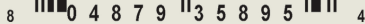


TWO SECTIONS PLUS SUPPLEMENTS | \$2



OBITUARIES

Laura Evans Barden

Laura Evans Barden passed away Thursday, July 9, at her home in Richlands, Virginia. She was 69.

Born October 3, 1956, at Grundy Hospital, she was the youngest daughter of Gomer and China Evans, who precede her in death. She is survived by her son, Joshua Evans, who was with her at death and who sacrificially and lovingly took care of his mother through the months of her battle with cancer.

Laura had four dogs and a cat that provided her with many entertaining stories, which she shared with her Facebook friends. She also posted stories of the amazing wild-life and birds that she provided for in her green belt zone.

For years, Laura was employed by Mark Shortridge at Cardinal Industries/Cardinal Active wear. Laura was gifted in technology and en-

joyed the work she did there. She was a graduate of Grundy Senior High School and Southwest Virginia Community College.

Laura is survived by her sisters, Linda (Rick) Ramey of Augusta, WV, and Sylvia Evans, Bristol, VA; nephews Tony Ramey and Shea Ramey, both of Augusta; four great nieces and a great nephew; and a faithful friend, Jerry Elkins of Oakwood, VA, who provided much needed encouragement and care for both Laura and Joshua. Husband Roger Barden and nephew Michael Ramey preceded her in death.

The family wishes to express their thanks and praise for Caris health system and for those who helped Laura with such exceptional skill and warmth, going beyond routine care: the hospice nurse Sal-



ly, the caregiver Becky, and the social worker Tara. We are so grateful for the way they served her.

In accordance with her wishes, Laura was cremated and her ashes strewn in a beloved place.



Courthouse News

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

Marriage licenses

Gavin Jeremy Steele, 26, and Santana Mariah Stacy, 25, both of Grundy, July 3, 2026.

Billy Boyd Thacker Jr., 41, and Hailey Nicole Matney, 23, both of Grundy, July 6, 2026.

Thomas Nazir Combs, 20, of Grundy and Jasmine Bo Rena Justice, 20, of Vansant, July 8, 2026.

Kevin Aaron Dotson, 27, and McKenzie Faith Deel, 25, both of Vansant, July 11, 2026.

Tyler Dewayne Looney, 34, and Sarah Nicole Stacy, 22, both of Breaks, July 11, 2026.

Deeds recorded

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

VA250 Mobile Museum rolling into Vansant Thursday



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

Buchanan County residents will have an opportunity this Thursday to step back in time and explore the story of America's founding when the VA250 Mobile Museum Experience rolls into Vansant.

The traveling museum will be open from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Thursday, July 23, at the Food City located at 18765 Riverside Drive. Admission is free.

The exhibit is part of a partnership between Food City and the Virginia American Revolution 250 Commission as communities across the commonwealth continue preparations for the nation's 250th anniversary celebration.

Visitors can explore interactive exhibits highlighting Virginia's pivotal role in the American Revolution. Displays feature well-known moments in history, in-

cluding Patrick Henry's famous call for liberty and George Washington's victory at the Siege of Yorktown, while also recognizing the contributions and sacrifices of ordinary Virginians who helped secure the nation's independence.

Organizers said the mobile museum was designed to showcase stories from across the commonwealth, including Southwest Virginia, giving residents a chance to learn more about the region's place in America's founding.

The Vansant visit is one of several stops on the museum's Southwest Virginia tour. Previous stops included Independence and Lebanon.

Following its Buchanan County appearance, the VA250 Mobile Museum Experience is scheduled to visit 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.

BIG SANDY GRANT

FROM PAGE 1A

ures occur.

If inspections reveal additional repairs are needed, homeowners may still qualify for assistance through the program.

Applications must be submitted and approved before any work begins. Officials warned that work completed before approval may not be eligible for reimbursement.

The conservation district also offers free assistance to help property owners assess the condition of their septic systems and determine what work may be needed. Once approved work has been completed, reimbursement payments are processed promptly.

District officials said the voluntary program benefits both homeowners and the environment by helping ensure septic systems are functioning properly, pro-

tecting groundwater and nearby streams, and maintaining property values.

Big Sandy Soil and Water Conservation District board member Bobby Looney praised the program and its potential impact on the community.

"This is one of the greatest things that has happened for the Hurley area in a long time," Looney said.

Residents who live in the Knox or Papaw watersheds and would like to learn more or apply for the program are encouraged to contact Jeanne Presley at the Big Sandy Soil and Water Conservation District by calling 276-935-7750 or emailing jeanne.presley@outlook.com.

Funding for the program was provided through the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Disaster preparedness workshop coming Thursday to SGTLC

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

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

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 from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. Thursday, 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 and 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@unitedway-swva.org.

MISSING MAN

FROM PAGE 1A

Family members told WTOC they later learned Scarberry planned to explore abandoned mines.

Roland Scarberry, Scotty's uncle, told WTOC that his nephew specifically said he intended to enter abandoned mines in Virginia.

"He said he was going in the mines, and I honestly believe that if that's where he said he was going, that's where he was going," Roland Scarberry told WTOC.

The Buchanan County Sheriff's Office confirmed to WTOC that deputies requested assistance from the Virginia Department of Energy's Mines Rescue Team after receiving information that Scarberry may have entered an abandoned mine in the Paw/Paw section of Buchanan County.

According to the sheriff's office, the mine entrance was excavated by the rescue team, but no sign of Scarberry was found.

Family members remain especially concerned because Scarberry reportedly left behind his dog, Creedy, something relatives say would be highly unusual if he intended to be away for an extended period.

Authorities continue to investigate Scarberry's disappearance and are asking anyone who may have information about his whereabouts to contact the Buchanan County Sheriff's Office at 276-935-2313.

Information for this story was obtained in part from reporting by WTOC in Savannah, Georgia.

YOUR HOMETOWN NEWS IS JUST A CLICK AWAY



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LOOKING BACK

From our files

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

60 YEARS AGO

JULY 28, 1966

Blake Compton, who was a stellar lineman for Grundy High in the early 1960s, was named head football coach at Grundy Junior High this week. The announcement was made by County Supt. Don Bevins and Principal John Meade. Compton succeeds Carl Pennington, who resigned to continue studies toward his master's degree.

Employment of a band director for Grundy Senior High School was announced this week by County School Supt. Don Bevins. He is Mr. Manuel Arellano, who has served as choral director at Grundy Methodist Church for the past several years. Mr. Arellano succeeds Bill Cook, who resigned to become band director of R.B. Worthy High at Saltville.

50 YEARS AGO

JULY 22, 1976

A Grundy native, Dr. Eloise Elizabeth Clark, has been nominated by President Gerald Ford to be assistant director of the National Science Foundation, according to news reports from Washington. Dr. Clark is the youngest daughter of the late Dr. Frank E. Clark, founder of the Grundy Presbyterian School and a leader in establishing the Presbyterian churches in the county.

The Cincinnati Reds were not the only winners at New River Stadium Saturday night. A 13-year-old Grundy boy, attending the Reds-Montreal game with a YMCA group from this county, was the winner of \$100 worth of ice cream given away by the Reds following their successful game. Randy Childress was among 29 boys and girls from this county on a YMCA weekend excursion to Cincinnati, and the ball game was among the highlights of the trip.

30 YEARS AGO

JULY 25, 1996

Bobby Aaron Deel, a rising junior at Grundy High School, has been named to Who's Who among American High School students. His biography will appear in the late fall edition. He is the son of Stacy and Kim Deel of Russell Prater.

Winning a state title as a sophomore, Luke Owens had already made his mark as a wrestling standout among Virginia grapplers. In North Dakota, he stood out like a man among men, only this time on the National stage. Owens earned All-American status in both freestyle and Greco-Roman competition at the Junior Nationals Championships, July 6-14 at the Fargodome in Fargo, N.D.

25 YEARS AGO

JULY 19, 2001

Continued to make administrative post reassignments this week, taking action Monday afternoon to fill a total of four vacant principal and assistant principal positions. Following an hour-long closed session called to discuss the assignment and transfer of various school personnel, members of the board voted unanimously to name Connie Childress principal of Russell Prater Elementary School and Ron Epling principal of J.M. Bevins Elementary School.

The younger guns came with all they had, but the veteran dodged all the obstacles. Bob Fuller of Grundy, at age 73, used his consistent style of play -- dodged the obstacles of the course -- and captured Willowbrook Country Club's men's club championship title this past weekend at WCC.

Whitewood native returns home to join Generation United

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

For Stephen Ward, returning to Buchanan County isn't just another stop on a ministry tour.

It's a homecoming.

A Whitewood native, who has spent decades traveling nationwide leading worship and preaching the Gospel, will come back to his hometown to participate in the three-night Generation United Revival from August 6-8 at the Roger and Susie Rife Park on Southern Gap.

The outdoor revival begins each evening at 7 p.m. and will also feature Joel Horn, JT Harman and Ward's wife, Lori. Organizers encourage attendees to bring a lawn chair to the free, public event.

For Ward, the opportunity carries special meaning.

"It is truly an honor," he said. "I'm grateful for the opportunity to come back and pour into a community that invested so much into my life and spiritual journey."

That journey began in the mountains of Buchanan County.

Growing up in Whitewood, Ward spent his childhood trout fishing, swimming in the Dismal River and riding dirt bikes through the hills of Southwest Virginia. Those experiences, combined with the influence of his family and church, laid the foundation for a ministry that has now reached thousands of people across the country.

"Those simple moments helped shape who I am and gave me a deep appreciation for God's creation," Ward said.

Homeschooled throughout his education, Ward discovered his love for singing and gospel music around eight years old.

"I was greatly inspired by my family and our church family, who cultivated a love for worship and ministry from an early age," he said.

That passion eventually led him far beyond the mountains where he grew up.

Ward met his wife, Lori, when both were 17 years old. They married at 19 and, after six years together, moved to Greenville, South Carolina, where they joined the staff of Redemption Church. They served there until 2016 before launching The Living Room Movement, a ministry focused on encouraging people to pursue a deeper relationship with God.

Today, the couple travels full time, leading worship services, revival meetings and church events across the nation. They now live in Tracy, California, where they have lived for the past two and a half years.

Despite ministering across the country, Ward says the values he learned growing up in Southwest Virginia have remained central to everything he does.

"Growing up in Southwest Virginia taught me the importance of keeping God at the center of every area of my life," he said. "That foundation has shaped both my ministry and my career."

Ward said the greatest accomplishment of his ministry isn't measured by the size of crowds or the stages where he has performed.

"The greatest highlight has never been the stages or the crowds," he said. "It's watching people come alive to their true identity in Christ through an encounter with the presence of the Lord."

One moment, however, stands out among the many services he has led over the years.

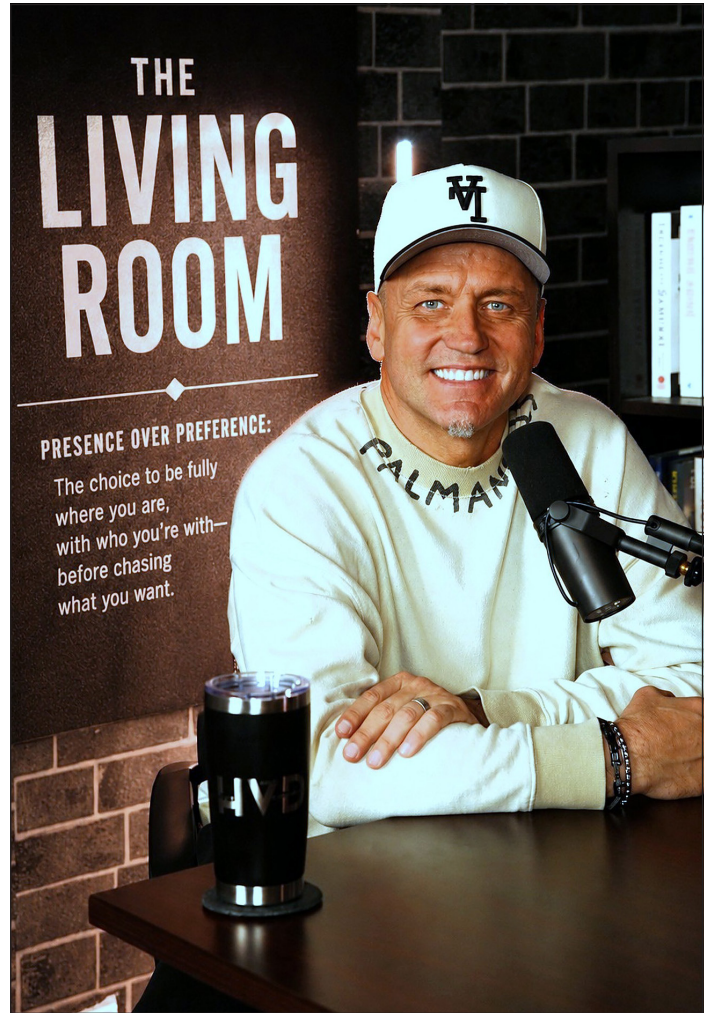
During a tent revival, Ward recalled hearing someone running toward the service after hearing the worship music from several blocks away.

