

BOUNCE HOUSES

FACE PAINTING

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

THANK YOU TO OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Buchanan County Public Library • Sandy Soil & Preservation
Grundy Women's Club • Buchanan County Department of Social Services
Cumberland Mountain Community Services • Oakwood Fire & Rescue
Virginia State Police • Buchanan County Sheriff's Office • People Inc.
Buchanan County Health Department

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Pizza Plus • Hurley's Jump Zone • Krissy McClanahan

and the many local businesses and individuals whose generous support and contributions helped make this event possible!

THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS BUSINESSES & INDIVIDUALS!

Food City • Bellacino's • El Sombrero • Transitions Spa • Medical Park • Hall's Market • 460 Market • Radio Shack
Advance Auto Parts • Master's Hand • Unique Nails • Elaine's Boutique • Kenneth Ratliff • Comfort Assured LLC
Noah Horn Well Drilling • New People's Bank • TruPoint Bank-Grundy Branch • TruPoint Bank-Oakwood Branch
Buchanan County Department of Social Services • Irwin & Tunnelling- Big Rock location • Wal-Mart • Chad's Zip-In
Hurley Pharmacy • Mike's Towing • Long John Silvers • Special Touch Hair Salon • R&M Pallets • Main Street Floral
Bob Branham Sales • Tim & Ivy Boutique & Gifts • Pizza Plus • Buchanan County Sheriff's Office

To Our Head Start Families...
Lastly but certainly not least, BCHSP would like to extend its sincere appreciation to its Head Start families for allowing the program to play a meaningful role in their children's early education and development.

★ TOGETHER, WE MADE FAMILY FUN DAY A HUGE SUCCESS! ★
★ BUCHANAN COUNTY HEAD START PRESCHOOL ★
Building Strong Foundations for Lifelong Learning

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- ★ Pillows
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Limited Time Offer Ends July 3, 2026 on Sealy Qualifying Mattress

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