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TWO SECTIONS PLUS SUPPLEMENTS | \$2

Coal company bankruptcy results in layoffs at Buchanan mine

By **CHAD COOPER**
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Another wave of uncertainty has hit Buchanan County's coal industry after employees at a local coal preparation plant and surface mining operation were laid off following the sale of their company's assets in federal bankruptcy court.

Clintwood JOD LLC, a Southwest Virginia-based coal producer with operations in Buchanan County and Eastern Kentucky, has sold virtually all of its assets as part of Chapter 11 bankruptcy proceedings. The sale was approved last week by the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Eastern District of Kentucky.

Employees at the company's Buchanan County operations were notified of additional layoffs Friday, just days after the court approved the sale. As of press time, the company had not announced how many local employees were affected.

The layoffs come several months after Clintwood JOD laid off approximately 300 workers in March, following

an initial announcement of temporary furloughs, highlighting the continued challenges facing the Appalachian coal industry.

Under the court-approved sale, the company's assets were purchased by CW Reclaim LLC of Cleveland, Ohio, for approximately \$1.1 million, despite Clintwood JOD carrying tens of millions of dollars in debt.

Court records indicate the company owed creditors more than \$60 million before the sale. Among its largest obligations were approximately \$26.6 million owed to a New Jersey investment firm, nearly \$9 million in equipment financing and millions more in unpaid coal severance taxes.

The bankruptcy marks a dramatic reversal for a company that acquired mining assets in 2019 to operate some of Central Appalachia's remaining reserves of premium metallurgical coal, the type of coal used in steel production.

According to court filings, CW Reclaim LLC will assume responsibility for reclaiming and closing more than a dozen underground and surface mining operations in Kentucky and Virginia, as well as certain finan-

cial obligations incurred during the bankruptcy process.

In an affidavit filed with the bankruptcy court, Clintwood JOD CEO J. Chris Adkins said the accepted bid represented the best available option under difficult market conditions.

"While the CW Reclaim Bid is less than hoped for, the coal industry is suffering a downturn, and it is the best offer received after a thorough marketing and auction process and maximizes the recovery to the Debtors' creditors," Adkins said.

The sale comes as coal production continues to decline across the region. Industry analysts have pointed to several factors affecting the market, including lower-priced foreign competition, fluctuating demand for metallurgical coal, rising operating costs and the continued shift by many electric utilities toward other energy sources.

It remains unclear whether additional layoffs will occur or what plans CW Reclaim LLC has for the Buchanan County operations. Company officials had not released further information regarding future employment or production plans as of press time.



Back-to-school countdown begins as BCPS prepares for Aug. 21 start

By **CHAD COOPER**
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With just two weeks remaining before the first day of classes, Buchanan County Public Schools is reminding families to make sure students are ready for the start of the 2026-27 school year.

Students will return to classrooms across the county on Friday, Aug. 21, and school officials are encouraging parents to complete required physicals, immunizations and health

paperwork before opening day. Families will also have opportunities to meet teachers, tour schools and submit required documents during upcoming meet-and-greet events.

Meet-and-greet events for Council Elementary/Middle School, Twin Valley Elementary/Middle School, Riverview Elementary/Middle School, and Tommy P. Justus Elementary/Middle School (formerly Hurley Elementary/Middle School) will be held on Tuesday, Aug. 18, from 3 to 7 p.m.

SEE **BACK-TO-SCHOOL COUNTDOWN** | 2A

Cato renews lease at Grundy Town Center, IDA hears property update

By **CHAD COOPER**
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Cato Fashions will remain a tenant at Grundy Town Center after the Town of Grundy Industrial Development Authority approved a two-year lease extension during its July 28 meeting.

IDA Property Manager Dennis Ramey told board members the retailer had requested to renew its lease under the same terms as its current agreement.

Board members unanimously approved the extension after Ramey presented the request.

Town IDA board member Sam Bartley said he visited the establishment earlier in the month to purchase gift cards and was told by employees that business was booming.

Ramey said he believes Cato's is happy to be located in the Grundy Town Center.

In addition to the lease renewal, Ramey provided updates on several other IDA-owned properties.

At the Grundy Plaza, Ramey said a new heat pump and HVAC system has been installed in Pekings and is operating properly. He also reported interest from prospective tenants, saying he has shown available



Dennis Ramey, property manager for the Town of Grundy Industrial Development Authority, recently provided board members with an update on several IDA-owned properties, including the renewal of Cato's lease at Grundy Town Center and ongoing efforts to attract new tenants.

SEE **CATO RENEWS LEASE** | 2A

Students participate in ACP Summer Camp experiences

Virginia Mountaineer

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SEE **SUMMER CAMP** | 2A



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



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Federal judge dismisses excessive force suit against Buchanan deputy

By CHAD COOPERcoopkam@gmail.com

A federal judge has thrown out a lawsuit alleging a Buchanan County Sheriff's Office deputy used excessive force during a January 2024 arrest. The court ruled Deputy Cody Looney was entitled to summary judgment after finding the evidence failed to support the claims brought against him.

U.S. District Judge James P. Jones issued the ruling in favor of Looney, ending a civil rights lawsuit filed by Mackenzie Poston of Meadowview without the case proceeding to trial.

Poston, who represented herself, filed the lawsuit in February 2025 in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Virginia. She alleged Looney violated her constitutional rights during her arrest.

In her complaint, Poston claimed Looney "forcefully violated my 4th Amendment, putting me under arrest for obstruction and handcuffing me and putting me into his police car."

She also alleged Looney "violated my 8th Amendment by striking me in the face three times, blacking both eyes, chipping my tooth, busting my nose and charging me with assault on a law enforcement officer for defending myself."

Poston sought \$50,000 in damages and asked the court to suspend Looney from his duties as a law enforcement officer.

According to court records, Poston was charged with three counts of assault on a law enforcement officer, attempting to disarm an officer of his stun gun, obstruction, resisting arrest by threat or force and public intoxication. She later pleaded guilty to assault on a law enforcement officer and attempting to disarm the deputy. She was sentenced to eight years in prison, with seven

years suspended, and placed on two years of supervised probation.

Looney denied the allegations through his attorney, Nathan Schnetzler of Roanoke. Court filings state Poston was lawfully placed under arrest but became combative, spit on the deputy and attempted to grab his holstered firearm. The filings contend any force used during the arrest was reasonable under the circumstances and authorized by law. Looney also denied striking Poston in the face.

In his opinion, Jones wrote that the evidence presented left no genuine dispute requiring a trial.

"A court must grant summary judgment 'if No change to the quotation itself; consider moving the explanatory note outside the quotation marks as a bracketed editor's note if it was not in the original ruling. shows that there is no genuine dispute as to any material fact and the movant is entitled to judgment as a matter of law,'" Jones wrote. "A genuine dispute exists 'if the evidence is such that a reasonable jury could return a verdict for the nonmoving party.'"

Jones concluded the record overwhelmingly contradicted Poston's account of the arrest.

"Summary judgment is appropriate where the opposing party's version of events is so utterly discredited by the record that no reasonable jury could have believed him. And based on the record before me, I conclude that this circumstance is present here."

The judge also cited Poston's booking photograph as evidence supporting his decision.

"Poston's booking photograph," Jones wrote, "completely belies her claim that the defendant struck her in the face."

The ruling dismisses all of Poston's claims against Looney and brings the federal civil lawsuit to a close.



Courthouse News

By CHAD COOPER
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Marriage licenses

Cory Delaurencio, 50, of Oakwood and Brittany Kathleen Casey, 40, of Wytheville, July 11, 2026.

Kevon Donezz Evans, 24, and Alicia Renee Green, 42, both of Owings Mills, Maryland, July 11, 2026.

Carsyn E. Pacini, 18, and Kayla Danise Harris, 18, both of Honaker, July 17, 2026.

Keith Alan Spaulding, 55, and Melissa Dawn Meade, 57, both of Grundy, July 18, 2026.

Ronnie Dalton Newsome, 25, of Pikeville, Kentucky, and Kathryn Grace Brown, 24, of Banner, Kentucky, July 18, 2026.

Ashton Kyle Prater, 21, and Hannah Ciara-Bleu Sanders, 21, both of Elkhorn City, Kentucky, July 19, 2026.

Deeds recorded

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

Spirit Fest to return Sept. 12 in Downtown Grundy

By CHAD COOPER
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Downtown Grundy will once again come alive with music, food and family-friendly entertainment when Spirit Fest returns on Saturday, Sept. 12.

The annual festival, a community tradition since 2009, will take place, rain or shine, from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. in downtown Grundy. Admission is free, and organizers invite residents from across Buchanan County and the surrounding region to spend the day enjoying live entertainment, children's activities, local vendors and a variety of food options.

One of the festival's biggest attractions will be its lineup of live music on the main stage.

Bluegrass favorites Cody Hagerman & Still Pickin' will kick off the entertainment from 12:30 p.m. to 2 p.m. Ralph Stanley II & The Clinch Mountain Boys will follow

from 2:30 p.m. to 4 p.m., bringing the traditional mountain sound made famous throughout Southwest Virginia. The festival will close with a performance by From the Edge from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Festivalgoers will also have the opportunity to browse vendor booths featuring handmade crafts, woodwork and other locally made items while learning more about community organizations through informational displays.

A variety of food trucks will be on site throughout the day, offering everything from festival favorites to specialty menu items.

Spirit Fest has become one of Grundy's signature annual events, drawing families, friends and visitors together to celebrate the community while supporting local businesses and organizations.

Whether attending for the live music, children's activities, local shopping or food, organizers say the festival offers something for every age.

SUMMER CAMP

FROM PAGE 1A

The Appalachian College of Pharmacy is the only three-year Doctor of Pharmacy program in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Founded in 2003, the college accepted its first students in 2005. It is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). The college also

offers a Doctor of Public Health program and a Certified Pharmacy Technician program. Appalachian College of Pharmacy's mission is to cultivate a learning community committed to education, community outreach and the professional development of pharmacists. Its graduate pharmacists are now practicing throughout the United States.



Dr. Randy Mullins talks with a student about compounding practices during the ACP summer pharmacy camp held at the Roanoke Higher Education Center in Roanoke, VA.

Enjoy this delicacy from the comforts of home

Certain foods have inspired a devotion that other dishes simply cannot match. Oysters certainly fit that mold. To oyster lovers, there's simply no better way to start a meal than to order a plate of these wildly popular delicacies.

Of course, oysters also can be enjoyed at home. Whether you procure your own oysters or find them at your local fishery, this recipe for "Oysters With Spinach and Gruyere" from Lines+Angles is a simple and tasty way to enjoy this popular delicacy once you arrive home.

OYSTERS WITH SPINACH AND GRUYERE

Makes 4 servings

- 24 oysters (in the shell), scrubbed
- 1/2 cup butter, melted
- 6 ounces fresh spinach, cooked and drained
- 6 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 4 ounces Gruyere cheese, grated
- 1 lemon, cut into wedges, for garnish



1. Shuck oysters using an oyster knife. Scrub the inside of the deeper shell.
2. Brush the inside of each shell with a generous amount of melted butter. Spread a layer of cooked spinach on each shell. Dip each oyster in Worcestershire sauce and place on top of spinach. Sprinkle each oyster with remaining melted butter and top with grated Gruyere cheese.
3. Place oysters in a shallow pan or on a cookie sheet. Broil quickly or until the edges of the oyster curl and the cheese is bubbly and golden brown.
4. Serve on a bed of sea salt with lemon wedges.

space to several individuals.

"I've shown a couple places to different tenants," Ramey said. "I've got two that are interested — one in the plaza and one in the town center."

Ramey said discussions regarding the prospective tenants would need to be discussed in closed session.