"A man heard the worship from several blocks away, came running into the service, threw his drugs on the stage and surrendered his life to Jesus," Ward said. "Moments like that remind me why we do what we do."

Now, Ward hopes to see lives impacted once again as he ministers in the county where his own spiritual journey began.

"I believe people can expect more than just a concert," he said. "They can expect an authentic encounter with God. My heart is that

SEE **WHITEWOOD NATIVE** | 2B



Living Room Movement podcast/promotional photo Stephen and Lori Ward promote The Living Room Movement, the couple's full-time ministry that shares worship, biblical teaching and encouragement through live events and online platforms. The Wards will be among the featured guests at the Generation United Revival Aug. 6-8 at the Buchanan County Fairgrounds in Grundy.



Stephen Ward leads worship during a ministry event. The Whitewood native has traveled throughout the United States sharing worship and speaking at churches and revival services and will return to Buchanan County Aug. 6-8 as a featured worship leader during the Generation United Revival at the Buchanan County Fairgrounds in Grundy.

GOOD OL DAYS



1966 ROTARY OFFICERS - Newly elected officers of the Grundy Rotary Club recently assumed their duties. Seated at center is President Earl Dellinger. Seated are Board Member P.L. Williams (left) and Secretary John E. Moore (right); standing from left are Board Members Nick E. Persin, Dr. Thomas Penn and Alvis Hunt. Vice President Dave Kendrick was not present when the photo was taken. This photo appeared in the July 28, 1966 edition of the Virginia Mountaineer.

Congressman Griffith’s: End Birthright Citizenship in the Territories

At the close of June, the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) weighed in on various issues that impact the country.

Perhaps the SCOTUS decision to receive the most media attention is Trump v. Barbara. This case concerns the Citizenship Clause in the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

The Citizenship Clause specifically states, “all persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside.”

The Trump Administration challenged this definition to argue the Citizenship Clause does not apply to children born in the United States to illegal immigrants. Through Executive action on birthright citizenship, automatic U.S. citizenship would not apply to these new-borns.

Trump’s Executive action became the subject of SCOTUS scrutiny in Trump v. Barbara.

SCOTUS ruled against the Administration. Whether we like it or not, absent a Constitutional amendment, birthright citizenship will remain in place for the U.S. States.

However, this ruling does not address the birthright citizenship process in the U.S. territories.

Citizenship in the territories is distinct from that of the States.

Currently, four of the five inhabited U.S. territories have been granted U.S. citizenship by laws passed in Congress. These are Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

These four territories exercise these powers because Congress extended such rights in statute through laws like the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952. The Northern Mariana Islands have acquired such rights through a different statutory mechanism.

The U.S. territory of American Samoa is the lone exception. Those born in this territory are considered American nationals but have not been granted citizenship status by Congress.

Accordingly, birthright citizenship does not apply



WEEKLY REPORT
FROM THE CAPITOL

currently in American Samoa.

The application under the Barbara case of birthright citizenship in the U.S. territories differs from what is established in the 50 U.S. States according to Supreme Court cases.

The birthright discrepancy between the territories and the States dates to legal cases beginning in the early 20th century known as the Insular Cases.

Generally, these cases governed which constitutional protections apply in U.S. territories.

Additionally, since 2010, two federal courts of appeals cases have rejected the notion that those born in the U.S. territories access the same automatic rights by virtue of the Constitution as those in the U.S. states.

Thus, the Barack case leaves the door open for Congressional action on citizenship in the American territories. I am leading a bill to crack down on abuse of birthright citizenship in the territories. This bill should stop the so-called “birth tourism” that is taking place in the American territories.

Because of the current birthright laws in place in the territories, any child born in a U.S. territory (minus American Samoa) accesses U.S. citizenship automatically.

Accordingly, business in the “birth tourism” industry,

which Justice Clarence Thomas references in his dissent of Trump v. Barbara, empowers groups to exploit U.S. citizenship laws for personal gain.

A New York Post article this year notes estimates of roughly 1,000 companies that offer “birth tourism” services.

One of the referenced China-based “birth tourism” companies advertises with the slogan “Create beautiful memories while having an American baby.”

“Birth tourists” and their babies later return to the parent’s country of origin. But by providing U.S. citizenship to their child, one day their child can access the benefits that U.S. citizenship has to offer.

That can come in the form of work, education, voting in federal elections and more.

This is outrageous and I am working on a legislative fix.

Just like Congress possesses the power to grant the territories Constitutional rights in statute, we have the power to take them away in statute.

Whereas under Barack a Constitutional amendment would be needed to change birthright citizenship in the 50 U.S. states, a simple statutory reform for the U.S. territories is a realistic solution with real world implications.

Accordingly, I am leading the charge in Congress to rectify this problem, clarify U.S. citizenship laws in the territories and combat foreign nationals who are exploiting loopholes in our citizenship laws to take advantage of U.S. generosity.

My bill would stop “birth tourism” in the U.S. territories!

While this change is limited to the territories, it is the only step we can currently take to effectively protect U.S. citizenship.

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: A Beacon of Hope

A beacon of hope is an expression that refers to someone or something that provides inspiration, optimism and reassurance in challenging times.

It symbolizes a guiding light that leads individuals or communities toward a positive outcome or a better future. God wants all of us to have a blessed future.

The Lord said in Jeremiah 29:11, “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not evil, to give you an expected in.” God wants us to have hope and a future.

First, we must be seekers of God and his righteousness. He wants all of our heart (Jeremiah 29:13), and ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

God wants all or nothing. There is a way that seems right to man, but the word of God says in Proverbs 14:12 that the end thereof are the ways of death.

But God wants to give us life and life more abundant. God wants us to have an abundant life, a successful life.

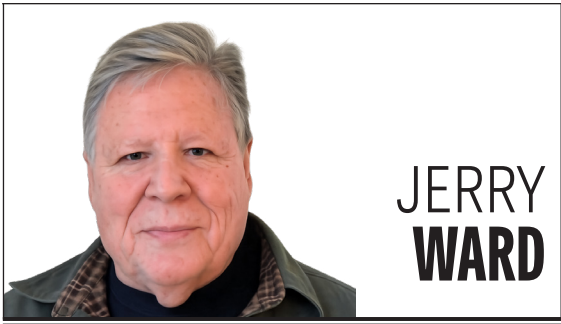
Key number two, don’t let anyone steal your hopes, dreams, and aspirations. We have an adversary in 1 Peter 5:8.

He is called the devil, and he comes at us in many different ways. John 10:10 calls him a thief. It says, “The thief cometh not, but for to steal and kill and destroy.” But I like these parts best. The Lord said, “I come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

God wants his children to have the fullest measure of life. In Genesis chapter 37, there is a true story about a young man who had dreams from God, and his brethren hated him most because of his dreams (verse 5). In verse 19, they said to one another, “Behold, this dreamer cometh.”

Verse 20 says they said, “Come now, therefore, and let us slay him.” Our adversary is vicious (1 Peter 5:6-9). He’s looking for those he can destroy. If you are a child of God, he has no power over you, only that which you allow. The Bible says in Ephesians 4:27, “Neither give place to the devil. Give him no ground.

You give him an inch, he will become the ruler.” Colossians 2:14-15 tells us that Christ Jesus made a show of



THE WATCHMAN

them openly, triumphing over them on the cross. He defeated the devil and all his principalities and powers.

This leads us to key number three. We must trust God with our dreams, hopes, and aspirations. Job 13:15 says, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.”

In essence, it’s trusting in something we can’t see with the natural eye, but by the spir-

itual eye. This brings us to Hebrews 11:1, which says, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

The word “substance” could be rendered “confidence” in this context, because a few verses back in Hebrews 10:35 it says, “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompense of reward.” Ephesians 6:20 says, “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to his power that worketh in us.” Proverbs 3:5 tells us to “trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding.” As I said earlier, where or what are you hoping for?

Paul the Apostle said in 1 Corinthians 15:19, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.” Isaiah 36:6 tells us not to trust in man. If our trust is in men, it would be like leaning on a broken reed, and it will pierce you.

If you are trusting in this world, it’s like trusting the Titanic, which we now know is going down. Our only hope is in the Lord Jesus Christ; he is the lifeboat. Get aboard before it is eternally too late.

I will be in revival at Brother Jack Wright’s church, New Harvest, on Route 83 in Vansant. Services begin at 7 p.m. nightly. Also, don’t forget the revival on August 6-8 at Popular Gap Park in Grundy, also known as Roger and Susie Rife Park. Brother Stephen Ward will be joining us.

He is the founder of the Living Room Program. He and his team will be coming in from California and other states. We will have several ministries joining us each night, along with area youth. Please come out and bring your chair. It’s going to be a great time in the Lord.

The Watchman

Adult education connection

As adults, we often have moments of conflict in our lives, and we tend to lose sight of the power of positivity. Positive thinking can have a beneficial effect mentally, but it can also help us physically.

Not only will thinking positively make you feel good, but studies have shown that it helps strengthen the immune system, reduces anxiety, and increases positive emotions; all that combined is fuel for your future success.



Eventually, we all come to understand that you rarely achieve success without some hardships. To ensure future success, it is vital to understand how to cope with failure and overcome negative thinking.

We view the world through our mental attitude. If that attitude is mostly negative, it can impact everything. Failure is linked with feelings and emotions such as sadness, anxiety, stress, anger, etc. Accepting how you feel can help form a healthy coping mechanism which, in turn, can make you work harder to find different and better solutions to your problems in the future.

Learning from your failures is the single most important thing you can do to cope positively from failure. Allow yourself to accept that one path has proven to be ineffective and that a new direction is needed. Understanding what steps you may have missed can help you be mentally more prepared and establish specific goals for the future.

Failure is a part of life, but we should not let that define who we are. We all fail in various aspects of life; it can be in our jobs, relationships, etc... We can learn from our setbacks and not let them hold us back from accomplishing our goals with a sense of renewed purpose. We can and need to let go of those negative thoughts, so that we may gain the confidence needed to move forward.

Hardships and struggles are understood concepts, and some people focus on the tough times and fail to move past them in order to achieve success. It is essential to recognize that everyone experiences some form of failure in life, and that it should be considered a learning experience, not a demonstration of your self-worth.

If you are thinking about making a positive change in your life, whether it be a new career or possibly taking a class to refresh some skills, there are so many options available free of charge. You can call Southwest Regional Adult Education at 276-889-5424 to get more information. Don’t let past failures hold you back, remember that today is a new day, and we all deserve a fresh start.

THE VIRGINIA MOUNTAINEER

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Savvy Senior: How Families Can Find Lost Money After a Loved One Dies

Dear Savvy Senior,

After my mom passed away, we discovered a few small accounts and an old insurance policy we didn't know she still had. It made me wonder how often families uncover forgotten or unclaimed money like this after a parent dies. Is it common, and where should I start looking?

--Searching Sarah

Dear Sarah,

It's actually quite common. After a parent or spouse dies, families often come across small, forgotten accounts, uncashed checks, or old insurance policies that slipped through the cracks over the years. In many cases, paperwork was misplaced, accounts were opened decades ago, or loved ones simply weren't aware the assets existed.

