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FEMA awards nearly \$400,000 for Buchanan County debris removal

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

Buchanan County will receive nearly \$400,000 in federal disaster relief funding to help cover debris removal costs associated with severe winter storms that struck Southwest Virginia in early 2025.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency awarded \$389,310 to the Commonwealth of Virginia to support countywide debris removal operations in Buchanan County, U.S. Rep. Morgan Griffith announced Monday,

Aug. 31.

“This FEMA grant for nearly \$400,000 helps Buchanan County access federal disaster relief,” Griffith said.

The funding is tied to Virginia’s Major Disaster Declaration, which President Donald Trump approved in April 2025. Griffith said he pushed for federal approval of the declaration that Gov. Glenn Youngkin requested.

“Virginia’s Ninth District uses federal assistance to help communities recover from natural disaster damage, such as the damaging winter storms from early 2025,” Griffith said. “As the congressman for Southwest Virgin-

ia, I pushed for action at the federal level to approve Governor Youngkin’s Major Disaster Declaration.”

FEMA will provide the money to the Commonwealth of Virginia, which will distribute the funding to Buchanan County.

Griffith worked with U.S. Sens. Tim Kaine and Mark Warner to secure federal approval of the disaster declaration.

The latest award follows \$1.6 million in FEMA disaster relief funding that Griffith announced in June for Buchanan and Dickenson counties.



Jeff Rife, center, is pictured with his father, Earl, and mother, Barbara, after returning home safely following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the Pentagon. Rife was working inside the Pentagon as an Air Force contractor when it was struck by American Airlines Flight 77 (Contributed photo).

Twenty-five years later, Rife remembers surviving the Pentagon attack

By **CHAD COOPER**
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Twenty-five years have passed since terrorists attacked America on Sept. 11, 2001, but for Jeff Rife, the memories of that morning remain vivid.

Rife was 27 and in his third week working as an Air Force contractor at the Pentagon. Like millions of Americans, he watched television coverage as hijacked airplanes struck the World Trade Center towers in New York.

Then the attack reached him.

“We were watching the World Trade Center attacks on TV when alarms started going off, telling us to evacuate immediately,” Rife said. “As soon as we stepped outside, there was thick black smoke everywhere, and we headed straight to our designated meeting spot to get a headcount.”

American Airlines Flight 77 had crashed into the western side of the Pentagon at 9:37 a.m. The attack killed 184 people — 125 inside the building and 59 passengers and crew members aboard the airplane. That total does

not include the five hijackers.

Rife escaped without injury, but his family in Southwest Virginia did not immediately know he was safe.

A newspaper article published shortly after the attacks described the anxious wait endured by his mother, Barbara Rife, who was working as a teacher’s aide at Vansant Elementary School.

“It seemed like it was days, but it was probably 20-25 minutes from the time I’d heard on TV that the Pentagon was bombed and the time I heard his voice and knew he was alive,” she said at the time. “Everything was going through my mind. When I picked up the phone and heard him say, ‘Hello Mom,’ I just broke down and cried.”

For Rife, however, leaving the Pentagon on Sept. 11 did not mean leaving his responsibilities behind. Although part of the building was still burning, he returned the following morning.

“Despite the building still burning, I went back to work at the Pentagon the next morning

SEE **TWENTY-FIVE YEARS LATER | 2A**

New farmers market nearing completion at Southern Gap

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

A new farmers market is nearing completion in Buchanan County’s Prater District, creating a place where residents will be able to sell produce, honey, fresh eggs and other locally made products at no charge.

The market is located behind the large Southern Gap sign at the entrance to Southern Gap Road. The 20-by-30-foot building includes a 10-foot porch and was constructed with funding from an Agricultural and Forestry Industries Development grant Buchanan County received through the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Big Sandy Soil and Water Conservation District Manager and Education Specialist Jeanne Presley said crews are still completing details at the site before the market officially opens.

“We are still completing some details but hope to open in the near future,” Presley said.

Those interested in becoming vendors should contact the Big Sandy Soil and Water Conservation Dis-

SEE **NEW FARMERS MARKET | 2A**



The new Buchanan County Farmers Market is located behind the large Southern Gap sign at the entrance to Southern Gap Road in the Prater District. The 20-by-30-foot building features a 10-foot porch and is expected to open soon (Contributed photo).

Spirit Fest to bring live music, Dolly Parton look-alike contest to Grundy

By **CHAD COOPER**
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Spirit Fest 2026 will bring an afternoon of live music, family fun and plenty of rhinestones to downtown Grundy on Saturday, Sept. 12.

The free community celebration will feature three musical performances from 12:30 to 7 p.m., followed by

a Dolly Parton look-alike contest open to participants of all ages.

Cody Hagerman and Still Pickin’ will open the festival, performing from 12:30 p.m. to 2 p.m. Ralph Stanley II and the Clinch Mountain Boys will take the stage from 2:30 p.m. to 4 p.m.

From the Edge will close the festival’s musical lineup with a performance from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

At 4 p.m., contestants will break out their rhinestones, patchwork outfits and gravity-defying hairstyles for the Dolly Parton Look-Alike Contest in front of the stage.

The multigenerational contest will feature four categories: Coat of Many Colors, recognizing the best handmade and patchwork outfit; The True Dolly, honoring the

participant who best captures Parton’s overall spirit and style; Biggest Hair; and Rhinestones and Glam, celebrating Western-inspired fashion and sparkle.

First-, second- and third-place ribbons will be awarded in each category. The overall Grand Dolly Champion will receive a crown and a \$100 cash prize.

Entry is free. Participants may complete an official registration form and return it to the Grundy Town Office by Friday, Sept. 11. Contestants may also register at the Town of Grundy booth during Spirit Fest until 3 p.m.

Presented by the Community Arts Council, Spirit Fest gives residents and visitors an opportunity to gather in the heart of Grundy and enjoy an afternoon of live entertainment at no cost. The public is invited to attend.



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Virginia CFX Authority Executive Director Jonathan Belcher (standing) updates members of the West Virginia Department of Transportation on progress made on the construction of the Coalfields Expressway in Virginia during a meeting between the authority and West Virginia officials, Monday in Princeton, WV.

Virginia, West Virginia officials discuss future of CFX

By CHAD COOPER
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With 14 miles of the Coalfields Expressway in Buchanan County expected to be completed by next year, officials from Virginia and West Virginia are looking at ways the two states can work together to move the long-awaited highway project forward.

Members of the Virginia Coalfields Expressway Authority met with representatives of the Virginia Department of Transportation and West Virginia Department of Transportation on Aug. 31 in Princeton to discuss the project's status in both states, funding challenges and opportunities for collaboration.

The Coalfields Expressway, designated as U.S. Route 121, is envisioned as a limited-access highway connecting communities throughout the coalfields of Southwest Virginia and southern West Virginia.

For Buchanan County, the project has been in the works for decades.

Virginia Coalfields Expressway Authority Executive Director Jonathan Belcher told those attending the meeting that 14 miles of U.S. 121 and U.S. 460 in Buchanan County are expected to be completed by next year. However, approximately 42 miles of the remaining U.S. 121 corridor in Virginia are currently unfunded.

"The overall project has long been a priority for local leaders and state and federal officials who recognize its importance to the region's economic future," Belcher said.

The highway is intended to provide a safer and more efficient transportation route through the coalfields while opening additional opportunities for economic development, tourism and access to industrial sites.

When completed, the route would connect with Interstates 64 and 77 in West Virginia, U.S. Route 460 in Kentucky and ultimately U.S. Route 23 in Pound.

Belcher said the project has faced several challenges over the years, particularly funding shortages and the complexities of developing a major highway that crosses state lines.

In West Virginia, approximately 18 miles of the Coalfields Expressway have been constructed and opened between Mullens and the Sophia area near Beckley.

West Virginia Deputy State Highway Engineer Ed Compton said his state's construction efforts have focused on connecting Welch to Beckley. The segments that would eventually connect Virginia with the Welch area are not currently included in West Virginia's upcoming Statewide Transportation Improvement Program for the expressway.

Both states have largely moved the massive highway project forward one section at a time as money becomes available.

"Our success in Virginia has come from piecemeal appropriations and strong advocacy from local legislators and CDS funding," Belcher said, referring to congressionally directed spending.

Compton said West Virginia has faced a similar situation, completing individual portions as funding becomes available.

"It's a generational project," Compton said, noting that construction on portions of the highway in West Virginia has been taking place for three decades.

James Keen, a member of the Virginia Coalfields Expressway Authority board and former member of Virginia's state transportation board, suggested that a study could be needed to examine how statewide transportation funding guidelines affect rural communities.

Officials also briefly discussed whether coal synergy projects could help advance construction.

Del. Will Morefield, who attended the meeting, said he would investigate a federal conduit bond program he recently learned about that could allow a governor to earmark funds for specific projects. Morefield said he would share what he learns with Virginia and West Virginia officials.

Another potential source of future funding involves the Appalachian Development Highway System.

Belcher said the Virginia Coalfields Expressway Authority has been working with members of Virginia's congressional delegation to add more Coalfields Expressway mileage to the federal highway system.

A portion of the roadway overlapping U.S. 460 already carries the designation, but most of the Coalfields Expressway does not.

A bill has been drafted that would add the additional mileage and is expected to be submitted to Congress at an appropriate time. The designation would make the roadway eligible for Appalachian Regional Commission funding.

Belcher also said Virginia would explore opportunities to partner with West Virginia when seeking federal transportation grants. A joint application involving both states, he said, could potentially strengthen the project's chances of receiving funding.

"The benefit of the highway is connection, and it makes sense for us to work together," Belcher said. "Any way we can, we will work with you. It will benefit all of us."

Also attending from Virginia was Shane Clem from the office of U.S. Sen. Mark Warner.

Virginia Coalfields Expressway Authority board members attending included Keen; Chris Hall of Dickenson County; and Ed Talbott and Philip Cook of Buchanan County. VDOT representatives Tabitha Crowder and Marty Halloway also attended.

West Virginia representatives included Compton, Nathan Thomas, Bill Murray, Josh Howell and Jonathan Schaffer. Dave Cramer of Michael Baker International also attended.

West Virginia Secretary of Transportation and Commissioner of Highways Todd Rumbaugh and state Highway Engineer Jacob Bumgarner participated virtually.

The Virginia General Assembly created the Virginia Coalfields Expressway Authority in 2017 to improve transportation in Southwest Virginia, support regional economic development and improve highway safety.

The Coalfields Expressway is designated as a congressional high-priority corridor and is planned as a modern transportation artery through the coalfields of Southwest Virginia and southern West Virginia.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS LATER

FROM PAGE 1A

to support the mission and help with what was next," Rife said.

The attacks claimed 2,977 lives at the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Thousands more were injured, and countless families, survivors and first responders continued to feel the effects long afterward.

Rife said being inside the Pentagon that morning is an experience that has never left him. Yet amid the fear, destruction and uncertainty, he also remembers the unity that followed.

"What stands out most is how our nation came together in the aftermath, with everyone stepping up to help one another," Rife said.

Across the country, people donated blood, displayed

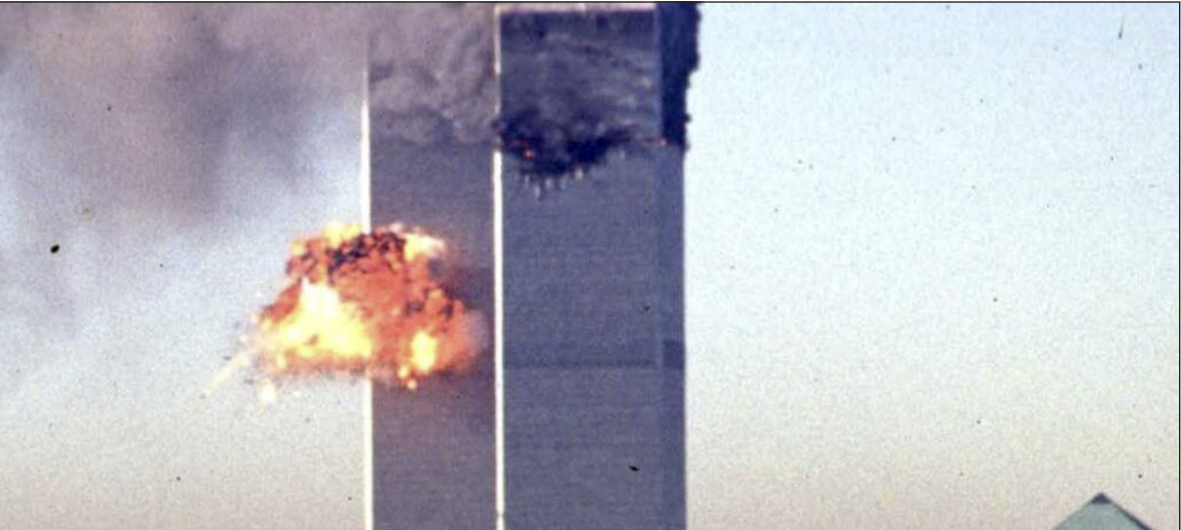
American flags, attended prayer services and reached out to help strangers. First responders rushed toward danger, while communities mourned the victims and supported their families.

For Rife, the anniversary is more than a date in history. It is a personal reminder of how quickly life can change and of the importance of remaining prepared.

"Being at the Pentagon that day reminds me that we must always stay vigilant and never let our guard down," he said.

As the nation marks a quarter-century since the attacks, Rife continues to remember those who left home that morning and never returned.

"Twenty-five years later, we continue to honor and remember every life lost," he said.



Smoke and flames pour from the World Trade Center towers in New York following the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001. (AP file photo)



Courthouse News

By CHAD COOPER
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Marriage licenses
Devin Wayne Hall, 25, of Haysi, to Mycah Shay Brown, 22, of the Breaks, August 22, 2026.

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

Whitewood Fire Department to host second annual car show

By CHAD COOPER
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Classic cars, trucks, motorcycles and specialty vehicles will roll into Whitewood next Saturday for a community event supporting the Whitewood Volunteer Fire Department.

The department's second annual car show will be held Saturday, Sept. 12, at 16128 Dismal River Road in Whitewood. Registration will begin at 8 a.m.

The event will give automobile enthusiasts an opportunity to display their vehicles while families and other visitors enjoy a day of live music, food and fellowship. Food will be available for purchase throughout the event.

Trophies will be presented in several categories, including People's Choice and Fireman's Choice.

