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TWO SECTIONS PLUS SUPPLEMENTS | \$2

BCSO deputies to begin using body-worn cameras

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

Buchanan County Sheriff's deputies will soon begin wearing body cameras, marking a significant step toward increasing transparency, accountability and public safety across the county.

Sheriff Allen W. Boyd announced this week that the Buchanan County Sheriff's Office has purchased body-worn cameras for its deputies. The cameras will be phased into service over the coming months as deputies complete training, equipment is installed and departmental policies and procedures are finalized.

The new technology will provide deputies with the ability to record law enforcement interactions, creating an objective record that can assist criminal investigations, support court proceedings and help resolve citizen complaints.

"The addition of body-worn cameras is an important investment in public safety and reflects our continued



commitment to transparency, accountability, and professionalism," Boyd said. "The cameras will provide an objective record of law enforcement interactions, assist with criminal investigations and prosecutions, help resolve citizen complaints, and document the professional service our deputies provide to the citizens of Buchanan

County each day."

Body-worn cameras have become increasingly common among law enforcement agencies across Virginia and the nation, serving as an additional tool to document encounters between deputies and the public.

Boyd said the purchase was made possible through careful financial planning within the Sheriff's Office.

"This project was made possible largely through taxpayer dollars that were available because of responsible budgeting and careful management of Sheriff's Office resources," Boyd said. "We believe it is important to make sound financial decisions while continuing to invest in equipment and technology that benefits both our deputies and the community we serve."

The sheriff also credited the continued support of the Buchanan County Board of Supervisors for helping make the project possible.

"I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the

SEE **BCSO DEPUTIES** | 6A



Photo by Chad Cooper

Members of the Buchanan County Board of Supervisors met during a special called meeting on Friday, July 10 and voted unanimously to remove Tim O'Quinn from the Buchanan County Industrial Development Authority Board. Pictured, from left, are Prater Supervisor David Rose, Board Chairman and Hurricane Supervisor Tim Hess, Garden Supervisor Jeff Cooper, South Grundy Supervisor Roger Rife, North Grundy Supervisor Lee Dotson and Knox Supervisor Trey Adkins. Rocklick Supervisor Craig Stiltner attended the meeting remotely by Zoom.

BOS removes O'Quinn from IDA board, dispute erupts

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

A unanimous vote by the Buchanan County Board of Supervisors to remove Industrial Development Authority Chairman Tim O'Quinn from the IDA board has ignited a public dispute over transparency, economic development and the handling of taxpayer funds.

During a special called meeting Friday, July 10, the Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to remove O'Quinn from the Buchanan County Industrial Development Authority Board. North Grundy Supervisor Lee Dotson

made the motion, which Knox Supervisor Trey Adkins seconded before the board approved it. Rocklick Supervisor Craig Stiltner participated in the meeting by Zoom.

No public discussion was held before the vote.

Within hours of his removal, O'Quinn released a lengthy statement on social media accusing county officials of removing him for asking questions about public spending and oversight.

"They removed me from the IDA for asking too many questions," O'Quinn wrote. "Now I'm going to ask even more."

SEE **BOS REMOVES O'QUINN** | 2A



Courtesy photo

Former Buchanan County Industrial Development Authority Chairman Tim O'Quinn was unanimously removed from the IDA Board by the Buchanan County Board of Supervisors during a special-called meeting on Friday, July 10. O'Quinn later released a public statement criticizing the decision and pledging to continue seeking answers regarding county government spending and transparency.

Garden supervisor Cooper honored with VOGA award

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

Buchanan County's Jeff Cooper has been recognized for nearly three decades of leadership in Virginia's oil and gas industry, receiving the Virginia Oil & Gas Association's Community and Ambassador Award during the organization's annual summer meeting in Virginia Beach.

The Community & Industry Ambassador Award is presented by the Virginia Oil & Gas Association (VOGA) to individuals who demonstrate outstanding

SEE **COOPER HONORED** | 6A



CFX funding officially approved in state budget

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

After months of anticipation, \$7 million in state funding for the Coalfields Expressway is officially in place.

The funding became final when Virginia's budget was approved June 29, securing money to continue construction of the U.S. 460 completion project in Buchanan County. State Sen. Todd Pillion, R-Washington County, who served as the only Southwest Virginia lawmaker on the conference committee that negotiated the final spending plan, announced the project's inclusion in the completed budget.

The \$7 million will fund the completion of approximately 4 miles of U.S. 460, extending from the Virginia 80 intersection near Breaks Interstate Park to the Virginia 609 intersection, where the roadway connects to the existing four-lane highway. According to Jonathan Belcher, executive director of the Virginia Coalfields Expressway Authority and the Virginia Coalfields Economic Development Authority, two lanes of the section have already been completed. The newly approved funding will allow construction of

the remaining two lanes, creating a continuous four-lane highway between Grundy and Pikeville, Kentucky, once the project is finished.

The state funding adds to \$3 million approved earlier this year in the federal budget for the same project. Belcher said the project is expected to be advertised for bids and completed within about three years.

Construction also continues on Poplar Creek Phase B, the final two-mile section connecting Poplar Creek Road to Grundy. VDOT estimates that the project will be completed in late 2027 and will cost an estimated \$178 million.

The Coalfields Expressway is designed to provide a safer and more efficient transportation corridor through Southwest Virginia while reducing travel times, improving access to health care and creating new opportunities for business, tourism and economic development.

Since 2023, several major sections of the highway have opened to traffic, including approximately 2.5 miles of Route 121 in November 2023 and another three

SEE **CFX FUNDING** | 6A



Photo courtesy of VDOT

Another massive bridge pier rises from the ground below Grundy as construction continues on the Coalfields Expressway's Poplar Creek Phase B project. The final two-mile section will connect Poplar Creek Road to Grundy, completing another key segment of the long-awaited four-lane highway through Buchanan County. Construction is expected to be completed in late 2027.

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Arthur Hersel Goff

ARTHUR HERSEL GOFF, 88, of New Castle, Virginia, passed away Tuesday, June 30, 2026. He was preceded in death by parents Arthur H. and Mary Goff; wife Glenna Goff; son James H. Goff; and son-in-law Craig Reynolds.

He is survived by daughters Robin Hallberg (Martin) and Cynthia Reynolds; daughter-in-law Janice Goff; grandchildren Angela Estes

(Shane); April Armendariz (Gabe); Jason Goff; Jack Mayer (Erika Grammel); and Kathleen Mayer (Peter Sloan); nine great-grandchildren and one great-great grandchild.

A memorial service was held at 6:00 pm Wednesday, July 8, 2026, at the Cornerstone Church in New Castle, Virginia, with Pastor Don Brown officiating.



Arthur Hersel Goff



Courthouse News

June 22 – Industrial Development Authority to Jerry Calvin Scarberry, Lot 20, Southern Gap Phase 1A subdivision, Mountain Crest at Southern Gap, \$27,261.00.

June 22 – Linda Blankenship, to Douglas Eugene Lester, tract Home Creek, Levisa River, \$25,000.00.

June 22 – James Douglas Yates, ETAL to Roger Dale Pugh, ETAL, two tracts Little Prater Creek, Levisa River, \$173,000.00.

June 23 – Judy Lynn Meadows Horn, ETAL, to TL Properties LLC., 3.31 acres North Grundy District, \$20,000.00.

June 23 – Industrial Development Authority, to Southern Gap Enterprises LLC., tract Southern Gap Prater District, \$230,000.00.

June 23 – Jessica Nicole Ratliff Oney, to Lora Beth Stiltner, 1.04 acres, Left Hand Fork, Garden Creek, Levisa River, \$10,000.00.

June 23 – Jeffery Allen Blankenship, to Roberta L. Freeman, 3.54 acres, Big Prater Creek, Levisa River, \$10.00.

June 23 – Judy Gay Counts, ETAL, to Jamie Lynn Justus, 0.87 acre Blackeys Fork, Knox Creek, Knox District, \$86,000.00.

June 25 – Timothy W. Ratliff, to Zachary Lester, ETAL, tract Knotty Poplar Branch, Poplar Creek, Levisa River, \$515,000.00.

June 25 – Bridget Cornelia Ball, to Harold Johnson, five acres, Hurricane District, \$35,000.00.

June 29 – Gerald Douglas Arrington, to Trung Hoang Ly, ETAL, two tracts, Town of Grundy, \$110,000.00.

June 30 – Denise K. Elswick, to Nicholas T. Hunt, ETAL, tract Turnpike Branch, Big Prater, Levisa River, \$10.00.

June 30 – Pratt Property Management, LLC, to Ellis Hunt, two tracts Turnpike Branch, Big Prater Creek, \$1,200.00.

June 30 – Rufus Wayne Viars, ETAL, to Ricky Adam Viers, ETAL, one acre, Buchanan County, \$1.00.

June 30 – Betty Viars, ETAL, to Michael Lee Viars, ETAL, tract Bill Young Branch, Contrary Creek, Big Sandy River, \$1.00.

June 30 – Betty Viars, to Michael Lee Viars, ETAL, tract Meeting House Branch, Slate Creek, Levisa River, deed of gift.

June 30 – Betty Viars, to Michael Lee Viars, ETAL, tract Compton Mountain, deed of gift.

June 30 – Billy Charles Duty, ETAL, to Kevin Lyall, ETAL, 2.39 acres Right Hand Fork, Bull Creek, Levisa River, \$10,000.00.

June 30 – William Blankenship, ETAL, to Tina Baker, three tracts Lester's Fork, Knox District, \$8,000.00.

June 30 – Mary Jane Compton, ETAL, to Mark Fitchett, ETAL, 25 acres Loggy Bottom Branch, Dismal River, \$7,500.00.

June 30 – I S Ratliff, ETAL, to Mark Fitchett, ETAL, half undivided interest tract Slate Creek, \$11,000.00.

June 30 – Henry Cecil Hawkins, ETAL, to Luis A. Alberto Cruz, tract Little Paw Paw Creek, Russell Fork River, \$3,500.00.

Diana Leigh Duty

DIANA LEIGH DUTY, age 72, of Wolford, Virginia, passed away on July 5, 2026, in Lebanon, Virginia, surrounded by her family following a brief illness.

Beloved “Granny” to many, Diana will be remembered for her fun-loving spirit, playful mischief, and childlike wonder of the world around her. She loved her family, adored her pets, and never lost her sense of adventure. She found joy in life’s simple moments and had a remarkable way of making those around her smile. Whether sharing a laugh, creating cherished memories with those she loved, or simply enjoying the company of family and friends, Diana’s warmth and kindness left a lasting impression on everyone fortunate enough to know her.

Throughout her life, she made many places her home, including Hurley, Virginia, and Kissimmee, Florida. To know Diana was to know laughter, compassion, and a heart that always made room for family, friends, and every animal that

crossed her path. Her greatest happiness came from the people and animals she loved, and the memories she created with them will be treasured always.

Diana is survived by her daughter, Belinda Justus; her grandson, Jimmy “Marcus” Justus, whom she loved as a son, and his life partner, Christopher Culbertson, of Lebanon, Virginia; her grandsons, Bradley Hurley and Matthew Ball; her granddaughter, Ashley Hurley, of Raven, Virginia; her brothers, Starlin Gibson and his wife, Janice, of Grundy, Virginia, and Frankie Gibson and his partner, Dreama Bevins, of Grundy, Virginia; her sister-in-law, Mary Duty, of Hurley, Virginia; and her extended family, Debra Stacy, Tracy Keen, and Jojo Key, and her beloved dogs, Flipper, Khaleesi, and Khloe, who brought her endless love and companionship.

She was preceded in death by her cherished husband, Jimmy Dean Duty; her daughter, Hope Leigh Prater; her son, Scotty Duty; and her cousin, Linda Salmons, whom she



Diana Leigh Duty

loved as a sister.

A celebration of Diana’s life will be held by the family at a later date, with the time and location to be announced.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that memorial donations be made to your local animal shelter in Diana’s memory, honoring her lifelong love of animals.

Grundy Funeral Home is honored to serve the family of DIANA LEIGH DUTY.