According to the National Association of Unclaimed Property Administrators, billions of dollars in unclaimed assets are currently being held by state governments and federal agencies, waiting to be claimed by rightful

owners or heirs.

Unclaimed property usually comes from financial accounts or benefits that became inactive because the owner moved, changed names or died. In many cases, heirs were never aware the money existed or did not know where to look. These assets can include savings or checking accounts, uncashed dividend checks, utility security deposits, life insurance proceeds, pension benefits, tax refunds, matured savings bonds and unpaid wages.

By law, banks, employers, insurance companies and other institutions must turn these assets over to the state if they cannot locate the owner or next of kin after a set period, usually two to five years. Once turned over, the money is held indefinitely, so there is no deadline for families to file a claim.

Where to start

A good place to begin is MissingMoney.com, a free site endorsed by the National Association of Unclaimed Property Ad-



JIM MILLER
SAVVY SENIOR

ministrators and the National Association of State Treasurers.

It allows users to search for unclaimed property in 49 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico at once. Hawaii is not included but can be searched through a link on the site.

When searching, check every state where your mother lived, worked or did business. Be sure to search under maiden names, married names and common misspellings.

Using just a first initial and last name can also uncover accounts that do not appear under a full name search. Each state's site will indicate whether property is listed and explain how to file a claim.

Other places to check

State treasuries are only part of the picture. Families should also check several other common sources of forgotten money.

Pensions and 401(k)s: To search for lost or forgotten retirement benefits your mom may have left behind with an old employer, use the U.S. Department of Labor's Retirement Savings Lost & Found Database at lostandfound.dol.gov and the National Registry of Unclaimed Retirement Benefits at unclaimedretirementbenefits.com.

Or to search for unclaimed retirement benefits from private-sector plans that have closed down, use the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation search tool at pbgc.gov/workers-retirees.

Savings bonds: It's very common for people to lose track of U.S. Saving Bonds because they are often given to children as gifts, then forgotten before the bonds reach maturity.

To find out if your mom had a Savings Bond or other Treasury

security visit your state's unclaimed property office using unclaimed.org. Search the state of residence at the time of the securities purchase or last known address.

Lost life insurance: To track down a lost or forgotten life insurance policy, the National Association of Insurance Commissioners, an insurance regulatory support organization, offers a free policy locator service at eapps.naic.org/life-policy-locator.

Other refunds: To search for money left at an FDIC insured bank or credit union that has gone out of business, visit closedbanks.fdic.gov/funds. Federal tax refunds can be checked at irs.gov/refunds or by calling 800-829-1954. FHA mortgage refunds can be checked at entp.hud.gov/dsrs/refunds. And unpaid wages are listed at dol.gov/agencies/whd/wow.

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

Rocklick News

Hello Readers,

Once again, our church service wasn't on Facebook. I'm not sure what's going on.

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

Happy 91st birthday to our Uncle Apple Jack.

I finally started mowing our yard today, and it's a mess, in places above my knees. I got about half the front yard mowed and raked; hopefully I can finish tomorrow.

Thursday morning, I had a couple of errands to run, then I went and got my turkey-and-dressing dinner and Ray's cheeseburger and fries. No cooking today.

The man came Saturday and cut our weeds; it was a mess. Hopefully, I can get it evened out next week. He did a great job, and it looks so much better.

Feeding my Sheep had their giveaway, and they served 450 households.

Reminder: the mobile food truck, Feeding Southwest Virginia, an equal opportunity provider, will be at the Grundy Community Center on Wednesday, July 22nd. The truck arrives about 9:00, and the giveaway starts about 10:00. This is a drive-thru event; stay in your car, and we will come to you.

Important reminder: the mobile food truck giveaway in Grundy is always on the fourth Wednesday of each month. This month has five Wednesdays.

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

My prayer list is long: Shannon and Christine, 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 and Crystal, Steve, Scotty, Brother Kenny, Freddie and Sheila, Darrell and Vicki, Trish, Hudson, Amber, Dennis and Kathy, Courtland, Amy, Anthony, Henry, Jerry, 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, 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, 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, Will, Raymond, Mary, Wanda, Lois, Darrell, Sue, Jeff, Shirley, little Zach, 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 276-935-8296 or email me at dfoster_59@yahoo.com

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16 KJV

Until next week.

Never lose faith. Keep praying.



DEBBIE FOSTER
ROCKLICK AREA NEWS
276-935-8296



The CAM's stage is shown from backstage, looking toward the audience, on July 1, as renovation work was underway. The theater curtains were pinned up and wrapped in protective plastic while the stage floor had been stripped in preparation for refinishing, part of a series of behind-the-scenes improvements designed to preserve and enhance the facility for future performances.

Spotlight on The CAM: The Work You Don't Always See

By JODI REYNOLDS
Theatre Guild of Buchanan County

When you attend a show at The CAM, your attention is naturally drawn to the stage. You notice the performers, the music, the lights, and the stories unfolding before you. What you may not notice is everything happening behind the scenes to make those moments possible.

Over the past three weeks, The CAM has been full of activity, not with rehearsals, but with construction crews, electricians, and contractors working to improve our facility from the inside out. These are the kinds of projects that audiences rarely see, yet they are some of the most important investments we can make in the future of The CAM.

One of the largest improvements has been the installation of new electrical service throughout portions of the building. This project included new hookups for food trucks, making outdoor events and festivals more efficient and welcoming for vendors. We also upgraded backstage electrical service and installed new outdoor lighting, improvements that enhance safety, functionality, and the overall experience for volunteers, performers, and guests.

Our stage also received some long overdue attention with a complete refinishing of the floor. While the refreshed finish certainly looks beautiful, this project was about much more than appearance.

Many people may remember the devastating hailstorm that swept through Vansant on May 19, 2022. The storm left more than 100 holes in The CAM's roof, allowing rainwater to pour into the building. Although the roof was eventually repaired, moisture had already seeped beneath the stage's epoxy coating. Since then, we have been in a constant cycle of patching and repairing areas where the finish continued to separate

from the floor below. Refinishing the stage finally allows us to put those ongoing repairs behind us and provides our performers with a safer, more durable surface for years to come.

Another milestone was quietly reached backstage as we completed the third and final phase of our spray foam insulation project. Over the past 18 months, we have tackled this project section by section as funding became available. With the remaining outdated insulation removed and replaced, the building is now significantly more energy efficient and comfortable for everyone who walks through our doors.

Our work isn't finished yet. Before *The Beverly Hillsbillies* opens in October, another unique project will take center stage. Professional theater curtain specialists will be onsite to clean our large stage curtains while carefully working within the existing rigging system. Each curtain must be removed, cleaned, and rehung with remarkable precision. Behind every curtain is a carefully balanced system of tracks, pulleys, and counterweights, and restoring everything to perfect working order is a skilled process all its own.

Projects like these may never earn a standing ovation, but they make every performance possible. They protect our building, improve the experience for audiences and performers, and preserve The CAM for the next generation of artists.

As always, none of this would be possible without the generosity of our grant partners, donors, volunteers, and community members. Every improvement, whether visible from the audience or hidden behind the curtain, is another investment in a place that continues to inspire creativity, build community, and bring people together through the arts.

Be sure to check out our new and improved website at www.seeyouatthecam.com to keep up with all our events. We are constantly adding to our offerings, so check back often. See you at The CAM.

YOUR HOMETOWN NEWS IS JUST A CLICK AWAY



LOCAL NEWS



SPORTS



OBITUARIES



COMMUNITY EVENTS

www.VirginiaMountaineer.com

Poplar Gap Community Garden opens for fall planting

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

Just weeks after breaking ground on a new community garden on Poplar Gap, the Big Sandy Soil and Water Conservation District is inviting Buchanan County residents to start planting.

District officials announced that the raised garden beds are nearly ready for use and say now is the perfect time for

residents to plant vegetables and other crops for a fall harvest.

“We have 11 boxes,” said Jeanne Presley, manager and educational specialist for the Big Sandy Soil and Water Conservation District. “We would like to invite Buchanan County residents to use the boxes. We are getting the boxes filled as soon as the weather breaks. Perfect time to plant some crops for fall harvest.”

The community garden was made

possible through a \$1,000 Keep America Beautiful Green Grant awarded to the Big Sandy Soil and Water Conservation District earlier this year. The grant funded construction of the raised garden beds, which were created to provide residents with a place to grow fresh produce while encouraging healthy living, outdoor activity and community involvement.

When the grant was announced, district officials envisioned the garden as more than just a place to grow vegetables. Long-term plans include expanding the number of raised beds, allowing families to reserve their own plots and eventually creating a pumpkin patch where local children can pick pumpkins without leaving Buchanan County.

Prater District Supervisor David Rose, who helped spearhead the Poplar Gap Community Garden project, said he is pleased to see the idea become a reality.

“It’s exciting to see the garden ready for the community,” Rose said. “I hope residents from all across Buchanan County will take advantage of it and enjoy growing their own fresh produce.”

Interest in the project has continued to grow since it was first announced. The district originally planned to build nine raised beds, but the project has expanded to 11 boxes as organizers continue working toward their long-term vision for the site.

Presley said the district hopes the garden becomes a gathering place where families, experienced gardeners and first-time growers alike can enjoy the rewards of planting and harvesting their own food.

Big Sandy Soil and Water Conservation District board member Bobby Looney said Big Sandy is on the move, and more are to come. “Another big win for Big Sandy Soil and Water Conservation District and Buchanan County,” Looney said. “Thanks for your help, David Rose, Prater supervisor, on the community garden grant coming soon to Popular Gap Park.”

Residents interested in using one of the garden boxes are encouraged to contact the Big Sandy Soil and Water Conservation District office at 276-935-7750 for additional information.



From left, Jon Fuller, Bobby Looney, Jake Hess, Colten Stiltner and Virginia Looney gather at the newly completed raised garden beds at the Poplar Gap Community Garden. The Big Sandy Soil and Water Conservation District is inviting Buchanan County residents to use the 11 community garden beds to grow vegetables and other crops for a fall harvest.

Board approves new artwork for Southern Gap



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

Southern Gap High School will receive two additional pieces of locally inspired artwork.

During the Buchanan County School Board’s July 13 meeting at the Buchanan County Government Center on Slate Creek, board Chairman David Thornbury presented plans for two new projects by local sculptor Johnny Hagerman.

Hagerman recently completed the large brick Eagle sculpture inside Southern Gap High School with assistance from local Career and Technical Education students. The new projects would build on that work by adding artwork near the football stadium entrance and a coal-themed scene inside the school.

The first project would be installed at the ticket booth leading into the football stadium. The proposed artwork would measure approximately 5 feet by 15 feet and be designed to complement the existing brickwork.

The project is expected to cost about \$30,000, with the Smiley Ratliff Foundation agreeing to provide the funding.

Board member Ray Blankenship made the motion to approve the stadium entrance project, with board member Brian “Doc” Looney providing the second. The motion passed without opposition.

The board also approved a second Hagerman project for a blank interior wall behind the completed Eagle sculpture.

The proposed artwork would depict a coal scene, paying tribute to the industry that has shaped generations of Buchanan County families and communities.

Thornbury said Hagerman first discussed the idea with school officials several months ago. The estimated cost of the interior project is \$60,000, with the McGlothlin Foundation pledging to fund the work.

North Grundy school board member Angie McClanahan made the motion to approve the interior artwork, with Prater

school board member Jack Compton seconding the motion. That proposal also passed unanimously.

The final designs will be reviewed before the artwork is completed.

In other business, the board approved transferring the former Council, Twin Valley and Grundy high school properties to Buchanan County as surplus property effective Aug. 1.

A request will be made to the Buchanan County Board of Supervisors asking the county to allow the school system access to Council and Twin Valley high schools through the end of August while equipment, records and other materials are removed. School officials will have until Sept. 30 to complete work at Grundy High School because more time is expected to be needed there.

McClanahan moved to transfer the properties under those conditions, with Compton seconding. The board approved the motion unanimously.

Hurley High School and the former Buchanan County Career, Technology and Higher Learning Center were not included in the transfer.

Both buildings must be demolished under an agreement with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers connected to the development of Southern Gap High School.

The former high schools closed at the end of the 2025-26 school year as Buchanan County prepared to consolidate students in grades 8-12 at Southern Gap.