Organizers are inviting owners of classic cars, trucks, motorcycles and specialty vehicles to participate. Community members are also encouraged to attend, view the vehicles and support the volunteer fire department.

For more information, contact Robert Rife at 276-259-6196 or Ronnie Taylor at 276-210-8133.

NEW FARMERS MARKET

FROM PAGE 1A

trict. Vendors will not be charged to sell their produce or other products at the market.

"If you wish to sell at the farmers market, please contact Big Sandy Soil and Water Conservation District. It will be free to sell your produce or products. We will have some tables and chairs available for vendors to rent," Presley said.

Presley said the market will give local growers a dedicated place to connect with customers and other community members.

"The Farmer's Market will provide a place for people to trade and sell garden vegetables, honey, fresh eggs, etc. We are excited to get this going for the County. There will be no charge to set up at the Farmer's Market. A big thank you goes out to Big Sandy Soil and Water Conservation for providing this opportunity for the community of Buchanan County," Presley said.

Prater District Supervisor David Rose worked with Big Sandy Soil and Water Conservation District and the Buchanan County Board of Supervisors to make the project possible in his district.

"Big Sandy was so grateful to David Rose and the Buchanan County Board of Supervisors for working with us to make this project come to pass," Presley said.

Big Sandy Soil and Water Conservation District board member Bobby Looney said the market will be available for everyone in Buchanan County to use and represents an important first step toward meeting the county's agricultural and conservation needs.

"Our county's new farmers market for Buchanan County everybody is welcome to use it," Looney said. "Just the beginning of our county conservation and agriculture needs."

Additional information about the market's opening and vendor opportunities will be announced as the remaining work is completed.

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LOOKING BACK

From our files

By **CHAD COOPER**
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65 YEARS AGO

SEPTEMBER 14, 1961

Chief Forrest Warden Kyle McClanahan of Maxie attended a two-day training meeting at Abingdon this week on Civil Defense. Extensive instruction was given on the duties State Forestry personnel will have in Civil Defense. Instruments used in measuring radioactive fallout were demonstrated and will be issued to each chief forest warden at a later date.

The Buchanan County Home Demonstration Club Committee, by Mrs. L.O. Falke, after which Mrs. Riggsby stated the purpose of the meeting. The evaluation of the 1960-1961 program was given by Mrs. Louise W. Carmichael, County HD Agent.

55 YEARS AGO

SEPTEMBER 9, 1971

Mountain Mission School opens this year on September 6 with still more instructors and the inclusion of Greek in its high school curriculum. New to the MMS staff this year are Mr. and Mrs. Lee Magness. Mr. Magness served as Associate Minister of First Christian Church in Erwin, Tennessee, during his undergraduate days.

S. D. Wood, retired Buchanan County school teacher and former county Extension Agent, received a Fifty-Year Masonic Veteran Emblem Saturday evening at the Masonic Temple in Grundy. This honor is conferred by the Grand Lodge of Virginia to all Virginia Masons who have attained 50 years of membership in Masonry.

45 YEARS AGO

SEPTEMBER 11, 1981

Appreciation Day ceremonies honoring Mr. and Mrs. Charles M. Sublett, president and secretary of Mountain Mission School, were held Sunday at the school by MMS Alumni in recognition of Sublett's 46 years of service. To show their appreciation, the former students presented Sublett with a 1981 Cadillac Diesel and enough cash for a little vacation.

Council High School Cheerleaders attended the Golden Eagle Cheerleading Clinic held at Virginia Intermont College Aug. 11-14, where they won a spirit stick and ribbons. Members of the squad are Mary Ratliff, Ruthie Wilson, Sheryl Deel, Toni Lester, Barbara Street, Audrey Street, Mickie Sykes, Donna Bostic, Vickie Sykes, Dana Tiller and Rema Keen.

25 YEARS AGO

SEPTEMBER 13, 2001

Grundy fans were chanting "Lu- u u-ke"; Powell Valley defenders were crying "uncles". Luke Dales punished more than a few defenders, played some great defense himself and added three touchdowns as Grundy won a battle of classic proportions, 35-7, in non-district action Friday night at Nelson Memorial Field.

Twin Valley had it all working on the road Friday. The offense showed its power, and the defense pitched a shutout. Brit Coleman scored a pair of touchdowns as Twin Valley whipped Ervinton 20-0 in non-district action at Rebel Field at Nora Friday night. There was no secret what the Panthers (2-0) were going to do, but the Rebels (1-1) couldn't stop Coleman or Jonathan Clifton once they got some room to run.



Southern Gap High School students speak with college representatives and collect information about admissions, scholarships, academic programs and campus life during the College Fair at Smiley Ratliff Field (Contributed photo).

SGHS hosts first-ever college fair

By **ADDY BELL & KALI D. STILTNER**

SGHS Media Reporters

Southern Gap High School recently hosted its first-ever College Fair for students in the 11th and 12th grades, giving students the opportunity to explore colleges, career options, and their plans for life after high school.

The College Fair was a huge success, with around 40 colleges and universities attending. Students were able to walk around and talk with representatives from different schools to learn more about what each college had to offer.

Some of the schools represented included Virginia Tech, University of Louisville, Marshall University, Southwest Virginia Community College, Bluefield University, Emory & Henry University, Radford University, and Roanoke College.

College representatives were very friendly and willing to answer students' questions. They provided information about admissions, scholarships, majors, graduate programs, campus life, and career

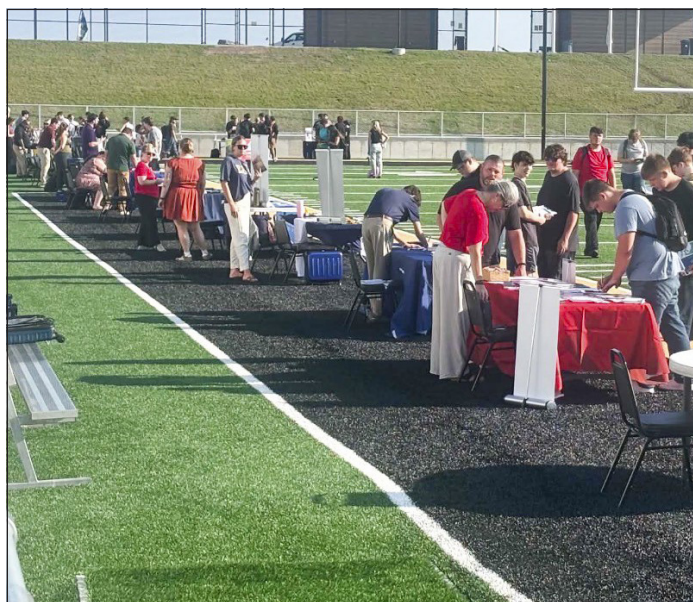
opportunities. Students could ask questions about anything they were curious about and take home brochures, information packets, and other fun materials.

For many students, the fair was a great way to discover schools and career paths they may not have previously considered. It also gave students a better idea of what to expect when applying to college and what opportunities are available after graduation.

The College Fair was not just about picking a college. It was about helping students think about their futures and showing them that there are many different paths they can take to reach their goals.

Having nearly 40 colleges represented at SGHS gave students the chance to explore their options without having to travel far from home. The event also helped create excitement about college and the careers that can follow a college education.

The success of the first College Fair shows just how many opportunities are available to SGHS students. It was an exciting first step in helping students prepare for their futures, and hopefully it will become an annual tradition at Southern Gap High School.



Southern Gap High School juniors and seniors move from table to table while meeting with college representatives during the school's first College Fair at Smiley Ratliff Field (Contributed photo).



Students explore their options after graduation by gathering information from colleges and universities represented at Southern Gap High School's recent College Fair (Contributed photo).

GOOD OL DAYS



The Garden Green Dragons football team is pictured during a practice for the 1969-70 season at the former Garden School, located on the present-day site of the Appalachian College of Pharmacy in Oakwood. Pictured in the top row, from left, are Greg Matney, Harris Crumpton, Jerry Davis, coach P.L. Williams, James Bailey, Jimmy Martin and Ozzie Osborne. Kneeling, from left, are Phillip Keen, Herman Ratliff, Rusty West, Randall Rasnake, Mark Johnson, Jerry Ward and Brookes Crumpton (Contributed by Jerry Ward).

Congressman Griffith: War Drones

Technological innovation in warfare fuels American strength.

The American Civil War introduced numerous innovations in warfare, including tethered gas balloons for aerial reconnaissance as well as ironclad gunboats.

Throughout the history of our country, perhaps no weapon was more impactful than the atom bomb. The bomb helped the United States force Japan's surrender and end World War II.

Later, during the Cold War, the United States deployed the world's first-of-its-kind fleet of nuclear-powered ships, including submarines. This advantage cemented the status of American naval power in the world.

The evolution of modern military technologies continues to reverberate in the 21st century.

A central component of this evolution is the proliferation of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), more commonly known as drones.

The drone universe is incredibly diverse and the settings for their uses continue to grow.

The range of these technologies extends from niche surveillance tools to critical features of modern military power. They support counterterrorism missions, maritime security, and rapid-response scenarios.

Further, many cheap, commercially adapted drones now perform reconnaissance, artillery spotting, electronic warfare and kamikaze strikes.

Meanwhile, advanced militaries deploy stealthy combat drones, swarming systems capable of overwhelming defenses, and counterdrone technologies such as directed-energy weapons and electronic jamming.

Collectively, these advancements have reshaped battlefield dynamics. Persistent surveillance, precision strikes, and smaller actors who historically lacked access to advanced airpower represent the dramatic rise in drone activity for combat.

Modern conflicts and military strategies now reflect the reliance on drone technologies.

Exhibit A? The Russia-Ukraine conflict.

The power of drones was on display during the early weeks of the conflict when Ukrainian drones substantially halted a Russian convoy of Russia's best tanks.

Further, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky remarked that Russia fired nearly 1,500 drones at Ukraine during a recent four-day period in August.

Russian drone incursions into Eastern Europe are



WEEKLY REPORT
FROM THE CAPITOL

unsettling our European allies. Germany recently accused Russia of trying to launch a drone attack on a German airport.

Meanwhile, Iran's drone program, propped up by Russian interests, continues to target American military assets and threaten stability in the Middle East.

Further, Iran helped supply the Maduro regime in Venezuela with UAV capabilities that put American shores within striking distance.

This growing industry shows that numerous militaries, namely America's adversaries, view drones as a vital technology for success.

Accordingly, the Trump Administration and Republican Congress are working to support American military adjustments to this new reality.

President Trump's "Unleashing American Drone Dominance" Executive Order calls for measures that support American leadership in the drone space.

This summer, President Trump introduced a drone tariff program. This program is meant to reduce our reliance on foreign countries for drone components and parts, bolster American drone production and protect U.S. national security.

Further, in the 2025 reconciliation package, I voted for the Working Families Tax Cuts which invested \$1.4 billion to expand the American unmanned aerial system (UAS) industrial base!

Hundreds of millions in additional federal funds from

the bill will support the development, procurement and integration of UAS technologies.

The federal demands to increase our understanding and development of drone technologies have the attention of leading institutions, including Virginia Tech.

In late August, I attended a ribbon-cutting for the new Virginia Tech Counter-UAS Testing & Research Center.

This Center is one of only nine UAS test sites designated by the Federal Aviation Administration.

Other speakers at the program included President Tim Sands, Dr. Eric Paterson of the Virginia Tech National Security Institute, Senator Mark Warner and Mr. Tombo Jones of the Virginia Tech Mid-Atlantic Aviation Partnership.

Jones noted the sophisticated technologies that strengthen the stealth of drones. Thanks to advances, these UAVs can fly undetected by radio frequency detection systems and at extremely high speeds.

This shows the urgent need to develop counter-UAS technologies.

Further, the event featured a live swarm demonstration, a drone library and a radar system platform.

The Center will operate an indoor lab and an outdoor range as part of its initiatives.

With the Center up and running, we are excited that Virginia Tech will provide key insights into counter-UAS technologies, help U.S. national security and project American strength.

The projection of American strength requires an integration of next generation systems.

As military weapons and technologies transform, it is vital that America not only keep pace, but stay ahead.

We recognize that letting our adversaries have the upper hand in advanced weaponry threatens American interests and freedom around the world.

I will continue to support policies that strengthen American military readiness, facilitate American technological progress and accelerate American drone power.

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/>.



James Goodman

Adult education connection

When most people think of Adult Education classes, they typically associate the term with adults going back to school to work on obtaining a GED ®. While this is true, adult education programs have several other offerings to support adult learners in various areas.

Basic education and GED® classes are options, but they also have programs to teach computer skills, help with job readiness and financial awareness, along with job training programs that lead to certifications such as the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) program and the SMAW Welder program. There are many excellent learning and training opportunities available with Southwest Regional Adult Education (SRAE) for adults in our region.

Earlier this year, one adult learner, James Goodman, decided that after being out of school for a few years, he needed to refresh some job skills to make applying for employment more successful. James did not know what exactly to expect when he showed up to Ami Warner's class at the Richlands Career Works Center, but he was definitely motivated to get started. Once he began, it did not take him long to finish five courses in just one week. James took two computer skill courses, NorthStar Digital Literacy and Computer Essentials, as well as Job Essentials, Work Essentials, and Money Essentials.

James admitted that he was concerned with having been out of school for a while and possibly not remembering some subjects very well. But he did not give up when faced with challenges. He stated, "I studied the practice tests and lessons each day and paid attention to the questions I got wrong and where I needed to improve until I passed each test. The programs were filled with examples for each subject and provided a way to



re-learn old subjects and grasp new ones." James says that he feels more confident in the knowledge that he has gained and that he learned "It's never too late to get further education or to pursue help."

Ami Warner, who helped James achieve this goal, added, "Like many young people, James needed training to develop the skills necessary to obtain and maintain a job. Southwest Regional Adult Education provides these skills free of charge to anyone who enrolls in our programs. These programs develop the skills necessary for workplace readiness, managing money, and developing the computer skills required to meet societal demands."

If you would like to build up your confidence and are ready to pursue help with your educational goals like James did, please contact SRAE at 276-889-5424. Your educational goals are within your reach; give us a call today!

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Rocklick News

Hello Readers,

I went to church this morning. I needed to get back to make that first step by myself. Being alone is hard.

Brother Gene Miller brought the message, and I'm so glad I went. He read Matthew 7:15-23 and Luke 6:46. Does God Speak to You? I've always listened for that little voice that is God talking to me and guiding me. Since Ray passed away, I haven't heard, or I guess, been willing to hear him. Please pray for me.