Geneva Frances “Jean” Harman

GENEVA FRANCES “JEAN” HARMAN, of Abingdon, Va., went to be with the Lord on Monday, July 6, 2026, at Commonwealth Senior Living.

Born in Buchanan County, Va., to the late Ulysses Jackson and Ettis Breeding Jackson, Jean was a dedicated member of her community. She served as an auxiliary volunteer at Johnston Memorial Hospital for many years and worked as a substitute teacher at the former Garden Elementary School. Her hobbies included yard work of any kind but especially gardening. In addition to her parents, Jean was preceded in death by seven siblings: Fern Lowe, Fred Jackson, Bill Jackson, Jerry

Jackson, Joan Maxwell, Suzie Hughes, and John Jackson.

She is survived by her husband of 65 years, Henry Ford Harman; two children, Greg Harman and wife, Beth, of Tazewell, Va., and Beth Farmer and husband, David, of Raven, Va.; two grandchildren, Matthew Farmer and wife, Marisa, of Swords Creek, Va., and Tyler Harman of Tazewell, Va.; and two great-grandchildren, Madiynn and Colton Farmer. She is also survived by several nieces and nephews.

The family of Geneva Harman is being cared for by Perry Cremation & Funeral Alternatives, 1000 W. Main St., Abingdon, VA 24210 (276) 776-5950.



Geneva Frances “Jean” Harman

BOS REMOVES O'QUINN

FROM PAGE 1A

O’Quinn said he refused to “rubber-stamp” requests involving millions of dollars in public funding connected to the Appalachian School of Law, arguing that additional review was necessary before taxpayer money was committed.

“Here’s the truth: the Board of Supervisors wanted the County IDA to hand over millions of dollars to the Appalachian School of Law, no questions asked,” O’Quinn wrote. “No due diligence, no feasibility study, nothing. Just write the check and look the other way.”

O’Quinn emphasized that he supports the Appalachian School of Law and its proposed merger with the University of Pikeville but believes any public investment should be handled with transparency and accountability.

“I believe in the potential of ASL and the benefits it can bring to our community,” he wrote. “But I also believe we have a duty to be transparent about how we’re spending taxpayer money.”

O’Quinn further alleged that after the county IDA sought additional due diligence, county officials instead pursued funding through the Town of Grundy Industrial Development Authority. He also claimed former Buchanan County IDA Executive Director Matt Fields left his position after disagreements over transparency.

In addition, O’Quinn questioned other county matters, including operations involving the Buchanan County Public Service Authority, saying public officials should welcome scrutiny over taxpayer spending.

“These aren’t accusations,” O’Quinn wrote. “They’re just basic questions that any steward of public funds should be asking.”

O’Quinn also announced that he has filed a Freedom of Information Act request seeking records involving bids, board minutes and other documents related to the issues he raised.

“If everything was done properly,” he wrote, “there should be nothing to hide.”

He concluded his statement by pledging to continue seeking answers despite his removal.

“They can take away my seat,” O’Quinn wrote. “But they can’t take away your right to know how your money is being spent.”

After O’Quinn accused county officials of removing him for demanding transparency, Adkins forcefully rejected those claims via social media, saying the decision had nothing to do with asking questions and everything

to do with how O’Quinn conducted IDA business.

“You didn’t get removed today because you didn’t sign the money over to the law school,” Adkins said. “That’s been months ago.”

Instead, Adkins alleged O’Quinn exceeded his authority as IDA chairman by making decisions that the full board should have approved during a public meeting. He accused O’Quinn of hiring legal counsel and authorizing a \$10,000 payment without a formal vote of the IDA board.

According to Adkins, both County Attorney Lee Moise and he warned O’Quinn against hiring Tazewell County attorney Flux Neo after learning the attorney was facing disciplinary issues with the Virginia State Bar.

“I didn’t tell him to stop digging,” Adkins said, responding directly to O’Quinn’s social media post. “I told him to pick a different lawyer. Period.”

Adkins further alleged that O’Quinn signed a contract and issued a \$10,000 check without the IDA board’s approval.

“Not one time did any other board member get to vote specifically on Flux Neo and paying him \$10,000,” Adkins said. “There was never a meeting on it. There’s no minutes on it.”

Adkins also claimed the IDA ultimately filed a complaint with the Virginia State Bar regarding the attorney and alleged efforts to recover the money paid have been unsuccessful. Those claims have not been verified by the Mountaineer.

He disputed O’Quinn’s portrayal of himself as someone removed simply for asking questions.

“What you did was when Matt (Fields) wouldn’t come down when subpoenaed to the Board of Supervisors meeting to answer questions about things he was doing at work, he resigned,” Adkins said. “You thought it was a good idea to try to sneak a vote in” to continue paying the former executive director after his resignation.

Adkins also accused O’Quinn of attempting to secure two consecutive \$10,000 raises for former IDA Executive Director Matt Fields, and later of trying to hire Fields as a grant writer after Fields resigned. Those allegations also remain unverified.

He denied O’Quinn’s suggestion that county officials have concealed information from the public, arguing that records are available through Virginia’s Freedom of Information Act.

“Everything that me or you are saying can be dug up in



Photo by Chad Cooper

Knox Supervisor Trey Adkins addresses the Buchanan County Board of Supervisors during Friday’s special-called meeting, at which the board unanimously voted to remove Tim O’Quinn from the Buchanan County Industrial Development Authority Board. Adkins later disputed O’Quinn’s claims surrounding the removal, saying the decision was based on actions taken while serving as IDA chairman.

public records through a FOIA request,” Adkins said.

Adkins went on to say he intends to refer information involving O’Quinn’s actions to the Buchanan County Commonwealth’s Attorney for review and believes additional information regarding the dispute will become public.

“We’re going to keep digging,” Adkins said. “You’re @\$\$ is getting turned over to the Commonwealth Attorney. She’ll have to appoint a special prosecutor, and they’ll deal with you.”

O’Quinn, meanwhile, maintains his removal stemmed from his insistence on greater transparency regarding public spending and says he has filed a Freedom of Information Act request seeking records involving the law school funding, the IDA and other county matters.

As of press time, no criminal charges had been filed, and none of the allegations made by either side had been adjudicated in court.



LOOKING BACK

From our files

60 YEARS AGO

JULY 14, 1966

Gary Boyd, stellar lineman on Grundy High's 1965 football team, has been chosen to participate as a member of the Virginia squad in the 1966 High School All-Star game to be staged at Mitchell Stadium in Bluefield on Aug. 19. Gary, son of Mr. and Mrs. Thurman Boyd, was chosen on the 1965 All-Buchanan County team and the All-Southwest District squad for the same year.

Miss Sherry Ann Wampler graduated with honors Sunday, June 26, from National Business College. The graduation exercises were held in the Kazim Temple Auditorium. Wampler is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Floyd Wampler of Oakwood.

55 YEARS AGO

JULY 15, 1971

The Buchanan County School Board held an organizational meeting on Tuesday, July 6, which had been delayed one day due to the holidays. The Board, which operates on a July-through-June year, reelected John Astor Rife as chairman and Glenn Matney as vice chairman. Ivon Compton of Council was reappointed to the term representing the Hurricane District.

Mr. Charles Gregory Looney of Oakwood, a student at King College, is named on the Dean's List for the semester just completed, having averaged B or better in all his courses. A 1968 graduate of Garden High School, Mr. Looney is a member of the rising senior class at King and is majoring in mathematics.

35 YEARS AGO

JULY 11, 1991

After a two-hour closed-door session, the Buchanan County School Board returned to name James Carroll Branham as the new principal at Grundy Senior High School. Branham, who has been the student coordinator at GSHS, is also a past principal at Grundy Junior High School. He will replace Mary McGlothlin, who retired at the end of the 1990-1991 school year.

Andrea Miller Payne, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Franklin Miller of White-wood, has been nominated again to have her biography published in Who's Who Among American High School Students for 1990-1991.

25 YEARS AGO

JULY 12, 2001

Russell A. Justus has been awarded the degree of Doctor of Chiropractic by Logan College of Chiropractic in Chesterfield, Mo. Justus and his wife, Amber, reside in Abingdon. He is the son of Charles Justus of Hurley and Brenda Justus of Abingdon. Justus was among 111 graduating students honored at the 133rd commencement of the school, held recently at the Scottish Rite Cathedral in St. Louis.

Dr. Bradley VanDyke of VanDyke Chiropractic, P.C. at Vansant, has obtained the designation of Certified Chiropractic Sports Physician (CCSP) by the American Chiropractic Board of Sports Physicians. The CCSP degree requires the doctor to attend a 120-hour postgraduate program.

Damron earns inaugural ASL scholarship

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

The Appalachian School of Law has announced that first-year student Tatumn Damron has been selected as the inaugural recipient of the Steven R. Minor Memorial Scholarship, an award established to recognize excellence in legal research and writing.

Damron, a native of Schererville, Indiana, earned her undergraduate degree from Truman State University before enrolling at ASL. During her first year of law school, she distinguished herself through outstanding performance in legal research and writing, earning the honor as the scholarship's first recipient.

The scholarship was created in memory of Steven R. Minor, a respected attorney remembered for his professionalism, dedication to the legal profession and exceptional skill in legal research and writing. School officials said the scholarship will be awarded annually to a first-year student who best reflects those same qualities.

Damron said receiving the inaugural award is both an honor and a responsibility. "I'm deeply honored to be the first recip-

ient of the Steven R. Minor Scholarship," she said. "It means so much to receive a scholarship that honors someone so respected for their dedication to legal research and writing. Knowing his colleagues and friends created this award to celebrate that legacy makes the recognition feel even more meaningful."

She said the award reinforces the importance of developing the skills that serve as the foundation of a successful legal career.

"Legal research and writing is the foundation of effective advocacy, and dedicating myself to mastering it feels like the right way to honor someone who clearly valued precision and clarity in the law," Damron said.

ASL officials congratulated Damron on the achievement, noting that the scholarship recognizes not only academic excellence but also the commitment and discipline needed to succeed in the legal profession.

The law school expressed confidence that Damron will continue to build on her accomplishments during her time at ASL and throughout her future legal career while carrying forward the legacy of Steven R. Minor.



Photo courtesy of ASL

Tatumn Damron, a first-year student at the Appalachian School of Law, has been named the inaugural recipient of the Steven R. Minor Memorial Scholarship. The annual scholarship recognizes excellence in legal research and writing and honors the legacy of respected attorney Steven R. Minor.



Contributed photo

The Southwest Virginia Community College's Southern Gap Transportation and Logistics Center will host a free Disaster Preparedness Workshop from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Thursday, July 23. The event, presented in partnership with United Way of Southwest Virginia and the United Recovery Force, will provide families with practical emergency preparedness training, and each household attending will receive a free disaster preparedness bucket.

Disaster preparedness workshop planned at SGTLC

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

Residents will have an opportunity to learn how to better prepare their families for emergencies later this month during a free disaster preparedness workshop at Southwest Virginia Community College's Southern Gap Transportation and Logistics Center (SGTLC) on Southern Gap.

The event, hosted by Southwest Virginia Community College in partnership with United Way of Southwest Virginia and the United Recovery Force Disaster Division, is

scheduled for 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. on July 23 at SGTLC, located at 1102 Ovenbird Road in Grundy.

The free, hands-on training session is designed to help individuals and families prepare for emergencies by teaching practical disaster preparedness skills and safety measures. Organizers said participants will learn easy-to-follow steps they can use before, during and after natural disasters or other emergency situations.