He also updated the board on the former Huddle House building, saying he has another potential tenant interested in the property. Ramey said he plans to meet with the prospective tenant next week to discuss the available space and determine whether the individual remains interested.

Ramey provided the IDA with an update on the ongoing Richardson Building renovation.

"It's getting to be a headache because you're so close, but yet you're so far," Ramey said of preparing the building for a new tenant. "There can be things done down there that need to be done."

Ramey said pressure testing and other work will be needed before the building is ready for occupancy but noted those tasks could be completed relatively quickly.

Board members also discussed ongoing elevator and escalator issues inside the Walmart at the Grundy Town Center. Ramey acknowledged the ongoing problems and said repairs are ongoing. He also informed board members about plans to install an additional elevator at the front of the building, noting that it is still in the engineering phase. He did not provide a timeline for when the project might begin. Ramey concluded his report by saying he would continue working with prospective tenants and keep the board informed as lease negotiations and property improvements progress.

CATO RENEWS LEASE

FROM PAGE 1A



LOOKING BACK

From our files

60 YEARS AGO

AUGUST 4, 1966

Buford C. (Pete) Sturgill, son of Mr. and Mrs. H.D. Sturgill of Grundy, recently was promoted to the grade of Air Force staff sergeant while serving in Saigon, Vietnam. Sturgill is with a combat support refueling squadron. Sturgill was stationed in Goose Bay, Labrador and in Thailand.

Five young people from Buchanan County, all former students at Grundy Senior High School, have been named to the Dean's List at Berea College for the second semester of 1965-1966, the college announced this week. Students honored were Lille Mae Shortridge, Earnest Gary Raines, Linda Sue Hagy, Curtis Deel and James Cecil Owens.

55 YEARS AGO

AUGUST 5, 1971

F.D. Robertson, president of the Grundy Lions Club, announced this week the various committees to serve during the 71-72 club year. The following committee chairmen were named. Agricultural, Terry L. Wilson; Attendance, Jay Rife, Jr.; Boys and Girls, Robert E. Hale; Citizen and Patriotism, Murphy Miller; Community Betterment, Tyler Yates; Constitution and Bylaws, S. Charles Ratliff; Convention, Robert Dennis; Education, Harold C. Turner; Finance, Larkin Deel; Greeter, James S. Swiney; Health and Welfare, Lyle Mutter...

Miss Vickie Dotson, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Burton Dotson, gets to ride on a camel's back as she and nine other Grundy residents tour the Holy Land. The students and Mrs. Lawrence Lindsey, a teacher at Grundy Senior High, have also been touring Europe and the Mediterranean and are in London this week as their 11-day tour nears an end. Terese Farmer, Diane Cecil, Mike Dennis, Teresa Looney, Eddie Lindsey, Glenda Kent, Neva Jo Stiltner and Shelia Hopkins.

45 YEARS AGO

AUGUST 6, 1981

Mrs. P.L. Williams, a volunteer at Buchanan General Hospital, has earned her 1,000-hour Service Pin. Mrs. Virginia Spraker, Director of Volunteer Services, presented the honor. Mrs. Williams is also a devoted member of the Grundy United Methodist Church and a substitute teacher in Buchanan County schools. She was born and raised in this county.

Delegate Donald A. McGlothlin of Grundy and William P. Green of Lebanon announced today that they will seek re-election to the Virginia House of Delegates, subject to the will of the Third Legislative Democratic Convention. Delegate McGlothlin will be seeking his eighth term in the Virginia House of Delegates.

He serves on the following committees in the House: General Laws, Courts of Justice, Roads and Internal Navigation and is in line to become Chairman of the Mining and Minerals Committee.

20 YEARS AGO

AUGUST 6, 2006

Last year's Lady Wave standout Brooke Shepherd made it official this week that she has decided to continue her basketball career at Division I program the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Shepherd, a rising senior, also announced that she will be returning to Bristol next year to play at Virginia High.

Hollie Danielle Yates, second from right, was crowned Miss Buchanan County Fair 2006. First runner-up was Dreema Danielle Kiser; second runner-up was Paige Branham; and third runner-up was Erica Paige Coleman. In the Teen Miss category, Celisha Shantel Allen, second from right, was named Teen Miss Buchanan County Fair. Jodi Samantha Paige Jones was chosen as first runner-up; Jodie Nikole Jackson, second runner-up; and Kendra Endicott, third runner-up. Amanda Dawn Burks, second from right, was crowned Young Miss Buchanan County Fair. First runner-up was Brianna Graham; second runner-up was Lindsay Branham; and third runner-up was Emily Rena McClanahan.



2026 Miss Tazewell County Fair Queen Raegan Leann Ryder is pictured with members of her court following the pageant July 25 at Nuckolls Hall on the Tazewell County Fairgrounds. Photo by Rie Cook.

105 contestants compete in 2026 Miss Tazewell County Fair Pageant

By **CHAD COOPER**
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TAZEWELL — A field of 105 contestants from across Southwest Virginia competed for crowns during the 2026 Miss Tazewell County Fair Pageant on July 25 at Nuckolls Hall on the Tazewell County Fairgrounds.

Organized by Buchanan County native Norma McGuire, the annual pageant featured contestants across 12 age divisions. Throughout the day, participants competed for queens' titles, court placements and a variety of special awards.

Among those crowned queens were Bailynn Mae Taylor in Baby Miss, Hadley Graye Price in Tiny Miss, Jaylin Hagerman in Junior Miss and Raegan Leann Ryder in the Miss division.

Baby Miss (0-11 months)

The Baby Miss division featured Magnolia Seraphine Mook, Eliana Heaston, Kinsley Rayne Burnette, Charlotte Lewis, Pacey Cook, Delaney Robinson, Madielyn Atwell, Bailynn Mae Taylor and LaBella Church.

Bailynn Mae Taylor was crowned Baby Miss Queen.

The Baby Miss court included LaBella Church as first runner-up, Pacey Cook as second runner-up and Madielyn Atwell as third runner-up.

Special awards went to Magnolia Seraphine Mook (Best Dressed and People's Choice Queen), LaBella Church (Best Personality and Photogenic Queen), Pacey Cook (Prettiest Smile), Delaney Robinson (Prettiest Hair) and Bailynn Mae Taylor (Most Beautiful Queen).

Tiny Miss (12-23 months)

Contestants in the Tiny Miss division were Ivy Jaymes Phillips, Gracelyn Ratliff, Jur'Mani Reed, Blakley Gray Ramey, Eden Olivia Clark, Layana Rayne Ratcliffe, Brynlee Caroline Sutherland, Hadley Graye Price and Kya Nichole Dean.

Hadley Graye Price was crowned Tiny Miss Queen.

The Tiny Miss court included Blakley Gray Ramey as first runner-up, Layana Rayne Ratcliffe as second runner-up and Jur'Mani Reed as third runner-up.

Special awards were presented to Hadley Graye Price (Best Dressed and Prettiest Smile), Jur'Mani Reed (Best Personality), Eden Olivia Clark (Prettiest Hair), Ivy Jaymes Phillips (Photogenic Queen), Blakley Gray Ramey (Most Beautiful Queen) and Kya Nichole Dean (People's Choice Queen).

Wee Miss (24-35 months)

Competing in the Wee Miss division were Ensleigh Cordle, Mia Revelo, Kinslee Kayt Duty, Chevelle "Chevy" Rife, Ellison Lester, Seanna Kennedy and Lydia Blythe

Kennedy.

Toddler Miss (3-4 years)

Contestants included Legacy Ann Davis, Annaleigh Skeens, Abigail Kaye Hagy, Evie Jane Hagy, Kymber Grace, Xariah Lynn Shortridge, Elliana Marrs, Nova Rife, Emzy Payne, Eliza Stiltner, Nyoka Sueann Glover, Merdith Taylor and Bailor Paige Slaughter.

Mini Miss (5-6 years)

Competing were Hannah Grace Harrison, Aviana Grace Cline, Stella Bradshaw, Brinleigh Mae Putnam, Ja'Myiah Cordle, Lilliana Estep, Emma Hedrick, Ember Webb, Violet Honeycutt and Kaylan Sophia Ramsey.

Little Miss (7-8 years)

Contestants included Charleston Morefield, Codi Compton, Joplin Owens, Charlotte Reece Miller and Miracle Sweeney.

Dainty Miss (9-10 years)

Competing were Kami Mo Harris, Kortni Harris, Kennedy Morefield, Makinlee Lane, KimberLyn Estep, Isabella Taylor and Kinzley Bowman.

Young Miss (11-12 years)

Contestants included Tylee Stacy, Khloe Brooke Harris, Jeradyn Blevins, April Gross, Ryleigh Cordle, Jaylen Yates, Brynn Webb and Claire Elise Looney.

Ms./Mrs. Ageless

The Ms./Mrs. Ageless division featured Marissa Anne Bailey, Kara Heaston, Michele Sweeney, Alana Capshaw, Jayla Marie Duty, Haley Wolford and Rachel Hill.

Elegant Miss

Competing in the Elegant Miss division were Beth Razo Soto, Mendy Potter, Darlene Hill and Elizabeth Rae Bishop.

Junior Miss (13-15 years)

The Junior Miss division included Ryver Compton, Jaylin Hagerman, Abigail Faith Brandon, Holly Isabella Childress, Baylee Powers, Tiffany Amber Leigh, Chianna Marie Damron, Alyana Rife and Cecilia LaRae Potter.

Jaylin Hagerman was crowned Junior Miss Queen.

The Junior Miss court included Cecilia LaRae Potter as first runner-up, Holly Isabella Childress as second runner-up and Abigail Faith Brandon as third runner-up.

Special awards went to Chianna Marie Damron (Best Dressed), Holly Isabella Childress (Best Personality and Photogenic Queen), Cecilia LaRae Potter (Prettiest Smile and Most Beautiful Queen), Jaylin Hagerman (Prettiest Hair and High Fashion Queen) and Abigail Faith Brandon (People's Choice Queen).

Miss (16-22 years)

Contestants competing for the Miss title were Brooklyn West, Juli McGuire, Ivory Bucklin, Breanna Hess, McKenzie Faith Cordle, Myah Rayne, Haven Brooke Crabtree, Raegan Leann Ryder, MaKenna N. Cantrell, Madison Riley Matney, Destany Davis, Laken MaKenna Graham, Kierra Boyd, Valencia Kennedy, Rayelea Madison Santolla, Justice Hill and Chloe Aubrielle Anders.

Raegan Leann Ryder was crowned the 2026 Miss Tazewell County Fair Queen.

SEE **MISS TAZEWEILL** | 6A



The 2026 Tazewell County Fair Wee Miss Queen is pictured with members of her court following the pageant July 25 at Nuckolls Hall on the Tazewell County Fairgrounds. Photo courtesy of the Tazewell County Fair Pageant.

GOOD OL DAYS

ROTARY GOVERNOR VISITS - District Rotary Governor Ralph P. Grant, of Kingsport, Tenn., made his official visit to the Grundy Rotary Club on Monday evening. He is pictured (second from right) discussing Rotary affairs with Paul Hurley, president of the local club. Looking on are John Astor Rife, public relations chairman, and P. L. Williams, longtime secretary. Gov. Grant, who represents District 757, which comprises most of Virginia, West Virginia, and portions of Tennessee and Kentucky, discussed his experiences at the Lake Placid, N.Y., and Sydney, Australia, conventions with local Rotarians. He urged club members to attend the spring conference at The Homestead and the International Convention in Houston, Texas, the following year.



Congressman Griffith’s: More Legislative Momentum on Health Care

In July 2025, I received an appointment to be Chair- man of the Health Subcommittee for the House Commit- tee on Energy and Commerce.