I owe a debt of gratitude to a group of strangers who stepped in and tried to save Ray. When it happened, a man started yelling, "Call 911," and seconds later, we were surrounded. I called Brother Eddie. He was on the phone praying with me; some ladies were there literally holding me up, and several others were working on Ray.

I'm a believer that when God calls you home, there's nothing on this earth that will change that. I wasn't ready. I had a lot left to say to him, but God has a plan, and it's perfect. Ray was ready. He was suffering and couldn't breathe. It was his time to go home.

I called Eddie, and he met me at the hospital. I don't know what I would have done without him. He held my hand and stayed with me until I was ready to leave the hospital and go home.

The law enforcement community showed up in force and showed Ray the admiration and respect I feel he deserved.

Everyone had a "Ray story," friends and strangers alike. I didn't realize how many lives he'd touched and people he'd helped.

I can't say enough about our church family. They prayed for him as he got worse, and a few of the men came up and built him a bridge from the garage to our porch. He got to use it one time, and that was on his birthday.

I'm figuring out it's not necessarily the big stuff you miss when you lose your husband. I've got a PSA water leak. What do I do? Our dogs tore down the door going under the house. Who can I get to fix it? It's also about the little things, as simple as, "What do you want to eat?" "My back itches, and I can't reach it. Can you get it for me?"

I love you, Honey.

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." —Matthew 5:4 KJV

THE VIRGINIA MOUNTAINEER

The Virginia Mountaineer (USPS NO. 660-760) is published every Thursday by Virginia Media, LLC., 1633 W Main St, Salem, VA 24153. Entering in the Grundy Post Office as periodicals May 11, 1922, under Act of March 2, 1879. Periodicals postage paid at Grundy, VA 24614. Postmaster Send address changes to The Virginia Mountaineer.

OPINIONS

The views expressed in our opinion section represent the views of the writer and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Virginia Mountaineer or Virginia Media, LLC. Anyone wishing to respond to a column or editorial may contact us at (540) 389-9355.

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JERRY
WARD

THE WATCHMAN:
Convergence

In this article, we are going to look at convergence. Three men coming together for the purpose of God, the timing of the convergence, and the purpose. These three men are Mark Twain, Charles Warren, and Theodor Herzl.

Who are these men? First, Mark Twain. I believe he's the stranger mentioned in Deuteronomy, chapter 29, verses 22-23. That would come from a far land, see the plagues of the land, and tell about them to the world. He was a journalist and would send his reports from the land of that time, called Palestine, where they would appear in newspapers throughout America.

The witness of the stranger would go beyond that shortly after he returned from his journey. He was approached by a publisher to turn the reports of his journey into a book. The book would be released in 1869 and would be called Innocence Abroad. It would become a best seller. I believe this was the fulfillment of the ancient prophecy of the stranger.

You may ask who Charles Warren was. He would later be called the pioneer of archaeology, and he would lay the foundation for the uncovering of Asia and ancient Jerusalem. His measuring and mapping of Jerusalem proved so significant that it opened the door to a greater mission. The next decade would see the mapping of the entire land. The survey would cover the area from Dan to Beersheba, the same boundaries given in the Bible to identify the land of Israel. With every discovery, the connection between the Jewish people and the land was further restored and strengthened. All this would be part of building momentum for a greater restoration. It would take place in the following century and would begin the restoration of Jerusalem.

After measuring Jerusalem and uncovering its ancient pathways, Warren returned to England. There, he was led to write down a vision concerning the land and its future. Warren foresaw the return of the Jewish people from exile and that their return would lead to the birth of a nation. He envisioned the nation of Israel resurrected from the dead.

A Jewish state is recorded in Ezekiel chapter 37. Charles Warren and Mark Twain came to Jerusalem at the same time in 1867. Coincidence? I do not think so. I believe it was the providence of God's convergence. Just a few years after their visit, the Jewish people went from a minority to a majority. From there, the rest is history.

I wonder what Mark Twain would say if he could come back and see what has happened to the land. He called it desolate. There is a prophecy in Isaiah chapter 62 verses 1-4 concerning the restoration of Zion, Jerusalem, and the land. In verse one of Isaiah 62:1-4, for Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest until the righteousness thereof goes forth as brightness and the salvation thereof is a lamp that burneth. And the gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory, and thou shalt be called a new, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed forsaken, neither shall thy land anymore be turned desolate, but should be called Hephzibah in thy land Beulah. For the Lord delighted in thee, and thy land shall be married.

These scriptures tell us that Israel would fall into great evil but would return to God and be restored to greatness and glory. This brings us to the third person, Theodor Herzl. Who is he? He would become the founder of political Zionism, from the word Zion, the ancient name for Jerusalem and its land. Zionism was the movement for the return of the Jewish people to the land and the restoration of the nation.

Herzl would be called the father of the Jewish state because the paths of Mark Twain and Herzl converged in the same city in the same year. The two were brought together in the very place where Zionism was formed. So the convergence of these three men's lives came together for God's purpose to bring the restoration of Israel. Nobody involved in the land's restoration could have planned or known what was coming; only God's providence could have foreseen it.

As the restoration continues in the 21st century, we are getting closer to going home to be with the Lord. There are two scriptures in the Bible that tell us about the time, not the day or the hour.

Let's look at the first scripture, Psalms 102:13, "thou shall rise and have mercy upon Zion, for the time to favor her, the set time, is come." When is the set time? Look at verse 16 of Psalms 102, when the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.

I believe 1867 marked the start of the end-time restoration. Mark Twain recorded in his travels to Palestine that he could go for 30 miles and not see 10 people. Today, Israel's population is around 10 million.

I believe that since 1948 we've witnessed the resurrection that was prophesied in Ezekiel chapter 37. On December 7, 2017, Donald Trump recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Israel is economically, socially, and militarily one of the top nations of the world. So, we are in the timeframe set forth in Psalms 102:13 and Psalms 102:16.

Another scripture that tells us of the time of his return is Matthew 24:14, which says, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." Are you ready if he should come today? If not, why not ask Jesus to forgive you and live for him the time you have left?

Stay Tuned, The Watchman

Savvy Senior: Medicare and Moving: What You Need to Know

Dear Savvy Senior,

I'm planning to move later this year to be closer to my youngest son and his family. I've lived in the same state for decades, so I'm a little nervous about how this might affect my Medicare coverage. Will I need to change plans or take any special steps to avoid gaps?

--Relocating Rita

Dear Rita,

Great question. A move like this is exciting, but it's smart to think ahead about how it could affect your coverage. Whether your Medicare is impacted – and what you'll need to do – depends on the type of plan you have. Here's what to expect and steps to take before and after your move.

Original Medicare

If you're enrolled in original Medicare (Part A and Part B), you're in the simplest situation. Your coverage will go with you anywhere in the United States, so you won't need to change your plan when you move.

That said, you do need to update your address so you don't miss important notices like your Medicare Summary Notice or billing statements. The easiest way to do that is online through your "my Social Security" account at ssa.gov/myaccount using the "My Profile" tab. If you don't already have an account, you can set one up in just a few minutes. Or, you can call Social Security at 800-772-1213 and have them update it for you.

Part D drug coverage

If you have original Medicare along with a stand-alone Part D drug plan, your move may require a change. Drug plans are based on where you live, so you'll need to contact your current plan to see if it operates in your new state.

If it doesn't, you'll need to choose a new plan that does. You're given a special enrollment window to make this switch – starting the month before your move and lasting up to two full months afterward. If you miss that window, you may have to wait until the next open enrollment period (Oct. 15 to Dec. 7), and you could face a late enrollment penalty if you go without qualifying drug coverage.

Advantage plans

Medicare Advantage plans are also location-based, so a move almost always means you'll need to take action. Check with your plan to see if it serves your new



JIM
MILLER

SAVVY SENIOR

area. If it doesn't, you'll need to enroll in a new Advantage plan or switch to original Medicare.

Like Part D, you'll have a special enrollment period that begins the month before you move and continues for two months after. If you move outside your plan's service area and don't pick a new plan, your current plan will eventually disenroll you, and you'll be placed back into original Medicare.

To compare plans available in your new location, visit medicare.gov/plan-compare, which lets you review both Advantage and Part D options side by side.

Medigap

If you have original Medicare and a Medigap policy, you generally won't need to switch plans when you move. These policies are standardized nationwide, meaning a Plan G in one state offers the same basic benefits in another.

Still, you should notify your insurer of your new address. And keep in mind that while your coverage stays the same, your premium might change depending on your new ZIP code.

One exception to be aware of is Medicare Select, a type of Medigap plan that uses provider networks. If you have one of these (they're not very common), you may need to switch plans when you relocate.

A move doesn't have to disrupt your Medicare, but it pays to plan ahead. Update your address, and if you have a Part D or Medicare Advantage plan, review your coverage and make any needed changes on time.

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

Dolly Parton, We Will Always Love You

I was in the third grade when my teacher announced that President Kennedy had been shot. I was in the parking lot of an auto parts store in Englewood, Ohio when I heard on the radio that Elvis had died. I will always remember where I was when I learned the sad news that Dolly Parton had died.

The first time I saw Dolly was on The Porter Wagoner Show. For a long time, Wagoner's female guest artist was Norma Jean.

He always introduced her as "the pretty Miss Norma Jean". Then, one Saturday night there was a new guest singer. It was Dolly. Dolly was a young rising star who caught the attention of Wagoner. He knew she was an awesome talent.

The parting song that she wrote for Wagoner became a major hit. "I Will Always Love You" was a phenomenal hit for Parton but then became a mega hit when it was sung by Whitney Houston in the 1992 movie The Bodyguard. Houston's version of the song has sold over 24 million copies worldwide and has over 800 million downloads on Spotify.

Dolly made an indelible impression on all of us. Anyone who ever heard her sing or watched her in a movie was touched by the person of Dolly. She wrote great songs. She was an amazing singer and fabulous actress. She was a smart business person. Her success brought her more and more successes.

There is nothing that any writer or television/radio person can add to Dolly. All we can do is grieve and embrace all she gave us, which was a lot. She had 25 hits on Billboard's Hot Country Song chart. She had many other popular songs like "9 to 5" and "Islands in the Stream".

She made at least 23 movies including 9 to 5, The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas, Steel Magnolias and Joyful Noise. She won eleven Grammys out of 55 nominations. She had many business ventures including Dollywood, a theme park in Sevierville, Tennessee.

She owned Dolly Wines, a line of cake mixes with



DR. GLENN
MOLLETTE

Duncan Hines, a pet accessories line called Doggy Parton and a plethora of fragrances. She had apparel and beauty products and Dolly's Tennessean Travel Stop. Recently, she was working on building a hotel in Nashville called Song Teller Hotel.

Her net worth has been estimated to be between \$450 million and \$650 million.

We loved Dolly for a lot of reasons. She was a real person. The plastic surgery and her super success never tarnished her ability to connect with people on all levels. Her Imagination Library project has gifted millions of books to children. Her financial support of hospitals and medical research was also in the millions. She supported multiple humanitarian causes which helped and encouraged so many.

I saw her in the Ryman Auditorium just a few years back. She was doing an acoustic performance with no bells or whistles and only a small ensemble of musicians. It was a simple show to raise money for struggling Nashville musicians.

My wife and I were able to buy seats in the balcony and then sat for a mesmerizing two-hour show of Dolly just giving us her best in song and performance. I believe that's how she lived her daily life and that's one of many reasons why we will always love her.

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Cody Kennedy, a Grundy native, will perform during Third Thursday at The CAM on Sept. 17 at 7 p.m. Kennedy's music blends Appalachian soul, dark country and mountain grit.

Spotlight on the CAM: Third Thursday at the CAM welcomes Cody Kennedy and Phat Patty's Food Truck

By JESSICA SAVAGE
Theatre Guild of Buchanan County

There's something special about live music in your own hometown, and this month, The CAM is bringing a hometown musician to the stage for the fifth installment of our Summer Concert Series. Join us Thursday, Sept. 17, at 7 p.m. for another Third Thursday at The CAM, featuring live music from Grundy native Cody Kennedy and great food from the Phat Patty's Food Truck.

Kennedy brings a powerful blend of Appalachian soul, dark country and mountain grit straight from the hills of Grundy, Virginia. With a raspy, commanding voice and a style rooted in raw storytelling, his music combines the spirit of traditional mountain music with the edge of modern outlaw country. The result is a sound that feels haunting, soulful and unmistakably Appalachian.

For Kennedy, music has been a fascination for as long as he can remember. He says that even as a child, he was intrigued by musical instruments, not only by the music they created, but by how the instruments themselves worked. That curiosity eventually grew into an appreciation for the many different sounds that make up American music. During his Third Thursday performance, guests can expect to hear a mixture of familiar covers and Kennedy's own original music, giving the audience a chance to enjoy songs they know while also getting to know him as a songwriter and artist.

But perhaps what makes this performance most meaningful is where it is happening.

Kennedy says he is especially excited to perform at The CAM because of its community-powered spirit. As a Grundy native, the opportunity to take the stage in front of a hometown crowd makes this Third Thursday a special one for him and for us.

We love being able to use The CAM stage to showcase the talent that exists right here in our community. Our Summer Concert Series has been about more than music. It's about creating a place where people can gather, visit with friends, enjoy good food, discover talented musicians and simply spend an evening together.

And, of course, you can't have a great Third Thursday without something good to eat.

Joining us for the evening will be Phat Patty's Food Truck, the mobile extension of Phat Patty's Bar & Grill in Lebanon, Virginia. Phat Patty's is known for hearty American favorites, with offerings that include burgers, chicken, loaded fries and plenty of creative takes on classic comfort food. Come hungry and grab dinner from the food truck before settling in for the music.

September's event marks the fifth concert in The CAM's Summer Concert Series, and we would love to see another great crowd come out to support live music and the people who make our region such a special place to call home. So, text your friends, round up the family and make plans for a Thursday night at The CAM. Grab something delicious from Phat Patty's Food Truck, find a seat, catch up with your neighbors and enjoy an evening of live Appalachian music with one of our own.

Come hungry, bring your friends and spend your Thursday night with us. We will see you at The CAM.



The courtyard at The CAM provides a welcoming space for live music, food and community gatherings. The CAM will host Cody Kennedy and Phat Patty's Food Truck during its Sept. 17 Third Thursday event.