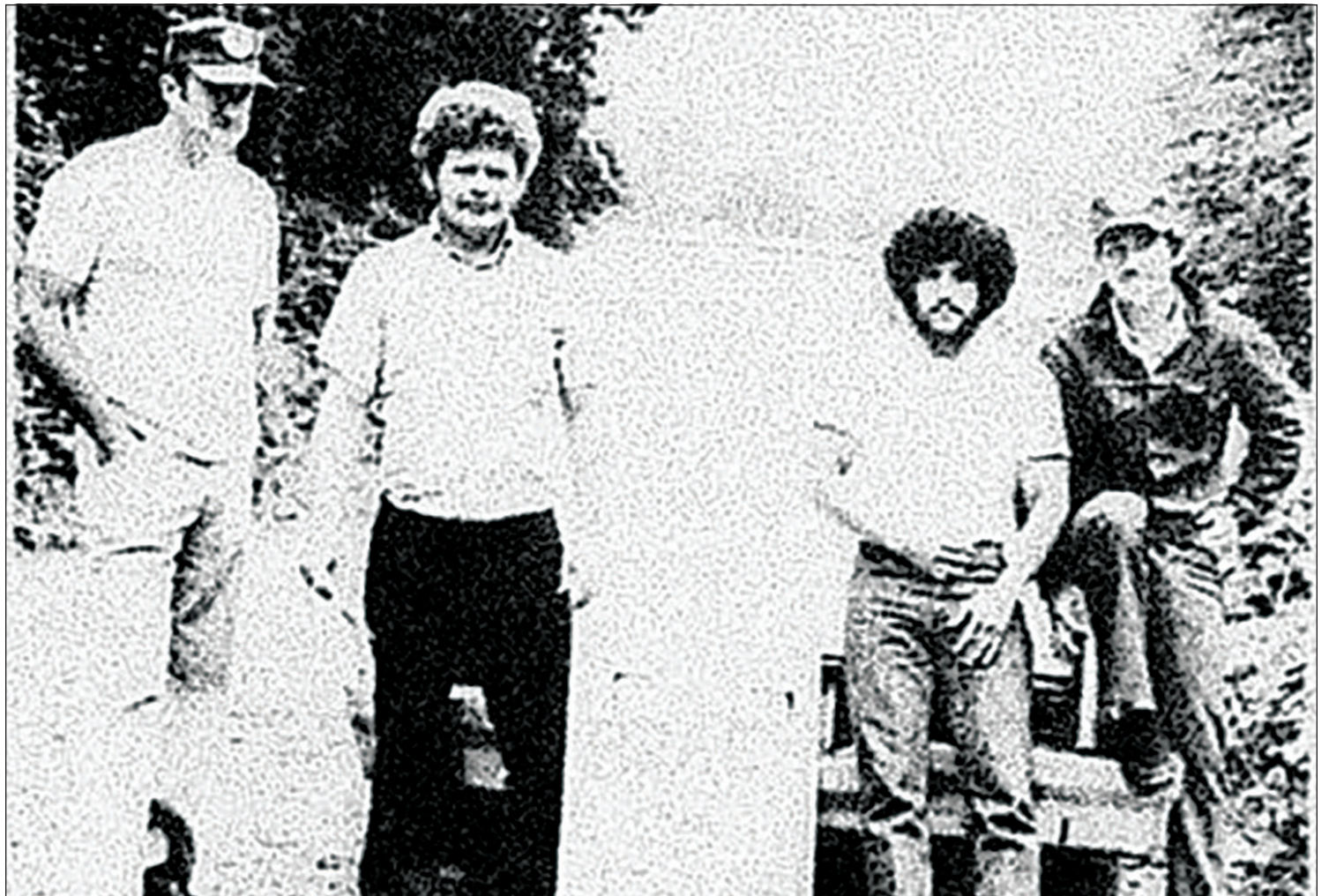
In addition to the training, each family attending the workshop will receive one free disaster preparedness bucket filled with emergency preparedness supplies.

The workshop is part of an ongoing effort by Southwest Virginia Community College and the United Recovery Force to strengthen disaster readiness across Southwest Virginia by providing communities with the knowledge and basic resources needed to respond to emergencies.

Officials encourage residents of all ages to attend, noting that no previous emergency preparedness experience is necessary. The event is free and open to the public.

Those with questions about the workshop may contact Joseph Moore, disaster recovery specialist, at (276) 268-2508 or by email at jmoore@unitedwayswva.org.

GOOD OL DAYS



ON THE PICKET LINE at the East end of Weller Yard in mid-July of 1978 are four employees of the N & W Railroad. They are (left to right): Landon Davis, Jack Jennings, Freddie Dickie and James Miller. Jennings and Miller are members of the strike. Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks. Davis and Dickie are members of the United Transportation Union. The UTU is not on strike but is honoring the BRAC's picket lines.

Congressman Griffith: Actions on Agriculture

A core pillar of the economy for Virginia's Ninth District is agriculture. Whether they raise corn or cattle, cut timber or Christmas trees, agricultural producers all play a vital role in rural America's success.

Thanks to our agricultural communities, we can deliver fresh produce, supply grocery stores, feed American families, spur small business economic activity, support local communities and so much more.

Given these meaningful contributions, I explore opportunities in Congress to support America's agricultural sector.

Often that means voting for better federal policy. In April, I voted for a bill that helps strengthen the farming industry in Virginia's Ninth District.

H.R. 7567 – the Farm, Food, and National Security Act provides funding resources for farmers.

The farm bill helps institutions like Virginia Tech with federal funding through various research grant opportunities.

The farm bill creates a pilot program for badly needed additional custom slaughter establishments. Small meat-processing facilities may be able to sell their meat inside the Commonwealth of Virginia as long as their product has a label that says the product is not inspected by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Further, the farm bill promotes 21st century technologies to help farmers modernize their operations to make them more efficient.

I believe there are some very positive provisions that will help Virginia farmers. That is why the bill has support from the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, the Virginia Agribusiness Council and the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation, among others.

After Republicans helped pass this critical legislation for rural America, it awaits action in the Senate. I will continue to encourage Congressional action on policies that benefit our American farmers.

Not only do I support Congressional action, but I also work with the Trump Administration to help deliver better outcomes for Virginia's farmers.

Such was the case this year as the Commonwealth has faced harmful weather events.

In response to frost and freeze events during the



MORGAN GRIFFITH

WEEKLY REPORT FROM THE CAPITOL

spring that impacted many farms, Virginia requested a Secretarial Disaster Designation from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

I helped lead efforts in Virginia's congressional delegation to urge USDA Secretary Rollins to approve Virginia's request.

In June, Secretary Rollins granted our request! Many Virginia farmers who suffered crop losses from the spring can now access emergency loan assistance.

Further, severe drought this summer has caused additional challenges.

Governor Spanberger has urged Virginians to conserve water as Virginia faces its driest period since 1941.

Secretary Rollins approved parts of Virginia to be eligible for federal drought relief, with Tazewell County receiving a primary natural disaster area designation. Bland, Buchanan, Russell and Smyth Counties may also request federal drought assistance.

As growing season challenges and record temperatures threaten to destabilize farming operations, I will continue my advocacy at the federal level for farming community access to federal disaster resources.

Our farmers need access to more than just resources. They need access to opportunity.

That is why President Trump continues to work on trade deals that create opportunities for the American farming industry to market its products globally.

Trump's trade actions have improved American beef producers' access to markets in Southeast Asia.

All the while, we continue to monitor the situation with South American beef.

Due to the deteriorating relationship with China caused by many factors, trade negotiations have been tougher.

In those negotiations, I have joined lawmakers in writing to President Trump to protect American tobacco.

One complication is likely that the Chinese Communist Party controls the expansive Chinese tobacco industry.

For many years, China was among the U.S. trade partners that annually purchased as much as 80 million pounds of American tobacco.

However, China made clear it would not buy America's superior quality flue-cured tobacco from the 2025 crop. This announcement spelled unease and trouble for Virginia's tobacco producers.

Accordingly, I am supportive of President Trump's efforts to ensure fair treatment of American farmers and expanded market access for our farming products.

Some have not fared as well with the tariffs, and Congress is working to ameliorate those issues. Affecting our region is the export of timber products.

Whether it is crops, livestock, timber or other items, America's agricultural sector creates the best quality products in the world. Accordingly, it is only right for them to get a fair shake.

I will continue working in Congress to promote policy outcomes that make farming operations in the U.S. more sustainable, less costly and more successful.

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

In this article, we are going to look at the Iranian Revolution and the American Revolution. Although America's presence in the Middle East has often been viewed as a stabilizing force, it has also been complicated because of two very different ideologies.

The American Revolution was founded on the principles of freedom, democracy and capitalism. Christianity has influenced America since its founding. Some may disagree, but many of the signers of the Declaration of Independence were Christians.

According to an article published by The Gospel Coalition, churches in the United States send more missionaries than any other nation. U.S. churches support approximately 127,000 of the world's 400,000 missionaries. Because of this, America has played a major role in spreading Christianity around the world.

Now let's look at the Iranian Revolution and the spread of Islam. The belief system of Islam is based on the absolute authority of Allah and Islamic law, which has been ingrained in Muslim societies for centuries. The word Islam means "submission," and the word Muslim means "one who submits."

Who is Allah? Is Allah the God of the Bible? I believe the answer is no. The Bible says in 1 John 2:22, "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son."

The Quran, Islam's sacred book, is believed by Muslims to be the word of God revealed to Muhammad through the archangel Gabriel. It teaches that Allah has no son and re-



THE WATCHMAN

fers to Jesus as a prophet rather than the Son of God. The Quran also refers to Allah as "the best of deceivers." Because of these fundamental theological differences, I believe negotiations based solely on shared religious beliefs are difficult.

Most Shia Muslims believe there have been only 12 true Imams. According to this belief, the Twelfth Imam has been hidden from the world since the ninth century and will one day return to establish a worldwide Islamic caliphate. They believe he will appear during a time of worldwide conflict, war and destruction. In this view, these events prepare the way for the coming of the Mahdi, who will establish Islamic rule throughout the world.

Many politicians do not understand this mindset. Today, Israel is surrounded by nations where the majority of the population is Muslim. Many Islamic nations, particularly in the Middle East, consider Israel to be occupying Palestinian land. Christians who believe the Bible view the situation differently.

In Genesis 15:18-21, God made a covenant with Abram, saying, "Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates."

Many Muslims are

taught that the Mahdi will one day lead a final conflict against Jews and Christians, recapture Palestine and unite Islamic nations into one empire. Both Sunni and Shia traditions include beliefs about the Mahdi, although they differ in many details. Some traditions associate his appearance with Iraq, the region of ancient Babylon described in Genesis 11 and the Book of Daniel.

Both Sunni and Shia traditions recognize the cities of Karbala and Samarra as important in Islamic history. Some Bible prophecy teachers believe certain Islamic traditions concerning the Mahdi parallel biblical descriptions of the Antichrist found in the Book of Revelation.

For example, some traditions describe the Mahdi arriving on a white horse, while Revelation 6 describes a rider on a white horse. Revelation 20:4 speaks of believers being beheaded for their testimony of Jesus.

Some Islamic traditions describe the Mahdi's rule as lasting seven years, while Daniel 9:27 often associates seven years with the Tribulation. Daniel 11:38 mentions gold and silver, and Daniel 8:9 speaks of a kingdom expanding toward the east.

Muslims did not derive their beliefs about the

Mahdi from the Bible. However, many Bible prophecy teachers believe the biblical prophets foresaw events that will occur in the last days.

I believe Islam will play a role in the kingdom of the Beast and in the final empire described in Revelation 17:9-18.

The Bible warns of a coming kingdom that will persecute God's people and seek to destroy Israel. These events will come to pass according to Scripture.

This does not have to be your future. Jesus said in Luke 21:36, "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."

If you are not ready to meet Jesus, will you pray today and ask Him to forgive your sins and come into your heart? Revelation 3:20 says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

I will be in revival July 19-25 at Brother Jack Wright's church, New Harvest, on Route 83 in Vansant. Services begin each evening at 7 p.m.

Also, don't forget the revival that will be held Aug. 6-8 at Roger and Susie Rife Park (formerly Poplar Gap Park) with Brother Joel Ward, Stephen and Lori Ward, J.T. Harman, and Jeremy and Amy Mickles. Services begin nightly at 7 p.m. Please bring your own chair, as the services will be held outdoors. Bleacher seating will also be available.

Stay tuned,
The Watchman

Adult education connection

Did you know that being educated can have a positive impact on your health? Staying healthy is important not only for yourself, but also for your family as well. Having a high school diploma or a GED® credential can promote a heightened sense of physical and mental well-being.