In other business, the school agreed to hire Kaitlyn Dotson as the new finance director for the Buchanan County Public School system. The starting salary will be set at \$80,000. Garden school board member Ray Blankenship made the motion to hire Dotson, which was seconded by McClanahan, and the motion passed unanimously.

Before the meeting was adjourned, the school board approved several bus driver contracts. Those who received contracts were Derek Ray, Terry Austin, Alex Rife, Hayden Fuller, Kristen Church and Doug Thomas.

Kinship Navigator Program

Celebrates 8 Years

of Assisting Kinship Children and Families in Need

COMPASSION • CONNECTION • COMMUNITY

SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA – The Kinship Navigator Program is proud to celebrate its 8th year of providing vital support to kinship caregivers, children, and families across Southwest Virginia. Since its inception, the program has been a lifeline for relatives and close family friends stepping up to care for children, often in the face of unexpected and difficult circumstances.

Serving the counties of Buchanan, Dickenson, Lee, Russell, Scott, Tazewell, and Wise, as well as the City of Norton, the Kinship Navigator Program has made a lasting impact by offering guidance, resources, and a listening ear to those who need it most.

A MISSION ROOTED IN FAMILY
Kinship caregivers—grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, and other relatives—provide a safe, stable, and loving home for children when parents are unable to do so. These caregivers often face emotional, financial, and legal challenges. The Kinship Navigator Program is designed to walk alongside them, helping to ease their burden and empower them with the tools they need to thrive.

“Our kinship families are the unsung heroes of our communities,” said a Kinship Navigator. “They open their hearts and homes without hesitation. We’re honored to support them every step of the way.”

MAKING A DIFFERENCE EVERY DAY
Over the past eight years, the program has:

- Provided one-on-one support and advocacy to hundreds of kinship families.
- Connected families with resources such as financial assistance, counseling, education, and legal aid.
- Hosted events, trainings, and support groups to build community and encourage caregivers.
- Helped ensure children remain in safe, familiar environments where they can grow and thrive.

According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, more than 2.7 million children in the United States are being raised by relatives or family friends. In Virginia, kinship families are a critical part of the child welfare system, helping to keep children out of foster care and in the care of people they know and trust.

MEET OUR KINSHIP NAVIGATORS

Tina Presley Kinship Navigator Supervisor	Jordan Still Kinship Navigator	Nancy Boyd Kinship Navigator	Tina Browning Kinship Navigator
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A COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT
The Kinship Navigator Program is more than just a service—it’s a community. Caregivers often say the program has been a source of encouragement, understanding, and stability during some of the most challenging times in their lives.

LOOKING AHEAD
As the program enters its ninth year, the mission remains the same: to support kinship families, strengthen connections, and create brighter futures for children across Southwest Virginia.

Thank you to all the kinship caregivers who make a difference every day.

Together, we build stronger families and stronger communities.

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Buchanan County • Dickenson County • City of Norton • Lee County • Russell County • Scott County • Tazewell County • Wise County

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YMCA Basketball Camp returns July 29-31

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

Summer may bring a break from the classroom, but for many young basketball players in Buchanan County, it's also an opportunity to sharpen their skills before the next season begins.

The Buchanan County YMCA invites boys and girls entering second through eighth grade to participate in its annual Co-Ed Youth Summer Basketball Camp, scheduled for July 29-31.

The three-day camp will be led by Southern Gap High School varsity boys basketball head coach Jory Rife and

is designed to provide young athletes with a fun, encouraging environment where they can improve their basketball fundamentals, build confidence and make new friends.

Each day will begin with a devotional before campers take part in instruction covering ball handling, shooting, defensive pressure, layups, agility and game situations. Players will also have opportunities to apply what they learn through daily competitions and scrimmages.

The camp is open to players of all experience levels, whether they are learning the fundamentals of the game or preparing for the upcoming school basketball season. Sessions will be held from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. each

day at the Buchanan County YMCA.

In addition to basketball instruction, every participant will receive a camp T-shirt, a pool pass and a snow cone pass. Daily awards will be presented throughout the camp, and one participant will be named Camper of the Week and receive a complimentary one-year YMCA membership.

Registration is now open. The cost is \$75 for YMCA members, with each additional sibling costing \$60. For non-members, the fee is \$95, with additional siblings costing \$80 each.

For more information or to register, parents may contact the Buchanan County YMCA at (276) 935-8871.



Buchanan County Sports Podcast founder Michael Dotson (right), Kate Bostic (middle) and BCSP member Tim O'Quinn (left) pose for a photo during the Buchanan County Sports Podcast Awards Banquet, where Bostic was recognized as the organization's Girls Tennis Player of the Year.

Bostic recognized as BCSP Girls Tennis Player of the Year

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

The Buchanan County Sports Podcast announced that Grundy High School standout and recent graduate Kate Bostic was named its Girls Tennis Player of the Year at the organization's inaugural awards banquet.

Bostic earned the honor after an outstanding season on the court, during which she was named Black Diamond District Player of the Year and signed to further her academic and tennis career

at the University of Pikeville in late May.

The Buchanan County Sports Podcast's inaugural banquet recognized outstanding athletes, coaches and teams from across the county for their achievements during the school year. The awards banquet celebrates athletic excellence while honoring the accomplishments of student-athletes from Buchanan County's high schools.

The Virginia Mountaineer regrets omitting Bostic's award from its previous coverage of the banquet and is pleased to recognize her achievement.

In the Locker Room

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

A true angel leaves her mark on Buchanan County Buchanan County lost a true angel this past week.

I was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Mary "Susie" Ratliff Rife, the beloved wife of legendary Buchanan County coach Roger Rife, who also serves as the South Grundy District supervisor.

Personally, I can't remember ever seeing Miss Susie without being greeted by a warm hug and an even warmer smile. Her gentle spirit had a way of brightening anyone's day. Although soft-spoken, she possessed a tremendous passion for God, Coach Rife, her family and Buchanan County.



One of her greatest legacies will forever be the transformation of what is now known as Roger and Susie Rife Park, formerly known as Poplar Gap Park at Southern Gap. Coach Rife has always been quick to credit Miss Susie as the driving force behind turning the park into one of Buchanan County's premier recreational facilities.

From the state-of-the-art playground equipment and Frisbee golf course to the horse arena, the Consol Energy Main Stage, the gym, the magical Christmas light display and the popular drive-through Trunk-or-Treat each Halloween, Miss Susie's fingerprints can be found everywhere. Those events created countless memories for families throughout the county, and her work will continue bringing smiles to children for generations.

She was also Coach Rife's biggest supporter. Rarely did you see one without the other.

Throughout Coach Rife's legendary coaching career and more than three decades of public service, Miss Susie quietly served as a team mom and supporter for hundreds of student-athletes. My own family was fortunate enough to know the Rifes during Coach Rife's days at Hurley High School in the mid-1980s when my brother, Mark, played for him.

Coach Rife built an incredible coaching résumé. During 18 seasons as Garden High School's boys basketball coach, he won 223 games, a school record that will never be broken. His teams captured three district tournament championships, reached regional play nine times, and he earned District Coach of the Year honors four times.

His football success was equally impressive. Over nine seasons, Coach Rife won 55 games, another Garden school record. His teams claimed four district championships, won the Region title in 1986 and finished as VHSL state runner-up that same season. He was also named District Coach of the Year three times.

Behind every one of those accomplishments stood Miss Susie.

She wasn't looking for recognition. She loved serv-

SEE LOCKER ROOM | 4B

SGHS to host Meet the Eagles to introduce fall athletes

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

As excitement continues to build for the opening of Southern Gap High School, students, families and community members will have an opportunity to meet the Eagles' first-ever fall athletic teams during a special community event next month.

The Southern Gap High School Pep Club, "The Nest," will host its inaugural Meet the Eagles celebration on Thursday, Aug. 20, from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Southern Gap High School, one day before the start of the 2026-27 school year.

The event will introduce the school's high school and middle school fall student-athletes as Southern Gap

prepares for its historic first athletic season.

Organizers have planned a family-friendly atmosphere featuring inflatables for children, live music, food vendors and additional activities throughout the evening.

Admission is free for Southern Gap students. Admission for all other attendees is \$5.

The event serves as one of the first major public celebrations of Southern Gap athletics as the new school prepares to begin competition following the consolidation of Buchanan County's four high schools into one campus.

School officials encourage students, families and community members to attend, meet the athletes and coaches, and show their support as the Eagles begin a new era of Buchanan County athletics.

Competition cheer open gyms set at Southern Gap High School

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

Students interested in joining Southern Gap High School's inaugural competition cheer program will have several opportunities to sharpen their skills and meet teammates during a series of open gyms beginning later this month.

The sessions are open to all students in grades 8-12 and will be held primarily at the Buchanan County YMCA. Coaches said both junior varsity and varsity teams will be formed, with all eligible students encouraged to participate.

The first open gym was held on July 20, from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Additional sessions are planned for July 24, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.; July 29, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.; and Monday, Aug. 3, from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Each open gym will feature a different theme to help create a fun and welcoming atmosphere for participants. The July 20 session was "Dress Like Your Water Bottle" theme, followed by "Anything But a Bow" on July 24, "White Lie T-Shirt" on July 29 and "Crazy Socks & High Ponies" on Aug. 3.

In addition to the open gyms, a cheer clinic is scheduled for Monday, July 27, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Organizers said additional information about the clinic will be announced soon.

Team evaluations will be held Wednesday, Aug. 5, beginning at 5:30 p.m. Choreography for the squad is scheduled for Aug. 7-8.

The open gyms are designed to help athletes im-

SEE COMPETITION CHEER | 1B

YMCA seeks instructors for community programs

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

The Buchanan County YMCA is looking to expand its lineup of community programs and is seeking instructors to lead a variety of classes and activities.

YMCA officials are encouraging energetic, motivated and passionate individuals to apply to teach programs designed to promote health, wellness and community engagement. Organizers say instructors will be paid by the class and will receive support from the YMCA in developing and leading their programs.

Openings are available in several areas, including group fitness classes such as Zumba, HIIT, spin, strength training and other exercise programs. The YMCA is also seeking instructors for yoga and mindfulness classes, dance and ballet, aquatics, youth programs

and other specialty activities.

Officials say the instructor positions offer flexible scheduling, allowing individuals to teach classes that fit their availability while sharing their skills with others. In addition to earning compensation, instructors will have the opportunity to help improve the community's health and well-being while building lasting connections with participants.

The recruitment effort is part of the YMCA's continued commitment to expanding recreational and wellness opportunities for residents of all ages throughout Buchanan County.

Anyone interested in becoming an instructor or learning more about the available opportunities is encouraged to contact the Buchanan County YMCA at 276-935-8871 or stop by the facility at 1059 Golden Wave Drive in Grundy to apply or receive additional information.

SOUTHERN GAP

FROM PAGE 1B

and gymnasium, while flooring installation has entered its final stages.

Inside the nearly 200,000-square-foot facility, classrooms are rapidly taking shape. Burge said case-work installation is almost complete, final paint touch-ups are nearing completion, and kitchen equipment is being connected. The remaining exterior glass is expected to be installed, while heating and air conditioning systems are currently being started up and balanced.

The move into the building has already begun. Burge told the board that boxes from the county's former high schools started arriving last week, while furniture deliveries officially began the day of the meeting.

Over the coming weeks, contractors will focus on completing asphalt paving, installing sod around the front of the school, finishing the gymnasium floor, completing the remaining flooring in a handful of areas, installing ceiling tiles and furnishing classrooms and offices. Fence installation also continues around the football stadium and the baseball and softball facilities.

During the presentation, board members viewed photographs highlighting many of the school's finished spaces, including the auditorium, band room, wrestling room, business and science labs, foreign language classrooms, sensory room and multiple academic classrooms. Images also showcased the Eagles sculpture completed by local artist Johnny Hagerman with assistance from local CTE students that welcomes visitors inside the new school.

The board also watched a brief drone video by recent

Grundy High School graduate Teddy Smith showcasing the school's interior.

Knox school board member Tommy Blankenship asked Burge whether responsibility had been determined should the building experience settlement or structural issues in the future.

Burge said the building was constructed according to engineering plans and specifications.