Bestselling author David Baldacci coming to BCPL

By VIRGINIA MOUNTAINEER
Library, author, bestselling author

David Baldacci is coming to the Buchanan County Public Library and you are invited.

The award-winning #1 global best selling author is the featured guest for the library's Lee Smith Speakers Series Thursday, September 17th at 5:30 P.M. Baldacci will be discussing his book, "A Calamity of Souls", which was selected as the library's 2026 Community Read.

Teresa Matney, the organizer of the event, is excited for Baldacci's visit and the library is going all out.

"It is an honor for our library to host an author of David's stature," said Matney. "Thanks to the Friends of the Library, we have distributed more than 200 copies of the community read selection so that readers



Award-winning bestselling author David Baldacci will visit the Buchanan County Public Library on Thursday, Sept. 17, as the featured guest of the Lee Smith Speakers Series. The event begins at 5:30 p.m. (Contributed photo).

ers can be more engaged in the discussion. I'm so grateful for him to visit our library and spend time

with his readers."

The library will be running free bus service from the lower level of the Walmart parking garage to the library beginning at 4:30 P.M. Those riding the bus will be entered into a drawing for a Baldacci book bundle.

"I believe that one event builds on another, so if you love your library and want to see it grow, then plan on attending," said Matney. "The best way you can support your library is by showing up when we need you and we need you now."

Following Baldacci's remarks, he will be signing copies of his books. The library will have a limited number of books for sale on the night of the event and those attending are also welcomed to bring copies of David's books to be signed.

For more information about the event, please call the library at 276-935-5721.

Drought ends in Buchanan County, Big Sandy region

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

After months of dry conditions, Buchanan County is officially out of drought status following several weeks of much-needed rainfall across Southwest Virginia.

The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality announced Aug. 31 that the drought watch for the Big Sandy Drought Evaluation Region, which includes Buchanan County, has been lifted.

The decision returns the region to normal drought status and marks the first time since April 16 that any drought evaluation region in Virginia has been free of a drought watch or warning.

The improvement did not come from a single rainstorm. Instead, state officials said sustained rainfall over several weeks gradually improved conditions enough for the Virginia Drought Monitoring Task Force to recommend lifting the watch during its Aug. 25 meeting.

Some parts of the Big Sandy region received between 3 and 5 inches of rain during the week leading up to the meeting, providing another boost to water conditions.

Several measurements used by the state to determine drought conditions now show the Big Sandy region back in the normal range.

As of Aug. 24, the region had received 89.53% of its normal precipitation since the beginning of the water year on Oct. 1, 2025. The state's precipitation indicator for the region was classified as normal.

Streamflow conditions have also rebounded. For the Aug. 18-24 monitoring period, the Big Sandy streamflow indicator stood at the 95.97 percentile and was classified as normal. The state uses the Clinch River at Cleveland as its streamflow monitoring point for the Big Sandy region.

Groundwater conditions are especially important locally because one of the wells used to monitor the Big Sandy region is located in Buchanan County.

The Buchanan County Observation Well and Cane Patch Observation Well are the two groundwater monitoring sites used for the region. Both were classified as normal during the Aug. 18-24 monitoring period. The Buchanan County indicator was at the 45.69 percentile, while the Cane Patch indicator was at the 100th percentile.

Big Cherry Reservoir, which is also used as a drought indicator for the Big Sandy region, was listed at normal status.

The combination of improved rainfall, streamflow, groundwater and reservoir conditions was enough for state officials to return the region to normal status.

While the drought watch has ended, weather conditions will continue to be monitored as the area moves into fall.

The outlook included in the state's Aug. 25 drought report gives Southwest Virginia an increased chance of above-normal precipitation during September. Near- or above-normal temperatures are favored for the month.

Looking farther ahead, forecasters see equal chances of above- or below-average precipitation through Nov. 30, with near- or above-normal temperatures favored.

For Buchanan County, however, the latest numbers represent a welcome turnaround after an extended period of dry weather, with the area's major drought indicators now back in the normal range.

Restaurant plans advance at former Huddle House

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

Plans to bring a new restaurant to the former Huddle House building in Grundy continue to move forward.

Town of Grundy IDA Properties Manager Dennis Ramey updated authority members on the project during their Aug. 25 meeting at the Grundy Town Offices.

Ramey said a lease had been prepared for prospective restaurant operators Gary and Michelle Stacy, who currently operate the Breaks Diner, although the agreement had not been signed as of the meeting.

The Stacys have been given permission to begin cleaning and preparing the building. Ramey had already purchased cleaning supplies, and the prospective operators requested keys so they could begin work inside the property.

Plans call for the restaurant to serve traditional country-style food, including breakfast throughout the day.

Ramey also reported continued interest from prospective tenants at the Grundy Town Center. He said he was working with at least two prospects, but he did not discuss details publicly because of potential legal and contractual considerations.

Richardson Building renovations continue; IDA considers open house

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

Renovation work at the Richardson Building continues, with electrical work nearing completion and new epoxy flooring expected this fall.

Town of Grundy IDA Properties Manager Dennis Ramey provided an update during the authority's Aug. 25 meeting at the Town Offices in Grundy.

Ramey said he attended a conference earlier in the day with Jordan Dillon, Director of Economic Development for Cumberland Plateau Planning District, about the project's finances, and reported that work continues to move forward on several fronts despite running low on funds.

The IDA accepted a \$35,000 price for epoxy flooring in the building's bar area, kitchen and new addition during a special called meeting earlier this month. The contractor indicated the flooring work could begin around mid-September and should take about two weeks to complete.

Electrical work is also nearly finished, with only a small amount remaining, in-

cluding installing some light fixtures. Additional electrical equipment is still needed outside the building, including a meter base, cabinet and disconnect box.

Workers have been at the building each day during the past couple of weeks as the renovation moves closer to completion.

Once the interior has been painted and the flooring is installed, officials may consider holding an open house to give residents a look at the building's transformation.

Ramey said an open house could include photographs showing the building's condition before work began, including areas that once had dirt floors. The event may be held in early spring rather than this fall, allowing the public to see the progress before every final detail is completed.

Officials also plan to contact people who previously expressed interest in using the property.

The renovation aims to rejuvenate the Richardson Building and establish an inviting restaurant space on Walnut Street in Downtown Grundy.

Southern Gap boys claim
first cross-country team
championship

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

Southern Gap placed five runners among the top 13 to capture the first boys' cross-country team championship in school history Sept. 2 at the SWVA High/Middle Cross Country Rumble.

The Eagles finished with 39 points to edge Wise Central, which placed second with 42. Eastside was third with 47 points, while Jenkins finished fourth with 89.

Wise Central claimed the first two individual positions, but Southern Gap's depth proved to be the difference. The Eagles placed four runners among the top nine and their fifth scoring runner finished 13th.

Sophomore Ethan Deel led Southern Gap by finishing third in the 5,000-meter race with a time of 20 minutes, 21 seconds. Sophomore Wyatt Street placed sixth in

SEE SOUTHERN GAP BOYS | 2B



The Southern Gap boys cross country team celebrates after winning the SWVA High/Middle Cross Country Rumble on Sept. 2 in Wise, earning the first cross country team championship in school history.



Freshman Gunner Baker scores on a 4-yard touchdown run during Southern Gap's 35-24 loss to Rye Cove. Baker's third-quarter score and Brayden White's conversion run tied the game at 24 (Photo by Chad Cooper).

Southern Gap falls to
defending Region 1D champ
Rye Cove in road debut

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

Southern Gap went on the road for the first time in school history Friday night and stood toe-to-toe with one of the strongest Class 1 football programs in Southwest Virginia for three quarters.

The Eagles scored twice in the opening quarter, carried a lead into halftime and were tied late in the third before two-time defending Region 1D champion Rye Cove pulled away for a 35-24 victory at War Eagle Field.

Southern Gap fell to 1-2, while Rye Cove improved to 2-0.

The final score did not fully reflect how competitive the game was. Southern Gap's defense kept the Eagles within striking distance, but the offense became stagnant after a fast start, and several important breaks went Rye Cove's way.

Southern Gap struck first with 9:11 remaining in the opening quarter. Brayden White, making his first start as the Eagles' QB1, broke free on a designed quarterback keeper to move Southern Gap near the goal line. Aidan Baker finished the drive with a 2-yard touchdown

run before White connected with tight end Kanan Justice for the 2-point conversion and an 8-0 lead.

The War Eagles wasted little team finding their way into the endzone as speedster Maverick Cress returned the ensuing kickoff 80 yards for a Rye Cove touchdown. The conversion attempt failed, leaving Southern Gap in front 8-6.

The Eagles responded immediately with a special-teams touchdown of their own. Freshman Carson Blankenship does what Carson Blankenship does best and returned the next kickoff 88 yards to the end zone. White once again found his big tight-end Justice for the two-point conversion, extending Southern Gap's lead to 16-6 midway through quarter number one.

Rye Cove kept its next drive alive by converting on third-and-long which setup a 22-yard touchdown run by Cress with 4:06 remaining in the first quarter. Cole Barnette added the conversion run, trimming Southern Gap's lead to 16-14.

Neither team scored during the second quarter. Southern Gap's defense repeatedly

SEE SOUTHERN GAP FALLS | 2B

In the Locker Room

A week filled with Southern Gap milestones

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

Southern Gap High School's inaugural athletic season has already produced its share of memorable moments, but last week may have been the busiest and most historic yet for the Eagles.

The Eagles recorded a first victory in the new, impressive gymnasium, a first team championship on the cross-country course, and the first football road trip in school history. The golfers also continued proving they belong among the established programs of the Southwest District.



CHAD COOPER
IN THE LOCKER ROOM

Not bad for one week.

The week began last Monday evening with Southern Gap's first home athletic contest. By the end of the night, the Eagles had another first to celebrate.

Southern Gap swept Honaker 3-0 to earn the volleyball program's first victory, but the moment felt bigger than the final score.

A large crowd filled the new gymnasium to watch athletes from Council, Grundy, Hurley and Twin Valley compete together under one name. Players who once wore different uniforms were now celebrating side by side as Southern Gap Eagles.

That is what stood out most to me.

You could see how quickly the girls have accepted one another as teammates. They communicated, celebrated every point and played with the chemistry of a group that had been together much longer than a few weeks.

At times, coach Hannah Lester used rotations that included players from each of the four communities. It was a small detail, but it represented exactly what this new school is supposed to be about.

When the match ended, the game ball was saved and set aside for the school's trophy case.

Years from now, students may walk past that volleyball without knowing every detail from the night it was used. They may not remember the score or who recorded the final point, but the ball will always represent where Southern Gap volleyball began.

It will represent the first home match, the first victory and one of the first times Buchanan County packed the stands to cheer for one team.

The history continued Sept. 2 at the SWVA High/Middle Cross Country Rumble at the Virginia-Kentucky District Fairgrounds in Wise.

Southern Gap's boys didn't have an individual winner, but they had something even more important in a team competition — strength in numbers.

SEE IN THE LOCKER ROOM | 2B

Eagles sweep Honaker in historic
home volleyball opener

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

Southern Gap High School celebrated a historic night with the first home athletic contest in school history — and the Eagles made sure it ended with another milestone.

Southern Gap swept Honaker 3-0 to earn the volleyball program's first victory in front of a large and energetic home crowd.

Following the match, the game ball was saved and will be placed in the school's trophy case as a permanent reminder of the landmark win.

"I am so proud of the girls tonight," Southern Gap coach Hannah Lester said. "They have worked so hard and came together as a brand-new team so beautifully. It looks like they have played together their whole lives. They deserve all the credit and praise and I couldn't be more proud of them getting their first win tonight."

Southern Gap improved to 1-1 with the victory. Despite entering the season as a newly formed team, the Eagles displayed impressive chemistry and depth throughout the match.

At times, Coach Lester used rotations featuring

SEE EAGLES SWEEP HONAKER | 2B



The Southern Gap girls volleyball team celebrates after sweeping Honaker 3-0 in the Eagles' historic home opener. The victory marked the program's first win.

New People's Bank

PLAYER OF THE WEEK

SOUTHERN GAP EAGLES

CLAIRES GRIFFEY

Southern Gap High School senior Claire Griffey is the New People's Bank Player of the Week.

Griffey collected 25 digs in a 3-0 sweep over Honaker last Monday night in the first home game in Southern Gap Volleyball history.

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IN THE LOCKER ROOM

FROM PAGE 1B

Sophomore Ethan Deel led the Eagles with a third-place finish, while Wyatt Street, Bentley Jackson and Kyler Lester also placed among the top nine. Oliver Breeding completed the team score by finishing 13th.

Those five performances allowed Southern Gap to edge Wise Central 39-42 and capture the first boys cross-country team championship in school history.

Three points separated first place from second. That means every runner, every position gained, and every final push toward the finish line mattered.

The Southern Gap girls nearly made it a championship sweep.

Freshman Katelyn Wolford finished second overall and continued to establish herself as one of the area's top young runners. Kelly Ratliff earned a top-10 finish, while Vieronika Silishchenko, Ava Ward and Madison Lester helped the Eagles secure second place behind Wise Central.

Ella Robinson also represented Southern Gap in the race.

Southern Gap's golfers also continued to make their presence felt in the Southwest District.

The Eagles finished third in a seven-team district match with a score of 169, trailing only Graham and Marion. Southern Gap finished ahead of Lebanon, Virginia High, Richlands and Tazewell.

Ethan Deel and Jaxon Hardin led the Eagles with rounds of 41, while Brayden Hopkins shot a 42. Mason Boyd and Ben Mayhew each carded a 45, and Street finished with a 50.

Golf may not always receive the same attention as some other high school sports, but Southern Gap's players have quietly put together an impressive inaugural season under head coach Preston Hibbitts. They have stepped onto courses against experienced district programs and shown they can compete.

The busy week concluded Friday night at Rye Cove, where Southern Gap's football team played away from home for the first time.

Rye Cove entered the game as the two-time defending Region 1D champion. Southern Gap entered with two varsity games of experience.

On paper, that looked like a difficult matchup. On the field, the Eagles showed they were not intimidated.

Southern Gap scored first, carried a 16-14 lead into halftime and moved back in front late in the third quarter. The Eagles were within four points entering the final period before Rye Cove used a couple of big plays to pull away for a 35-24 victory.

Aidan Baker and Gunner Baker scored rushing touchdowns. Carson Blankenship electrified the Southern Gap sideline with an 88-yard kickoff return for a score, and quarterback Brayden White made plays

on both sides of the football.