Many people that are healthy both physically and mentally benefit from more job opportunities



BEVERLY PRATER ASHBY

and growth. In short, having an education could just lead to better health overall.

Education deepens knowledge, inspires confidence, and equips people with the necessary skills to make money and pay for healthy lifestyles.

Studies have shown that some people with a high school diploma have fewer chronic health conditions than those without. Achieving a high school credential can truly be life-changing. The GED® can open doors to further education and higher paying, more stable jobs.

There are many ways you can take direct action through education to encourage healthy behaviors and improve health outcomes throughout life. A high school equivalency diploma is a great starting point. After obtaining their GED®, many people pursue further career advancement with skills training, and others have gone on to secure a college degree.

People with more education and higher income are more likely to be spared from the stresses that frequently arise from economic hardship. These stress-inducing events can have extremely negative effects on health and might make individuals more sensitive to other types of tension.

Educated adults are also more likely to have larger social circles, which in turn brings access to resources that may reduce hardship and stress which could protect them from negative health effects.

Perhaps taking a step towards being more educated could be the change you are looking for. It could help you out financially and improve your physical well-being. Also, keep in mind that adult education classes are free and convenient.

For any adult who is interested in getting their GED® or gaining new career skills, there are many opportunities available. If you would like to find out more information about these opportunities, please call Southwest Regional Adult Education at 276-889-5424.

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THE VIRGINIA MOUNTAINEER

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Savvy Senior: Doctor Visits Without the Drive: How Medicare Covers Telehealth

Dear Savvy Senior,

I don't drive much anymore, so getting to the doctor can be a hassle. They suggested telehealth visits, but I'm not very tech savvy. How does Medicare cover these kinds of appointments?

--Trying to Keep Up

Dear Trying,

You're certainly not alone. Many older adults are running into the same issue. Getting to appointments is not as easy as it used to be, and the idea of using technology for doctor visits can feel a little intimidating at first.

The good news is that telehealth has made it much easier to get care without leaving home, and it's usually much simpler to use than people expect. Medicare covers many of these services, too, making it easier to stay connected with your health care providers. Here's a look at how it works and what Medicare pays for.

What is telehealth?

Telehealth is simply a way to see or talk to your doctor from home using a phone, tablet or computer. Visits can be done by video, where you and your doctor can see and talk to each other, or sometimes by a regular phone call.

And don't worry, you don't need to be a tech expert. Many doctor's offices use simple systems and will walk you through it step by step. In some cases, all you have to do is click a link they send you or answer your phone at the scheduled time.

It's also important to understand that telehealth visits are not just quick chats. They are considered full medical appointments. Your doctor can go over symptoms, review medications, discuss test results and recommend treatment, much like an in person visit.



Does Medicare cover it?

Yes, Medicare does cover many telehealth services. While telehealth has been part of Medicare for years, it was expanded significantly during the COVID 19 pandemic so people could safely get care from home. Those expanded benefits are still in place today.

Right now, Medicare allows you to receive telehealth services from home no matter where you live. Covered visits include a wide range of care, such as reviewing lab results, managing prescriptions, routine checkups, preventive screenings and even

evaluating minor illnesses like colds, coughs or infections. In many cases, follow up visits and ongoing care for chronic conditions can also be handled this way.

Another big plus is flexibility. If you are not comfortable with video or do not have internet access, some telehealth visits can still be done using just a regular phone call. And it is not limited to your primary doctor. Many types of health care providers can offer telehealth services.

What's ahead?

Here's where things get a little uncertain. The expanded telehealth coverage that began during the pandemic is not permanent, at least not yet.

Under current law, these broader telehealth benefits are set to continue through Dec. 31, 2027. After that, Medicare will likely scale back coverage to more limited rules unless Congress steps in and extends the changes.

Even so, some telehealth services are expected to continue long term. Mental and behavioral health care, diabetes education, nutrition therapy and certain dialysis related visits should still be covered. Audio only phone visits for mental health care are also expected to remain available.

If you are curious about telehealth, start by calling your doctor's office and asking what options they offer. They can guide you through the process and help you feel comfortable before your first appointment.

It may feel unfamiliar at first, but many people find that once they try telehealth, it's a simple and convenient way to stay on top of their health, especially when getting to appointments is difficult.

Send your questions or comments to questions@savvysenior.org, or to Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070.

Rocklick News

Hello Readers

I'm not sure what happened; I haven't found out yet, but our church service wasn't on YouTube or Facebook today. Brother Ronnie Sliger brought the message; I found that out. I'm still looking!

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 28 from 6 p.m. until 8:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

I went to Walmart Monday looking for bottles to feed the kittens, thinking it would be easier; it isn't. I went back to the syringes; they're starting to eat kitten food and use the litter box. I'm such a proud foster mom.

Ray was determined to go to the movies Tuesday night, and he made it. I dropped him off and went to get something to eat. It was busy. Lots of kids running around; I love it.

The mobile food truck, Feeding Southwest Virginia, an equal opportunity provider, was at the Council Park. They served 103 households.

We went to Bristol Thursday, no doctor's appointment, just because we need to get out of the house. We ate lunch at Cracker Barrel, turkey and dressing Thursday. A group of friends had gotten us a Cracker Barrel gift card, and we enjoyed it. A get-well card was with it, and everyone had signed it along with sweet messages; those were good days and good memories.

Friday we had visitors. We don't get many of those. It was so good just sitting and talking.

I got up Saturday morning and found one of my kittens down. I checked it and gave it extra TLC, and within an hour it was running around just fine. When I put it back with the others, I discovered the two bigger kittens were being little bullies. She's the runt of the litter, and they decided to jump on her back. I'll have to watch her very carefully. They'll be ready in about three weeks; I've found homes for two of them.

Today is the 28th anniversary of my brother's death. That was my first thought this morning.

Reminder: Feeding my Sheep will be doing their giveaway Saturday, July 18.

The giveaway starts about 9 a.m. and goes until 1 p.m. Because of construction at the old Russell Prater School, cars will line up near the old Sykes building (current EOC) on Southern Gap. Someone will be there to assist you.

Reminder: the Buchanan County Humane Society will be having a pet food giveaway at the office location behind (the old) Grundy High School on Saturday, July 18, from 9 a.m. until noon or until they run out. One bag of dog food and one bag of cat food per vehicle. Must have proof of Buchanan County residency. For your safety, please stay in your vehicle.

Reminder: the Buchanan County Humane Society will have a Back-to-School yard sale at our office behind (the old) Grundy High School on Thursday, Aug. 6, from 8 a.m. until noon. All clothing is \$1 an item.

I saw this morning that Hensen has lost his battle with cancer but is healed now, safe in the arms of Jesus. O Lord my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me. Psalm 30:2 KJV. Please pray for his family and friends as they grieve.

My prayer list is long: Shannon and Christine (needs urgent prayers), Sarah, Shawne, Brad, Joann, Michelle, Linda, Alvin, Mac, Gary, Jerry and Vicky, Betty and Arlene, Leroy, Linda and James, Craig, Scott, Martha, Teresa, 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, Shirley, JJ, Mike, Jack, Pastor Ronnie and Alma Sliger, Timmy, Riley, Darrell, Debbie, Maryann, Brian, Miss Gertrude (keep praying for answers for this sweet lady), Patty, Bill, Charles and Von, Ann, Jack and Annette, Curtis, Susie, Carol, Ronnie and Carol, Mike, Thelma, Kim, Judy, Malva, Gary and Linda, Randy, Tyler, Miss Jean, Jerry, D.C., June, Rachel, Jason, Lonie, Dean, Ralph, Ashleigh, Jim, Brenda, Barbara, Rodney, Chris and family, Lillian, Geraldine, Colin, Snoda, Judy, Mike and Dee, Bryan and Tina (double knee replacement), PPTA, Pam, Phillip, Peggy and Family, Renee, Melissa, Charlie, Linda, Gordon, Miss Irene, Elmo, Teresa, Chris, Anthony, Miss Pauline, Margie, Melinda, Archie and Cathy, Martha, Colton, Ira, Jennifer, Daniel, Tracy, 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, Lois, Darrell, Sue, Jeff, Shirley, little Zach (keep praying), Bobby, Mary Lou, Dreama, 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.

And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

1 Corinthians 13:13 KJV

Until next week...

Love like Jesus.



DEBBIE FOSTER

ROCKLICK AREA NEWS

276-935-8296

Spotlight on the CAM

By CHARITY BARGER

Theatre Guild of Buchanan County

IT'S AUDITION TIME, WHAT DO YOU DO? WHAT REALLY HAPPENS AT AN AUDITION

I have no doubt that you have seen a post or two from the Theatre Guild of Buchanan County announcing auditions for an upcoming show.

Have you ever wanted to respond? Have you ever wanted to audition, but were unsure what to expect or how to make a good impression on the casting committee? Well, this article was written especially for you.

As someone who has been on both sides of the casting table (and could be on the casting committee in the CAM's upcoming show), I am here to provide you with some helpful tips to put your best foot forward.

First, preparation calms the nerves. If you want to make a good impression on the casting committee, do as much research as you can about the target production. If the show is not well-known, reach out to the director and ask for an overview.

After you have done your research, put yourself in the casting committee's shoes. What role best fits you? Your nerves will be easier to control if you are convinced you fit into the show.

There is nothing wrong with being open to any role (in fact, we like that), but preparing in this way will provide you with the confidence you need to wow the committee.

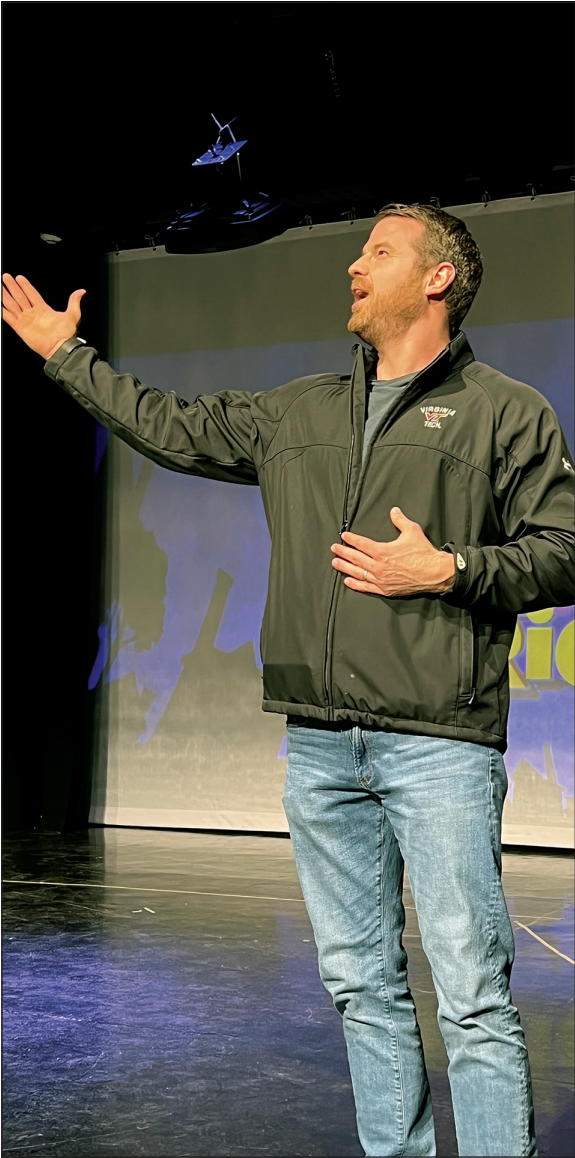
Second, be thoughtful when picking an audition piece. Most directors will allow you to prepare a monologue or song to show off your talent. It is imperative that you pick an audition piece that highlights the qualities of the character for which you are auditioning. Often actors will prepare monologues that do nothing to inform the casting committee on how to cast them in the upcoming production.

This is a missed opportunity. Even the way you dress for auditions can help you in securing the part you desire. Trust me, you have already won half the battle if the casting committee can visualize you in your preferred role and/or the production itself.

Finally, be open to the process. On the day of auditions, the casting committee will likely have you read for multiple parts, which is a great opportunity to showcase your full capabilities. Be versatile, follow direction, and, most of all, enjoy yourself.