"The civil engineer has designed the structure on what to set the structure on," Burge said. "We did exactly what they said to do, and that's on the engineers. They're the ones that designed what to set the building on, and then we built it according to the plans. That's all we can do."

He added that the site was prepared in accordance with the approved engineering plans. He acknowledged that any future dispute over structural issues would likely involve the engineers responsible for the design.

Blankenship concluded by asking the question many Buchanan County families have been wondering for months.

"Is the school going to be ready?" he asked. Burge responded without hesitation. "Yes, it will," Burge said. "If it's not ready, it will be ready. There is no fail. It will open on the 21st."

Southern Gap High School is scheduled to welcome students for the first day of classes on Friday, Aug. 21. The new school will serve students in grades 8-12 and unites the former Grundy, Hurley, Council and Twin Valley high schools under one roof for the first time in county history.



Construction Superintendent Tim Burge shows Buchanan County School Board members the nearly completed gymnasium floor at Southern Gap High School during a July 13 construction update. Crews were preparing to sand, stain and seal the hardwood floor as work enters its final stages before the school's Aug. 21 opening.



The auditorium at Southern Gap High School is among the many areas nearing completion as crews put the finishing touches on the new campus. Construction Superintendent Tim Burge shared images of the facility with the Buchanan County School Board during a July 13 progress update.

WHITEWOOD NATIVE

FROM PAGE 3B

people experience His presence, healing, hope and the reality of miracles, signs and wonders."

Ward hopes his return home will serve as an encouragement, especially to young people growing up in the same mountains where his own journey of faith and music began.

"My prayer is that my life will serve as a testimony that nothing is impossible for those who believe," Ward said. "If my story encourages even one person to trust God with their calling, it will be worth it."

He also offered simple but heartfelt advice to aspiring musicians and worship leaders throughout the region.

"Keep God at the center of everything you do, and make daily fellowship with Him your highest priority," he said. "Your relationship with Jesus will always be more important than your platform."

Although his ministry now takes him across the country, Ward said his mission has never changed.

"More than anything, I want people to leave knowing they are fully loved, fully accepted and deeply valued by God," he said. "Everything we do points people to the love and finished work of Jesus."

Those unable to attend the revival or wishing to learn more about Ward's ministry can follow Stephen and Lori Ward on YouTube (Stephen & Lori) and on Facebook and Instagram (The Living Room Movement), where they regularly share worship, teaching and ministry updates.

The Generation United Revival will be held Thursday through Saturday, Aug. 6-8, at the Roger and Susie Rife Park (formerly Poplar Gap Park). Services begin nightly at 7 p.m. Admission is free, and attendees are encouraged to bring a chair. For more information, contact Jerry Ward at 276-935-5672.



Whitewood native Stephen Ward will return to Buchanan County as a featured worship leader and speaker during the Generation United Revival, scheduled for Aug. 6-8 at the Buchanan County Fairgrounds in Grundy. Ward and his wife, Lori, now travel nationwide through their ministry, The Living Room Movement.

GRAND JURY

FROM PAGE 1B

Terry Wayne Wolford — one count each of possession of buprenorphine/naloxone, possession of gabapentin and possession of methamphetamine.

Timmy Ray Waters — one count of reckless driving after allegedly disregarding a police command to stop.

Billy Ray Viars — one count of obstruction of justice, one count of possession of methamphetamine and two counts of assaulting a law enforcement officer.

Mickey Dwayne Stacy — two counts of grand larceny and one count of damaging property valued at \$1,000 or more.

Miranda Nicole Miller — one count of possession of methamphetamine.

Kaneesa Lynn McClanahan — one count of knowingly making a false application for public assistance and one count of fraudulently obtaining \$1,000 or more in welfare assistance.

Donald Christopher McClanahan — possession of Suboxone, possession of methamphetamine and two counts of grand larceny of a motor vehicle.

Kenneth Ray Matney — one count of possession of gabapentin and one count of possession of methamphetamine.

Jimmy Stewart Justus — one count of driving on a suspended or revoked license, one count of possession of alprazolam and one count of possession of methamphetamine.

Gladys Jennings — one count of knowingly making a false application for public assistance and one count of fraudulently obtaining \$1,000 or more in welfare assistance.

Keith Brett James — one count of entering school property after being convicted of a violent sex offense.

Marvin Craig Hibbitts — possession of drug paraphernalia, possession of buprenorphine and possession of methamphetamine.

Melissa Ann Hardin — one count of knowingly making a false application for public assistance and one count of fraudulently obtaining \$1,000 or more in welfare assistance.

William Bryant Gibson — one count of knowingly making a false application for public assistance and one count of fraudulently obtaining \$1,000 or more in welfare assistance.

Angie Gibson — one count of knowingly making a false application for public assistance and one count of fraudulently obtaining \$1,000 or more in welfare assistance.

Alexander K. Dotson — one count of obstruction of justice and one count of child neglect.

Aaron Joseph Cook — one count of possession of fentanyl.

Terry Lee Coleman — one count of knowingly making a false application for public assistance and one count of fraudulently obtaining \$1,000 or more in welfare assistance.

Courtney Danielle Coleman — one count of knowingly making a false application for public assistance and one count of fraudulently obtaining \$1,000 or more in welfare assistance.

Audria Rene Coleman — one count of possession of methamphetamine.

David Childers — one count of conspiracy to commit burglary and one count of statutory burglary.

Christopher Edward Catron — one count of driving on a suspended or revoked license and one count of driving while intoxicated, third offense within 10 years.

Erica Nicole Burkes — one count of knowingly making a false application for public assistance and one count of fraudulently obtaining \$1,000 or more in welfare assistance.

Rebecca Brown — one count of possession of methamphetamine.

William Eric Blankenship — one count of obtaining money by false pretenses involving less than \$1,000, one count of uttering a forged check and one count of forgery.

David Lee Blankenship — one count of obstruction of justice and two counts of child neglect.

Samantha Adkins — two counts of simple assault and one count of statutory burglary.

Melissa Adkins — one count of conspiracy to commit burglary and one count of statutory burglary.

Keisha Adkins — one count of fraudulently obtaining \$1,000 or more in welfare assistance and one count of knowingly making a false application for public assistance.

Andrew Hassell Hess — one count of malicious wounding. The indictment alleges Hess stabbed, cut or otherwise wounded another person with the intent to maim, disfigure, disable or kill.

Jonathan Shane Spence — one count each of hunting, trapping or fishing without a required license, trespassing with intent to damage or interfere with property and grand larceny.

Wesley Allen Burke — one count of trespassing with intent to damage or interfere with property and one count of grand larceny.

Todd Matthew Lane — one count of burning personal property valued at less than \$1,000.

Matthew William Slone — one count of burning personal property valued at less than \$1,000 and one count of obtaining more than \$1,000 by false pretenses.

Maryetta Earlene Casey Fuller (identified in the indictments as Maryetta Earlene Casey) — one count each of failure to appear, common-law trespassing, simple assault and damaging property valued at \$1,000 or more.

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Eaton Power Solutions approved for VCEDA seed capital grant

Virginia Mountaineer

Off-grid solar energy solutions for homes, businesses and remote infrastructure utilizing locally manufactured portable solar trailers is what Joshua Eaton's new business, Eaton Power Solutions, LLC provides to those seeking an alternative energy source in the region.

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

"Eaton Power Solutions, LLC manufactures solar trailers which have numerous applications from meeting the needs of contractors and in emergency back-up applications to those capable of powering food trucks, large residences or portable EV charging stations," said Jonathan Belcher, VCEDA executive director/general counsel. "The business projects three full-time employees and one part-time employee within five years."

"Not only do we manufacture portable solar power trailers in the region, but we also rent them or install them from our 21 Mountain View Circle, Honaker location," Eaton said. "We design and build trailer-mounted solar power systems that deliver clean, reliable electricity anywhere it is needed with no additional fuel costs, no noise and no emissions."

"I started the business because I saw a need for it in order to supply power in remote areas. "No plug-in or panel? No problem. With the solar power trailer, the need for electricity is met. "We offer 5, 10 and 15kw trailer models, but can customize them to meet specific customer needs."

Eaton noted response to his new business, which opened last September, has been good.

"What we have seen is a clear, validated demand for both the sales



Joshua Eaton opened Eaton Power Solutions, LLC to manufacture portable solar-powered trailers for use in a variety of settings - from homes and businesses, to construction sites, to power food trucks and more. The new business is a recent recipient of a \$10,000 VCEDA Seed Capital Matching Grant.

and rental sides of the business," Eaton said. "Existing customers have responded enthusiastically to the project and inquiries for both purchases and rentals continue to grow as word spreads across the region of their availability."

He noted in the near term, the business is marketing its services in the seven county-coalfield region as well as into Washington County. In the longer term, Eaton plans to expand sales and rentals into surrounding multi-state Appalachian markets including those in Northeast Tennessee, Western North Carolina, Southeast Kentucky and Southern West Virginia.

Eaton used the VCEDA grant for the component supplies and equipment needed to build and equip the solar trailers.

"I am really thankful for the grant," Eaton said. "It will help us to furnish out the trailers."

The trailers are available for purchase or may be rented out by the day, the week, or longer as needed. They assist with powering light towers, food trucks, as emergency back-up power sources and more and are noise and emissions-free, unlike a traditional generator, Eaton noted. Currently, he

has five available for rent.

Eaton worked with the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Southwest Virginia Community College (SWCC) in developing his application to VCEDA. He received a letter of support from the Russell County Industrial Development Authority.

"We are always excited to see new entrepreneurs invest in Southwest Virginia, bringing innovation, specialized services and new opportunities to our local economy," said Denise Harmon, SBDC director at SWCC. "It was a pleasure working with Josh as he launched Eaton Power Solutions and turned his business vision into reality. His dedication and entrepreneurial spirit are a great example of the talent and determination found throughout our region. The SBDC is proud to have been part of Josh's entrepreneurial journey. We wish him continued success and look forward to watching Eaton Power Solutions grow, serve the community, and contribute to the economic vitality of Southwest Virginia. Congratulations, Josh, on this well-deserved achievement."

"Eaton Power Solutions fills a critical need in Russell County by expanding access to alternative energy services," said Laura Gilmer, executive director of the Russell County Industrial Development Authority (IDA). "Businesses like this one are exactly the kind of forward-looking investment that will help attract new business growth to our county, while creating jobs and generating new tax revenue for our community."

The business is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday-Friday. For more information about Eaton Power Solutions, interested persons may visit the website at eatonpowersolutions.com or visit the Facebook page. Contacts for company services may be made via Facebook Messenger or by emailing eatonjosh0@gmail.com.



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 20 through July 26, 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

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

(NEW) Route 460 intersection improvements – Richlands: Intersection improvement work will take place on Route 460 at the Clinch Valley Medical Center intersection in Richlands. The work will take place on Tuesday (July 21). Be alert to lane closures and pay attention to signs and message boards.

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)

(UPDATE) 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 through July 31. 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)

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

Interstate projects

Interstate 81/77

(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)

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

Interstate 81

Nighttime paving operations southbound between mile marker 56 and Exit 54 in Smyth County.

Asuperload is traveling northbound from Bristol to the West Virginia state line the week of July 20.

Interstate 77

Nighttime tunnel maintenance northbound at Big Walker Mountain Tunnel in Bland County. All wide loads over 12 feet must stop before entering the tunnel.

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

Back-to-School events set across BCPS

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

With the first day of school less than five weeks away, Buchanan County Public Schools is encouraging families to complete required health forms, attend school meet-and-greet events, take part in back-to-school celebrations and take advantage of a free vaccination clinic before students return to class.

The 2026-27 school year begins Friday, Aug. 21, marking the opening of a new chapter for students across the county, including the inaugural year of Southern Gap High School.

School officials remind parents that all required physical examinations, immunization records and other health documentation must be completed before the first day of school. Families may also turn in those documents during school meet-and-greet events scheduled for Wednesday, Aug. 19, from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.

At Southern Gap High School, students and families will have an opportunity to meet teachers, tour the new campus and become familiar with the school's layout during the Aug. 19 meet-and-greet. Elementary and middle school students throughout the county also will have an opportunity to meet their teachers from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Aug. 19 at their respective schools.