White helped set up the opening touchdown, threw two successful conversion passes, ran for another conversion and intercepted a pass on defense.

The Eagles did not get the result they wanted, but they left War Eagle Field with something valuable. They proved they could travel into a difficult environment and compete with one of the region's established powers.

For much of the night, there was little difference between a football program with a championship history and one playing its third game.

That says something about the foundation coach Greg Tester, his staff, and their players are building.

Looking back, last week was about much more than scores and statistics.

It was about the roar inside the gymnasium when the volleyball team won its first match. It was about exhausted runners realizing they had made school history. It was about golfers continuing to earn respect and a young football team discovering it could compete on the road against a regional champion.

Most of all, it was about athletes from four communities continuing to become one team.

These young men and women are carrying the traditions of Council, Grundy, Hurley and Twin Valley with them, but they are also creating something new. Every match, race, round and game adds another line to a story that has only begun.

Someday, Southern Gap will have trophy cases filled with reminders of past teams and athletes. Future Eagles will walk through the halls surrounded by years of school history.

The athletes competing today are the ones creating those first memories.

Last week, they created plenty.

I also want to thank the people of Buchanan County for getting behind our Southern Gap Eagles. Seeing those bleachers packed with fans wearing Vegas gold and black really is something special. Over the past few years, attendance at many local sporting events has declined, and the stands often looked bare. That has changed. Our community has rallied around these athletes, and the excitement inside the gymnasium and throughout the football stadium shows what Buchanan County can accomplish when we come together. The players have given us something to cheer for, and our fans have responded by making sure they know an entire county is behind them.

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.

SOUTHERN GAP FALLS

FROM PAGE 1B



Southern Gap quarterback Brayden White breaks free for a long gain on the opening drive against Rye Cove. The run set up Aidan Baker's 2-yard touchdown, giving the Eagles an early lead (Photo by Chad Cooper).

turned Rye Cove away, allowing the visiting Eagles to carry a two-point advantage into halftime.

The momentum began to turn during Rye Cove's opening possession of the second half.

Southern Gap appeared to have an opportunity to stop the drive on third-and-long, but a questionable defensive holding penalty gave Rye Cove's offense new life. Barnette eventually scored on an 18-yard run with 7:36 remaining in the third quarter and added the conversion to put the War Eagles ahead 22-16.

Southern Gap refused to go away.

Following another long kickoff return by Blankenship, coach Greg Tester's Eagles moved inside the Rye Cove 5-yard line with an opportunity to tie the game or regain the lead. The War Eagles stopped Southern Gap on fourth down at the 2, turning the ball over on downs.

White, who also plays defensive back, quickly gave Southern Gap another opportunity. He intercepted a Tyler Shupe pass on third down inside the Rye Cove 10 and returned possession to the Eagles with a short field.

A few plays later, freshman running back Gunner Baker capitalized on the turnover with a 4-yard touchdown run. White carried the ball into the end zone for the conversion, given Southern Gap a 24-22 advantage with 4:08 remaining in the third quarter.

Rye Cove answered on its next possession.

Barnette found room behind a powerful offensive line anchored by Ethan Lawson, an offensive and defensive tackle who has signed with West Virginia University. Barnette broke loose for a 52-yard touchdown run with 3:10 remaining in the quarter. The conversion attempt failed, but the War Eagles had regained the lead at 28-24.

Southern Gap entered the fourth quarter trailing by only four points. Its defense had done enough to keep the game within one possession, but the Eagles' offense could not find the rhythm it displayed during the opening quarter.

Rye Cove sealed the victory with 9:22 remaining. Facing third-and-long, Shupe heaved the ball downfield, where Cress made a heads-up play by coming back to make the catch before breaking away from White to complete a 40-yard touchdown. Cress added the extra point to produce the final margin.

Barnette led Rye Cove's rushing attack with 132 yards and two touchdowns on 16 carries. Cress scored in three different ways, recording touchdowns on a kickoff return, a run and a reception.

White led Southern Gap with 88 rushing yards on 17 carries. He also completed four passes for 39 yards, intercepted a pass on defense and accounted for three

successful 2-point conversions — two through the air and one on the ground.

Blankenship provided one of the night's biggest moments with his 88-yard kickoff return and gave Southern Gap favorable field position with another long return in the third quarter. Brothers Aidan Baker and Gunner Baker each added rushing touchdowns.

Southern Gap's defense played well against one of the top teams in Class 1 this season. Chase Baker, Trevor Blankenship, Gunner Baker and Devin Mullins were among the team's most active defenders.

Mason Rife also contributed several stops and did an excellent job of breaking up several passes by Shupe, while White, Reid Stiltner, Blankenship, Luke Stiltner, Ayden Whited, Gunner and Aidan Baker helped Southern Gap limit Rye Cove for much of the night.

Southern Gap finished with 143 yards on 34 rushing attempts and 39 yards through the air. The Eagles recorded eight first downs and were hurt by 11 penalties for 83 yards.

Rye Cove recorded 171 rushing yards and 74 passing yards. The War Eagles finished with 13 first downs.

The breaks did not fall Southern Gap's way, but the Eagles showed plenty of fight during their historic first trip away from home. They led at halftime and were tied late in the third quarter against a Rye Cove program that captured the Region 1D championship in 2024 and 2025.

For a team playing only the third football game in school history, Southern Gap proved it could compete with one of the region's established powers. The Eagles will travel to Giles to take on the Spartans this Friday while Rye Cove visits Honaker. Both games are scheduled to kick off at 7 p.m.

RYE COVE 35, SOUTHERN GAP 24									
Southern Gap		16	0	8	0	—	24		
Rye Cove		14	0	14	7	—	35		
Scoring summary									
SG — A. Baker 2 run (K. Justice pass from White)									
RC — M. Cress 80 kickoff return (run failed)									
SG — C. Blankenship 88 kickoff return (Justice pass from White)									
RC — Cress 22 run (Cole Barnette run)									
RC — Barnette 18 run (Barnette run)									
SG — G. Baker 4 run (White run)									
RC — Barnette 52 run (run failed)									
RC — Cress 40 pass from T. Shupe (Cress kick)									
Team statistics									
First downs: SG 8, RC 13; Rushes-yards: SG 34-143, RC 36-171; Passing yards: SG 39, RC 74; Comp.-Att.-Int.: SG 4-10-0, RC 5-12-1; Fumbles lost: SG 1-0, RC 0-0; Penalties yards: SG 11-83, RC 7-50; Punts average: SG 4-39.3, RC 3-41.7.									

SOUTHERN GAP BOYS

FROM PAGE 1B

21:07, while freshmen Bentley Jackson and Kyler Lester crossed the finish line just six seconds apart. Jackson finished eighth in 21:26, and Lester placed ninth in 21:32.

Freshman Oliver Breeding completed Southern Gap's team score by finishing 13th in 23:36. The Eagles' five scoring runners were separated by 3:15.

Southern Gap sophomore Jacobb Smeltzer placed 19th in 25:41, while junior Westen Deel finished 25th in 42:17.

Wise Central junior Ty Arney won the race in 17:54, edging teammate Nathan Wallin by one second. Eastside's Jason Correa placed fourth in 20:42, while teammate Brandon Edwards finished fifth in 21:01.

Eastside also placed Evan McReynolds seventh, Easton Phelps 11th and Bronston Williams 20th. However, Southern Gap's strong group of runners allowed the Eagles to finish eight points ahead of Eastside in the team standings.

The team championship added another milestone to Southern Gap's inaugural athletic season.

Boys varsity 5,000-meter results

Ty Arney, Wise Central, 17:54
Nathan Wallin, Wise Central, 17:55
Ethan Deel, Southern Gap, 20:21
Jason Correa, Eastside, 20:42
Brandon Edwards, Eastside, 21:01
Wyatt Street, Southern Gap, 21:07
Evan McReynolds, Eastside, 21:16
Bentley Jackson, Southern Gap, 21:26
Kyler Lester, Southern Gap, 21:32
Jeremy Wells, Wise Central, 22:14
Easton Phelps, Eastside, 22:31
Noah Vernon, Jenkins, 23:31
Oliver Breeding, Southern Gap, 23:36
Logan Hamilton, Wise Central, 23:42
William Sturgill, Wise Central, 24:13
Sean Jones, Jenkins, 25:04
Bentley Hopkins, Wise Central, 25:25
Joseph Collins, Jenkins, 25:40
Jacobb Smeltzer, Southern Gap, 25:41
Bronston Williams, Eastside, 27:26
Darius Chiphua, Jenkins, 30:18
Allan Jones, Jenkins, 33:13
Joshua Winskey, Jenkins, 37:30
Gregory Gregory Jones, Jenkins, 38:44
Westen Deel, Southern Gap, 42:17
Boys team standings
Southern Gap — 39 points (3-6-8-9-13); average: 21:36; spread: 3:15
Wise Central — 42 points (1-2-10-14-15); average: 21:11; spread: 6:19
Eastside — 47 points (4-5-7-11-20); average: 22:35; spread: 6:44
Jenkins — 89 points (12-16-18-21-22); average: 27:33; spread: 9:42

EAGLES SWEEP HONAKER

FROM PAGE 1B

players from each of the four communities that came together to form Southern Gap — Council, Grundy, Hurley and Twin Valley. The players appeared comfortable alongside one another and played with the confidence of a team that had shared the court for years.

Senior libero Claire Griffey anchored the defense with a match-high 25 digs, three assists and four service points. Her leadership and ability to keep rallies alive helped Southern Gap control the match.

Outside hitter Leah Rasnake delivered an all-around performance with 11 kills, six digs, five aces, two assists and seven service points. Madison Lester provided seven kills, four aces, two blocks and seven service points from the middle, while Addy Boyd added five kills.

Setters Adyson Bell and Bela Hurley directed the Eagles' attack. Bell recorded 13 assists, four kills, four digs, four aces and 13 service points. Hurley finished with 10 assists and two digs.

Megan Hess and Lucy Savage contributed four kills apiece. Kendall Brown supplied six digs, three aces and five service points, while Bree Looney added four digs and three service points.

The balanced production reflected the depth of Southern Gap's roster, but the night meant more than a mark in the win column. It represented the beginning of a new home tradition for volleyball players and fans from across Buchanan County.

Kiwanis 5K returns to Breaks Interstate Park

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

Runners and cross-country teams will take on the hills and trails of Breaks Interstate Park during the 26th annual Kiwanis/Breaks Park 5K Cross Country Run on Saturday, Sept. 26.

The race will begin at 10 a.m. in the swimming pool area inside Breaks Interstate Park. The course will cover approximately 3.1 miles through some of the park's central attractions, taking runners along portions of its trails toward the cottage area before returning to the swimming pool.

The event is open to runners of all ages and abilities. The individual entry fee is \$15 in advance or \$20 on race day. Registration for high school cross-country runners is \$2 per team member, but T-shirts are not included with the high school team rate.

Trophies will be presented to the overall male and female winners and the top male and female finishers in the masters division for runners age 40 and older. Awards will also be presented to the top three finishers in each age group.

The age divisions are 14 and younger, 15-19, 20-24, 25-29, 30-34, 35-39, 40-44, 45-49, 50-54, 55-59 and 60 and older.

High school teams will also compete for team trophies and cash prizes in separate boys and girls divisions. Winning teams will receive \$150, with \$100 for second place and \$75 for third place. Each school that brings a complete team will receive \$50, except schools entering both boys and girls teams (one payment per school).

A 1.5-mile middle school cross-country meet will follow the main race. The middle school competition will include divisions for fifth- and sixth-grade runners and seventh- and eighth-grade runners. Trophies will be presented to the top three boys and girls in each division.

All participants will enjoy a pancake breakfast sponsored by Buchanan General Hospital. Parking and restrooms will be available at the park.

The event is sponsored by the Grundy Kiwanis Club, Rife's TV, Food City, SunCoke Energy, Legacy Bank, Buchanan County Parks and Recreation and Buchanan General Hospital.

For registration information, contact Jon Rife at 276-935-2181 or jonrife@rifestv.net. You may mail registration forms to P.O. Box 724, Grundy, VA 24614.



VIRGINIA MOUNTAINEER PIGSKIN PROGNOSTICATORS



THIS WEEK'S GAMES		CHAD COOPER	SAM BARTLEY	RYAN KEENE	TERESA MATNEY	MARK COOPER	BRIAN MOORE
1	Southern Gap at Giles	Southern Gap	Giles	Southern Gap	Giles	Southern Gap	Giles
2	Wise Central at Ridgeview	Ridgeview	Ridgeview	Ridgeview	Ridgeview	Ridgeview	Ridgeview
3	Rye Cove at Honaker	Rye Cove	Rye Cove	Rye Cove	Rye Cove	Rye Cove	Rye Cove
4	Lee High at Richlands	Richlands	Richlands	Lee High	Lee High	Lee High	Richlands
5	Tazewell at Grayson County	Grayson County	Grayson County	Tazewell	Tazewell	Grayson County	Grayson County
6	Abingdon at Gate City	Abingdon	Abingdon	Abingdon	Gate City	Abingdon	Gate City
7	Graham at Union	Graham	Graham	Union	Union	Graham	Graham
8	Marion at Lebanon	Lebanon	Lebanon	Lebanon	Lebanon	Lebanon	Lebanon
9	Rural Retreat at Eastside	Eastside	Eastside	Eastside	Eastside	Eastside	Eastside
10	J.I. Burton at Patrick Henry	Patrick Henry	J.I. Burton	Patrick Henry	Patrick Henry	Patrick Henry	Patrick Henry
11	Narrows at Chilhowie	Chilhowie	Chilhowie	Chilhowie	Chilhowie	Chilhowie	Chilhowie
12	John Battle at Holston	Holston	Holston	Holston	Holston	Holston	Holston
OVERALL RECORDS		19-5	17-7	19-5	21-3	16-8	16-8



Former Buchanan County standouts, from left, Alexsis Porter, Ella Rasnake and Jayda Hilton are members of the UVA Wise women's cross-country team. Porter competed for Grundy High School, Rasnake represented Council High School and Hilton ran for Hurley High School. The trio makes up three of the nine runners on the Cavaliers' roster.