The majority of an actor's career is auditioning. Auditioning is an art in and of itself. The more you do it, the better you become at it, and, surprisingly, the more you love it. For this reason, you should never be discouraged by not receiving a particular role. Every audition is an opportunity to polish your skills, no matter the outcome.

If you are still on the fence about auditioning, jump down and join us. The auditioning process does not have to be scary. In truth, it is a lot of fun, especially when you are auditioning alongside a talented group of



Contributed photo

BD Robertson auditions for the role of Señor O'Brien during Community Arts Mainstage's (CAM) production of Disney's Freaky Friday in February 2022. Robertson went on to portray Señor O'Brien in the production, marking one of many performances in his CAM theater journey.

actors much like those you will bump into at the CAM. Make sure you are part of the fun!

Auditions for Beverly Hillbillies and It's A Wonderful Life are just around the corner. Check out our website at www.seeyouatthecam.com and our social media channels for audition details as well as the upcoming events schedule. See you at The CAM!

Fresh ingredients are perfect for summertime

Fresh ingredients can be components of a flavorful meal. Come the warmer weather, fresh ingredients also can help people avoid feeling sluggish after eating.

This summer, fresh ingredients like avocado and tomatoes can be just what people need when looking for a delicious meal that won't adversely affect their energy levels. The following recipe for "Bruschetta Topped With Avocado and Tomatoes" from Lines+Angles employs both foods and can make a great addition to any summertime dinner table.

Bruschetta Topped With Avocado and Tomatoes
Makes 4 to 6 servings

2 large Hass avocados, ripe, pitted, peeled, and cubed

4 vine tomatoes, cored, seeded, and diced

1 shallot, finely chopped

8 ounces fresh mozzarella, drained and diced

2 to 3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

2 to 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra for brushing

1 large baguette, cut into 1-inch thick slices

1 small bunch basil, leaves only, finely sliced

Kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1. Combine the cubed avocado with the tomato, shallot, mozzarella, balsamic vinegar, extra-virgin olive oil, and plenty of seasoning in a mixing bowl.



2. Stir and toss to combine, adding more vinegar and extra-virgin olive oil as needed. Set aside until needed.

3. Preheat the broiler to hot. Lightly brush the baguette slices with olive oil before toasting under the broiler for 1 to 2 minutes until golden brown.

4. Remove bread slices and leave to cool briefly. Carefully spoon the avocado bruschetta mix on top and serve with a garnish of sliced basil on top.

BSCO DEPUTIES

FROM PAGE 1A

Buchanan County Board of Supervisors for their continued support of the Sheriff's Office and their commitment to public safety," Boyd said. "Their cooperation and partnership were instrumental in making this project possible."

Boyd also thanked Buchanan County Commonwealth's Attorney Nikki Stiltner for her assistance during the process.

"I also want to thank Buchanan County Commonwealth's Attorney Nikki Stiltner for her cooperation and assistance throughout this process," Boyd said. "Her support and collaboration helped make this investment a reality."

Stiltner said the addition of body cameras will benefit both law enforcement officers and the public by providing an accurate record of interactions.

"Body-worn cameras are an important tool that strengthens both public trust and the integrity of our criminal justice system," Stiltner said. "They provide an objective record of interactions that can protect both citizens and law enforcement officers, improve the quality of evidence presented in court, and enhance accountability across the board."

She said the cameras will also assist prosecutors in preparing criminal cases.

"As Commonwealth's Attorney, I appreciate the Sheriff's Office's commitment to professionalism and transparency," Stiltner said. "The implementation of this program will not only support our deputies in the field but will also greatly assist our office in reviewing cases and presenting clear, reliable evidence in court."

Stiltner praised Boyd for making the investment and thanked county leaders for supporting the initiative.

"I commend Sheriff Boyd for his leadership in bringing this important technology to Buchanan County, and I appreciate the support of the Board of Supervisors in helping make this investment possible," she said. "This is a positive step forward for public safety and for the continued confidence our citizens place in their local law enforcement."

The Sheriff's Office expects the cameras to be implemented over the next several months as deputies complete the necessary training and the department finalizes procedures governing their use.

Boyd said the investment reflects the department's ongoing mission to serve the community while equipping deputies with modern tools to perform their duties.

"The Buchanan County Sheriff's Office remains committed to providing professional, transparent, and accountable law enforcement while equipping our deputies with the tools they need to effectively serve and protect the citizens of Buchanan County," Boyd said. "We look forward to implementing this program in the months ahead."

CFX FUNDING

FROM PAGE 1A

miles with the completion of Poplar Creek Phase A in late 2025. Once the current project is completed, motorists will be able to travel on a continuous four-lane highway from Grundy to Pikeville.

The Coalfields Expressway is part of the National Highway System. It will eventually connect Interstates 64 and 77 in West Virginia with U.S. 23 in Virginia, creating an important transportation corridor linking Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee and West Virginia.

While work continues in Buchanan County, future Route 121 expansions into Dickenson and Wise counties remain dependent on funding through Virginia's SMART SCALE program, which prioritizes transportation projects based on statewide needs.

COOPER HONORED

FROM PAGE 1A

leadership, community involvement and a commitment to serving as ambassadors for Virginia's oil and gas industry.

Cooper, a resident of the Pilgrims Knob section of Buchanan County, serves as production manager for Diversified Energy and also represents the Garden District on the Buchanan County Board of Supervisors. Over the course of his career, he has become known not only for his work in the energy industry but also for his dedication to the communities he serves.

Receiving the honor, Cooper reflected on the career that has shaped much of his life.

"Receiving the Community and Ambassador Award from the Virginia Oil and Gas Association is truly humbling, and I am incredibly grateful for this recognition," Cooper said.

"When I began my career in the oil and gas industry nearly 30 years ago, I never imagined the opportunities, friendships, and experiences that would come from it. What started as a job became a lifelong passion and a chance to serve the communities and people who make this region such a special place."

Cooper credited the many people who have supported him throughout his career, saying their encouragement played an important role in reaching this milestone.

"I want to thank my coworkers, mentors, friends, and the many others who have supported me over the years," Cooper said. "Most importantly, I want to thank my family for their love, encouragement, and understanding throughout the long days and challenges that often come with this profession."

Cooper said the recognition is especially meaningful because it reflects the relationships he has built and the opportunity he has had to give back to the communities where he has lived and worked.

"The oil and gas industry has been very good to me and my family, and I am proud to have spent nearly three decades contributing to an industry that provides jobs, energy, and economic growth for our region," he said. "To be recognized for community involvement and ambassadorship is especially meaningful because building relationships and giving back have always been among the most rewarding parts of my career."

Looking ahead, Cooper said he remains committed to serving both the industry and the people of Southwest Virginia.

"I am honored by this award, grateful for the people who have walked this journey with me, and excited to continue serving our communities and our industry in the years ahead," he said.



Firefighter Alex Costa recently earned his National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians Emergency Medical Technician-Basic certification. Knox Creek Fire Department officials said the nationally recognized credential reflects Costa's dedication to providing high-quality emergency medical care to the community.

Knox Creek firefighter earns national EMT certification

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

The Knox Creek Fire Department is celebrating one of its own after firefighter Alex Costa successfully earned his National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT) Emergency Medical Technician (EMT-Basic) certification.

The nationally recognized certification marks an important milestone in Costa's emergency services career and allows him to provide pre-hospital emergency medical care as a certified EMT.

Department officials said the achievement reflects Costa's dedication, hard work and commitment to serving the community.

"Alex's accomplishment reflects his hard work, dedication and commitment to serving our community with the highest level of care," the department said in a statement. "We are proud to have him as part of our team and look forward to the positive impact he'll continue to make for the citizens we serve."

EMTs are trained to respond to medical emergencies, provide lifesaving care and transport patients while working alongside other first responders.

VDOT releases traffic alerts for Buchanan and nearby counties

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 July 13 through July 19, 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)

Russell County

(NEW) Second Street/Front Street Intersection Improvement - Richlands - Work is underway on a realignment project on 2nd Street and Front Street in the town of Richlands, modifying the raised median/island at the intersection of 2nd Street and Front Street and adding a raised median along Front Street to allow right turn movements from Kents Ridge Road. A detour is anticipated in mid-to-late September. When the detour is in place, motorists traveling on Kents Ridge Road and Front Street will use 2nd Street and Floyd Avenue to access Front Street. Pay attention to signs, message boards and construction crews in the area. (Completion: November 2026)

2026)

Route 19/460 drainage structure repairs at Corsica Drive - Due to drainage structure repairs on Route 19/460 at Corsica Drive in Tazewell County, a lane closure will be in place from July 7 - 17. Be alert to signs and message boards in the area.

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)

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

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

Interstates 81 and 77

(UPDATE) 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 underway. Be alert to construction crews 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)

(UPDATE) Interstates 81 and 77 maintenance activities

Be alert to the following lane closures due to interstate maintenance activities:

Interstate 81

Nighttime bridge inspection work on I-381 southbound in Bristol and between mile markers 44 and 460 in Smyth County.

Daytime, mobile brush removal activities between Bristol and Emory.

Superloads traveling north and southbound through Virginia may create delays for motorists the week of July 13.

Interstate 77

Nighttime paving operations northbound between mile markers 55.9 and 59 in Bland County.

Nighttime lane closures northbound at Big Walker Mountain Tunnel due to maintenance activities. All wide loads over 12 feet must stop before entering the tunnel when the work zone is in place.

Nighttime bridge deck repairs north and southbound near exit 24 and mile marker 30.9 in Wythe County.

YOUR HOMETOWN NEWS IS JUST A CLICK AWAY

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www.VirginiaMountaineer.com

Southern Gap comp cheer program invites students to open gym

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

As excitement continues to build for the opening of Southern Gap High School, the school's competition cheer program invites students to take their first step toward joining the Eagles' inaugural squad. Southern Gap High School will host a Competition Cheer Open Gym on Monday, July 13, from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at the Buchanan County YMCA. The session is open to students entering grades 8-12 for the 2026-27

school year. Coaches encourage anyone interested in competition cheer to attend, regardless of experience. The open gym is designed to introduce students to the program while allowing them to begin conditioning and learn the fundamentals of jumps, stunts and tumbling. Organizers said all skill levels are welcome, making the event an opportunity for both experienced cheerleaders and those looking to try the sport for the first time. The open gym comes as Southern Gap High School

prepares for its inaugural athletic season this fall. The competition cheer team will be among the school's first athletic programs, joining the Eagles as they begin a new chapter in Buchanan County athletics. Participants are encouraged to bring plenty of energy, a positive attitude and a willingness to learn as coaches begin laying the foundation for the program's first season. Students planning to attend should arrive a few minutes early and wear comfortable athletic clothing and appropriate shoes for physical activity.



With the racing complete, three victorious competitors pose for a photo following their winning performances at the Southern Gap Dirt Drags. The Independence Day tradition once again showcased the talent and sportsmanship of riders from across the region.

Southern Gap Dirt Drags draws big crowd, three track records fall

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

Southern Gap was alive with the sound of roaring engines and cheering fans on Independence Day as a large crowd turned out for the Southern Gap Dirt Drags. The July 4 event featured intense competition in ATV, dirt bike and side-by-side (SXS) racing, highlighted by close finishes and three new track records. The fastest performances of the day were recorded, with Dylan Hacker setting a new dirt bike track record with a blistering pass of 4.057 seconds. Michael Lee established a new ATV track record at 4.230 seconds, while Danny Boyd etched his name into Southern Gap history with a new SXS track record of 4.217 seconds. Those record-setting runs capped a day filled with high-speed racing as competitors from across the region battled for victories in nearly 20 divisions. The youngest racers opened the competition in the Ages 9-12 division, where Madison Cheeseman claimed first place. Eli Baker finished second, followed by Dustley Lawson in third. Hunter Bowman captured the 65cc-100cc dirt bike division ahead of Hunter Justus and Xavier James. Jesse Hurley earned the victory in the 110cc-200cc class, while Madison Cheeseman finished second and Ayden Bowman placed third. Kyle Blankenship topped the 201cc-250cc dirt bike division, followed by Connor Clevinger and Brayden Bennett. Hacker continued his outstanding day by winning the 251cc-and-up dirt bike class over Aaron



A class winner shares a moment after earning a victory during the Southern Gap Dirt Drags. The annual Fourth of July event featured fierce competition and plenty of excitement for racers and spectators alike.