In addition to the meet-and-greet events, schools and community partners have planned several Back-to-School Bash celebrations to help students and families prepare for the new academic year.

Riverview Elementary/Middle School will kick off the schedule with a Back-to-School Bash on Thursday, July 30, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the school.

Twin Valley Elementary/Middle School will host its event Saturday, Aug. 1, from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Whitewood Volunteer Fire Department.

Council Elementary/Middle School and Tommy P. Justus Elementary/Middle School (Hurley Elementary/Middle School) will each hold Back-to-School Bash events on Tuesday, Aug. 18, from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. at their respective schools.

Southern Gap High School will conclude the celebrations with its Back-to-School Bash on Thursday, Aug. 20, from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the new high school, giving students and families another opportunity to become familiar with the campus before the first day of classes.

School officials said the events are designed to help students of all ages make a smooth transition into the new school year while allowing

parents to meet faculty and staff, become familiar with school procedures and connect with available resources before classes begin.

Health requirements vary by grade level. Kindergarten students must have a current school physical and all required immunizations before attending classes.

Students entering seventh grade must receive the Tdap and meningococcal vaccines, while the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine remains optional under Virginia guidelines.

Students entering 12th grade are required to receive the meningococcal vaccine before returning to school.

To help families meet those requirements, the Virginia Department of Health will host a free

Back-to-School Vaccine Clinic on Thursday, July 30, from 10 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Appointments may be scheduled by calling 276-935-4591, although walk-in patients also will be accepted throughout the day.

School officials encourage parents not to wait until the last minute to schedule physicals or vaccinations, noting that completing all required paperwork before classes begin will help ensure students can start the school year without delays.

The vaccination clinic, Back-to-School Bash events and school meet-and-greets are all part of the division's effort to help families prepare for the opening of the 2026-27 school year and give students a successful start when classes begin Aug. 21.

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 Elementary/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.

IN THE LOCKER ROOM

FROM PAGE 1B

ing others.

Beyond athletics, Susie dedicated her life to Buchanan County. She was a member of Little Prater Church of Christ, worked for many years as a teacher's aide and substitute teacher with Buchanan County Public Schools, and devoted countless volunteer hours to improving her community.

Her legacy isn't measured only by the facilities she helped build or the events she organized. It lives on in every child who laughed on the playground, every family who enjoyed Christmas lights or gave their lives to Christ at one of the park's many faith-based events, and every athlete whose life she quietly touched.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to Coach Roger Rife, her beloved son Greg and wife Debbie Rife, and the entire Rife family during this difficult time.

Thank you, Miss Susie, for showing us what servant leadership truly looks like. You will be forever missed, and your legacy will live on.

Now, shifting from one legend to the future of basketball, the NBA Summer League has provided an exciting glimpse of the league's next generation of stars.

The first four selections in the 2026 NBA Draft have all looked worthy of their lofty draft positions.

No. 1 overall pick AJ Dybantsa has been everything the Washington Wizards hoped for after selecting him out of BYU. The 19-year-old has showcased elite scoring ability, averaging 25 points and 7 rebounds per game. His defensive prowess has been equally impressive, averaging 2.5 steals and 1.5 blocks.

Washington's future suddenly looks much brighter with Dybantsa joining Alex Sarr and Tre Johnson, giving the Wizards one of the NBA's

most promising young cores.

Utah's Darren Peterson, selected second overall out of Kansas, has answered many of the questions critics raised before the draft. Peterson is averaging 20.7 points, four rebounds and four assists while showing he can be a true floor general.

The Memphis Grizzlies may have landed one of the biggest steals of the draft when Cameron Boozer fell to them at No. 3. After an outstanding freshman season at Duke, Boozer has continued his stellar play in Las Vegas, averaging 20 points, seven rebounds, three assists, three steals and two blocks.

Perhaps the biggest surprise has been Chicago rookie Caleb Wilson. The former North Carolina standout has been electric, averaging 27.7 points per game while looking every bit like a future NBA star. His Summer League performance has already sparked conversations that he could eventually prove to be one of the best players from this draft class.

Another player making plenty of noise has been Cleveland's Maleek Thomas, who leads the Summer League in scoring at 29 points per game. His offensive creativity and scoring instincts have reminded many observers of a young Tyrese Haliburton.

Of course, Summer League numbers don't always translate into NBA success. We've all seen players dominate in July only to disappear once the regular season begins or end up in the G-League. But this rookie class appears different.

If these young stars continue developing at this pace, the NBA could be entering another exciting era led by one of the deepest draft classes we've seen in years.

I'm certainly looking forward to watching their journeys unfold.

COMPETITION

CHEER

FROM PAGE 1B

prove their cheerleading skills, build team chemistry and prepare for evaluations as Southern Gap High School launches its first competition cheer program.

Because schedules are subject to change, students and parents are encouraged to monitor the Southern Gap competition cheer Facebook page for updates. School officials also remind participants that open gyms will be held at the YMCA unless otherwise announced.

For more information, contact competition cheer coach Megan Wolford at megan.wolford@bcpsk12.com.

CLASSIFIEDS

LEGAL NOTICES

Public Notice Application for Bond Release Under Chapter 19, Title 45.2 Code of Virginia PUBLICATION NUMBER: 26TLD02

APPLICATION NUMBER: 1011857

Dominion Coal Corporation is applying for bond release on Permit No. 1202036 located in Buchanan County 2.4 miles west of Oakwood on Webb Branch. This permit consists of 19.30 acres bonded under Cost Estimate Bond. As provided by 4VAC25-130-800.40 of the Virginia Coal Surface Mining Reclamation Regulations, the Applicant is requesting that the current total bond amount of \$320,600 in the form of insurance surety posted for this permit be released. The Applicant is also requesting in this application the deletion of the unmined areas and Phase III release of the Division of Oil and Gas (DGO) permitted road located within this MLR permit area, for a total of 19.30 acres to be deleted/released. This bond release request is based on the following Phase III reclamation:

1. This applicant has never mined any coal on this permit; the unmined areas are being deleted.

2. The remaining areas totaling 4.91 acres, are DGO permitted gas well/line roads which are in use by the gas company and have met their Phase III requirements.

3. The Post-Mining Land Use is Industrial Oil and Gas usage for the 4.91 acres being proposed for Phase III release.

Any person with a valid legal interest which might be adversely affected by this proposal, or an officer or head of any federal, state or local government agency or authority, may within 30 days of (August 13, 2026) submit written comments or objections concerning this bond release, and may also request, in writing, that the Mined Land Repurposing Program hold an Informal Conference concerning this application. A copy of the application materials is available electronically for public inspection at <https://www.energy.virginia>

.gov/dmlrinquiry/frm-Main.a.spx?ctl=4 All correspondence concerning this application should be submitted to the Mined Land Repurposing Program (Attention: Permit Section), 3405 Mountain Empire Road, Big Stone Gap, Virginia 24219. Telephone (276) 523-8160. Written comments and a request for informal conference may be e-mailed to the Division at repurposingpublicnotice@energy.virginia.gov. V A M - 07,23,30;08,6,13;2026

TRUSTEE SALE 7118 Deskins Road, Vansant, VA 24656 Buchanan County

In execution of a Deed of Trust in the original principal amount of \$45,000.00, dated April 16, 2010 recorded in the Clerk's Office of the Circuit Court of the Buchanan County, Virginia, in Document No. 100001013 and modified in Document No. 220000547, at the request of the holder of the Note, the undersigned Substitute Trustee and will offer for sale at public auction at the entrance to the Circuit Court of Buchanan County, 1012 Walnut Street, Grundy, on August 27, 2026 at 12:30 PM the property described in said deed, located at the above address and briefly described as:

PARCEL 1: Beginning at a stake which bears S 27 00 W 1.3 feet from Appalachian Power Company pole # 322-191, and also bears S 16 00 E 4 feet from a 6 inch apple tree, and approximately 6 feet East of the right to way of State Route 620; thence N 2 00 W 52 feet, and following the right of way line of State Route 620 for a part of said distance, to a stake in said Highway Right of Way line; thence continuing with said right of way line, N 20 00 W 101 feet to a stake in the center of Prater Creek, said stake bearing N 10 00 W 15.5 feet from U.S. Geographical Survey B. Marker No. 22 WSM, and S 35 30 E 15.5 feet from a lead plug in the bridge pier connecting State Route 83 and State Route 620, and N 23 30 W 29 feet from an 11 inch locust; thence with the appropriate center of Prater Creek, descending, N 72 30 E 100 feet to a station in the cen-

ter of said creek, said station bearing N 11 00 W 20 feet from a 15 inch hemlock and N 50 15 W 23 feet from a 12 inch buckeye; thence S 20 00 E 134 feet to a stake located approximately 3 feet above the toe of the hill; thence S 63 55 W 117 feet to the beginning, containing approximately 1 1/3 acre, more or less, with improvements thereon. Less and Except the remainder of the property of which the property conveyed is a part, a right of way 20 feet in width, across the back of this property and being more particularly described as follows: Beginning at a stake which bears S 27 00 W 1.3 feet from Appalachian Power Company pole no. 322-191, and also bears S 16 00 E 4 feet from a six inch apple tree, and approximately six feet of the right of way of State Route 620; thence N 2 00 W approximately 20 feet to a stake; thence N 63 55 E approximately 115 feet to a stake in the lower line of the lot above conveyed; thence S 20 00 E approximately 20 feet to a stake, located approximately three feet above the toe of the hill; thence S 63 55 W 117 feet to the beginning. Less and Except from this conveyance, all the coal underlying the Tiller seam or the horizon thereof, which was previously conveyed to Island Creek Coal Company by Deed in Deed Book 186, page 95.

PARCEL 2: Beginning at a stake 3 feet above the toe of the bank, corner to a lot purchased by parties of the second part from party of the first part; thence with the line of the parties of the second part S 20 E 134 feet to a stake in the center line of Prater Creek; thence leaving the line of the parties of the second part down Prater Creek to the eastern boundary of the 7.34 acre tract; thence leaving the creek up the hill with said eastern boundary of the 7.34 acre tract to a marked sycamore; thence S 20 30 E 386.4 feet to a point on the cliff, 2.5 feet below a 6 inch sugar tree; thence S 10 30 E 160 feet to a stake on a spur, witnessed by a small pine; thence N 68 30 W approximately 645 feet to a point in the edge of State Highway Right of Way to Route 620; thence with the Highway Right of Way approximately 315 feet to a stake in the highway right of

way line and a corner of the property heretofore conveyed by the party of the first part to the parties of the second part; thence with the line of the parties of the second part S 2 E 52 feet to a stake; thence N 63 55 E 117 feet to the beginning, containing approximately 4 acres, more or less, and being all the property owned by party of the first part bounded on the north by State Route 620 and Big Prater River Creek, with improvements thereon. Less and Except and reserved from this property, that portion conveyed by Deed recorded in Deed Book 162, Page 99. Subject to any and all covenants, conditions, restrictions, easements, and all other matters of record taking priority over the Deed of Trust, if any, affecting the aforesaid property.

TERMS OF SALE: CASH: A deposit of \$20,000.00 or 10% of the sales price, whichever is lower, cash or certified check will be required at the time of sale, but no more than \$9,000.00 of cash will be accepted, with settlement within fifteen (15) days from the date of sale. Sale is subject to post sale confirmation that the borrower did not file for protection under the U.S. Bankruptcy Code prior to the sale which affects the validity of the sale, as well as to post-sale confirmation of the status of the loan with the loan servicer including, but not limited to, determination of whether the borrower entered into any repayment agreement, re-instated or paid off the loan prior to the sale. Sale is also subject to buyer providing Trustee with information needed for reporting requirements required by Federal Law including FinCen requirements (31 CFR Chapter X) within 15 days from date of sale. In any such event, the sale shall be null and void, and the Purchaser's sole remedy, in law or equity, shall be the return of his deposit without interest. Additional terms may be announced at the time of sale. Pursuant to the Federal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, we advise you that this firm is a debt collector attempting to collect the indebtedness referred to herein and any information we obtain will be used for that purpose.