Buchanan trio running for UVA Wise

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

Three former Buchanan County standouts are competing together this fall as members of the University of Virginia's College at Wise women's cross-country team. Senior Alexsis Porter, sophomore Jayda Hilton and freshman Ella Rasnake make up one-third of the Highland Cavaliers' nine-runner roster. Porter enjoyed an outstanding career at Grundy High School, while Hilton led Hurley High School during her prep career. Rasnake established herself as one of the area's top runners while competing for Council High School. The three runners once represented different Buchanan County schools. They now compete as teammates at the NCAA Division II level. Porter began her senior season as one of the South Atlantic Conference's runners to watch and lived up to that recognition in UVA Wise's season opener Sept. 4 at the Virginia Tech Invitational in Blacksburg. Porter led the Cavaliers by placing 20th in the women's 4.385-kilometer race with a time of 17 minutes, 28.9

seconds. UVA Wise placed fifth in the team standings with 134 points. Freshman Amelia Lewis was UVA Wise's second finisher, placing 31st in 18:23.4. Sadie Brewer finished 42nd in 19:15.7, while Shay Cannon placed 49th in 19:48.7. Kaylen Fields completed the Cavaliers' team score by finishing 57th in 21:10. Hilton crossed the finish line one position behind Fields, placing 58th with a time of 21:11.5. The former Hurley standout is in her second season with the UVA Wise program. Senior Jayden Sisk placed 62nd in 26:09.2. Rasnake did not compete in the season opener as she continues working her way back from an injury. The former Council standout is expected to compete for a place in the Cavaliers' lineup when she returns. In addition to Porter, Hilton and Rasnake, UVA Wise's roster includes Sisk, a John Battle graduate; Cannon, a Virginia High graduate; Fields and freshman Kiley Adair, both from J.I. Burton; Lewis, a Thomas Walker graduate; and Brewer, a George C. Marshall graduate.

Southern Gap places third in Southwest District golf match

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

Southern Gap placed third in a seven-team Southwest District golf match, firing a team score of 169 behind Graham and Marion. The Eagles had three golfers shoot 42 or better, led by Ethan Deel and Jaxon Hardin with rounds of 41. Braden Hopkins was one stroke back with a 42. Mason Boyd and Ben Mayhew each carded a 45, while Wyatt Street rounded out the Southern Gap lineup with a 50. Only four scores counted toward the team total. Deel's 41, Hardin's 41, Hopkins' 42 and a 45 from either Boyd or Mayhew gave the Eagles their 169. The other 45 and Street's 50 were outside Southern Gap's four counting scores. Graham won the team competition with a 141, followed by Marion at 162. Southern Gap was seven strokes behind Marion in third place. Lebanon finished fourth at 184, followed by Virginia High at 189, Richlands at 199 and Tazewell at 204. Marion's Campbell Sayers earned medalist honors with a 31. Graham's Bailey Goodson and Noah Mulkey tied for second with rounds of 34, while Graham's Brogan Gilpin followed with a 36. Graham's Colton Graham and Marion's Brady White each shot 37, while Graham's Kendal Brodnik finished with a 38. Four golfers tied at 41 — Southern Gap's Deel and Hardin, Marion's Hayes Hall and Virginia High's Carter Gemmell — creating a four-way tie beginning in eighth place. Southern Gap's third-place showing continued the Eagles' inaugural season as they compete for the first time as a member of the Southwest District.



Mason Boyd shot a 45 for Southern Gap as the Eagles finished third in a seven-team Southwest District golf match (Photo by Chad Cooper).

- ### TOP INDIVIDUALS

 - 1. Campbell Sayers, Marion — 31
 - T2. Bailey Goodson, Graham — 34
 - T2. Noah Mulkey, Graham — 34
 - 4. Brogan Gilpin, Graham — 36
 - T5. Brady White, Marion — 37
 - T5. Colton Graham, Graham — 37
 - 7. Kendal Brodnik, Graham — 38
 - T8. Ethan Deel, Southern Gap — 41
 - T8. Jaxon Hardin, Southern Gap — 41
 - T8. Hayes Hall, Marion — 41
 - T8. Carter Gemmell, Virginia High — 41

Because four golfers tied at 41, 11 players are listed among the top individual finishers.
- ### AGATE GOLF Southwest District Team Scores

Graham 141, Marion 162, Southern Gap 169, Lebanon 184, Virginia High 189, Richlands 199, Tazewell 204.

Southern Gap (169) — Ethan Deel 41, Jaxon Hardin 41, Braden Hopkins 42, Mason Boyd 45, Ben Mayhew 45, Wyatt Street 50.

Graham (141) — Bailey Goodson 34, Noah Mulkey 34, Brogan Gilpin 36, Colton Graham 37, Kendal Brodnik 38, Tate Mullins 45.

Marion (162) — Campbell Sayers 31, Brady White 37, Hayes Hall 41, Kingston Gates 48, IJ Cregar 52, Emerson Street 54.

Virginia High (189) — Carter Gemmell 41, Gracie Belcher 44, Ryan Penley 44, Kendon Lester 60.

Tazewell (204) — Jaxson Sawyers 46, Brooks Mitchem 42, Tanner Lester 58, Cason Howington 58.

Lebanon (184) — C. Barton 52, M. Banton 46, E. Horne 49, E. Jones 46, T. Waugh 44, G. Orr 48.

Richlands (199) — K. Keegan 47, W. Welch (score not listed), G. Gunner 45, D.J. 54, E. Elijah 53, L. Brayden 57.

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VIRGINIA: IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE COUNTY OF BUCHANAN COUNTY OF BUCHANAN, VIRGINIA,
a Political Subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia,
Complainant,
v.
ESTATE OF JAMES MEADOWS, ET AL
Respondent(s).
Case No. CL25-705
ORDER OF PUBLICATION

The object of this suit is to enforce the lien of the Complainant, County of Buchanan, Virginia, for delinquent real estate taxes against certain real property located in the County of Buchanan, Virginia, described as follows:
Tax Map No. 2HH123058
Account No. 11232
All that certain lot, piece or parcel of land situate in Buchanan County, State of Virginia, on the Ridge between Prater Creek and Garden Creek and on the head of Box Camp fork of said Prater Creek and on the head of Breedings Branch of Garden Creek waters of Louisa fork of Sandy River, which is more particularly described as follows:
Beginning for the same at a water oak in the Gap of the Ridge between Garden Creek and Prater Creek at a corner of land now or formerly of John H. Street; and running thence from said place of beginning by and with said Street s line South 65 degrees West 14 poles to a chest nut on a spur; thence down said spur North 45 degrees West 41 poles to a small chestnut; thence North 11 degrees West 16 poles to two chestnut oaks; thence North 21 degrees West 14 poles to a chestnut oak; thence North 65 degrees West 8 poles to a red oak; thence North 12 degrees West 38 poles to a white oak by the side of a path; thence North 1-1/2 degrees West 44 poles to a chestnut and chestnut oak sprouts on top of a spur; thence North 69 degrees East 18 poles to a black gum at a corner of land now or formerly of I. R. Coleman on the spur between the right hand and left hand forks of Box Camp fork of said spur; thence North 57 degrees East 16 poles to a

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double chestnut on top between Box Camp and Breedings Branch; thence South 60 degrees East 18 poles to a black oak and chestnut oak; thence South 23 degrees East 46 poles to a chestnut and two black oak; thence South 80 degrees East 21 poles to a hickory on a hillside; thence South 64 degrees East 64 poles to two chestnut on a spur in a line of the old survey of land now or formerly of James H. Coleman; thence with same South 22 poles to a chestnut; thence South 25 degrees West 48 poles to two chestnuts and poplar; thence North 72 degrees West 50 poles to the place of beginning; containing about 70 acres, more or less.
Being the same property conveyed to James Meadows by Deed from W. J. Coleman and Sarah J. Coleman, his wife, dated October 25, 1907 and recorded among the land records of the Circuit Court of Buchanan County, Virginia on November 11, 1907 in Deed Book 34 at Page 255.
This description is made subject to all easements, conditions, agreements, restrictions, and reservations of record which affect the property herein described including but not limited to those recorded in Deed Book 220 at Page 45, Deed Book 388 at Page 475, Deed Book 389 at Page 818, Deed Book 389 at Page 822, Deed Book 389 at Page 844, Deed Book 390 at Page 455, Deed Book 390 at Page 515, Deed Book 390 at Page 518, Deed Book 390 at Page 521, Deed Book 390 at Page 527, Deed Book 390 at Page 530, Deed Book 391 at Page 650, Deed Book 393 at Page 545, Deed Book 393 at Page 548, Deed Book 393 at Page 552, Deed Book 393 at Page 557, Deed Book 457 at Page 552, Deed Book 459 at Page 17, Deed Book 459 at Page 19, Deed Book 463 at Page 693, Deed Book 465 at Page 594, Deed Book 463 at Page 695, Deed Book 463 at Page 697, Deed Book 464 at Page 490, Deed Book 464 at Page 492, Deed Book 464 at P94Deed Book 464 at Page 520, Deed Book 464 at Page 525, Deed Book 646 at Page 542, Deed Book 464 at Page 544, Deed Book 464 at Page 546, Deed Book 464 at Page 548, Deed Book 465 at Page 522, Deed Book 465 at Page 528, Deed Book 465 at Page 535, Deed Book 465 at Page 537, Deed Book 465 at Page 550, Deed Book 465 at Page 552, Deed Book 465 at Page 559, Deed Book 465 at Page 585, DEED Book 465 at Page 587, Deed Book 465 at Page 592, Deed Book 465 at Page 846, Deed Book 465 at Page 848, Deed Book 466 at Page 1Deed Book 466 at Page 3, Deed Book 466 at Page 19, Deed Book 466 at Page 21, Deed Book 466 at Page 312, Deed Book 466 at Page 33, Deed Book 466 at Page 38, Deed Book 466 at Page 38, Deed Book 466 at Page 40, Deed Book 467 at Page 757, Deed Book 466 at Page 832, Deed Book 466 at Page 846, Deed Book 543 at Page 395, Deed Book 553 at Page 801, Deed Book 553 at Page 807, Deed Book 553 at Page 811, Deed Book 553 at Page 817, Deed Book 553 at Page 821, Deed Book 553 at Page 827, Deed Book 554 at Page 213, Deed Book 554 at Page 270, Deed Book 557 at Page 239, Deed Book 557 at Page 243, Deed Book 557 at Page 246, Deed Book 557 at Page 249, Deed Book 557 at Page 252, Deed Book 557 at Page 256, Deed Book 557 at Page 259, Deed Book 557 at Page 263, Deed Book 557 at Page 266, Deed Book 557 at Page 270, Deed Book 557 at Page 273, Deed Book 557 at Page 277, Deed Book 557 at Page 334, Deed Book 557 at Page 336, Deed Book 557 at Page 340, Deed Book 557 at Page 343, Deed Book 558 at Page 100, Deed Book 559 at Page 103, Deed Book 564 at Page 72, Deed Book 564 at Page 76, Deed Book 564 at Page 79, Deed Book 564 at Page 84, Deed

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Book 564 at Page 88, Deed Book 564 at Page 92, Deed Book 564 at Page 96, Deed Book 564 at Page 100, Deed Book 564 at Page 104, Deed Book 564 at Page 108, Deed Book 564 at Page 112, Deed Book 564 at Page 116, Deed Book 564 at Page 119, Deed Book 564 at Page 123, Deed Book 564 at Page 127, Deed Book 564 at Page 131, Deed Book 564 at Page 135, Deed Book 564 at Page 139, Deed Book 564 at Page 143, Deed Book 564 at Page 147, Deed Book 565 at Page 476, Deed Book 565 at Page 594, Deed Book 565 at Page 645, Deed Book 565 at Page 649, Deed Book 565 at Page 653, Deed Book 656 at Page 657, Deed Book 656 at Page 820, Deed Book 656 at Page 824, Deed Book 656 at Page 828, Deed Book 656 at Page 832, Deed Book 657 at Page 49, Deed Book 657 at Page 53, Deed Book 657 at Page 70, Deed Book 657 at Page 073, Deed Book 657 at Page 077, Deed Book 657 at Page 80, Deed Book 657 at Page 084, Deed Book 657 at Page 088, Deed Book 657 at Page 091, Deed Book 657 at Page 094, Deed Book 657 at Page 403, Deed Book 657 at Page 066, Deed Book 657 at Page 069, Deed Book 657 at Page 080, Deed Book 657 at Page 083, Deed Book 657 at Page 560, Deed Book 657 at Page 564, Deed Book 658 at Page 468, and Instrument Number 080001326.
IT APPEARING that an Affidavit has been made and filed stating that due diligence has been used, without effect, to ascertain the identity and location of certain parties to be served, that the last known addresses for the Respondents herein are as follows: James Meadows, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Vester Meadows aka William Selvester Meadows, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Linda Meadows Svoboda, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Loretta Meadows Seitler, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Charles Melvin Seitler, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Hurley Mays Meadows, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Bobby Lee Meadows, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Virgil Meadows, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Evelyn Lucille Meadows, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Sherman Louis Meadows, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Hazel Bea Meadows Whittaker, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Larry Whittaker, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Joseph Daniel Boyd, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Edna Marie Meadows Boyd, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Myrtle Ann Boyd, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Billy Carnell Boyd, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Joseph Daniel Boyd, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Thurman Meadows, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Peggy Manning Meadows, whose last known address is 6043 Winchester Avenue, Inwood, West Virginia 25428; Steve Meadows, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Thurman Lee Meadows, who is believed to be deceased and whose last

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known address is unknown; Jamie Reid Meadows, whose last known address is 606 N. Market Street, McArthur, Ohio 45651; Jordan Meadows, whose last known address is unknown; Jenessa Meadows, whose last known address is 34519 Union Ridge Road, Albany, Ohio 45710; Lisa Byrd, whose last known address is unknown; Karen Ann Roberts, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Ellis James Meadows, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Rufus McKinley Meadows, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Eva Meadows, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Leonard Alfred Meadows, whose last known address is unknown; Eunice Viola Meadows Strouth, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Carter Strouth, whose last known address is unknown; Donnie Jay Strouth, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Virginia Ethel Meadows Osborne, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Lavern Wayne Osborne, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Rufus Meadows, Jr. , who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Amos Lee Meadows, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Susan Meadows, whose last known address is 1208 Armistead Way, Baltimore, Maryland 21205; Ruby Jean Meadows McGuigan, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Robert Russell Coleman, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Brenda C. Coleman, whose last known address is 14 Elktion Trail, Bracey, Virginia 23919; Ronnie Coleman, Jr. , who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Clarence Sewell Meadows, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Jimmie Clyde Meadows, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Tammy Mounts, whose last known address is Post Office Box 654, Pounding Mill, Virginia 24637; Cindy Hess, whose last known address is Post Office Box 876, Cedar Bluff, Virginia 24609; Ernest Clyde Meadows, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Ellen Marie Rife Meadows, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Jo Ellen Meadows, whose last known address is 639 Baptist Valley Road, Cedar Bluff, Virginia 24609; Alice Irene Meadows Smith, whose last known address is 857 East Avenue, Richlands, Virginia 24641; Eddie Arnold Meadows, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Dellie Brown Meadows, whose last known address is 2117 Walnut Crossing Run, Yadkinville, North Carolina 27055; Howard Daniel Meadows, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; and that any officers, heirs, devisees, and successors in title of the Respondent named herein are made parties Respondent to this action individually and/or by the general description of Parties Unknown, it is hereby ORDERED that the parties herein and all Parties Unknown and/or whose location cannot be ascertained appear on or before October 23, 2026 in the Clerk s Office of the Circuit Court of the County of Buchanan, Virginia, and do what may be necessary to protect their interests in this cause. Entered on the 31st day of August, 2026.
Reece Hale Robertson Judge
I Ask For This:
John A. Rife, Esq. (VSB No. 45805)
Jeffrey A. Scharf, Esq. (VSB No. 30591)
Mark K. Ames, Esq. (VSB No. 27409)
Andrew M. Neville, Esq.