SEE RECORDS FALL | 5B

In The Locker Room

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

New VHSL eligibility rules changing how families plan for high school For years, one of the biggest decisions families faced before a student entered high school was simply deciding where they wanted to attend school. Thanks to countywide consolidation, Buchanan County families no longer have multiple in-county high school options. Students will either attend Southern Gap High School or choose to go out of county or out of state. One thing is certain — the Buchanan County School Board can probably rest a little easier now that it no longer has to grant or deny transfer requests between county high schools. Apparently, the Virginia High School League has been dealing with enough transfer issues in other parts of the state that it decided changes were necessary. The VHSL has approved new eligibility rules that significantly change how ninth-grade students establish athletic eligibility, particularly if they want to attend a high school outside the attendance zone where they live. The legislation officially took effect July 1, 2026, but its biggest impact will not be felt until students entering ninth grade in the fall of 2027. For decades, first-time ninth graders enjoyed what many considered a “fresh start.” A student could enroll at nearly any high school and immediately become eligible for athletics, regardless of where they attended middle school or where they lived. That exception is now going away. Under the new rule, students who choose to attend a high school outside the attendance zone where they reside must have attended that school's designated feeder middle school for their entire eighth-grade year to receive immediate athletic eligibility. There are exceptions. Students accepted into approved academic academies or specialty programs can still receive immediate eligibility. That includes Governor's Schools, International Baccalaureate programs and other approved specialty academic programs. Without meeting one of those requirements, a student transferring outside his or her attendance zone could lose immediate athletic eligibility. Parents of current middle school students should pay close attention. The VHSL says students who completed eighth grade before the rule took effect are not affected. Those entering high school this fall may still establish eligibility simply by enrolling in the school of their choice. Beginning with the next group of eighth graders, however, planning ahead becomes much more important. The rule also affects students attending private middle schools. Unless they plan to attend the public high school in the attendance zone where they live, those students generally must enroll in the appropriate



CHAD COOPER
IN THE LOCKER ROOM

SEE LOCKER ROOM | 3B

Southern Gap track clinic gives athletes early-season boost

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

Southern Gap High School's inaugural cross-country and track-and-field clinic wrapped up last week. The three-day clinic, held from July 6 to July 8 at Nelson Memorial Field in Grundy, was for students in grades six through and instructed runners in distance running, sprinting, jumping and throwing events. Participants also benefited from guest instruction by UVA Wise cross country and track and field coach Andrew Howard, who led specialized training sessions throughout the camp. About 15 athletes attended the clinic, taking advantage of workouts designed to build fundamentals while preparing for the upcoming school year. Although sev-

SEE TRACK CLINIC | 3B



Athletes listen as UVA Wise coach Andrew Howard provides instruction during Southern Gap High School's three-day cross-country and track-and-field clinic at Nelson Memorial Field in Grundy. The guest coach worked with students on techniques for sprinting, distance running and field events while helping them prepare for the upcoming season.

Southern Gap golf team to hold tryouts for inaugural season

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

With Southern Gap High School preparing to tee off its first athletic season, students interested in representing the Eagles on the golf course will soon have their chance to earn a spot on the team's inaugural roster. Golf tryouts are scheduled for the week of July 27 through Aug. 1 and are open to students in grades 8-12 for the 2026-27 school year. The tryouts mark another milestone as Southern Gap continues building its athletic programs ahead of the school's opening this fall. Student-athletes selected for the team will have the opportunity to become the first golfers to compete under the Eagles banner. School officials remind prospective players that all required athletic paperwork must be completed before participating in tryouts. Students who still need to complete eligibility requirements are encouraged to do so as soon as possible to ensure they are cleared to compete. Those interested in preparing before tryouts can also schedule a range session by contacting head golf coach Preston Hibbitts. The optional sessions will allow prospective players to sharpen their skills before official tryouts begin. For additional information or to schedule a range session, students and parents may contact Hibbitts at preston.hibbitts@bcpsk12.com.

AT THE GRILL

WORD SEARCH

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

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

WORDS

BACKYARD
BARBECUE
BURGER
CHARCOAL
CHICKEN
DELICIOUS
FLAME
FLAREUP
GRATE
HEAT
MARINADE
PROPANE
SAUSAGES
SEAR
SEASONING
SIZZLE
SKEWERS
SMOKE
SPATULA
STEAK
SUMMER
TEMPERATURE
TONGS
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CLUES ACROSS

1. Tire pressure measurement
4. Request
7. Clairvoyance
10. 007's creator
11. Adult male
12. God of battle (Scandinavian)
13. Cloths spread over a coffin
15. Breeze through
16. Ladyfish genus
19. We all take them
21. Earl's jurisdiction
23. Members of U.S. Navy
24. Rummy-like card game
25. Affected by injury
26. Member of a Semitic people
27. Withdrew from a union
30. Woman's cloak
34. Spanish river
35. Prohibit
36. Something you can take
41. Dish soap brand
45. Ottoman military commanders
46. Ancient Italian-Greek colony
47. Makes somber
50. Discuss again
54. A tool to inject
55. Support
56. Informal term for money
57. Catch doing something wrong
59. Prehistoric people
60. Large African antelope
61. Vehicle
62. Georgia rockers
63. High resolution microscope
64. Pitching statistic
65. Attempt

CLUES DOWN

1. Indoor plant
2. Marketable
3. Rather
4. Collected
5. A bag-like structure in a plant or animal
6. Irish hip-hop trio
7. Ageless
8. Course requirements
9. Pokes at
13. TV channel
14. They ____
17. Cooking material
18. Investment account
20. Iron-containing compound
22. Swiss river
27. Small coin (French)
28. Electronic countermeasures
29. Taxi
31. Helps little firms
32. Unhappy
33. Midway between northeast and east
37. Glowing
38. Item to be addressed
39. An informal body of friends
40. Intrinsic nature of something
41. Neural structures
42. Brews
43. A place for ships
44. One who sings holiday songs
47. Sino-Soviet block (abbr.)
48. Scottish town
49. The most worthless parts
51. Sticky
52. Put to work
53. Precursor to the EU
58. Retrospective analysis (abbr.)

PUZZLE SOLUTION

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

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CLUES ACROSS

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49. The most worthless parts
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PUZZLE SOLUTION

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

SUDOKU SOLUTION

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

Horoscopes

ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20

Aries, now is the perfect time to socialize with others. Romance is in the air and you are going to go out of your way to treat someone special in the days to come.

TAURUS – Apr 21/May 21

Taurus, some people express their affection for others by buying them gifts. You have the ability to know just what a person needs at a given time and provide that to them.

GEMINI – May 22/Jun 21

Gemini, a pleasant week awaits you, and one this inspires your compassionate and tender side to come to the forefront. You may feel unselfish and spiritual, and relationships will be easy.

CANCER – Jun 22/Jul 22

Your idealism is aroused this week, Cancer. This is a time for you to become more involved with others, and you might find it rewarding to work with a charity.

LEO – Jul 23/Aug 23

A friendship may turn romantic, Leo. You'll have to tread carefully depending on how you want to see things go. Listen to your emotions carefully in the days to come.

VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22

This week you are compelled to use your influence to help someone directly or indirectly, Virgo. Figure out what you can do to affect change.

LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23

Expect to meet people under unique circumstances, Libra. You may engage with someone who needs your help or can teach you something new.

SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22

Scorpio, enjoy spending time with friends and other groups because this is a feel-good time for you. If you feel affectionate toward someone, those feelings will become more passionate.

SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21

People notice you more than usual, Sagittarius. This is an excellent time to enjoy the company of others, including, friends, your partner or spouse.

CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20

Look for ways to help a coworker who could use some help right now, Capricorn. You have the power to give them what they need right now, more so than others.

AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18

This is a time for social outings and special dates, Aquarius. Figure out how to feel sensitive to the needs and feelings of loved ones as only you can do best.

PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20

True generosity is giving what is needed, Pisces. Assist a relative as best as you can, even if that is simply serving as a sounding board.

FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS

JULY 12
Brock Lesnar, Wrestler (49)

JULY 13
Harrison Ford, Actor (84)

JULY 14
Conor McGregor, MMA fighter (38)

JULY 15
Gabriel Iglesias, Comic (50)

JULY 16
Will Ferrell, Actor (59)

JULY 17
Luke Bryan, Singer (50)

JULY 18
Kristen Bell, Actress (46)



Virginia Gov. Abigail Spanberger speaks to press on April 27, 2026 at an event in Richmond touting policy accomplished during her first 100 days in office. (Photo by Charlotte Rene Woods/Virginia Mercury)

Virginia climbs to third spot in CNBC ‘Top States for Business’ rankings

Gov. Spanberger touts legislative agenda and workforce development measures, along with years-long infrastructure projects as contributing factors.

BY: CHARLOTTE RENE WOODS
The Virginia Mercury

Virginia shifted from fourth to third place in CNBC’s annual “top states

for business” rankings, Gov. Abigail Spanberger announced Thursday.

States that achieve the top bracket are considered the best in the nation for attracting or retaining companies and supporting regional economies.

“I think the fact that we are on the rise to number three means that we’re moving in the right direction,” Spanberger said in a phone interview Thursday afternoon.

“It isn’t just that the cost of doing business has improved; it’s that the cost of living has improved,” she said, citing a slate of new laws aimed at addressing housing, healthcare and energy affordability she signed this year.

These factors, she emphasized, can make Virginia more attractive to employers and workers considering a move to the state and give them reasons to stay once here.

Virginia also ranked second in the infrastructure category, reflecting work that has spanned gubernatorial administrations.

Spanberger noted the recently-completed improvements to the Port of Virginia, a \$450 million dredging project which began in 2019 under Gov. Ralph Northam. The project deepened Virginia’s port, making it more accessible for commercial shipping.

The state has also allocated funding for upgrades to Southwest Virginia’s Interstate 81 in recent years, a critical artery for ground shipments.

This year, CNBC also factored ease of permitting into its rankings. Spanberger said Virginia has “established” itself with a business reputation for speed to market.

Gov. Glenn Youngkin championed investment in the Virginia Business Ready Sites Program and celebrated manufacturing deals at a megasite near Danville during his tenure. Spanberger said she and lawmakers invested \$50 million in the program this year.

Virginia had remained consistently on top of the rankings since 2018 before falling to fourth in last summer’s report under Youngkin’s tenure. The rise over the past year, however, may also reflect

deals Youngkin secured before leaving office, like pharmaceutical companies Eli Lilly and AstraZeneca facilities setting up shop in the state and creating jobs, along with Spanberger’s first half a year as the new governor.

Spanberger said among the bills she signed into law this year were ones allocating about \$5 billion in new business investment around the state and another creating InternshipsVA, a statewide program that helps connect employers and college students for paid internships, and potentially stock Virginia’s talent pipeline.

The state-funded program offers grants for small and mid-size businesses to provide a 50% match for undergraduate students’ wages.

Spanberger added that it also offers more opportunities for students and younger professionals.

“There are many students or new graduates who can’t afford to do an internship and go unpaid,” she said.

Since housing and childcare directly impact employment, Spanberger touted a Hitachi investment in Halifax County as a potential model for blending new job growth while addressing housing strain.

State and local officials have coordinated with the energy company on plans to build new housing near its planned South Boston facilities and a childcare center to support workers.

“It’s in early stages,” the governor said. “Ideally it can be a model for what we do in other places.”

The CNBC ranking can serve as a progress report card for governors and lawmakers while also helping states shape new business goals.

Spanberger said her administration looks forward to working with legislators to expand the state’s latest economic development and quality-of-life measures. Another aim, she added, is to get Virginia back to the number one spot on the list, where it has ranked previously.

“We’ve medaled,” she said in an analogy to Olympics sports. “We’re still not at the top of the pillars.”