In the first week following my appointment, I toured various hospitals in Virginia’s Ninth District. My visits included Lee County Community Hospital in Penning- ton Gap, Clinch Valley Medical Center in Richlands, Carilion Giles Community Hospital in Pearisburg, and LewisGale Hospital Montgomery in Blacksburg.

My discussions with hospital leadership and staff touched on topics of hospital solvency, health care access challenges and the rural health care landscape.

Additionally, I consulted with our Community Health Centers (CHCs). During my first week as Health Subcom- mittee Chairman, I visited the Connect Health + Well- ness location in Martinsville.

I support federal engagement with health care pro- viders and patients to improve health care outcomes in rural America.

This engagement has continued in 2026.

I am in close contact with rural hospitals in Virginia’s Ninth District. These vital health care providers serve the medical needs of our rural communities with care, dig- nity and professionalism.

One hospital is Twin County Regional Healthcare in Galax. In May, I met with Twin County hospital leader- ship and local officials. Together, we are committed to serving the medical needs of our rural communities.

Another hospital with this mission is Clinch Valley Health Medical Center. This summer, I toured its facility. Clinch Valley Health President and CEO Peter Mulkey emphasized that these meetings help us “work together” to “provide top quality care to those that call our region home.”

For more of my summer meetings, I visited Abingdon and toured the Appalachian Highlands Community Dental Center. The clinic strives to be a source of care in Southwest Virginia.

Additionally, in Wise County, I had the privilege to visit a weekend-long expo, the Move Mountains Medical Mission.

This expo featured volunteer actions from numerous health care providers, including Radford University’s



MORGAN GRIFFITH

WEEKLY REPORT FROM THE CAPITOL

nursing program, UVA-Wise personnel and the Health Wagon.

There was even a free veterinary clinic!

Further, I will have additional opportunities to meet providers, medical staff and patients. I will continue to promote voices in our region to help advance rural health care solutions.

My Health Subcommittee has taken advantage of some opportunities to advance health care solutions. I was proud to push forward many bills for full House consideration.

These include H.R. 2821, the FDA Modernization Act 3.0.

This bill promotes modern alternative testing meth- ods to minimize animal testing.

The horrors of federal testing on animals hit Capitol Hill when Dr. Anthony Fauci came under fire for his agency, NIAID, and its taxpayer-funded experiments on beagles. This unnecessary dog testing included cutting out vocal cords, infesting them with ticks and placing them in cages with infectious sandflies.

House passage of the FDA Modernization Act 3.0 is a win for animal rights without sacrificing scientific breakthroughs.

Further, the bill improves development of clinical drugs by encouraging use of alternative methods, such as

computational AI models.As our agencies test scientific advances and potential treatments, new clinical drugs can hit the market for patients.

A second bill to win House support is H.R. 6238, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) IMPROVE Maternal Care Act.

This legislation delivers research funding for maternal care. With more than one million women of childbearing age in Virginia, this kind of funding will help our expect- ant mothers.

We also passed other bills that support research funding.

In the case of H.R. 3491, the DeOndra Dixon INCLUDE Project Act of 2025, we provide federal funding for re- search into Down syndrome.

We must continue to work to better understand this condition.

Additionally, the House passed the EARLY Act Reau- thorization of 2025.

This bill delivers funding for breast cancer awareness campaigns to promote early detection.

Breast cancer is one of the most common forms of cancer.According to the National Cancer Institute, a 2026 study found 15 percent of new cancer cases are breast cancer.

By educating our communities and patients on breast cancer, this legislation will help with diagnosis efforts.

These bills are a pillar of my Health Subcommittee’s efforts to improve health care outcomes across the United States.

We will have to wait for the Senate to pass them as well, but when it comes to maternal care, Down syn- drome, and breast cancer I cannot imagine the Senate will not concur.

I will continue to make the most of my appointment to the Health Subcommittee to advance policies, create health care opportunities and strengthen options for patients.

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/>.

The Watchman: The Beast

In this article we are going to look at who is the beast. Before the beast comes, there must be a platform set for him. I believe we are witnessing the early stages of that platform being set. You see, artificial intelligence, also known as AI, can see and identify objects. It can understand and respond to human language.

A few years ago, I was on a mission trip in Mexico. I went to a remote village and preached, and the locals said I was the first white man to ever preach in that area. I felt like I had gone back in time. I had never, in my lifetime, seen people living in such poverty. It was heartbreaking. Most of the people in the vil- lage lived in grass huts with just a dirt floor. The unusual thing was that, even though they lived in such poverty, a lot of them had cell phones. There is a force behind getting AI and technology to the world.

In Genesis chapter 11, some time after Noah’s flood, a king named Nimrod began to build a city and a tower in Babel (Genesis 11:1-10). In verse 4, they said, “Go, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach to heaven, and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.” Verse 5 says the Lord came down to see the city and tower which the children of men built. Verse 6 says the Lord said, “Be- hold, the people is one, and they all have one language, and this they begin to do, and now nothing will be re- strained from them, which they have imagined to do.”

They rebelled against God, saying they would build a tower so high that nothing would touch them. God said that nothing they imagined doing would be restrained from them, in other words, their rebellion would only intensify. They had no regard for what God wanted. In verse 4, we find the seed of all rebellion against God. The Lord had told Noah and his sons to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the Earth.

In Genesis 9:1, the followers of Nimrod are doing the very opposite. The Lord wanted mankind to be scat- tered over the Earth, but these rebels were determined to defy what God desired. In Genesis 11:4-9, verse 9 says the Lord confounded their language and scattered them abroad upon the face of the Earth.

Now, with technology, the world is becoming one again. From the days of Nimrod until the Third Indus- trial Revolution, the world did not change much until the last 125 years. Now we are entering the Fourth In- dustrial Revolution, a term for a technological, econom- ic, and social revolution connected by IT networks throughout society.

In Daniel 12:4, Daniel saw the coming expansion of

knowledge in the end time. I believe this is a sign of the coming of the beast empire, by whom this technology will be used to track the world’s population. The beast is the coming Antichrist and his kingdom. The world will embrace him. Jesus said in John 5:43, “I am come in my father’s name, ye receive me not.” The Antichrist

spirit was at work in the Apostle John’s time, as seen in John 2:18, 22, and 4:3, and in 2 John 7. The term Antichrist, however, is also the title of a man, a man who is identified by the pronoun he.

Revelations 13:2-7. Him who forged an eighth and final kingdom at the end of the age shall bear the sym- bol of a beast, as in Daniel 7:7-11, Revelation 11:7, and Revelation 13:1-2. In chap- ter 13, verse 1-2, John stood upon the sand of the sea and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads, ten horns, and ten crowns, and upon his head the name of Blasphemy. He will rise up out of a sea of humanity.

In Revelation 17:9-13, we are given insight into who the seven heads and ten horns are. The seven heads are seven kings, five have fallen before John’s time, and one is, John was living in the sixth head, and another has yet to come, which is the seventh head, must continue for a short space. The ten horns are the seventh. In Revela- tion 17:12, the ten horns which thou saw are ten kings which received no kingdom as of yet, but they receive power as kings one hour with the beast. Verse 13 says these have one mind and shall give their power and strength into the beast.

On the World Economic Forum website, the world in the future is shown divided into ten world regions, each with a leader. Could this possibly be the future ten kings? Only time will tell. Verse 11 tells us the beast is the eighth and is of the seven and goes into prediction. Revelation 13:26 says he causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bound, to receive a mark in their right hand or in their forehead. Verse 17 says they can- not buy or sell without the mark.

Revelations 14:11 tells us that all who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receives this mark of his name, shall be lost for eternity. The fourth Indus- trial Revolution provides the technological support that will allow the Antichrist to do this. I believe we could be the generation that Luke 21:32 is talking about, the rapture generation that will escape all these things that are to come upon the Earth. Luke 21:34-36 tells us to watch and pray that we may escape these things to come.



JERRY WARD

THE WATCHMAN

Adult education connection

What does it mean to learn? Learning means adopting an open mind and allowing oneself to be exposed to new experiences and ideas to grow. The excitement people used to experience about the world can be difficult to remember and relearn as adults, but we all need to learn.

While grow- ing up, we typi- cally possess a natural curiosi- ty about what we were learn- ing in school.

Yet, as adults, we often overlook the importance of being a lifelong learner.

For learning to occur, individuals need to be open to new concepts and actively seek diverse ways of learning and developing. Many adults have a strong interest in keeping up to date on what is occurring in the world around them and learning how to do certain things more efficiently while keeping their minds sharper as they age. Keeping the mind engaged with obtaining information helps us continually grow in knowledge and increase our skill base.

Within the aspects of continuous learning, one of the most important skills to maintain is problem-solv- ing. To thrive in the present and the future, we must be able to solve real-world problems with accuracy. An- other critical skill to possess is adaptability. The world is constantly changing; therefore, we must adopt the ability to be flexible. effort.

Everyone can benefit significantly from learning if we cultivate it as a long-term habit. It is beneficial to have a variety of learning skills and to develop them continuously throughout one’s life. Skills that impact our future come from within us. It is one of the reasons we are who we are. By attaining necessary lifelong learning skills, we can become better workers, learn- ers, and problem solvers.

For anyone who is interested in taking an adult ed- ucation course in order to brush up on some learning skills or to acquire some new ones, there are many opportunities to be found throughout our region. Southwest Regional Adult Education (SRAE) provides free instruction in Buchanan, Dickenson, Russell, and Tazewell counties. All classes and programs are taught by highly qualified instructors. Learning resources and testing materials will be provided. To find out which programs are currently available as well as the ones that are upcoming, please call SRAE at 276-889-5424.



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THE VIRGINIA MOUNTAINEER

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Savvy Senior: With Social Security Uncertainty, Should You Claim Benefits Early?

Dear Savvy Senior,

I turn 62 early next year and plan to retire soon after. Most advice says I should wait to claim Social Security because my monthly benefit will be higher. But with all the recent news about Social Security's financial problems, I'm wondering if taking benefits early might be the safer choice. Is there ever a good reason to claim at 62?

--Ready to Retire

Dear Ready,

You're definitely not alone in asking this.

The latest Social Security Trustees Report projects the retirement trust fund could be depleted around 2032 if Congress doesn't act. If that happens, Social Security would still collect payroll taxes and pay benefits, but retirees could face an across-the-board cut of about 22 percent.

Before you rush to file, keep things in perspective. Most experts still expect Congress to step in, as it has before, to strengthen Social Security. And even if lawmakers don't act, waiting would still produce a higher monthly benefit because any across-the-board benefit cut would apply to everyone. While claiming at 62 means collecting benefits sooner, it also permanently locks in a smaller check.

That said, there are several situations where claiming Social Security at 62 can make good financial sense.

How claiming age affects your benefits

You can start Social Security at 62, but doing so permanently reduces your monthly benefit by about 30 percent compared with waiting until full retirement age (67 for those born in 1960 or later). Delaying until 70 increases your benefit by about 24 percent.



SAVVY SENIOR

For example, a \$2,000 monthly benefit at full retirement age would drop to about \$1,400 at 62, or rise to roughly \$2,480 if you wait until 70.

When claiming early makes sense

For some retirees, claiming at 62 is a practical move. If you've stopped working and need income for basic expenses, Social Security can provide a steady check right away. It can also serve as a bridge if you retire early or lose a job in your early 60s while delaying withdrawals from retirement accounts or a pension.

Some retirees also claim Social Security early to reduce withdrawals from their IRA or 401(k) during market downturns. The tradeoff is a permanently reduced lifetime benefit.

For married couples, timing can be coordinated as part of a broader strategy. One spouse may claim early to bring in income while the other delays to boost their future or survivor benefit.

Health is another big factor. Delaying only pays off if you live long enough to collect those higher monthly checks. The break-even point between claiming at 62 and full retirement age is around age 78 or 79.