SAMUEL I. WHITE, P.C., Substitute Trustee

This is a communication

from a debt collector. FOR INFORMATION CONTACT: SAMUEL I. WHITE, P.C.(60472) 448 Viking Drive Suite 350 Virginia Beach, VA 23452

757-457-1460 Call Between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. or visit our website at www.siwpc.net VAM-07-23,30;2026

EMPLOYMENT

Finance & Office Manager for 29th Judicial District CASA Program, Inc.

The unwavering dedication and expertise demonstrated by the Finance & Office Manager are central to our organization's enduring success and the confidence we inspire among our stakeholders. For those seeking a professional yet warm environment, where meticulous attention to detail and commitment to excellence are celebrated virtues, we extend an invitation to join us in our mission-driven endeavors.

Required Competencies

- Bachelor's degree or equivalent combination of education and experience demonstrating the required knowledge, skills and abilities to carry out the responsibilities of the Finance & Office Manager.
 - Administrative and financial support experience in a fast-paced agency, with a high attention to detail.
 - Understanding of database technology and thorough, detailed database management; experience in Microsoft Office suite is essential.
 - Ability to make mature decisions, work independently, multitask, and meet deadlines.
 - Strong organizational, time management, written, and oral communication skills.
 - Exceptional customer service, team player, and work ethic is required.
 - An appreciation and understanding of a people-centric environment including donors and volunteers.
 - The ability to work cooperatively with different types of personalities and individuals of diverse racial/economic/cultural background.
 - Oral and written communication skills.
- Preferred Skills and/or Expertise**
- Experience in QuickBooks or QuickBooks Online.
 - Nonprofit finance and administrative experience.
 - Familiarity or prior experience with financial audits.
 - Troubleshooting and technological assistance.
 - Knowledge or interest in court matters, child welfare, and juvenile justice issues.

Reports to:

Executive Director

Employment Status:

Full-Time – 40 hours/week

Benefits:

\$30,000 annual pay

Health Insurance 100%

PTO - 40 hours upon completion of 90 days of employment for the first year and 80 hours of PTO from the second year forward.

Paid Holidays observed by the 29th Judicial District CASA Program: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Day After Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day

To apply, send your resumé and cover letter of interest to: email casa@29thjdcasa.org, Fax 276-935-8542 or drop off at 1103 Plaza Drive - Suite D, Grundy, VA 24614

29th Judicial District CASA Program, Inc. is an equal opportunity employer, prohibiting harassment and discrimination based on race, religion, color, gender, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or any other legally protected status.

YOUR HOMETOWN NEWS IS JUST A CLICK AWAY



LOCAL NEWS



SPORTS



OBITUARIES



COMMUNITY EVENTS

www.VirginiaMountaineer.com



Members of the Grundy Town Council discuss a proposal to forgive the remaining balance of a long-standing loan owed by the Town of Grundy Industrial Development Authority during the council's July 14 meeting at the Grundy Plaza Town Office. The council later voted to convert the approximately \$230,000 debt into a grant following a public hearing held before the regular meeting.

Grundy Town Council forgives remaining IDA loan, converts debt to grant

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

The Grundy Town Council voted during its regular July 14 meeting to forgive the remaining balance of a long-standing loan owed by the Town of Grundy Industrial Development Authority, converting approximately \$230,000 in debt into a grant following a public hearing held before the meeting.

No one spoke during the public hearing, and the council later took up the matter during its regular session, where it approved the measure by roll-call vote.

Grundy Town Manager and Town of Grundy IDA Properties Manager Dennis Ramey said the loan dates back more than a decade.

According to Ramey, the IDA began experiencing cash-flow difficulties in 2014 while operating and maintaining the Grundy Town Center and other downtown properties. Between 2014 and 2018, the town advanced a series of temporary loans, generally ranging from \$20,000 to \$30,000 at a time, to help the authority meet its financial obligations.

Those advances eventually totaled approximately \$580,000. Ramey said the IDA has since repaid about \$350,000, leaving an outstanding balance of roughly \$230,000.

“This loan’s been out there for a long time,” Ramey told council members. “It just cleans up our books and the IDA’s books. It makes it easier for our auditors, and it would help the IDA, especially with some potentially tough financial times ahead.”

Ramey noted the council has previously reduced the debt by converting portions of the loan into grants. About \$150,000 was forgiven in 2019, while the IDA also made annual payments of approximately \$55,000 in 2021, 2023 and 2024.

He said the IDA’s financial challenges stem largely from its efforts to keep downtown businesses operating by maintaining affordable lease rates despite rising operating costs.

“We’ve tried our best to keep the rents competitive,” Ramey said. “When leases came up for renewal that normally called for increases, we chose to keep the rates the same to help businesses stay here.”

Ramey said several storefronts in the Town Center, including the former GameStop, Subway and Unique Nails locations, remain vacant, although prospective tenants have expressed interest. He added that nearly all of the available space in the Grundy Plaza has been leased, with only a few offices remaining because they lack storefront visibility.

He emphasized that the IDA continues to make debt payments associated with the Town Center and downtown redevelopment.

“It’s not like we’re stashing this money away somewhere,” Ramey said. “Those loans are still being paid every month.”

Ramey explained that construction costs for the downtown redevelopment escalated significantly beyond the original project estimates, requiring the IDA to borrow additional funds to complete projects such as the Town Center parking structure and infrastructure supporting the Walmart development.

He also addressed speculation that the Town Center could be sold, saying the IDA has no plans to do so.

“We could sell it tomorrow,” Ramey said. “But what happens if another owner decides Walmart isn’t making enough money and tells them to leave? Walmart is a big part of keeping this town going, and we’re trying to keep the Town Center alive.”

Ramey added that the IDA’s debt obligations are disclosed in its annual audited financial statements and are available for public review.

“We’re transparent,” he said. “People don’t always understand that we still owe money on the Walmart development. It’s in our audit every year.”

Following discussion, the council approved the motion by roll-call vote, officially forgiving the remaining loan balance and converting the debt into a grant, a move Ramey said will improve the IDA’s financial position while simplifying the accounting records for both the town and the authority.

BCPS releases bus routes for 2026-27 school year

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

With the opening of Southern Gap High School less than five weeks away, Buchanan County Public Schools has released its bus routes for the 2026-27 school year.

The transportation plan reflects the county’s new school configuration, with high school students from throughout Buchanan County traveling to Southern Gap High School. In contrast, elementary and middle school students continue to attend Riverview Elementary/Middle School, Council Elementary/Middle School, Hurley Elementary/Middle School, and Twin Valley Elementary/Middle School.

Several routes require students to transfer buses at designated locations before continuing to their schools. Those transfer points include the Buchanan County School Board Central Office, Riverview Elementary/Middle School (REMS), Council Elementary/Middle School (CEMS), Twin Valley Elementary/Middle School (TVEMS), Hurley Square, G&J Grocery, Paul’s Fans, Vansant Church of Christ, Farmers Market, the Food City parking lot across from Pizza Hut, Carter Cat and Rockhouse.

Southern Gap High School will operate from 8:15 a.m. until 2:45 p.m., while the county’s elementary schools will operate from 8 a.m. until 3 p.m.

School officials remind parents that all bus routes and pickup times are subject to change before or during the school year. Families are encouraged to review their child’s assigned route before the first day of classes on Friday, Aug. 21.

Grundy Area

Transportation in the Grundy attendance area will be provided by 21 buses serving communities from Breaks and Harman to Slate Creek, Leemaster, Poplar Creek and Southern Gap.

Bus 1 (Traci Boyd) will serve Route 83 from Sunset to Greenbrier Right and Left Forks, then end at Paul’s Fans, transporting elementary students to REMS.

Bus 71 (Charles Boyd) will travel through Breaks, Crow Pass, Happy Hollow, Orchard Road, the Mouth of Doubling Fields and Jess’s Fork before transporting high school students to Southern Gap High School.

Bus 72 (Tommy Crigger) will serve Top of Bull Mountain, Orchard Road, the Mouths of Doubling Fields, Jess’s Fork, Deel Fork and Charlie Hollow, taking students to REMS.

Bus 67 (Julio Dotson) will cover the Mouths of Deel Fork and Charlie Hollow, Main Harman, Belcher’s Fork and Convict Hollow before traveling to REMS.

Bus 17 (Norma Looney) will serve Sunset Hollow and Route 83 to Leemaster, then stop at Vansant Church of Christ for elementary students attending REMS.

Bus 70 (Chad Stevens) will travel Boyd’s Ridge, Union Chapel and Deskins before transporting Southern Gap High School students through Lover’s Gap.

Bus 55 (Mona McClanahan) will serve Bear Branch and War Fork before traveling to Vansant Church of Christ for REMS students.

Bus 35 (Greg Tester) will travel Dryfork, Deel and the Anchorage Shopping Center before continuing to Southern Gap High School through Lover’s Gap.

Bus 61 (Loni Webb) will cover Big Rock, Last House Hollow, Jack’s Creek and Brown’s Bottom before transporting elementary students to REMS and high school students to Southern Gap High School through Poplar Creek.

Bus 63 (Eddie Smith) will serve Conaway and Lynn Camp before taking elementary students to REMS and high school students to Southern Gap High School through Poplar Creek.

Bus 60 (David Owens) will cover Airport Road, Southern Gap Development, Poplar Creek and Wood’s Fork before transporting students to REMS.

Bus 3 (Jerry Stiltner) will travel Stateline No. 2, Mouth of Davis Ridge, Panther Ridge, Mouth of Myrtle Road, Slate Creek and Smith Branch before arriving at the Central Office. Students will continue to Southern Gap High School after REMS.

Bus 69 (Jon Prater) will serve Smith Branch, Stone Coal, Mouth of Lick Branch, Elkins Branch and Slate Creek before arriving at the Central Office. High school students will continue to Southern Gap High School through Lover’s Gap after REMS.

Bus 22 (Jeremy Ward) will transport students from the Central Office to REMS, then continue to Southern Gap High School.

Bus 76 (Preston Hibbitts) will travel Hobbs Branch, Enoch’s Branch, Walnut Street and Slate Creek to Super Dollar before taking elementary students to REMS and high school students to Southern Gap High School.

Bus 20 (Mark Cooper) will serve Lower Mill Branch, Dave’s Branch, Walnut, the Mouth of New House Branch, Hoot Owl and Farmers Market before transporting students to Southern Gap High School through Lover’s Gap.

Bus 56 (Bill Christian) will cover Watkins Branch, Route 460, New People’s, Farmers Market and Poe Town before taking elementary students to REMS and high school students from REMS to Southern Gap High School through Poplar Creek.

Bus 59 (Rick Jackson) will serve Routes 6 and 20, Looney’s Creek and Stiltner’s Creek before transporting students to REMS and Southern Gap High School.

Bus 65 (Doug Thomas) will travel Home Creek and the Left Fork of Home Creek before taking students to REMS and Southern Gap High School.

Bus 62 (Greg Rowe) will serve Little Prater, then the Food City parking lot across from Pizza Hut, before transporting high school students to Southern Gap High School.

Bus 68 (Anthony Church) will travel Leemaster, Red Dirt Road and Mott Branch to the Food City parking lot across from Pizza Hut before taking elementary students to REMS.

Grundy transfer locations include Paul’s Fans (7:20 a.m.), Vansant Church of Christ (7:15 a.m.), Central Office (7:15 a.m.), Farmers Market (7:10 a.m.) and the Food City parking lot across from Pizza Hut (7:25 a.m.).

Council Area

The Council attendance area will be served by six buses transporting students from communities throughout the eastern portion of the county to Council Elementary/Middle School and Southern Gap High School.

Bus 25 (Deanna Keene) will begin at Prater’s Zip In and travel along Paw Paw Road before arriving at G&J Grocery, where high school students will transfer to

Southern Gap High School.

Bus 73 (Anthony Barton) will serve the Big Fox, Little Fox and Runyon Hollow communities before arriving at G&J Grocery. Elementary students will continue to Council Elementary/Middle School.

Bus 27 (Derek Ray) will cover Hurricane Creek Road, Rockhouse Branch and Fletcher Hollow before arriving at G&J Grocery, where high school students will continue to Southern Gap High School.