IN THE LOCKER ROOM

FROM PAGE 1B

ate feeder middle school during eighth grade if they wish to compete immediately at another public high school.

Another important piece of the legislation involves transfers.

Once a student establishes eligibility at one high school, transferring to another school generally results in a 365-day period of athletic ineligibility.

The one-year sit-out period applies unless the transfer meets the VHSL’s definition of a bona fide change of residence.

That means the family must permanently relocate, abandon its previous residence and move for reasons unrelated to athletics. The move cannot be motivated by joining a stronger athletic program or playing for a particular coach, and the entire family must relocate rather than maintaining two residences.

Several exceptions remain in place.

Immediate eligibility may still be granted for students entering approved academic specialty programs, military families relocating, court-ordered placements, verified bullying situations and certain students protected under the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

VHSL officials also addressed situations involving school employees. Students whose parents work at feeder middle or high schools may still have eligibility options under certain circumstances, provided they receive approval from their local superintendent and meet the league’s residency requirements.

For families with younger student-athletes, especially those entering seventh or eighth grade, these are rules worth understanding now rather than waiting until high school registration arrives.

Personally, I really don’t have a dog in this fight, but I’ve always had mixed feelings about transfer and eligibility rules.

I’ve often wondered what might have happened if Virginia had followed Kentucky and West Virginia by allowing middle school students who were capable of competing at the varsity level to do so. A lot of smaller schools that struggled to field varsity teams might have survived a little longer, and in some communities those varsity programs could have been much stronger.

Hopefully, Southern Gap High School will never face that problem. With the county’s athletes under one roof, it should be much more difficult for a freshman to earn a varsity spot. That’s actually a good problem to have. The Eagles should be able to field strong varsity, junior varsity and middle school programs for years to come.

When I was in school, high school consisted of grades nine through 12. If a student wanted to be held back for athletic reasons, it usually happened in eighth grade. Once many schools shifted to eighth through 12th grade campuses, that decision moved to seventh grade instead.

The transfer rule, however, will probably always be a touchy subject.

Over the years, we’ve seen our share of high-profile athletes want to change schools, with the local school board often making the final decision. It makes you wonder whether the VHSL is trying to remove local school boards from that process by creating a more uniform statewide policy.

The reality is that no two transfer cases are exactly alike.

How do you tell a student who loses a parent and has to move in with another parent outside the school district that he or she must sit out a year? What about the student whose coach leaves or is fired before a winter or spring season and wants to continue playing for that coach elsewhere?

Years ago, a student could transfer within Buchanan County as long as the move wasn’t made to “chase a championship.” That rule never made much sense to me. How do you prove what someone’s motivation really is?

Of course athletes want to play for outstanding coaches, and great players usually become even better when they’re competing alongside — and against — the very best talent available.

As with most VHSL rules, there are good arguments on both sides. The league wants competitive balance and to discourage athletic recruiting, while families simply want what’s best for their children. Finding the right balance between those two goals has never been easy, and this latest legislation will likely spark plenty of debate for years to come.

TRACK CLINIC

FROM PAGE 1B

eral students were still on summer vacations or attending other sports camps, organizers were encouraged by the turnout and enthusiasm.

Southern Gap cross country and track and field coach Christina Bane said the clinic provided exactly the kind of early-season foundation the coaching staff hoped to establish.

“Our XCTF athletes had a great opportunity to jump-start their seasons with work ranging from sprints to distance to throws,” Bane said. “We had about 15 athletes take advantage of workouts featuring sessions from UVA Wise Coach Howard. It was great to see the turnout in the summer with quite a few still on vacations and participating in other sports clinics. We have some exciting young athletes coming up to add to our veterans.”

Coaches focused on teaching proper technique, conditioning and event-specific fundamentals while also giving younger athletes an opportunity to work alongside returning athletes.



Photo courtesy of Christina Bane

Southern Gap High School cross-country and track-and-field athletes take part in push-up exercises during the Eagles’ three-day summer clinic at Nelson Memorial Field in Grundy. The camp focused on conditioning, strength training and event-specific instruction to help prepare athletes for the upcoming season.

Southern Gap Trails & Tunes Festival planned for Aug. 20-22

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

A new off-road motorsports event is coming to Buchanan County this summer as organizers prepare for the inaugural Southern Gap Trails & Tunes Festival, scheduled for Aug. 20-22 at Southern Gap Dirt Drags.

The three-day festival will feature a variety of competitions and activities for off-road enthusiasts, including side-by-sides, four-wheelers and dirt bikes. Organizers are promoting the event as a weekend of motorsports, entertainment and outdoor recreation.

Activities begin on Aug. 20, with gates opening at 5 p.m. and events starting at 7 p.m. The evening lineup includes a wheelie competition and a panty race.

On Aug. 21, gates will open at 11 a.m. with events beginning at 12:30 p.m. Scheduled competitions include a tire toss, Dizzy Daze challenge, blindfold breakout, Crazy 8's barrel racing and tug-of-war.

The festival concludes on Aug. 22, with gates opening at 10 a.m. and events starting at 11:30 a.m. Featured events include a donut competition, mud bog, hill climb, and drag racing. An awards ceremony will follow the day's competitions.

Admission is \$25 for a three-day wristband or \$20 for a single-day pass. Wristbands are currently available for purchase at Extreme Motorsports.

The festival is expected to attract riders, racers and spectators from throughout Southwest Virginia and neighboring states while showcasing Buchanan County's growing reputation as an outdoor recreation destination.

The Southern Gap area has become a focal point for recreation and tourism development in recent years, and organizers believe the new festival will provide another opportunity to bring visitors to the county while supporting local businesses.

UVA Health study offers local residents chance to improve health

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

Residents across Buchanan County who have been thinking about improving their health or losing weight have an opportunity to receive professional guidance while taking part in a research study through UVA Health.

The Buchanan County Chamber of Commerce is helping spread the word about the TrackWell Research Study, a 17-

week weight-loss program offered by UVA Health's Department of Public Health Sciences. The Chamber shared the information on behalf of Chamber member Buchanan General Hospital to make residents aware of the opportunity.

The study is designed to provide participants with personalized support as they work toward healthier lifestyles. Throughout the 17-week program, participants will track their daily food intake,

exercise and weight while receiving weekly feedback from a health professional to help keep them motivated and on track.

Adults ages 18 and older who have overweight or obesity may qualify to participate if they are able to walk for exercise and own a compatible Apple or Android smartphone with a cellular data plan.

Participants accepted into the study

will receive several benefits at no cost, including a Fitbit activity tracker, a digital scale and access to a virtual 60-minute "Weight Loss 101" class. Those who complete the study's data collection will also receive a \$40 gift card.

Those interested in learning more about the TrackWell Research Study or determining whether they qualify can contact research specialist Maddie Glover by emailing TrackWell@uvahealth.org or calling 434-243-2387.

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Please take notice that the Buchanan County Board of Supervisors will hold a public hearing at **6:10 o'clock p.m. on the 3rd day of August, 2026**, in the Board of Supervisors' Meeting Room on the third floor of the Buchanan County Government Center, 4447 Slate Creek Road, Grundy, Virginia. The purpose of that hearing will be to entertain and receive public comment on the proposed conveyance of an easement for ingress and egress near Dog Pound Road, near the Buchanan County Animal Shelter to Billy Owens.

Any interested person is invited to appear and make public comment concerning such proposed ordinance in the manner set forth in this Notice. The proposed Ordinance is available upon request at the Buchanan County Administrator's Office on the third floor of the Buchanan County Government Center, 4447 Slate Creek Road in Grundy, Virginia. Please contact Sandy Stiltner, 276-935-6508 to make arrangement to receive a copy of the ordinance.

PLEASE CONDUCT YOURSELF ACCORDINGLY.

Robert Craig Horn, County Administrator of Buchanan County, Virginia

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Please take notice that the Buchanan County Board of Supervisors will hold a public hearing at **6:45 o'clock p.m. on the 3rd day of August, 2026**, in the Board of Supervisors' Meeting Room on the third floor of the Buchanan County Government Center, 4447 Slate Creek Road, Grundy, Virginia. The purpose of that hearing will be to entertain and receive public comment on the proposed adoption of an ordinance regarding Chapter 88, Taxation of the Buchanan County Code to amend section 88-32, Returns. This ordinance was adopted on an emergency basis on June 8, 2026. The public hearing is to determine whether to adopt the ordinance on a permanent basis.

Any interested person is invited to appear and make public comment concerning such proposed ordinance in the manner set forth in this Notice. The proposed Ordinance is available upon request at the Buchanan County Administrator's Office on the third floor of the Buchanan County Government Center, 4447 Slate Creek Road in Grundy, Virginia. Please contact Sandy Stiltner, 276-935-6508 to make arrangement to receive a copy of the ordinance.

PLEASE CONDUCT YOURSELF ACCORDINGLY.

Robert Craig Horn, County Administrator of Buchanan County, Virginia

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Please take notice that the Buchanan County Board of Supervisors will hold a public hearing at **6:15 o'clock p.m. on the 3rd day of August, 2026**, in the Board of Supervisors' Meeting Room on the third floor of the Buchanan County Government Center, 4447 Slate Creek Road, Grundy, Virginia. The purpose of that hearing will be to entertain and receive public comment on the proposed adoption of an ordinance regarding Chapter 37, Land Use Permits of the Buchanan County Code to include Land Use Permits; and renaming the title of Chapter 37 from Gasline Pipelines to Land Use Permits. This ordinance was adopted on an emergency basis on June 8, 2026. The public hearing is to determine whether to adopt the ordinance on a permanent basis.

Any interested person is invited to appear and make public comment concerning such proposed ordinance in the manner set forth in this Notice. The proposed Ordinance is available upon request at the Buchanan County Administrator's Office on the third floor of the Buchanan County Government Center, 4447 Slate Creek Road in Grundy, Virginia. Please contact Sandy Stiltner, 276-935-6508 to make arrangement to receive a copy of the ordinance.

PLEASE CONDUCT YOURSELF ACCORDINGLY.

Robert Craig Horn, County Administrator of Buchanan County, Virginia

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Please take notice that the Buchanan County Board of Supervisors will hold a public hearing at **6:20 o'clock p.m. on the 3rd day of August, 2026**, in the Board of Supervisors' Meeting Room on the third floor of the Buchanan County Government Center, 4447 Slate Creek Road, Grundy, Virginia. The purpose of that hearing will be to entertain and receive public comment on the proposed adoption of an ordinance regarding Chapter 90, Vehicles and Traffic of the Buchanan County Code prohibiting the use of heavy construction equipment to include, but not limited to heavy trucks and equipment with metal tracks on county roads. This ordinance was adopted on an emergency basis on June 8, 2026. The public hearing is to determine whether to adopt the ordinance on a permanent basis.

Any interested person is invited to appear and make public comment concerning such proposed ordinance in the manner set forth in this Notice. The proposed Ordinance is available upon request at the Buchanan County Administrator's Office on the third floor of the Buchanan County Government Center, 4447 Slate Creek Road in Grundy, Virginia. Please contact Sandy Stiltner, 276-935-6508 to make arrangement to receive a copy of the ordinance.

PLEASE CONDUCT YOURSELF ACCORDINGLY.

Robert Craig Horn, County Administrator of Buchanan County, Virginia

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.

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.

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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
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 interests on or before August 4, 2026 at 9:00 a.m.
VM-6-25, 7-2,9,16:2026

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.

The pay scale for a 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 276-935-4551.

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.

BCPS schedules in-services for new and returning substitutes

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

Buchanan County Public Schools has scheduled two in-service training sessions later this month for substitute teachers, instructional aides, cafeteria staff, custodial staff, coaching staff, nurses and volunteers preparing for the 2026-27 school year.

The first session is for returning substitute teachers, instructional aides, cafeteria staff, custodial staff, nurses, coaching staff and volunteers. It will be held July 28 at 9 a.m. at Riverview Elemen-

tary/Middle School.

Attendance is required for anyone wishing to remain on the 2026-27 substitute, coach or volunteer list.

A second in-service for individuals who are new to substitute teaching, instructional aide positions, cafeteria or custodial work, coaching or volunteer service will be held July 29 at 8:30 a.m. at the Buchanan County School Board Office. Attendance is required for all new personnel.