If you're still working, be careful here too. Before full retirement age, earnings above Social Security's annual limit can temporarily reduce your benefit, and claiming early locks in that lower amount for life.

Why delaying helps

For many retirees, waiting means a larger guaranteed monthly benefit for life and often a higher lifetime payout if you live into your late 70s or beyond. It can also provide stronger protection against outliving savings.

For couples, delaying the higher earner's benefit can increase the survivor benefit, which may help provide more financial security for a surviving spouse.

Before deciding, it's smart to review your numbers. You can create a free account at [SSA.gov/myaccount](https://ssa.gov/myaccount) to check your earnings record and estimate benefits at different ages. Tools like [OpenSocialSecurity.com](https://opensocialsecurity.com) or [MaximizeMySocialSecurity.com](https://maximizemysocialsecurity.com) (a paid tool with a \$49 fee) can also help you compare claiming strategies.

There's no one-size-fits-all answer. For most people, waiting still makes the most sense. But if you need income, have health concerns or are coordinating benefits with a spouse, claiming at 62 may be the better choice. The key is to base your decision on your own circumstances – not fear about Social Security's future.

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

Rocklick News

Hello Readers!

I watched our church service live this morning. The church is decorated for VBS and looks so good. The theme is... Jesus is the Light of the World...

Brother Kenny Coleman brought the message "What is Time Worth to You?"

He read Ephesians 5:5,15-21. He had a wonderful message. Kenny was talking to me this morning. Sometimes I feel I'm in a dark place; I'm struggling. The song Come Jesus Come was played at the end; I'd heard the song but never really listened to the words.

I heard from Jennifer; she said they had a great first night of VBS. There were 91 total in attendance, and the girls won the money.

Daddy passed away four years ago today. Hard to believe it's been that long.

My Aunt Bea called me this morning; yes, I have an Aunt Bea. She lives in Key West, and I hadn't heard from her for years. We talked for over an hour; it was so good to hear from her!

I messaged Jennifer; tonight was bring a friend with you to VBS. They had 95 total in attendance, and the boys won the money.

I saw two days' worth of pictures and videos, and it looks like everyone is having a good time.

Jennifer messaged me tonight; the attendance was 80, and the girls won the money.

Our Pastor, Eddie Wilson, came to visit today. It was so good to see him and have him pray with us.

Our church closed out VBS with a pool party at the YMCA. I'm going to call this week at VBS a huge success.

I took our bags of garbage to put beside the road Thursday morning only to find our chest freezer/trash bin missing. We had a bear visit last night, and I guess he got mad and pushed it over into the hollow. It's at least 100 feet down, and there's trash everywhere.

Ray and I went to town this morning. It's difficult for him to get up and down our steps, but he did it. I stopped at Double Kwik first and got my turkey and dressing dinner- delicious. He had to get his second dose of the shingles vaccine, and I got a few groceries. We stopped on the way home, and Ray got his cheeseburger and fries; no cooking today.

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

Reminder: the mobile food truck, Feeding Southwest Virginia, an equal opportunity provider, will be at the Council Park on Thursday, August 13th. The truck arrives about 9 a.m., and the giveaway starts about 10 a.m. This is a drive-thru event; stay in your car, and we will come to you.

Reminder: Feeding my Sheep will be doing their giveaway Saturday, August 15th.

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

My prayer list is long: Shannon and Christine (needs urgent prayers), Sarah, Shawne, Brad, Joann, Michelle, Linda, Alvin, Mac, Gary, Jerry and Vicky, Betty and Arlene, Leroy, Linda and James, Craig, Scott, Martha, Teresa, Jacob, Shawn, my uncle Tommy, Charles, Eugene, Melinda, Stanley and Crystal, Steve, Scotty, Brother Kenny, Tommy, Jon, Freddie and Sheila, Darrell and Vicki, Trish, Hudson, Amber, Dennis (urgent prayers needed!) 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 (keep praying for answers for this sweet lady!), Patty, Bill, Charles and Von, Ann, Jack and Annette, Curtis, Susie, Carol, Ronnie and Carol, Mike, Thelma, Kim, Judy, Malva, Gary and Linda, Randy, Tyler, Miss Jean, Jerry, D.C., June, Rachel, Jason, Lonie, Dean, Ralph, Ashleigh, Jim, Brenda, Barbara, Rodney, Chris and family, Lillian, Geraldine, Colin, Snoda, Judy, Mike and Dee, Bryan and Tina 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 (encouraging updates, keep praying), Baby Leon, Sandy, Buck and Harriet, Tommy (motorcycle accident), Raymond, Mary, Wanda, Lois, Darrell, Sue, Jeff, Shirley, little Zach (keep praying), Bobby, Mary Lou, Dreama, and Ray and I. God knows every need...

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

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, Romans 3:23 KJV

Until next week...

None of us are perfect; don't judge anyone; leave that up to God.



DEBBIE FOSTER
ROCKLICK
AREA NEWS
276-935-8296



Campers line the stage during the finale of The CAM's 2026 Acting Camp on July 23. Family and friends filled the audience to watch the young performers conclude four days of theater games, rehearsals and creative activities with a final showcase.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE CAM

The CAM's 2026 Acting Camp: A Week of Creativity, Confidence, and Adventure

By JESSICA SAVAGE
Theatre Guild of Buchanan County

The CAM wrapped up another unforgettable week of Acting Camp on Thursday, July 23, as campers took the stage to showcase everything they learned during four exciting days of creativity and imagination.

Held July 20-23, 2026 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. each day, Acting Camp welcomed performers ages 5-17 for a week filled with theater games, acting exercises, character development, crafts, music, dance and rehearsals. Throughout the week, campers not only prepared for their final performance but also built confidence, formed new friendships, and discovered the joy of working together on stage. We encountered many young new faces and even older new faces that attended camp for the first time!

Each day featured a different theme that encouraged campers to fully immerse themselves in the experience, culminating with an "Around the World" celebration on the final day of camp. On this day, campers were encouraged to "snack around the world" with a tray full of international snacks! The activity taught campers about food and fun in other countries. Each of the other days was themed as well, with Monday being "Red Carpet" Day, Tuesday "Safari" Day, Wednesday "Under The Sea" Day and Thursday wrapping up with "Around the World" Day!

One of the most anticipated traditions of Acting Camp is the annual Fashion Show, where campers are invited into The CAM's costume room to create an original character entirely from their own imagination. One by one, they walked the stage while emcee Pete Savage introduced and interviewed them about the unique characters they had created. The event once again brought plenty of laughter, creativity, and unforgettable memories for campers and families alike.

The week concluded with a special parent performance featuring presentations from each of the camp's age groups. Family and friends gathered to celebrate the campers' accomplishments and witness firsthand the confidence and creativity that had blossomed throughout the week. From the youngest performers taking the stage for the first time to returning campers demonstrating their growing skills, every group showcased the enthusiasm and teamwork that make Acting Camp such a special experience.

Acting Camp Director Jodi Reynolds once again led an outstanding week of programming, creating an environment where every child felt encouraged to step outside their comfort zone, use their imagination, and discover the magic of live theater.

The CAM is grateful for the incredible team of volunteers whose time, energy, and dedication helped make the week a success. Volunteers included Kurtlyn Thomas, Carla Thomas, Mary Huffstetler, Judd Reyn-

olds, Travis Elswick, Wade Vance, Jessica Savage, Jessica Vanover, Tina Clevinger, Stephanie Stiltner, Pete Savage, the wonderful CAM Grams, and many others who generously gave their time throughout the week.

Most importantly, The CAM extends its sincere appreciation to the United Charitable Foundation, whose support allows Acting Camp to be offered free of charge to every child while also providing meals throughout the week. Their investment in the youth of our community ensures that every child has the opportunity to experience performing arts, regardless of financial circumstances.

As another successful Acting Camp comes to a close, The CAM celebrates not only the performances presented but also the confidence gained, friendships formed, creativity sparked, and memories made over four incredible days.

Thank you to every camper, parent, volunteer, sponsor, and supporter who helped make Acting Camp 2026 such a tremendous success. We are already looking forward to welcoming both familiar and new faces back next summer for another week of theatrical adventure at The CAM.

Make plans now to attend our next installment in our Summer Concert Series on Thursday, Aug. 20 when Thomas Taylor will be rocking the Courtyard. Tickets may be purchased in advance at seeyouatthecam.com or through our social media channels. See you at The CAM.

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MISS TAZEWELL

FROM PAGE 3A

The Miss court included Brooklyn West as first runner-up, Laken MaKenna Graham as second runner-up and Haven Brooke Crabtree as third runner-up.

Special awards were presented to Laken MaKenna Graham (Best Dressed and Photogenic Queen), Brooklyn West (Best Personality and High Fashion Queen), McK-

enzie Faith Cordle (Prettiest Smile), Raegan Leann Ryder (Prettiest Hair and Most Beautiful Queen) and MaKenna N. Cantrell (People's Choice Queen).



2026 Tazewell County Fair Tiny Miss Queen Hadley Graye Price is pictured with members of her court following the pageant July 25 at Nuckolls Hall on the Tazewell County Fairgrounds. Photo by Rie Cook.



The 2026 Tazewell County Fair Mini Miss Queen is pictured with members of her court following the pageant July 25 at Nuckolls Hall on the Tazewell County Fairgrounds. Photo courtesy of the Tazewell County Fair Pageant.



The 2026 Tazewell County Fair Toddler Miss Queen is pictured with members of her court following the pageant July 25 at Nuckolls Hall on the Tazewell County Fairgrounds. Photo courtesy of the Tazewell County Fair Pageant.



The 2026 Tazewell County Fair Little Miss Queen is pictured with members of her court following the pageant July 25 at Nuckolls Hall on the Tazewell County Fairgrounds. Photo courtesy of the Tazewell County Fair Pageant.



2026 Tazewell County Fair Baby Miss Queen Bailynn Mae Taylor is pictured with members of her court following the pageant July 25 at Nuckolls Hall on the Tazewell County Fairgrounds. Photo by Kaly White Atwell.



The 2026 Tazewell County Fair Dainty Miss Queen is pictured with members of her court following the pageant July 25 at Nuckolls Hall on the Tazewell County Fairgrounds. Photo courtesy of the Tazewell County Fair Pageant.



The 2026 Tazewell County Fair Ms./Mrs. Ageless Queen is pictured with members of her court following the pageant July 25 at Nuckolls Hall on the Tazewell County Fairgrounds. Photo courtesy of the Tazewell County Fair Pageant.



The 2026 Tazewell County Fair Elegant Miss Queen is pictured with members of her court following the pageant July 25 at Nuckolls Hall on the Tazewell County Fairgrounds. Photo courtesy of the Tazewell County Fair Pageant.



2026 Tazewell County Fair Junior Miss Queen Jaylin Hagerman is pictured with members of her court following the pageant July 25 at Nuckolls Hall on the Tazewell County Fairgrounds. Photo courtesy of the Tazewell County Fair Pageant.



The 2026 Tazewell County Fair Young Miss Queen is pictured with members of her court following the pageant July 25 at Nuckolls Hall on the Tazewell County Fairgrounds. Photo courtesy of the Tazewell County Fair Pageant.



2026 Tazewell County Fair Junior Miss Queen Jaylin Hagerman is pictured with members of her court following the pageant July 25 at Nuckolls Hall on the Tazewell County Fairgrounds. Photo courtesy of the Tazewell County Fair Pageant.

Southern Gap Dirt Drags
crowns July 18 winners

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

Engines roared, and dirt flew as racers of all ages competed during the Southern Gap Dirt Drags on July 18 in Grundy, with dozens of drivers taking home top honors in ATV, motocross, UTV and specialty classes.