Bus 15 (D.J. Barton) will travel Boyd’s Ridge, Route 600 and Route 80 from G&J Grocery to the County Line Bridge before serving Hollow Poplar, Indian Creek, Lambert Fork and Copperhead. Elementary students will continue to Council Elementary/Middle School, while high school students transfer at G&J Grocery.

Bus 37 (Marlie Ball) will serve Fletcher Ridge, Indian Grave Gap, Stinson Ridge, Grissom Creek and Route 80 before transporting students to Council Elementary/Middle School.

Bus 31 (Terry Austin) will travel Route 80 and Combs Ridge before arriving at Council Elementary/Middle School.

Council transfer locations include G&J Grocery (7:20 a.m.), where Buses 25, 27 and 73 meet, and Council Elementary/Middle School (7:20 a.m.), where Buses 15, 31 and 37 meet.

Hurley Area

The Hurley attendance area is divided into three transportation corridors — Rocklick, Elkins Branch and Rockhouse — with students transferring to Southern Gap High School, Hurley Elementary/Middle School or the Central Office depending on their destination.

Rocklick Corridor

Bus 2 (Serena Ford) will travel the Right Fork of Paw Paw to Justus Grocery before transporting high school students to Southern Gap High School through Rocklick, Poplar Creek and the new road.

Bus 11 (Judy Sargent) will serve the Left Fork of Paw Paw before arriving at Justus Grocery, where elementary students will continue to Hurley Elementary/Middle School.

Bus 42 (Danny Justus) will cover Elk Creek, Mill Creek and Race Fork before arriving at Justus Grocery and continuing to Hurley Elementary/Middle School.

Elkins Branch Corridor

Bus 49 (Trish Justus) will serve the Right and Left Forks of Guesses Fork and Pounding Mill before arriving at Hurley Square, where elementary students will continue to Hurley Elementary/Middle School.

Bus 52 (Morgan Vandyke) will travel Main Lester’s Fork and Davis Fork before arriving at Hurley Square for transportation to Hurley Elementary/Middle School.

Bus 66 (Cheryl Justus) will cover Old Lester’s Fork and Brushy Fork before arriving at Hurley Square. High school students will transfer to the Central Office.

Bus 26 (Scotty Bostic) will transport students from the Central Office to Southern Gap High School through Lover’s Gap.

Rockhouse Corridor

Bus 21 (Scott Embrey) will serve Laurel Creek, Knox and Straight Fork before arriving at Rockhouse. Elementary students will continue to Hurley Elementary/Middle School.

Bus 28 (James Stacy) will travel Hiram Fork and Coon Branch before arriving at Rockhouse. High school students will transfer to the Central Office.

Bus 64 (Brandon Davis) will transport students from the Central Office to Southern Gap High School through Lover’s Gap.

Transfer locations include Justus Grocery (7:15 a.m.), Hurley Square (7:05 a.m.), Rockhouse (7:05 a.m.) and the Central Office (7:20 a.m.) for students continuing to Southern Gap High School.

Twin Valley Area

Twin Valley attendance area buses will serve students throughout the western portion of Buchanan County before transporting them to Twin Valley Elementary/Middle School or Southern Gap High School.

Bus 23 (Alex Rife) will serve Route 460, Route 626, Route 618, Shortt Gap and John Clifton before arriving at Twin Valley Elementary/Middle School. High school students will continue to Southern Gap High School through Lover’s Gap.

Bus 34 (Howie Fuller) will travel Clifton Fork, Ratliff Branch and Keen Mountain before arriving at Twin Valley Elementary/Middle School. High school students will continue to Southern Gap High School through Lover’s Gap.

Bus 57 (Dusty Payne) will cover Compton Mountain, Pea Patch, Wimmer Gap and Contrary before transporting students to Twin Valley Elementary/Middle School.

Bus 48 (Kristen Church) will serve Red Oak, Brown Mountain, Chicken Ridge, White’s Bottom and Spruce Pine before arriving at Twin Valley Elementary/Middle School.

Bus 58 (Carolyn Street) will travel Garden Creek (Drill), Long Branch, Breeden Branch and Old Vandyke Hollow before transporting students to Twin Valley Elementary/Middle School.

Bus 7 (Samantha Justus) will cover Page, Garden Creek and Keen Mountain Camp before arriving at Twin Valley Elementary/Middle School.

Bus 33 (Hayden Fuller) will serve the Mouth of Hale Creek (Dismal), Dismal, Patterson and Big Branch before arriving at Carter Cat. High school students will continue to Southern Gap High School through Lover’s Gap.

Bus 46 (Tom Burniston) will travel Route 460 to Webb Branch before arriving at Carter Cat and continuing to Twin Valley Elementary/Middle School.

Twin Valley transfer locations include Twin Valley Elementary/Middle School, where Buses 23 and 34 arrive by approximately 7:25 a.m. before continuing to Southern Gap High School, and Carter Cat, where Buses 33 and 46 exchange students between 7:20 and 7:25 a.m.

School officials encourage parents and guardians to review the complete transportation schedule carefully before the start of the school year and remind families that pickup times and routes may be adjusted as needed throughout the year. For additional transportation information, parents should contact the Buchanan County Public Schools Transportation Department.

Richardson Building renovation moving forward, Grundy officials say

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

Renovations to the long-vacant Richardson Building are entering the final stretch, and town officials are inviting the public to see the progress firsthand rather than relying on social media speculation.

During the Grundy Town Council meeting on July 14 at the Grundy Town Office in the Grundy Plaza, Town Manager and Town of Grundy Industrial Development Authority Properties Manager Dennis Ramey addressed recent criticism over the pace of work on the downtown restoration project.

Ramey acknowledged that some residents have questioned why renovations have taken longer than expected but said the biggest obstacle has been finding enough skilled workers to keep the project moving.

“The biggest problem that we face, and I think a lot of people in this county face, is hiring people to do work,” Ramey said.

Although only one worker has often been on site at the Walnut Street location in front of the Buchanan County Courthouse, Ramey explained that the contractor has been managing multiple projects simultaneously.

He also noted that the building sat vacant for years before renovation efforts began.

“Where were the complainers when it sat there empty for years?” Ramey

asked. “Now that we’ve got started...”

Rather than criticizing the project online, Ramey encouraged residents to attend town meetings or contact him directly with questions.

“If they want to know what’s going on... come to our meetings,” he said. “I’ll take them through the building. I don’t have a problem at all.”

Ramey said he is willing to personally give tours of the building and show residents the work completed, including photographs documenting the structure’s condition before renovations began.

Despite the challenges, he said that progress continues every day and that the project is now close to completion.

“There is somebody there every day,” Ramey said. “It’s really, really, really close.”

If construction continues as planned, he said the renovation could be finished by September.

The Richardson Building is one of several revitalization projects the Town of Grundy and its Industrial Development Authority have undertaken as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen the downtown business district.

In his town manager’s report, Ramey also updated council members on several other projects and upcoming initiatives.

Ramey also informed the council that three proposed ordinances are being prepared for future

consideration. The proposed measures would regulate parking around fire hydrants, establish rules for use of the Michael D. Young Trail Special Use Trail and address the burial of human remains on private property within the Town of Grundy.

Council members decided to postpone scheduling public hearings on the ordinances to allow additional time to review the proposed language before moving forward.

Ramey encouraged council members to submit any questions or suggested changes before the next meeting so revisions can be made before the ordinances are advertised for public hearings. Copies of the ordinances are available at the Town Offices at the Grundy Plaza.

As part of his IDA report, Ramey also highlighted continued improvements at the Grundy Community Center Cinema 3.

He said attendance has increased significantly over the past month, with ticket sales climbing from 1,622 in May to 2,283 in June as more popular movies have returned to the theater.

“The better the movies, the better the attendance,” Ramey said.

After operating at a loss of nearly \$70,000 last year because of a lack of major film releases, Ramey said the theater has experienced a noticeable turnaround, with several recent showings selling out.



Town Manager and Town of Grundy Industrial Development Authority Properties Manager Dennis Ramey updates the Grundy Town Council on the progress of the Richardson Building renovation during the council’s July 14 meeting at the Grundy Town Office. Ramey said the downtown revitalization project continues to move forward and could be completed as early as September.

He said the town continues to invest in the facility by replacing lighting with energy-efficient LED fixtures, installing a new \$16,000 fire alarm panel, and replacing three deteriorated exterior metal doors at the parking building.

Town Council member Rebecca Elkins also praised theater staff for selling popcorn and drinks during the town’s recent fireworks celebration, saying the concession sales were well received by those attending the event.

Ramey credited theater manager Dusty Childress and the cinema staff for their efforts to improve both the theater’s operations and customer experience as attendance continues to rebound.

Adopt a Pet

Virginia Mountaineer

The best things in life are rescued. This best boy is a two-year-old male mixed breed. His sleek coat is colored sunshine gold with white markings. He has bright eyes and high-set ears. His personality is friendly, charismatic and cheerful. He loves playtime.

This salvaged soul will be available for adoption at the Buchanan County Animal Shelter until Monday, July 27, 2026.

Also available for adoption is this six-month-old female mixed breed. Her short coat is colored black with a white marking on her chest. She has a kind expression and the cutest ears. Her temperament is sweet and loving. She is eager to learn.

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.



Grundy police adopt no face-covering policy

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

The Town of Grundy Police Department has implemented a new policy prohibiting officers from wearing face coverings while performing their duties except under limited circumstances, Police Chief Seth McGlothlin told the Grundy Town Council during its July 14 meeting.

McGlothlin said the policy was adopted to comply with Senate Bill 352, which took effect July 1, and guidance issued by the Virginia Department of Justice Services and the Office of the Attorney General.

“The policy addresses the device covering policy for officers,” McGlothlin told council members. “That policy was directed by DCJS along with the Attorney General’s Office to meet the new regulations of Senate Bill 352 that went into effect July 1.”

Under the policy, law enforcement officers generally may not wear face coverings while on duty except for medical reasons and other exemptions outlined in the policy. McGlothlin said all officers have been trained on the new requirements.

In his monthly report, McGlothlin said the department handled 92 calls for service during the reporting period, including 27 outside the town limits. Officers also conducted 62 traffic stops, issued 33 summonses, completed 29 incident reports, made eight arrests, served eight criminal papers and investigated one reportable motor vehicle crash.

McGlothlin also updated council members on upcoming training opportunities for department personnel.

He said he and Officer Chapman will attend Internal Affairs Investigator School on July 21-22, while Officer Dale will attend Taser Instructor School on July 27-28 in Mooresville, North Carolina.

The chief also announced that Shop-with-Cop will host its annual bingo fundraiser on Aug. 1.

McGlothlin said the town’s Independence Day fireworks celebration was generally successful despite attendance appearing lower than in previous years.

“The crowd was a lot lower this year,” he said, noting that while areas around Walmart and the Community Center remained busy, attendance elsewhere appeared to be down, possibly because of the extreme heat.

The chief also informed council members that a proposed relocation of the regional law enforcement training academy to Exit 35 in Chilhowie was recently approved by the academy’s governing board.

McGlothlin said the proposed project, which could take about five years to complete, would increase travel time for the Town’s officers attending training by approximately 15 to 20 minutes. He also noted membership costs for participating agencies could increase from the current annual rate of about \$450 per officer to nearly \$1,000 depending on grant funding and construction costs.

Following the police report, Town Maintenance Supervisor Tony Tiltner updated council members on operations within the public works department.

Stiltner said the department continues to work to resolve problems with equipment used in the town’s garbage collection system, including issues with a compactor that has been running continuously due to its size. He said the town has been working with PACOR to identify a solution that could eliminate the need for additional repairs.

He also discussed efforts to address a resident’s concerns about garbage collection, explaining that adjustments have been made to improve pickup service and that the situation is being monitored.

Buchanan General Hospital

— Welcomes —

Dr. Dylan Campbell, DO

Pediatrician

Beginning July 20th

Dr. Campbell, a 2015 graduate of Grundy High School, returns home to take over the practice for retiring Dr. Rajni R. Patel, M.D., at Tri-State Clinic.

Received Undergraduate Degree in Microbiology and Immunology at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg (2015-2019)

Received Medical Degree from VCOM – Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine in Blacksburg (2019-2023)

Completed Pediatric Residency at Virginia Tech Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital (2023-2026)

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