New participants must bring two forms of identification, such as a driver's

license and Social Security card, along with direct deposit information and a voided check. Those with a college degree also should bring an official transcript.

Several fees are required for new substitutes and must be paid in cash on the day of the training. The fees include \$27 for Live Scan fingerprinting, \$17.05 for TB screening, \$96 for a lab service drug screen and \$12.30 for a Central Registry background search, for a total of \$135.30. BCPS said exact cash and change are required.

The Live Scan fingerprinting must be completed at the Buchanan County Sheriff's Office, while TB screenings are available through the Buchanan County Health Department.

The substitute pay scale for the 2026-27 school year includes \$172 per day for teachers with bachelor's or master's degrees who possess a valid Collegiate Professional license and serve as long-term substitutes. Teachers with bachelor's or master's degrees working periodically as substitutes will earn \$107.25 per day.

Substitutes with associate degrees, two years of college or equivalent coursework will receive \$98.25 per day, while high school graduates or those with equivalent credentials will earn \$95.78 per day. Cafeteria and custodial substitutes are paid \$12.77 per hour.

BCPS said all substitute teachers will be paid on the high school graduate pay scale until an official college transcript is submitted to Becky Harrison, human resources director, at the Buchanan County School Board Office.

The next in-service session for new substitutes is scheduled for January 2027.

For more information, contact Harrison at 276-935-4551.



Two champions pose together after conquering their respective classes during the Southern Gap Dirt Drags. Roaring engines, flying dirt and cheering fans made for another memorable Independence Day at Southern Gap.

RECORDS FALL

FROM PAGE 1B

Mullins and Kaden Watkins, then added another victory in the Dirt Bikes Open division ahead of Kaden Watkins and Justin Taylor.

Lee dominated the ATV competition. Along with setting the new track record of 4.230 seconds, he claimed victories in the ATV 2-Stroke Open, ATV 401cc-500cc and ATV Open divisions, making him one of the day's biggest winners.

Other ATV champions included Ricky Baker in the Stock 4x4 Open division, Kohn Blankenship in the 201cc-400cc class and Nick Lester in the 501cc and up division.

The SXS classes also produced plenty of excitement.

Kanaan McClanahan earned victories in both the 801cc and Up division and the Non-Turbo Open class. Shane Fletcher claimed the Turbo Modified Open title, while Nick Sutherland won the Turbo Stock division.

Homer Waters captured first place in the Turbo Open class ahead of Dylan Stanley and Dean Ward.

The Powder Puff Open division was won by Kiersten Looney, followed by Morgan Stratton and Kaitlin Boyd.

Boyd capped the event by winning the Outlaw Open division after posting his record-breaking 4.217-second run, the fastest SXS pass ever recorded at Southern Gap.

Organizers thanked the racers, crews, volunteers and fans for making another

Independence Day event a success. With hundreds of spectators filling the venue, competitive racing throughout the day and three new track records established, this year's Southern Gap Dirt Drags delivered one of the most memorable events in the race's history.

Class winners

Ages 9-12: Madison Cheeseman.

Dirt Bikes 65cc-100cc: Hunter Bowman.

Dirt Bikes 110cc-200cc: Jesse Hurley.

Dirt Bikes 201cc-250cc: Kyle Blankenship.

Dirt Bikes 251cc & Up: Dylan Hacker.

Dirt Bikes Open: Dylan Hacker.

ATV Stock 4x4 Open: Ricky Baker.

ATV 2-Stroke Open: Michael Lee.

ATV 201cc-400cc: Kohn Blankenship.

ATV 401cc-500cc: Michael Lee.

ATV 501cc & Up: Nick Lester.

ATV Open: Michael Lee.

UTV 801cc & Up: Kanaan McClanahan.

UTV Turbo Modified Open: Shane Fletcher.

UTV Turbo Stock: Nick Sutherland.

UTV Non-Turbo Open: Kanaan McClanahan.

UTV Turbo Open: Homer Waters.

Powder Puff Open: Kiersten Looney.

Outlaw Open: Danny Boyd.

New track records

Dirt Bike: Dylan Hacker — 4.057 seconds

ATV: Michael Lee — 4.230 seconds

SXS: Danny Boyd — 4.217 seconds

LEGAL NOTICES



ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS – SNOW REMOVAL

The Virginia Department of Transportation invites heavy equipment owners to sign up for the rental of their equipment with operators for SNOW & ICE REMOVAL purposes in Lebanon Residency which includes the counties of Buchanan, Russell, Tazewell, during the winter of 2026-2027. Price per hour shall include operators, fuel, tire chains, supplies, required insurance and any other incidentals necessary for snow removal operations. VDOT will need single axle and tandem dump trucks with plow and spreaders. Along with a limited number of 4x4 pickups with plows and spreaders. All equipment should be equipped for night work and be in good mechanical condition to ensure a safe and dependable 24/7 operation. All equipment must have current registration, tags, certificate of insurance and inspection sticker at the time of contract submittal. Equipment must also pass a VDOT equipment inspection. VDOT reserves the right to determine acceptability of equipment size and condition for the task. Contractors submitting the lowest responsive and responsible bids will be awarded contracts for "on-call" services as deemed necessary by VDOT. Certified Small Business/micro vendor preferred, registered eVA vendor required. VDOT will be paying a \$2,000 Signing Bonus, and Minimum Guaranteed Payment on awarded contracts. To be eligible for the Signing Bonus all contract requirements shall be submitted in Plow4VA by September 1, 2026.

M7B Contract Snow Meeting will be held: **Wednesday, July 22, 2026 @ 10:00 a.m. Location-Town of Lebanon Parks & Recreation, Clinch Mountain Room.** All interested contractors are encouraged to attend this meeting.

Snow Removal Equipment Packages, which includes contract requirements, may be obtained on eVA after July 10, 2026, at <http://eVA.state.va.us/vendors>, and contracts must be submitted online through <https://plow4va.vdot.virginia.gov> EEO/AA Employer

LEGAL NOTICES

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Please take notice that the Buchanan County Board of Supervisors will hold a public hearing at 6:30 o'clock p.m. on the 3rd day of August 2026, in the Board of Supervisors' Meeting Room on the third floor of the Buchanan County Government Center, 4447 Slate Creek Road, Grundy, Virginia. The purpose of that hearing will be to entertain and receive public comment on the proposed adoption of an ordinance entitled: "An Ordinance to Establish Payment of a One-Time 2.0 percent bonus of base salary for Buchanan County Department of Social Service (LDSS) for LDSS employees." Said bonuses are being paid from State-Supported Local Employee Bonus in the Personnel & Fringe account for FY 26. The funding for the bonus is from a combination of funds from the Commonwealth of Virginia. This ordinance was adopted on an emergency basis on June 8, 2026. The Public Hearing is to consider adopting this ordinance on a permanent basis. However, the bonus is only a one-time bonus pursuant to the ordinance and the law of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The bonus must be paid and reimbursed in FY 2025 2026. A local ordinance regarding payment of bonuses must be in place per the Code of Virginia section 15.2-1508 to provide for a bonus. The funding for the bonus is a combination of funds from the Commonwealth of Virginia in the amount of \$68,229.65 and a local contribution from Buchanan County, Virginia in the amount of \$4,295.00.

§ 15.2-1508. BONUSES FOR EMPLOYEES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS. Notwithstanding any contrary provision of law, general or special, the governing body of any locality may provide for payment of monetary bonuses to its officers and employees. The payment of a bonus shall be authorized by ordinance.

Any interested person is invited to appear and make public comment concerning such proposed ordinance in the manner set forth in this Notice. The proposed Ordinance is available upon request at the Buchanan County Administrator's Office on the third floor of the Buchanan County Government Center, 4447 Slate Creek Road in Grundy, Virginia. Please contact Sandy Stiltner, 276-935-6508 to make arrangement to receive a copy of the ordinance.

PLEASE CONDUCT YOURSELF ACCORDINGLY.

Robert Craig Horn, County Administrator of Buchanan County, Virginia



Smiles tell the story as three class winners gather after celebrating victories at the Southern Gap Dirt Drags on Independence Day. The annual event brought together racers and fans for a day filled with speed, competition and hometown pride.



After a successful day on the track, three riders take time to rest at the Southern Gap Dirt Drags. The July 4 tradition once again drew a strong field of competitors and enthusiastic spectators.

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LOCAL NEWS



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COMMUNITY EVENTS

www.VirginiaMountaineer.com



The VA250 Mobile Museum Experience brings America's founding story to life through interactive exhibits and hands-on displays. The traveling museum will stop at Food City in Vansant on July 23, where residents can tour the exhibit free of charge from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. as part of the celebration leading up to America's 250th anniversary.

VA250 Mobile Museum rolling into Vansant later this month

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

Buchanan County residents will soon have a chance to step back in time and experience the story of America's founding without leaving home.

The VA250 Mobile Museum Experience will stop at Food City in Vansant on Wednesday, July 23, offering visitors a unique opportunity to explore Virginia's important role in the American Revolution. The museum will be open from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. at the Food City located at 18765 Riverside Drive, and admission is free.

The traveling exhibit is part of a partnership between Food City and the Virginia American Revolution 250 Commission as communities across the Commonwealth prepare to celebrate the nation's 250th birthday.

Inside the mobile museum, visitors will find interactive displays and exhibits that tell the story of how Vir-

ginia helped shape the birth of the United States. From Patrick Henry's famous call for liberty to George Washington's victory at the Siege of Yorktown, the exhibit also shines a light on the ordinary Virginians whose courage and sacrifices helped secure the nation's independence.

Organizers said the museum was specifically designed to feature stories and exhibits that highlight Southwest Virginia's rich heritage, allowing residents to see how this region played a role in the nation's history.

The Vansant stop is one of several scheduled appearances across Southwest Virginia. The tour previously visited Independence and Lebanon before making its way to Buchanan County.

After leaving Vansant, the VA250 Mobile Museum will continue its regional tour with stops at WCYB in Bristol on Aug. 13, Food City in Wise on Aug. 27, Food City in Weber City on Sept. 16, Food City in Marion on Oct. 1 and Food City in Bristol on Dec. 19.

Adopt a Pet

Pawsitive vibes only



This feeling-fine fellow is a two-year-old male Black Mouth Cur mix. His short, dense coat is colored fawn with white markings and a powerful, distinctively melanistic black muzzle. His head is broad and flat, with drooped ears. He has a broad chest, and his legs are long, as is the tail. His personality is friendly, inquisitive and fun.

This good vibe guy will be available for adoption at the Buchanan County Animal Shelter until Monday, July 20, 2026.

Also available for adoption is this ten-month-old male Australian Shepherd mix. His medium coat is colored white with auburn markings. He has dazzling green/hazel eyes and an intelligent demeanor. His temperament is sweet and adoring. The Buchanan County Animal Shelter is located at 1191 Dogpound Road. For more information about these animals, please call the shelter at 276-935-4067.

Humane Society hosting pet food pantry, July 18

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

The Buchanan County Humane Society is inviting local pet owners to take advantage of its upcoming Pet Food Pantry,

an effort aimed at helping families keep their dogs and cats fed during difficult times.

The event will be held from 9 a.m. to noon on July 18, or while supplies last, at 1132 Booth Branch

Road, behind the former Grundy High School.

The pantry is open exclusively to Buchanan County residents, who are asked to bring a driver's license or utility bill as proof of residency.

To ensure supplies reach as many families as possible, the humane society will provide one donation of dog food and one donation of cat food per vehicle.

Organizers said the pantry is designed to ease the financial burden many pet owners face while helping keep beloved animals in their homes. By providing food assistance, the organization hopes to reduce the number of pets surrendered to shelters because of temporary financial hardships.

The Buchanan County Humane Society also noted that donations to help cover fuel costs are appreciated, allowing volunteers to continue picking up and distributing food to those in need.

Residents planning to attend are encouraged to arrive early, as food will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis until supplies are exhausted.

The Pet Food Pantry is part of the humane society's ongoing mission of helping pets, supporting families and strengthening the community.

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