The event, hosted by Extreme Motor-sports Grundy VA, featured competition

ranging from Power Wheels racers to experienced adult drivers, drawing competitors and fans for another evening of racing at Southern Gap.

Among the youngest participants, Jaylen Hall claimed first place in the Power Wheels division, followed by Carter Street in second and Charlotte Street in third.

In the ATV MX ET 3-8 class, Rylan Deel

SEE SOUTHERN GAP DIRT DRAGS | 3B



1Breese Bostic (left) and Easton Stevens display their catches during the 2026 TBF Junior World Championship on Lake Dardanelle in Arkansas. Bostic landed a trophy largemouth bass, while Stevens holds two quality large-mouths during the national youth bass fishing tournament, where the Buchanan County duo finished 18th in a field of 79 teams.

Bostic and Stevens finish
in top 20 at TBF Junior
World Championship

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

Two young Buchanan County anglers proved they can compete with the nation's best, earning a top-20 finish at the 2026 TBF Junior World Championship on July 29-31 at Lake Dardanelle in Arkansas.

Breese Bostic and Easton Stevens, representing the Castaway Lip Rippers club, placed 18th out of 79 teams at the prestigious national tournament. The duo weighed in six fish over two days for a combined weight of 16 pounds, 7 ounces.

Verify whether the tournament was three days or four days and correct accordingly

Serving as boat captain for the Buchanan County team was Chad Stevens, assistant principal at Southern Gap High School. Following the tournament, Stevens praised the

determination and work ethic displayed by the two young anglers throughout the week.

"We wrapped up the TBF Junior World Championship today with a solid 18th place finish out of a 79-boat field on Lake Dardanelle in Arkansas," Stevens said. "The boys fished four consecutive days in 100+ degree heat, never giving up or complaining despite being on their feet all day. I even had to force them to take a break to eat."

Stevens said the tournament reinforced his confidence in the future of youth fishing in Buchanan County.

"There are no words for how proud I am of these boys or how excited I am for youth and high school fishing in Buchanan County," he said. "These boys proved they could hang in there. The future is bright."

SEE BOSTIC AND STEVENS | 3B

In the Locker Room:
The Eagles are
ready to soar

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

Football is finally back. Across Virginia, teams officially opened preseason practice on July 30, and that means Friday night lights are no longer just around the corner — they're here.

For Buchanan County, though, this isn't just another football season.

This is history.

At 7 p.m. on Aug. 21, the Southern Gap Eagles will take the field against Holston in the first varsity football game in school history. It's a moment years in the making, and one many people never thought they would see.

The Eagles have spent the opening days of preseason camp practicing at Nelson Memorial Field, preparing for a season unlike any other. Every workout, every rep and every meeting is helping lay the foundation for a brand-new program.

Like many of you, this season will feel different for me.

There won't be another Friday night cheering on the Grundy Golden Wave and hearing the Goldie Oldies cheer on their beloved school. I won't be making the trip to my old stomping grounds at Hurley to catch a game at the legendary Cliff. After covering Twin Valley for years — where three of my four children attended school — I started feeling like an honorary Panther.

For nearly a decade, I have had the privilege of covering every Buchanan County football program as a member of the Black Diamond District. I've witnessed championships like Grundy's run to a Region 1D title in 2022, heartbreaking losses and unforgettable rivalries that helped shape high school football in our county.

Those memories aren't going anywhere.

Neither is the pride those schools brought to their communities.

But like it or not, now is the time to write a new chapter.

For the first time in Buchanan County history, one team will represent more than 500 square miles of mountain communities. We are moving from the BDD to the Southwest District. Now we will be playing schools such as Richlands, which was a huge rival of



IN THE LOCKER ROOM

Annual YMCA summer basketball
camp was a huge success

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

After three days of drills, scrimmages and skill development, the Buchanan County YMCA's annual Youth Basketball Camp came to a close last Friday, leaving dozens of young athletes better prepared for the upcoming basketball season.

The three-day camp welcomed boys and girls entering second through eighth grade and focused on devel-

oping the fundamentals of the game while encouraging teamwork, sportsmanship and confidence. Led by Southern Gap High School varsity boys basketball coach Jory Rife, campers spent each day working on ball handling, passing, shooting, defensive pressure, layup mechanics, agility and game situations before putting those skills to use in competitions and scrimmages. Each morning also began with a devotional.

SEE BASKETBALL CAMP | 4B



Campers, coaches and volunteers gather for a group photo following the conclusion of the Buchanan County YMCA Youth Basketball Camp on Friday. The three-day camp, led by Southern Gap High School boys basketball coach Jory Rife, focused on developing basketball fundamentals, teamwork and sportsmanship.

Meet the Eagles event
rescheduled for Aug. 19

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

Southern Gap High School has rescheduled its inaugural "Meet the Eagles" community event, giving students, families and supporters a new opportunity to kick off the school's first year together.

The event will now be held Wednesday, Aug. 19, from 5 to 8 p.m. at Southern Gap High School.

Although the date has changed, school officials said the event will continue to offer an evening of community fellowship, school spirit and family-friendly activities as the Eagles prepare for their inaugural athletic season.

Residents will have the opportunity to meet Southern Gap's student-athletes, coaches and athletic programs while enjoying a vendor fair, music, inflatable attractions and other activities. The event is open to the public.

The celebration comes just days before Southern Gap opens its doors for its first school year following the consolidation of Buchanan County's four high schools. School officials hope the event will bring together students, parents, alums and community members to celebrate the beginning of a new chapter in Buchanan County athletics.

The Eagles will begin their inaugural football season Aug. 21 when they host Holston in the program's first regular-season game after opening preseason play with an Aug. 15 home scrimmage against Patrick Henry.

School officials encourage the community to update their calendars and attend the rescheduled event to meet the athletes who will represent Southern Gap during its historic first year.

Additional information about the event will be released as it becomes available.

FAIR DAYS

WORD SEARCH

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

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

WORDS

APPLES
BLUE RIBBON
CARNIVAL
CAROUSEL
CHURRO
COASTER
CONCERT
CORNDOG
COTTON CANDY
EXHIBIT
FERRIS WHEEL
FRIES
FUNNEL CAKE
GAMES
GRAND STAND
JUDGES
LEMONADE
LIVESTOCK
MIDWAY
POPCORN
PRIZE
QUILT
RACING
TRACTOR

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

CLUES ACROSS

1. Bleated
6. Snakelike fish
9. Database management system
13. Social evolution anthropologist Service
14. American rocker Grohl
15. Greek personification of compassion
16. Negatives
17. Rescued
18. Self-immolation by fire ritual
19. Assigns tasks
21. Popular type of cigar
22. Discounts
23. The whole quantity
24. New York Giants legend
25. Indicates before
28. Lentils
29. Extremely angry
31. Body part
33. "North Star State"
36. David __, US playwright

38. Lower and raise one's head
39. Private rendezvous
41. In a way, improved
44. A place to play
45. Astronomical period of 18 years
46. Automobile
48. Something you can take
49. A radio band
51. Jaws of a voracious animal
52. Short-billed rails
54. Chinese province
56. Shameless
60. Horizontal passage from the surface into a mine
61. Indian respectful titles
62. Fail to entertain
63. Dried-up
64. Central Utah city
65. Southern U.S.
66. German river
67. Necessary for breathing
68. Put into play

CLUES DOWN

1. Curved segment
2. Wings
3. Yellowish volatile liquid
4. Makes less severe
5. Debit note
6. Overhang
7. The nights before
8. Type of light
9. Lacking enthusiasm
10. Tattle
11. Some is "heavy"
12. One who is canonized
14. Indicates date and place of writing
17. "Peace" in Arabic
20. "Olaf" actor Josh
21. Fragmented rock
23. They __
25. Advanced degree
26. Backside
27. Influential architect and design couple
29. An act of undue intimacy

30. Words from which later words are derived
32. 10 meters
34. Neither
35. Fungal sacs
37. The law of God revealed to Moses
40. A woolen cap of Scottish origin
42. A promise
43. Challenges
47. British Air Aces
49. Large bank
50. Served as an omen
52. Cavalry sword
53. Vaccine developer
55. Belgian WW2 resistance leader Jules
56. Italian Seaport
57. Hip joint
58. __ Clapton, musician
59. Insect repellent
61. Constrictor snake
65 "The First State" (abbr.)

PUZZLE SOLUTION

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

SUDOKU

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

Level: Intermediate

WORD SCRAMBLE

Rearrange the letters to spell something pertaining to fairs.

E K C I T T

Answer: Ticket

GUESS WHO ?

I am a musician born in California on August 3, 1963. I learned to play various instruments after being inspired by the band Aerosmith growing up. I am a cofounder of one of the most popular heavy metal bands of all time.

Answer: James Hetfield

CRYPTO FUN

Solve the code to discover words related to fairs. Each number corresponds to a letter. (Hint: 15 = R)

A. 10 3 14 15
Clue: Fun outdoor gathering

B. 5 3 15 23 14 22 3 8
Clue: Event with rides and attractions

C. 15 14 17 7
Clue: Amusement

D. 22 7 23 17 1 15
Clue: Sells something

Answers: A. fair B. carnival C. ride D. vendor

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

SUDOKU SOLUTION

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

Horoscopes

ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20

You're pure rocket fuel this week, Aries. Charge ahead with all of your bold ideas. Your charisma is off the charts right now. Use it before your energy starts to wane.

TAURUS – Apr 21/May 21

Treat yourself to something delicious and expensive this week, Taurus. Just do not blame the cosmos when you get the receipt for this luxury.

GEMINI – May 22/Jun 21

Say yes to spontaneous plans this week, Gemini. Your brain is going a mile a minute, so you may need someone along for the ride to keep you grounded.

CANCER – Jun 22/Jul 22

Cancer, right now home is your fortress, so create a welcoming space to relax and recharge. You may want to spend some time in the kitchen baking up something delicious.

LEO – Jul 23/Aug 23

The spotlight is on you this week, Leo. Shine as brightly as you can, post that selfie and own the room you walk into. Be grateful to those who helped get you to the top.

VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22

All of your organizational superpowers will be activated this week, Virgo. Tackle that messy drawer you have been putting off or conquer a chaotic schedule.

LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23

Libra, romance and fun are in the air for you. Your charm level is very high this week, and you may have a lot of people circling in your orbit as a result.

SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22

Scorpio, you will dig out all of the secrets this week like a super sleuth. Although you are on the hunt for information, remember to keep these pursuits lighthearted.

SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21

Your adventure mode is engaged, Sagittarius. It's time to book the trip, try an exotic dish or say something wild.

CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20

Reward yourself with something that makes you feel important, Capricorn. It may be different depending on the day, and only you know what you desire.

AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18

Someone is ready to hear any wild ideas you can come up with, Aquarius. Tap into any genius that arises in your brain and share it with your close crew.

PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20

This week is about dreamy and magical vibes, Pisces. It's the perfect time to create art, fall in love with a song or float through the week.

FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS

AUGUST 2

J.D Vance, Vice President (42)

AUGUST 3

Tom Brady, Athlete (49)

AUGUST 4

Meghan Markle, Duchess (45)

AUGUST 5

Olivia Holt, Actress (29)

AUGUST 6

Michelle Yeoh, Actress (64)

AUGUST 7

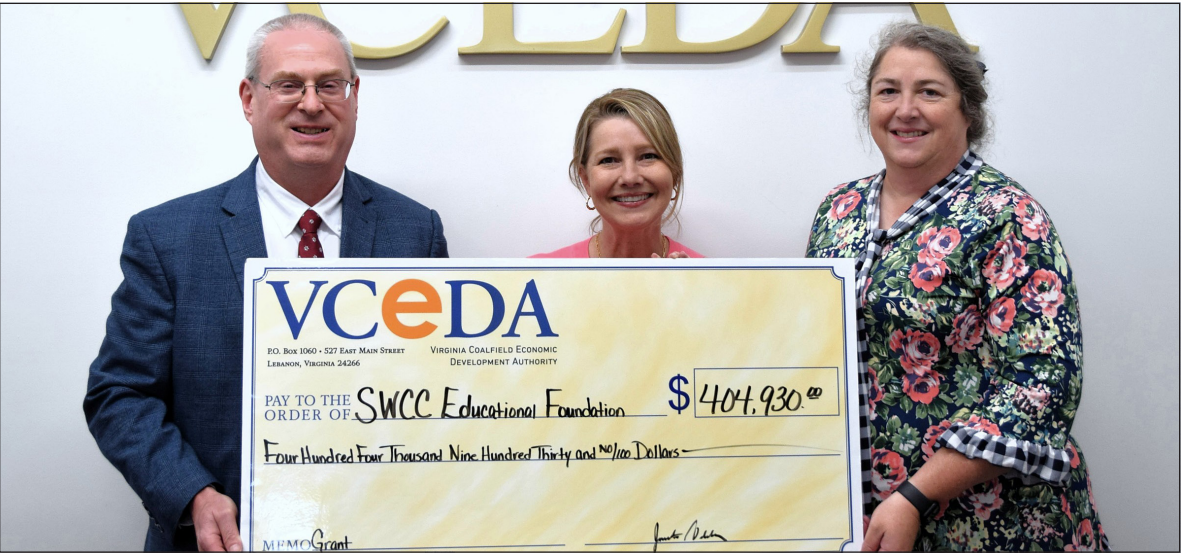
Wayne Knight, Actor (71)

AUGUST 8

Shawn Mendes, Singer (28)

VCEDA awards \$404,930 grant to SWCC Educational Foundation

Virginia Mountaineer



VCEDA Executive Director/General Counsel Jonathan Belcher, left, presents a ceremonial check for \$404,930 to Southwest Virginia Community College (SWCC) Vice President of Institutional Advancement Susan Lowe, center, and SWCC Small Business Development Center Executive Director Denise Harmon, right, to be used for workforce training and development programs; equipment; and support for the SBDC.

An up to \$404,930 grant from the Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority (VCEDA) to the Southwest Virginia Community College (SWCC) Educational Foundation was closed recently.

The funds will be used for workforce development and training, for the purchase of orbital welding units and to support the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at SWCC in its assistance to entrepreneurs and small business owners in the VCEDA region.

“VCEDA is pleased to once again provide support to SWCC to assist in workforce development and training for students in our region, to assist with the purchase of

needed equipment to expand the college's welding training options and to support the SBDC with which we work closely through our VCEDA Seed Capital Matching Grant program,” said VCEDA Executive Director/General Counsel Jonathan Belcher.

The workforce development and training component of the recent grant approval will continue funding to be used for scholarships for the emerging workforce, training instructional costs, customized workforce training for area businesses, work-based learning opportunities, costs of assessments and costs of administering National Career Readiness Certificate and other workforce testing for residents and/or workers in the VCEDA region.

That funding is specifically used in situations where training does not otherwise always qualify for other forms of financial assistance. Hundreds of workers and potential workers have been trained with the funding at both SWCC and Mountain Empire Community College.

The purchase of two orbital welding units for training purposes will support training in high purity piping systems for the food and beverage industry. These systems require precise, contamination-free welds to meet strict sanitary and regulatory standards. In addition, precision welding technology is widely used in industries including aerospace, energy, pharmaceuticals and advanced manufacturing. The equipment will be integrated into both an advanced welding program and a short-term workforce training program.

The third component of the grant request is for funding to help support workforce development and training for entrepreneurs and small business owners in the region including a part-time small business advisor position within the SBDC office at SWCC to assist in the delivery of one-on-one confidential advising on business planning, financial strategy, operations and market analysis.

“Thanks to VCEDA's partnership and vision, Southwest can continue expanding workforce initiatives that prepare students for high-demand careers,” said SWCC Vice President of Institutional Advancement Susan Lowe. “Their support helps transform potential into opportunity and strengthens the economic future of our region.”

Library invites community to End of Summer Luau

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

As summer winds down, the Buchanan County Public Library invites families to celebrate with an afternoon of food, fun and tropical flair at its End of Summer Luau later this month.

The free event will be held from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 29, at the Buchanan County Public Library, 1185 Poe Town Road in Grundy.

Guests can enjoy barbecue sliders and Hawaiian ice while taking part in a tropical-themed celebration marking the close of the summer season.

The library encourages residents of all ages to attend and enjoy an hour of fellowship with friends and neighbors before the busy back-to-school season gets fully underway.

The End of Summer Luau is one of several community events the Buchanan County Public Library has hosted throughout the summer to bring families together through fun, educational and seasonal activities.

For more information about the event or other upcoming library programs, contact the Buchanan County Public Library.

Fugitive captured: Bandy man wanted since March

By **WARREN HINKLE**

A man wanted on multiple charges, including attempted murder and arson, was captured Sunday night by Tazewell County sheriff's deputies.

“An operation conducted last night led to the capture of William Harold Bowden,” Sheriff Brian Hieatt said Monday. “He has been wanted since March 27 on charges of attempted murder, arson, destruction of property, attempted arson on a dwelling, attempt to enter a dwelling to commit a crime, and assault.”

The sheriff said Bowden is 38 years old and from the Bandy area.

“On the night of March 27, the 911 Center received calls of a man threatening his ex-girlfriend in the Dry Fork area of North Tazewell. When deputies arrived, they found a vehicle fully engulfed in the driveway. At that time, Mr. Bowden had fled the scene and has been wanted since.”

The Bandy Fire Department and the Baptist Valley Fire Department responded to the scene in March and controlled the fire before it could spread to any residences.

Bowden is currently being held in the Southwest Regional Jail Authority's Tazewell facility.

BOSTIC AND STEVENS

FROM PAGE 1B

He also thanked the many sponsors who helped make the trip possible.

“I would like to thank all of the sponsors who helped pave the way for Breese and Easton to chase their dream,” Stevens said.

For Stevens, the experience was about much more than the final standings.

“Fishing has always been a big part of my life,” he said. “Sharing this moment with my son and Breese as their boat captain meant so much to me! The memories we made on this trip will always have a special place in my heart. I can't wait to see what these boys do next season.”

Bostic and Stevens improved as the tournament progressed. After bringing in 5 pounds, 9 ounces on the opening day, the pair responded with 10 pounds, 14 ounces on the second day to secure their top-20 finish.

The national championship featured some of the top

youth anglers in the country. Parker Smith and Cooper Anderson of Scotts Hill Jr. Anglers captured the championship with a two-day total of 26 pounds, 12 ounces. Gunner Robbins and Drew Smith of the Upper Cumberland Junior Bass Club finished second with 24 pounds, 4 ounces, while Hagan Hay and Hank Rowton of the North Louisiana Jr. Fishing League placed third at 23 pounds, 15 ounces.

Brooks Beaty and Caleb Coburn of Calvary Baptist Academy Jr. Cavaliers finished fourth with 23 pounds, 5 ounces, and Easton Ovens and Coy Ebrahim of 863 Jr. Anglers rounded out the top five with 23 pounds, 1 ounce.



Easton Stevens (left), boat captain Chad Stevens (center) and Breese Bostic (right) pose after competing in the 2026 TBF Junior World Championship on Lake Dardanelle in Arkansas. The Buchanan County team earned an 18th-place finish in the national tournament, competing against 79 of the country's top youth bass fishing teams



Boat captain Chad Stevens (center) navigates Lake Dardanelle during the 2026 TBF Junior World Championship in Arkansas as Easton Stevens rides in the bow and Breese Bostic prepares from the rear deck. The Buchanan County team finished 18th among 79 of the nation's top youth fishing teams.

SOUTHERN GAP DIRT DRAGS

FROM PAGE 1B

earned the victory. Easton Vass topped the ATV MX ET 9-12 division, finishing ahead of Hunter Bowman and Hunter Justus.

Brantley Deel captured first place in the MX 65cc-100cc class, while Maddox Hinkle won the MX 101cc-200cc division after placing third in the younger motocross class. Kaden Watkins claimed the MX 201cc-250cc title and Justin Taylor won the MX 251cc-Up division. Ayden Thomas finished first in the MX Open Class.

Kobe Blankenship enjoyed one of the night's strongest performances, collecting victories in both the ATV 2-Stroke Open and ATV 201cc-400cc classes. He also placed first in the UTV 801cc-Up Non-Turbo division and finished second in the MX 201cc-250cc class.

Justin Taylor, Megan Shrader, Braxton Shrader and Kanaan McClanahan also earned victories in their respective divisions. Shrader won the ATV 501cc-Up class, while Braxton Shrader took the ATV Open title. McClanahan claimed first place in the UTV Non-Turbo Open division.

Danny Boyd set the pace in the Outlaw Open “Baddest of the Gap” class, establishing a track record with a run of 4.141 seconds.

Other winners included Dean Ward in the UTV Turbo Stock class, Homer Waters in the UTV Turbo Open division, Kiersten Looney in the Powder Puff Open class and Haley Phillips and Jase Hurley, who captured the ET Bracket Open Trophy and Money divisions, respectively.

Event organizers thanked the racers, crews, sponsors and fans for their continued support and announced plans to return for another round of racing at Southern Gap.

Division winners

Power Wheels: Jaylen Hall
ATV MX ET Ages 3-8: Rylan Deel
ATV MX ET Ages 9-12: Easton Vass
MX 65cc-100cc: Brantley Deel
MX 101cc-200cc: Maddox Hinkle
MX 201cc-250cc: Kaden Watkins
MX 251cc-Up: Justin Taylor
MX Open: Ayden Thomas
ATV 2-Stroke Open: Kobe Blankenship
ATV 201cc-400cc: Kobe Blankenship
ATV 401cc-500cc: Kobe Blankenship
ATV 501cc-Up: Megan Shrader
ATV Open: Braxton Shrader
UTV 801cc-Up Non-Turbo: Kobe Blankenship
UTV Turbo Modified Open: Danny Boyd
UTV Turbo Stock: Dean Ward
UTV Non-Turbo Open: Kanaan McClanahan
UTV Turbo Open: Homer Waters
Powder Puff Open: Kiersten Looney
ET Bracket Open (Trophy): Haley Phillips
ET Bracket Open (Money): Jase Hurley
Outlaw Open – Baddest of the Gap: Danny Boyd
(Track Record: 4.141 seconds)

IN THE LOCKER ROOM

FROM PAGE 1B

Grundy for many years and Tazewell, and then, in a year or so, be playing a full Southwest District schedule which includes perennial power Graham and Virginia High as well as making that long trip to Marion.

Players who once lined up across from one another are now teammates wearing the same black and Vegas gold.

I'm excited to watch former Grundy standout Ayden Whited, who will most likely be the first starting quarterback for the Eagles, line up alongside former Twin Valley first-team All-Region 1D defensive back Brayden White. Add in former Hurley standout Chase Baker, who earned second-team All-Region 1D honors on the defensive line last season, and you begin to see the talent that has come together under one roof.

The schedule offers plenty of excitement from the very beginning.

Following a scrimmage at home on Aug. 15 against former Hurley High School head coach Austin Cooper and the Patrick Henry Rebels, the Eagles will make history by hosting Holston in the season opener on Aug. 21. A week later, Southern Gap will host Ridgeview for the annual Black Diamond Miners Bowl. I had the opportunity to discuss the new bowl game with Ridgeview head football coach Kent Grant, and he mentioned that his group is excited about the new rivalry game between the neighboring counties, which will precede the away games at Rye Cove on Sept. 4 and Giles the following week.