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(VSB No. 86372)
Gregory L. Haynes, Esq. (VSB No. 37158)
Seth R. Konopasek, Esq. (VSB No. 97065)
Garrett W. Patton, Esq. (VSB No. 98345)
Michelle W. Clayton, Esq. (VSB No. 81365)
Lauralei K. Singsank, Esq. (VSB No. 100611)
G. Andrew Hall, Esq. (VSB No. 24114)
Taxing Authority Consulting Services, PC
P.O. Box 31800
Henrico, Virginia 23294-1800
Phone: (804) 506-3102
Facsimile: (804) 545-2378
TACS No.: 759787
VAM-09-10,17,24;2026 10-1;2026

PUBLIC NOTICE OF SURFACE MINE BLASTING SCHEDULE

In compliance with Section 4 VAC 25-130-816.64 in Chapter 19 of Virginia Coal Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1979, notice is hereby given that the undersigned, having been issued Virginia Coal Surface Mining Permit Number 1402382 located in the watershed of Dismal Creek in Buchanan County, Virginia, will be conducting blasting on the area covered by this permit.
The blasting will comply with applicable state and federal laws. Blasting will be conducted during daylight hours only from sunrise to sunset, six (6) days a week, Monday through Saturday. Blasting will be conducted from September 9, 2026 until September 9, 2027.
At least ten minutes prior to any blasting activity, access to these areas will be blocked to prevent unauthorized entry. An audible warning will be sounded with an air horn or siren giving three long blasts to signal that the area is clear. After the area has been checked one long blast will signal "all clear, ready to fire". After detonation has been approved by a certified person, three short blasts will be sounded to indicate that all is clear. Blasting will not be conducted at times significantly different from those listed except in emergency situations where weather or public safety requires unscheduled detonation. Should such a situation occur, access will be blocked and warning signals given as described above.
SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA MINING COMPANY, LLC
520 FORSYTHE ROAD, SUITE 102
BRISTOL, VIRGINIA 24202
276-669-8599
VAM-09-10;2026

Public Notice
APPROVAL OF A CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION FROM AN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR A PROJECT FUNDED THROUGH THE VIRGINIA WATER SUPPLY REVOLVING FUND
Public Notice No.: BIL 022S-25
First Publication Date: September 10, 2026
The Virginia Department of Health has under consideration a request for a Categorical Exclusion from an Environmental Assessment for a waterworks project proposed to be funded through the Virginia Water Supply Revolving Fund. The applicant is Buchanan County Public Service Authority.
The proposed project consists of replacement of approximately 14,100 linear feet of 8-inch and smaller waterlines along Route 619 (Leemaster Drive) and adjoining streets in Leemaster, Virginia. These waterlines are at the end of their useful life and frequent waterline breaks have occurred in the area. This project will improve water service to approximately 90 households and does not include any waterline extensions or new customers. Waterlines are proposed to be replaced with the same size pipe along the same route within roadway or roadside right-of-way. This project will involve multiple stream crossings of the Trace Fork Branch. No tree clearing is proposed. Historic structures (a church and two households) are located in the project area, but no impact is expected.

LEGAL NOTICES

Project activities will be in coordination with the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. No adverse environmental impacts are anticipated.
The project meets the following exclusion categories established by the Department:
* Water line replacement/rehabilitation to correct exfiltration water loss problems or problems associated with inadequate water pressure. Rehabilitation of drinking water facilities such as reservoirs and storage facilities.
Documentation supporting this request includes:
* Environmental Review Record by Artemis Consulting Services dated 3/12/2026
* Financial and Construction Assistance Programs Environmental Review site visit memorandum dated 7/20/2026
On the basis of a review of the request and support documentation, the Virginia Department of Health proposes to approve the request.
Persons may comment in writing to the Department on the proposed approval of the Categorical Exclusion within 30 days from the first publication date. Comments shall include the name, address, and telephone number of the writer and shall contain a complete, concise statement of the factual basis for the comments. Only those comments received within this period will be considered by the Department.
Following the comment period, the Department will make its determination regarding the approval. All comments should be addressed to:
Anthony Hess
c/o Theresa Hewlett
Virginia Department of Health
Office of Drinking Water
109 Governor Street, 6th Floor
Richmond, VA 23219
VAM-10-10,17;2026

TRUSTEE SALE

1139 Ellis Justus Rd, Grundy, VA 24614
Buchanan County
In execution of a Deed of Trust in the original principal amount of \$107,200.00, dated January 20, 2022 recorded in the Clerk's Office of the Circuit Court of the Buchanan County, Virginia, in Document No. 220000070, at the request of the holder of the Note, the undersigned Substitute Trustee and will offer for sale at public auction at the entrance to the Circuit Court of Buchanan County, 1012 Walnut Street, Grundy, on October 7, 2026 at 10:00 AM the property described in said deed, located at the above address and briefly described as:
Tax Map ID No: 2HH112007 C
BEGINNING at a large maple; thence East, uphill, 888 feet to a maple at a strip mine bench; thence Northeast around with said strip mine bench, 100 feet to a basswood and metal stake; thence Northwest downhill, passing a red oak and a cucumber as line trees, 300 feet down a spur to a hickory; thence Northwest 300 feet to a metal pipe and stake; thence Southwest 160 feet to a pine; thence continuing Southwest 300 feet to the BEGINNING, containing 3 acres, more or less, with any improvements thereon
Subject to any and all covenants, conditions, restrictions, easements, and all other matters of record taking priority over the Deed of Trust, if any, affecting the aforesaid property.
TERMS OF SALE: CASH: A deposit of \$20,000.00 or 10% of the sales price, whichever is lower, cash or certified check will be required at the time of sale, but no more than \$9,000.00 of cash will be accepted, with settlement within fifteen (15) days from the date of sale. Sale is subject to post sale confirmation that the borrower did not file for protection under the U.S. Bankruptcy Code prior to the sale which affects the validity of the sale, as

CONTINUED FROM PG 4

well as to post-sale confirmation of the status of the loan with the loan servicer including, but not limited to, determination of whether the borrower entered into any repayment agreement, reinstated or paid off the loan prior to the sale. In any such event, the sale shall be null and void, and the Purchaser's sole remedy, in law or equity, shall be the return of his deposit without interest. Additional terms may be announced at the time of sale. Pursuant to the Federal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, we advise you that this firm is a debt collector attempting to collect the indebtedness referred to herein and any information we obtain will be used for that purpose. SAMUEL I. WHITE, P.C., Substitute Trustee
This is a communication from a debt collector.
FOR INFORMATION CONTACT: SAMUEL I. WHITE, P.C. (95829)
448 Viking Drive Suite 350 Virginia Beach, VA 23452 757-457-1460 · Call Between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.
or visit our website at www.siwpc.net
To: Virginia Mountaineer
SAMUEL I. WHITE, P.C.

cc: Nationstar Mortgage LLC d/b/a Mr. Cooper
Ad runs: September 3, 2026 and September 10, 2026

**PUBLIC NOTICE
APPLICATION FOR RE-NEWAL/REISSUANCE OF COAL SURFACE MINING/ NPDES PERMIT NO. 1601787/0081787 UNDER CHAPTER 19, TITLE 45.2 OF THE CODE OF VIRGINIA**
Publication Number: 26NXA01
Application Number: 1011932

The Black Diamond Company of 1073 Riverview Street, Grundy, VA 24614 is applying to the Virginia Mined Land Repurposing Program for renewal of Permit No. 1601787, to continue the operations at the following location:
The operation is in Buchanan County on Caney Fork and Buckeye Branch, approximately 2.4 miles southwest of Big Rock off Route 610 and 460. The permit is situated on the Harman USGS 7.5 Minute Topographic Quadrangle Map. The acreage for this operation is 344.29 acres. Drainage will pass through sediment control structures and will be discharged into Caney Fork and Dry Hollow

near the VA/KY state line. The existing discharge locations may be viewed on the Renewal Map which is attached in Section 21.2 of the application. Additional discharge details are available in the NPDES Application attached in Section 5.15 of the application.
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 September 10, 2026, submit written comments or objections concerning this application and may also request, in writing, that the Mined Land Repurposing Program hold an Informal Conference concerning this application. A copy of the application materials is available electronically for public inspection at <https://www.energy.virginia.gov/epinquiry/frmMain.aspx>
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 08-20-27,
09-3,10;2026

SERVICES

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

Consumer Cellular - the same reliable, nationwide coverage as the largest carriers. No long-term contract, no hidden fees and activation is free. All plans feature unlimited talk and text, starting at just \$20/month. For more information, call 1-855-262-5564

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BCPS reports 2,111 students on sixth day

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

More than 2,100 students were in classrooms across Buchanan County on Friday, Aug. 28, as the school division completed its sixth day of the 2026-27 school year.

Buchanan County Public Schools welcomed students back Friday, Aug. 21. The division recorded 1,911 students in attendance on opening day, while sixth-day figures showed 2,111 students — an increase of 200 students.

The numbers represent students who attended school that day rather than the division's final official enrollment. Some students may have been absent, meaning actual enrollment could vary slightly.

“It has been a great first week of school across Buchanan County Public Schools,” Buchanan County Public Schools superintendent Sherry Fletcher said. “I am extremely proud of our students, teachers, administrators, and staff for the positive way they have started this school year. At Southern Gap High School, our students and staff have done an outstanding job coming together as one school community. With students and staff joining from four former high schools, this has been a major transition, and I am proud of the way everyone has embraced this new beginning. Our elementary and middle schools have also had a wonderful start. Classrooms are busy, students are learning, and our schools are creating a positive and welcoming environment for our students.”

Council Elementary School reported 161 students. The school had 11 prekindergarten students, 19 kindergarten students, 13 first graders, 12 second

graders, 29 third graders, 10 fourth graders, 29 fifth graders, 16 sixth graders and 22 seventh graders.

Tommy P. Justice Elementary School, formerly Hurley Elementary and Middle School, reported 236 students. Its attendance included 10 prekindergarten students, 36 kindergarten students, 25 first graders, 34 second graders, 20 third graders, 42 fourth graders, 28 fifth graders, 19 sixth graders and 22 seventh graders.

Riverview Elementary and Middle School had the largest elementary and middle school attendance, with 695 students. That figure included 71 prekindergarten students, 85 kindergarten students, 90 first graders, 68 second graders, 77 third graders, 83 fourth graders, 61 fifth graders, 102 sixth graders and 58 seventh graders.

Twin Valley Elementary and Middle School reported 225 students. The school had 17 prekindergarten students, 29 kindergarten students, 25 first graders, 22 second graders, 33 third graders, 27 fourth graders, 26 fifth graders, 26 sixth graders and 20 seventh graders.

Southern Gap High School, which opened this year as Buchanan County's only high school, recorded 794 students in grades eight through 12. The attendance figures included 180 eighth graders, 141 freshmen, 155 sophomores, 163 juniors and 155 seniors. Principal Mark Cooper noted that enrollment totaled nearly 805 students at press time.

The sixth-day figures provide an early look at the size of Buchanan County's student population during a historic year for the school system, as students from across the county begin classes under a newly consolidated structure.

ACP welcomes first-year pharmacy students

Virginia Mountaineer

OAKWOOD, VA (September 2, 2026) – First-year pharmacy students arrived on the campus of the Appalachian College of Pharmacy Wednesday to begin their studies leading to a Doctor of Pharmacy degree in Virginia's only three-year Doctor of Pharmacy program.

ACP President Mickey McGlothlin welcomed students to campus.

“This is a job,” he told students of their commitment to attend pharmacy school. “You have to be committed to learn everything that is taught to you and to be the best that you can be. And we believe that each and every one of you can be one of the best pharmacists. If we did not believe in you, you would not be here today.”

McGlothlin noted that as pharmacists, students will someday work to serve the healthcare needs of mankind and to improve the health of mankind.

“When you become pharmacists, you are the gatekeepers to the medications that are used to improve the health of mankind,” McGlothlin said.

Students in the incoming class of 2029 hail from throughout Central Appalachia, Northern Virginia, Kentucky and Canada. The new students join second-year pharmacy students on campus and at ACP's satellite instructional sites at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center in Abingdon, VA and the Roanoke Higher Education Center in Roanoke, VA; and third-year pharmacy students who are currently out on rotation.

ACP Provost and Dean, Dr. Susan Mayhew welcomed students to campus, noting “this is one of my favorite days of the entire year – when we get to meet and welcome our new students.

“You’ve chosen well,” Mayhew added. “Pharmacy is a fantastic profession.”

Mayhew reminded students of ACP's mission, which she said forms the foundation for the college's strategic plan.

“The Appalachian College of Pharmacy, a college of higher education, provides academic, scientific and professional education to address the health-related needs of rural and underserved communities, particularly those in Appalachia, through education, service and scholarship,” Mayhew said of ACP's mission. “The philosophy of the college is to cultivate a learning community committed to education, community outreach and professional development.

“This is our road map and what guides the growth and development of ACP,” Mayhew added. “We are approaching a new strategic planning cycle and will welcome your input. Our strategic plan is a working, living document that guides the growth of the college.”