The home schedule also features Honaker on Sept. 25 for Little League Night, Richlands on Oct. 2 for Senior Night and River View, West Virginia, on Oct. 23 for Homecoming. The Eagles will also hit the road for games against Tazewell, Class 1 favorites Eastside and a much-improved Wise Central team.

There's not an easy game on the schedule, but that's exactly what makes this first season so intriguing.

Will there be growing pains? Of course.

Building chemistry doesn't happen overnight when players from four different schools come together. But if there's one thing I've learned covering sports in Buchanan County, it's that our kids know how to compete. I have faith in head coach Greg Tester. The numbers are good with over 40 out and there is some young talent on that team.

More importantly, they know how to represent their communities.

On Aug. 21, I hope every seat in the new state-of-the-art facility is filled. I hope the parking lots overflow. I hope former Grundy, Hurley, Twin Valley and Council fans all stand together wearing black and gold.

Because this team belongs to every corner of Buchanan County.

The names on the jerseys may have changed, but the pride of Buchanan County hasn't.

A new era is about to begin, and I can't wait to cover every snap of it.

“Thanks for joining me in the Locker Room. Until next week, let's keep celebrating the victories, learning from the defeats, and always standing behind Buchanan County's athletes.”

Blue Nose Aerial Imaging approved for VCEDA seed capital grant

Virginia Mountaineer

Professional drone-based aerial imaging, photogrammetry, mapping inspection and media service is now available in Russell County, Va., as Jeremy and Roxanna Hill open Roadhouse Operations LLC, operating at Blue Nose Aerial Imaging of Southwest Virginia.

Blue Nose Aerial Imaging of Southwest Virginia 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.

“Blue Nose Aerial Imaging of Southwest Virginia provides services utilized by a wide variety of industries including transportation, construction, forestry, agriculture, real estate and more,” said Jonathan Belcher, VCEDA executive director/general counsel. “The business projects three full-time employees and one part-time employee within five years.”

Jeremy Hill noted services offered include orthomosaic mapping, volumetric calculations, thermal imaging, asset inspections and GIS-ready data deliverables. Cattle management and herd analysis, leased hunting property game assessments, 2D and 3D mapping, public safety assistance, precision agriculture, real estate and more are among the primary services currently being provided in the region.

The company is registered on SAM.gov and eVA and holds Virginia SWaM certifications. Also in the works is HUBZone certification to strengthen federal and prime

contractor positioning. The Russell County company is affiliated with Blue Nose Aerial Imaging, a nationwide provider of commercial drone services.

“We are building the business to support contractors, engineering teams, real estate professionals, local governments, utilities and other organizations needing a responsive small business partner capable of producing professional results quickly and cost-effectively,” Hill said. “We work with others to leverage relationships with Inframappa for asset-management related workflow support, Inotek for thermal reporting and GovCon support to improve contracting readiness.”

Hill noted his fascination with aviation began early in life, leading him to pursue aerial imaging. He is a Level I Thermologist, OSHA 10 safety, CPR and FAA Part 107 certified. He is a native of New Hampshire, where he said he grew up loving flight. He got his drone license through Virginia Highlands and then began looking at possible franchise opportunities to provide drone services in the region when he found Blue Nose through his research. He went through their academy, formed his LLC in April and officially opened last July. Blue Nose Aerial Imaging of Southwest Virginia is franchised to cover the territory from Roanoke, Va., west to the Tri-Cities.

“We are a solutions-based company and we can collect the data, analyze it and turn it into solutions,” Hill said.

He said the seed capital grant has been used for equipment as well as being planned for outreach, education and marketing events.

“The VCEDA grant is paramount to my success,” Hill said.

Hill 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.

“The Small Business Development Center congratulates Roadhouse Operations LLC, dba Blue Nose Aerial Imaging of Southwest Virginia, as they establish and grow their business in our region. 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 has been a pleasure working with this client through the SBDC and we appreciate the opportunity to assist them as they launch their business. We wish them continued success and look forward to seeing Blue Nose Aerial Imaging thrive in Russell County and throughout Southwest Virginia. Welcome to Russell County -- we are proud to have you as part of our business community.”

“Blue Nose Aerial Imaging is meeting a growing demand for professional drone services here in Russell County,” said Laura Gilmer, executive director of the Russell County Industrial Development Authority. “We’re proud to support this kind of innovative, professional service business, which can bring new jobs and tax revenue to the county.”

For more information about Blue Nose Aerial, interested persons may visit the website at www.blunoseaerial.com, their Facebook page at Blue Nose Aerial of Southwest Virginia, or call 276-885-5439.

BASKETBALL CAMP

FROM PAGE 1B

Rife said another successful year of camp was made possible by the enthusiasm of the campers and the coaches and players who volunteered their time.

“We had another excellent year of the Buchanan County YMCA camp,” Rife said. “I’m also so honored to be the host. The kids this year were great; I’m always so impressed with how fun, thoughtful and well-behaved the kids who attend camp are. This year we focused on fundamentals above everything else: ball handling, passing, proper layup mechanics and having fun. I couldn’t make this camp possible without good help, so I’m very thankful to my assistant coaches Greg McClanahan and Mark England and some of our players: Ethan McClanahan, Logan Fuller, Kyle Hunt, Jaxon Hardin, Brennon Yates, Brayden White, Carter Deel, Jansen Davis, Ethan Deel, Gavin Hartford and Evan Looney.”

In addition to basketball instruction, campers received a camp T-shirt, a pool pass and a snow cone pass.

Daily awards were presented throughout the week to recognize effort, attitude and sportsmanship.

The camp’s highest honor, Camper of the Week, was presented to Liam Smith during Friday’s closing ceremony. The award included a complimentary one-year membership at the Buchanan County YMCA.

Camp participants included Myiah Belachew, Lana Bennett, Kenzie Blankenship, Kylie Blankenship, Collin Bostwick, Cash Clevinger, Kinsley Clevinger, Eli Cochran, Fortune Cox, Alexander Dailey, Byron Dailey, Bryson Davis, Elijah Deel, Kylee Estep, Abby Jude, Isabella Lockhart, Lillian Lowry, Gabriella Perry, Margot Robertson, Jonah Shelton, Mary Shelton, Liam Smith, Tristian Stiltner, Kiley Street and Ada Viers.

Lauren Deskins, the YMCA program director, stated that the basketball camp was among the organization’s biggest and most successful events this summer.

“This is one of our most well-attended camp years,”

Deskins said. “We have offered Volleyball Camp coached by Hannah Scott, Cheer Camp coached by Thomas Ray, Football Camp coached by Southern Gap Eagle Football Staff, Soccer Camp coached by Ashley Shortt, Basketball Camp, and in August we will be having a Dance Camp as well as a MAD Camp (music, art and drama). Our Football Camp was a huge success; we got a donation from West River Conveyors for 50 members to join for free.”

The YMCA’s football camp, led by members of the inaugural Southern Gap Eagles football coaching staff, also drew a strong turnout this summer. Young athletes had the opportunity to develop football fundamentals while preparing for the upcoming season. Thanks to a donation from West River Conveyors, 50 participants received complimentary YMCA memberships, helping encourage continued participation in youth sports and healthy activities throughout the year.

CLASSIFIEDS

LEGAL NOTICES

**Public Notice
Application for Bond
Reduction
Under Chapter 19, Title
45.2
Code of Virginia’
PUBLICATION NUMBER:
APPLICATION NUM-
BER:1011886**

Jewell Valley Mining LLC is applying for bond reduction on Permit No.1202301 located in Buchanan County 4.2 MILES SW OF VANSANT ON PAWPAW CREEK. This permit consists of 14.82 acres bonded under Cost Estimate. 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 \$414,100.00 in the form of insurance surety posted for this permit be reduced by \$248,600.00. This bond reduction request is based on the following Phase I reclamation: All backfill and re-grading completed per approved settlement agreement. 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 27, 2026, submit written comments or objections concerning this bond reduction, 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/frmMain.aspx?ctl=4>. All correspondence concerning this application should be submitted to the Mined Land Repurposing Program (Attention: Permit Section), 3405 Mountain Empire Road, Big Stone Gap, Virginia 24219. Telephone (276) 523-8160. Written comments and a request for informal conference may be e-mailed to repurposingpublicnotice@energy.virginia.gov. VAM-08-6,13,20,27;2026

**Public Notice
Application for Bond
Reduction
Under Chapter 19, Title
45.2
Code of Virginia’
PUBLICATION NUMBER:
APPLICATION NUM-
BER:1011887**

Jewell Valley Mining LLC is applying for bond reduction on Permit No.1202304

located in Buchanan County 1.3 MILES NW OF WHITEWOOD ON MILL BRANCH. This permit consists of 20.38 acres bonded under Cost Estimate. 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 \$325,000.00 in the form of insurance surety posted for this permit be reduced by \$195,000.00. This bond reduction request is based on the following Phase I reclamation: All backfill and re-grading completed per approved settlement agreement. 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 27, 2026, submit written comments or objections concerning this bond reduction, 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/frmMain.aspx?ctl=4>. All correspondence concerning this application should be submitted to the Mined Land Repurposing Program (Attention: Permit Section), 3405 Mountain Empire Road, Big Stone Gap, Virginia 24219. Telephone (276) 523-8160. Written comments and a request for informal conference may be e-mailed to repurposingpublicnotice@energy.virginia.gov. VAM-08-6,13,20,27;2026

**Public Notice
Application for
Bond Reduction
Under Chapter
19, Title 45.2
Code of Virginia’
PUBLICATION NUMBER:
APPLICATION NUM-
BER:1011888**

Jewell Valley Mining LLC is applying for bond reduction on Permit No.1702302 located in Buchanan County JONES FK OF JEWELL VALLEY OFF ST RT 613. This permit consists of 196.03 acres bonded under Cost Estimate. 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 \$1,828,900.00 in the form of insurance surety posted for this permit be reduced by \$1,097,340.00. This bond reduction re-

quest is based on the following Phase I reclamation: All backfill and re-grading completed per approved settlement agreement. 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 27, 2026, submit written comments or objections concerning this bond reduction, 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/frmMain.aspx?ctl=4>. All correspondence concerning this application should be submitted to the Mined Land Repurposing Program (Attention: Permit Section), 3405 Mountain Empire Road, Big Stone Gap, Virginia 24219. Telephone (276) 523-8160. Written comments and a request for informal conference may be e-mailed to repurposingpublicnotice@energy.virginia.gov. VAM-08-6,13,20,27;2026

**Public Notice Applica-
tion for Bond Release
Under Chapter
19, Title 45.2
Code of Virginia
PUBLICATION NUM-
BER: 26TLDO2
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/frmMain.aspx?ctl=4>

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

EMPLOYMENT

TOM SCOTT LAW, PLLC

— Grundy, Virginia —

NOW HIRING: FULL-TIME LEGAL SECRETARY / OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR

Full-Time — In Office — Grundy, VA

About Our Firm

Tom Scott Law, PLLC is a newly established law practice serving clients across far southwest Virginia and east Tennessee, led by Attorney Tom Scott, who has practiced law in this region for nearly 50 years.

Position Summary

We're looking for a dependable, detail-oriented Legal Secretary / Office Administrator to serve as the first point of contact for our clients, handle administrative business tasks and prepare legal documentation. You'll be a lot of hats and be trusted to manage day-to-day operations with minimal oversight.

What You'll Do

- Greet clients in person and by phone in a professional manner
- Manage a busy schedule and juggle multiple priorities
- Prepare and proofread correspondence and legal documents
- Maintain client files and records in our practice management system
- Track deadlines and follow-ups carefully, including statute-of-limitations dates
- Track and record billable hours
- Handle mail and select billing paperwork accurately
- Use Microsoft Word, Outlook, and everyday office software; bring curiosity about AI tools that can improve efficiency

What We're Looking For

- Very strong organizational skills
- High attention to detail
- Comfortable in a fast-paced environment with shifting priorities
- Strong written and verbal communication skills
- Strong comfort with computers and everyday technology; willing to learn new software (e.g., Clio)
- Able to work autonomously and stay organized without constant direction
- Reliable and punctual
- Prior legal or general office experience

What You'll Get

A rare opportunity to join a firm at the very beginning and help shape its operations — working directly alongside Attorney Tom Scott, recognized among Virginia's Top 100 Lawyers. You'll be part of a small, close-knit team with hands-on experience across every part of running a law office. *Competitive compensation, commensurate with experience.*

How to Apply

Please send your resume, or a brief note about your background and experience, to Erin at erin@tomscottlawpllc.com.



Riverview Elementary/Middle School will host a free back-to-school haircut event on Wednesday, Aug. 12, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The event is open to all students on a walk-in basis and is designed to help children start the new school year looking and feeling their best.

Free back-to-school haircuts planned at REMS

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

Students in Buchanan County will have an opportunity to receive a free haircut before classes begin.

A free back-to-school haircut event is scheduled for Wednesday, Aug. 12, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Riverview Elementary/Middle School.

The event is open to all students and will offer free haircuts on a walk-in basis. No appointments are required.

Organizers hope the event will help students head

back to the classroom feeling confident and ready for the new school year while easing the financial burden many families face during back-to-school season.

The event's theme, "Fresh Look. New Start," encourages students to begin the school year looking and feeling their best.

Students will be served on a first-come, first-served basis throughout the four-hour event.

The free haircuts are part of ongoing community efforts to support local students as they prepare to return to school for the 2026-27 academic year. Organizers encourage families to arrive early, as the event is expected to draw students from across the area.

Schools plan back-to-school bashes for students, families

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

Students and parents will have several opportunities to reconnect with teachers, classmates and school staff before the new academic year begins, as Buchanan County schools continue to host their annual Back-to-School Bashes.

The events are designed to welcome students back, provide important school information and help families prepare for the start of the 2026-27 school year.

Twin Valley Elementary/Middle School was among the first schools to kick off the festivities, hosting its Back-to-School Bash on Aug. 1 at the Whitewood Fire Department. The event gave students and families an opportunity to celebrate the upcoming school year while connecting with school personnel.

Riverview Elementary/Middle School also recently welcomed students and parents during its Back-to-School Bash on July 30 at the school.

Three schools still have events on the calendar.

Council Elementary/Middle School will host its Back-to-School Bash from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 18, at the school.

Tommy P. Justus Elementary/Middle School, formerly known as Hurley Elementary/Middle School, will hold its Back-to-School Bash from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 18.

Southern Gap High School, which will open its doors for its inaugural school year this fall, will host its first-ever Back-to-School Bash from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 20, at the new campus.

In addition to giving students a chance to become familiar with their schools before classes begin, the

events allow parents to meet teachers and staff, ask questions and receive information to help make the transition into the new school year as smooth as possible.

Buchanan County Public Schools will begin the 2026-27 academic year on Friday, Aug. 21.



Members of the Big Sandy Soil and Water Conservation District distribute school supplies during Riverview Elementary/Middle School's Back-to-School Bash, held July 30 at the school. Big Sandy was among several community organizations and local agencies that participated in the event to help students prepare for the upcoming 2026-27 school year.

Wildwood Recovery Center to open Sept. 28 in neighboring Dickenson County

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

Residents of Buchanan County and the surrounding region struggling with substance use disorder will soon have access to another treatment option close to home.

Wildwood Recovery Center, a new 112-bed residential substance use disorder treatment facility in neighboring Dickenson County, is scheduled to begin accepting patients on Sept. 28. Located at 230 Chip Mill Road near Clintwood, the center is expected to serve individuals from across Southwest Virginia, including Buchanan County.

Operated by Momentum Management Solutions, Wildwood will provide clinically managed, high-intensity residential treatment for both men and women. Officials said treatment plans and the length of each patient's stay will be based on individual needs, with plans to expand services by adding lower levels of care in the future.

"We have been working toward this day for a long time, and we are proud to open Wildwood's doors to the individuals and families of Southwest Virginia who need it most," said Matt Boggs, chief financial officer and chief operating officer of Momentum Management Solutions. "This community has waited patiently, and we are honored to begin this work alongside so many dedicated local partners."

The recovery center is expected to employ more than 50 people once fully operational. Hiring is already underway for a variety of positions, including care specialists and support staff, with officials giving preference to local applicants from Dickenson County. Tyler Jordan recently was named the facility's administrator.

The project has been years in the making. Wildwood was first announced in January 2023 through a partnership involving Dickenson County, the Industrial Development Authority of Dickenson County and Southwest Properties to help address the region's ongoing substance use and overdose crisis. Momentum Management Solutions assumed operation of the facility in October 2025.

The center received financial support from several organizations, including the Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority, Virginia Small Business Financing Authority, Virginia Opioid Abatement Authority, Rapha Foundation and the Anne and Gene Worrell Foundation.

Dickenson County Director of Economic Development Dana Cronkhite said the opening represents years of planning and collaboration.

"Projects like this don't happen overnight," Cronkhite said. "They take vision, persistence, and a community willing to stay the course. Today is an exciting reminder that when we continue moving forward, even through the challenges, we can create opportunities that will benefit Dickenson County for generations to come."

Officials said Wildwood will work alongside existing community organizations and recovery programs to provide clients with additional support services during and after treatment, creating what county leaders have described as an "ecosystem for recovery."

A ribbon-cutting ceremony and community tour will be held before the Sept. 28 opening. Officials said details will be announced in the coming weeks.

The opening gives residents throughout Southwest Virginia, including those in Buchanan County, another nearby option for residential treatment as communities across the region continue working to combat addiction and expand access to recovery services.

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 Aug. 3 through Aug. 9, 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

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 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

Be alert to a lane closure due to drainage structure repairs on Route 19/460 at Corsica Drive in Tazewell County. Pay attention to signs and message boards in the area. (Completion: August 2026)

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

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 bridge deck repairs north and southbound between Exit 67 and mile marker 69 in Wythe County.

Nighttime bridge deck repairs northbound near mile marker 23 in Washington County.

Nighttime bridge deck repairs northbound near Exit 19 in the Abingdon area of Washington County. The right lane and northbound on-ramp will be closed for the work.

A superload is traveling northbound from Bristol to the West Virginia state line the week of August 3.

Interstate 77

Nighttime pothole patching operations north and southbound from Exit 41 to mile marker 67 in Wythe and Bland counties.

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

Southern Gap Trails & Tunes Festival two weeks away

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

With just two weeks remaining, anticipation is building for the inaugural Southern Gap Trails & Tunes Festival, a three-day off-road motor-sports event set for Aug. 20-22 at Southern Gap Dirt Drags.

The new festival is expected to bring riders, racers and spectators from across Southwest Virginia and neighboring states to Buchanan County for a weekend filled with competition, entertainment and outdoor fun. Featuring side-by-sides, four-wheelers and dirt bikes, the event aims to showcase the region's growing off-road recreation

scene while giving visitors another reason to explore Southern Gap.

Festivities kick off Thursday, Aug. 20, when gates open at 5 p.m. Competition begins at 7 p.m. with a wheelie contest and a panty race.

Action continues Friday, Aug. 21, with gates opening at 11 a.m. and events beginning at 12:30 p.m. The day's schedule includes a tire toss, Dizzy Daze challenge, blindfold breakout, Crazy 8's barrel racing and tug-of-war.

The festival wraps up Saturday, Aug. 22. Gates open at 10 a.m., with events beginning at 11:30 a.m. Saturday's lineup features a donut competition, mud bog, hill climb and drag racing before winners are recognized during an awards ceremony.

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

Organizers hope the inaugural event will become an annual tradition while continuing to strengthen Buchanan County's reputation as a destination for outdoor recreation and motorsports tourism. The festival is also expected to provide an economic boost for local restaurants, hotels and businesses as visitors travel to the county for the weekend.



Adopt a Pet: Puppy Power

Virginia Mountaineer

This super pup is a three-month-old male mixed breed. His short coat is colored black with white and rust markings. He has dark eyes and a kind expression. His temperament is friendly, sweet and lovable. He enjoys affection and playtime.

This hero of the hound world will be available for adoption at the Buchanan County Animal Shelter until Monday, August 10, 2026.

Also available for adoption is this four-month-old male mixed breed. His straight coat is colored dark mahogany with white and tan markings. He has hazel eyes and the cutest nose. His temperament is gentle and charming. 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.

Generations United Revival begins Thursday in Southern Gap

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

Residents throughout Buchanan County and the surrounding area are invited to attend the Generations United Revival. This free three-night community event begins Thursday, Aug. 6, at Roger and Susie Rife Park in Southern Gap.

The outdoor revival will be held Aug. 6-8, with services beginning each evening at 7 p.m. The event will feature messages from Joel Horn, pastor of The Anchor at Souls Harbor; J.T. Harman, pastor of Oakwood Full Gospel Church; and Whitewood native Stephen Ward. Worship will be led by Ward and his wife, Lori.

Organizers encourage those attending to bring a lawn chair for the outdoor services.

Ward, who was raised in Whitewood before starting full-time ministry, now tours nationally with his wife through The Living Room Movement, a ministry they established in 2016. The couple conducts worship services, revival meetings, and church events, inspiring others to deepen their faith.

As he heads back to Buchanan County, Ward wishes for the revival attendees to encounter more than merely an evening of music and sermons.

"I believe people can expect more than just a concert," Ward said. "They can expect an authentic encounter with God. My heart is that people experience His presence, healing, hope and the reality of miracles, signs and wonders."

The revival is open to everyone, regardless of church affiliation, and is intended to bring people of all ages together for three evenings of worship, encouragement and fellowship.

Admission is free. For more information, contact Jerry Ward at 276-935-5672.

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.

"I don't know what we would have done without you," one caregiver shared. "You helped us find hope when everything felt overwhelming."

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.

SCAN THE QR CODE TO MAKE A REFERRAL!

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

Together, we build stronger families and stronger communities.

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

2026 SWVA SPORTSMEN BANQUET

ELK COUNTRY'S BIGGEST NIGHT OF CONSERVATION, FELLOWSHIP & FAMILY FUN

LOCATION:
NOAH HORN WELL DRILLING
1070 SANDY VALLEY LANE
OAKWOOD, VA 24631
PHONE: 276-935-5903

DOORS OPEN:
3:00 PM
DINNER SERVED:
APPROXIMATELY 6:00 PM

CATERED BY:
BONANZA STEAKHOUSE

SCAN HERE TO PURCHASE TICKETS

GREAT FOOD | **FELLOWSHIP** | **FAMILY FUN** | **RAFFLES & GAMES** | **CONSERVATION FUNDRAISING**

100% OF THE MONEY RAISED STAYS RIGHT HERE IN ELK COUNTRY!!

YOUR SUPPORT HELPS FUND LOCAL CONSERVATION, HABITAT ENHANCEMENT, OUTDOOR RECREATION, EDUCATION, AND WILDLIFE INITIATIVES THAT DIRECTLY BENEFIT SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA.

PRESERVATION | EDUCATION | HABITAT ENHANCEMENT | WILDLIFE CONSERVATION | OUTDOOR RECREATION

PROTECTING TOMORROW. PRESERVING TODAY.

SATURDAY AUGUST 22, 2026

JOIN FELLOW HUNTERS, OUTDOOR ENTHUSIASTS, CONSERVATION SUPPORTERS, FAMILIES, AND FRIENDS FOR AN UNFORGETTABLE EVENING DEDICATED TO PRESERVING OUR OUTDOOR HERITAGE.