Mayhew noted ACP's three-year accelerated program leading to the Doctor of Pharmacy degree is fast-paced and she reminded students, “you are responsible for your learning.”

Developing good study habits from the start and being disciplined in maintaining those make all the difference, she said, noting the keys to success in the ACP program are good study habits, time management, balance, student support services and professionalism.

“This is your full-time job now,” Mayhew told students. “You control the degree of success you have in this program and from this day forward, you are an ambassador for the Appalachian College of Pharmacy and for the noble profession of pharmacy. Represent that well.”

Mayhew also touched briefly on the college's online Doctor of Public Health program and opportunities to simultaneously earn a Master of Business Administration through regional agreements ACP has with other institutions of higher learning.

She spoke about the variety of career opportunities in the profession of pharmacy, as well as the board certifications available in pharmacy specialties.

Following the introduction to professional education program, students, as well as faculty and staff, participated in a brief meet and greet allowing each to introduce themselves, where they were from, their educational background and a memorable fact about themselves.

Throughout the week, students will take part in additional orientation sessions focusing on a variety of topics—from curriculum, experiential education and technology policies, computer usage and software training, to student services, money management, community service and campus safety. A business services fair and ice cream social was planned for Thursday afternoon. CVS Pharmacy sponsored lunch for students on their first day; Walgreens was scheduled to sponsor lunch on Thursday; and Mutual Drug provided students with backpacks.

Fall semester classes begin Tuesday, September 8. ACP's traditional white coat ceremony, signifying first-year class members' entrance into the profession of pharmacy, is planned for next spring.

Library Clerk-Part Time

Duties: Will include but not be limited to general clerical tasks, shelving items, checking items in and out of the library, assisting patrons with information needs, and providing program support.

Qualifications: GED or High School diploma required, Associates Degree preferred. Should be comfortable with the Microsoft Office Suite, Google Docs, and have good computer skills. Customer service experience is highly desired. Must be able to lift 35lbs, push up to 150 lbs. on wheels, and communicate clearly.

Pay: Above minimum wage. This is a part time, non-exempt hourly position with no benefits. Hours will include evenings and Saturdays.

Apply: Send or deliver a resume with three references before September 17th to: Buchanan County Public Library
ATTN: Mae Broyles, 1185 Poe Town Street, Grundy, VA 24614. Call for more details 276-935-5721.

The Buchanan County Public Library is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Big Sandy SWCD: Assistant/Conservation Technician Part-Time Position

The Big Sandy Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is seeking an individual to fill the position of Part-Time Assistant to the District Manager and Conservation Technician. The applicant will assist the District Manager and Conservation Technician in all duties as determined to be necessary to assist in the technical programs administered by Big Sandy Soil & Water Conservation District, including outreach programs; managing current and future grants; and grant writing.

Duties include, but are not limited to, assisting in administering the Virginia Agricultural BMP Cost-Share Program; informing land users of available cost-share programs, both state and federal; assisting land users in application and maintenance of conservation practices; assisting in carrying out the information and education programs of the District; attending and participating in SWCD meetings as necessary; completing a monthly activities report; assisting in scheduling and conducting a continuing program of maintenance and follow up of applied BMP practices to ensure compliance with the Virginia BMP Cost-Share Program, and willingness to pursue additional funding opportunities. The applicant must be willing to learn agricultural and environmental stewardship, layout and design of best management conservation practices, practice installation, and supervision of construction.

This is a part-time position; pay will be based on qualifications and experience. A valid driver's license, background check, and drug screening are required.

To apply, please send a complete Commonwealth of Virginia Application for Employment and a cover letter to:

Big Sandy SWCD
Attn: Personnel Committee
1236 Almarine Drive
Grundy

Applications may be mailed to the address above or will be accepted online or in person in a sealed envelope.

Application Deadline: Open until September 18, 2026

Big Sandy SWCD job opportunities are available to all people regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.



The Southern Gap girls cross country team celebrates its runner-up finish at the SWVA High/Middle Cross Country Rumble on Sept. 2 at the Virginia-Kentucky District Fairgrounds in Wise.

Southern Gap girls race to second-place team finish

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

Led by freshman sensation Katelyn Wolford’s runner-up performance, the Southern Gap girls cross country team earned second place Sept. 2 at the SWVA High/Middle Cross Country Rumble. The Eagles finished with 34 points, trailing only Wise Central, which won the team championship with 22. Southern Gap placed five runners among the top 14 in the 5,000-meter race. Eastside produced the individual champion and had three runners among the top seven, but it did not have the five finishers required to record a team score. Jenkins also did not field enough runners to qualify for the team standings. Wise Central placed five scoring runners among the top 10, allowing the Warriors to earn the team championship. Southern Gap countered with a balanced performance, placing two runners among the top eight and four among the top 12. Wolford led the Eagles by placing second with a time of 22 minutes, 13 seconds. She finished 31 seconds behind Eastside sophomore Allie Salyer, who won the race in 21:42. Southern Gap senior Kelly Ratliff also earned a top-10 finish, placing eighth in 25:59. Sophomore Vieronika Silishchenko finished 11th in 26:50, followed by senior Ava Ward in 12th at 27:22. Senior Madison Lester completed Southern Gap’s team score by placing 14th in 27:40. Junior Ella Robinson also competed for the Eagles, placing 19th with a time of 31:33. Wolford, Ratliff, Silishchenko, Ward and Lester combined to produce Southern Gap’s 34-point total. The five scoring runners finished within 5:27 of one another.

er. Wise Central’s Cadence Fletcher led the team champions with a third-place finish in 22:51. The Warriors also placed Fionna Niece fifth, Rheagan Sullivan sixth, Addison Sturgill ninth and Carlie Anunson 10th. The runner-up showing gave Southern Gap a strong team performance during the program’s inaugural season. Girls varsity 5,000-meter results Allie Salyer, Eastside, 21:42 Katelyn Wolford, Southern Gap, 22:13 Cadence Fletcher, Wise Central, 22:51 Hailey Mays, Eastside, 23:23 Fionna Niece, Wise Central, 24:06 Rheagan Sullivan, Wise Central, 25:14 Hannah Mays, Eastside, 25:33 Kelly Ratliff, Southern Gap, 25:59 Addison Sturgill, Wise Central, 26:07 Carlie Anunson, Wise Central, 26:27 Vieronika Silishchenko, Southern Gap, 26:50 Ava Ward, Southern Gap, 27:22 Sarah Sturgill, Wise Central, 27:25 Madison Lester, Southern Gap, 27:40 Molly Taylor, Wise Central, 27:49 Molly Rose, Eastside, 29:27 Caroline Turner, Wise Central, 29:45 Alexis Hammonds, Jenkins, 30:32 Ella Robinson, Southern Gap, 31:33 Allison Anderson, Jenkins, 47:34 Girls team standings Wise Central — 22 points (2-3-4-6-7); average: 24:57; spread: 3:36 Southern Gap — 34 points (1-5-8-9-11); average: 26:00; spread: 5:27 Eastside and Jenkins did not record team scores because they did not have the required five finishers.



Adopt a Pet

Virginia Mountaineer

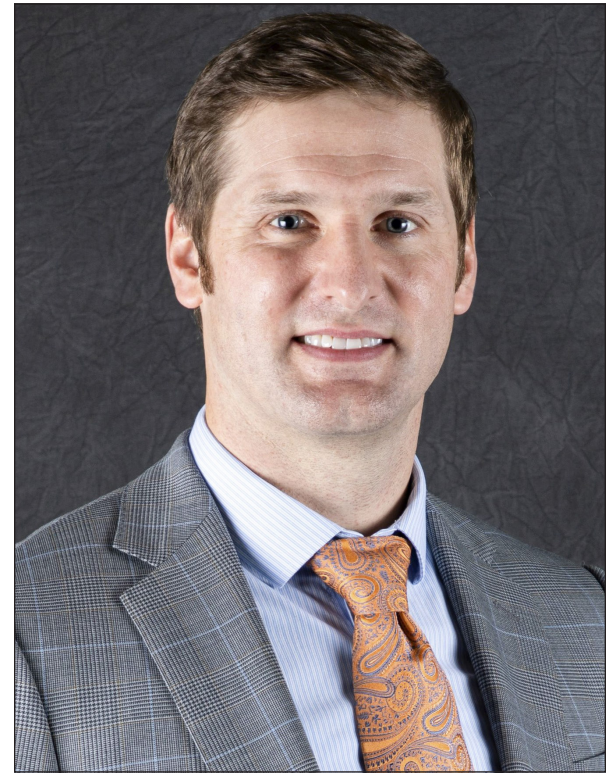
Too cool for school. This back-to-school boss is a one-year-old male mixed breed. His wiry coat is greyish-red with white markings. He has bright amber/grey eyes and an intelligent expression. His personality is fun, happy and friendly. He is a star student. This teacher’s pet will be available for adoption at the Buchanan County Animal Shelter until Monday, September 14, 2026. Also available for adoption is this one-year-old female mixed breed. Her short coat is colored mahogany with white markings. She has kind eyes and a gentle expression. Her temperament is easygoing and affectionate. 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.



ACP alumnus appointed to ACP Board of Trustees

Virginia Mountaineer

Appalachian College of Pharmacy alumnus Dr. Derek Webb was appointed to the ACP Board of Trustees last week during a meeting of the board. His appointment came from the Harvey W. Peters Foundation. “We congratulate Derek on his appointment to our ACP Board of Trustees and look forward to working with him in that capacity,” ACP Provost and Dean Susan Mayhew said. “Derek brings a unique perspective to the board, having also been a student here in the past.” Webb, who graduated in 2008 as a member of ACP’s inaugural graduating class, is the director of government affairs-East for Empower Pharmacy, based in Houston. In that role, he leads multistate legislative and regulatory strategy to expand access to high-quality, affordable compounded medications while enabling licensure, facility expansion and business growth. Webb joined Empower Pharmacy in October 2025. He has worked to advance legislative and regulatory priorities supporting patient access, pharmacy operations and growth. He joins other members of the ACP Board of Trustees, including Dr. Lu Ellsworth, who serves as chairman; Dr. Scott Cole; Dr. Rebecca Thornbury; Dr. Sherri Ratliff; Dr. Sue Cantrell; David Compton; Dr. Ida Harris; Tim Hess; Craig Horn; the Hon. Patrick Johnson; Dr. Scott Justus; Derek Keen; Frannie Minton; Dr. Susan Mullins; Dr. Dixie Tooke-Rawlins; Ginger Robertson; John Rocovich; Dr. Eural Viers; and Dr. Jimmy Viers. “Being appointed to the Appalachian College of Pharmacy Board of Trustees is an incredible honor and a meaningful opportunity to give back to an institution that helped shape who I am today,” Webb said. “ACP’s commitment to improving healthcare for rural and underserved communities closely aligns with the work I have dedicated my career to: advocating for patients and expanding access to medications and therapies. As a trustee, I look forward to helping advance that mission, strengthening ACP’s impact throughout Appalachia and ensuring future generations of healthcare leaders are prepared to serve the communities that need them most.” “I am thrilled to see Dr. Webb appointed to the board of trustees, a well-deserved recognition of his outstanding expertise and unwavering dedication to the pharmacy profession,” Empower Pharmacy General Counsel and Chief Compliance Officer Edgar Gonzalez said. “His depth of knowledge, sound judgment and collaborative spirit make him an exceptional team member who consistently brings positive energy and drives teams toward shared goals.” “Dr. Webb exemplifies the kind of leadership the pharmacy profession needs and I have no doubt he will serve as a role model and source of inspiration for the next generation of pharmacy leaders,” Gonzalez added. Webb continues to serve on the Virginia Board of Pharmacy, to which he was first appointed in July 2024. He chairs the bylaws committee and serves on the regulations committee.



He was elected earlier this year as president of District 2 of the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy. He also serves on the association’s Committee on Constitution and Bylaws and its Law and Legislation Committee. Webb has nearly 20 years of experience advancing health care policy, pharmacy regulation and stakeholder engagement across multiple states, with extensive expertise in compounding pharmacy and 503A and 503B regulatory frameworks. Before joining Empower, Webb worked at K-VA-T Food Stores Inc. from 2008 until October 2025. He first worked as a pharmacy manager, overseeing daily operations and ensuring compliance, safety and patient satisfaction at the company’s Abingdon store. While there, Webb led a team focused on operational efficiency and clinical excellence. He collaborated with physicians and regulatory partners to improve patient outcomes through policy-aligned practices and analyzed business metrics to drive profitability and operational growth. Webb later served as a pharmacy administrator for K-VA-T. In that role, he led communication with regulatory agencies and pharmacy boards, ensuring compliance and proactive advocacy. He also oversaw operations for 130 pharmacy locations, coordinating policy integration and quality initiatives. Webb served as a media spokesperson and public health advocate and was regularly featured on WCYB’s “Healthy Living” segments. He directed telemedicine and immunization programs supporting community health and access to care and led pharmacy mergers, acquisitions

and infrastructure expansion projects across state lines. At the same time, Webb represented K-VA-T Food Stores before state legislatures, regulatory agencies and pharmacy boards, successfully influencing policies affecting pharmacy practices and patient access. Webb served as mayor of the town of Abingdon from July 2020 to January 2023 and currently serves as a member of the Abingdon Town Council. Since 2011, he has owned Phinneas Enterprises LLC in Abingdon, specializing in locating and leasing rental properties. He has also worked as a personal coach for Lululemon Team Webb in Abingdon. Webb has served as a key opinion leader and speaker for Pharmacy Times and WCYB on a variety of pharmacy-related topics. He was named a Tri-Cities Business Journal 40 Under Forty honoree in 2020 and scored in the top 99% on the pharmacy board examination. Webb was the youngest mayor to serve the town of Abingdon and received the highest number of votes ever recorded for an Abingdon Town Council candidate. Webb earned a bachelor’s degree in biology and chemistry from King College in 2005 before enrolling at ACP. While at ACP, he was a member of the student chapters of the American Pharmacists Association and the Virginia Pharmacists Association. He was also a member and former vice president of the Rho Chi honor society. Webb served as the ACP Class of 2008 speaker and received the TEVA Pharmaceuticals USA Award for outstanding achievement in the study of pharmacy, the ACP Pharmaceutics Highest GPA Award and the Merck Award for outstanding achievement in the study of pharmacy. He was named to the dean’s list and served as vice president of his class. Webb and his wife, Rebecca, live in Abingdon with their 14-year-old daughter, Eleanor.



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