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GRUNDY, VA. | THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2026

TWO SECTIONS PLUS SUPPLEMENTS | \$2

Council, Chamber approve Halloween plans and Hall of Fame display

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

Grundy Town Council and the Buchanan County Chamber of Commerce have approved plans for the Chamber's annual Trunk or Treat celebration and found a new home for the Buchanan County Hall of Fame plaque.

Council approved two motions concerning Halloween during its Sept. 8 meeting.

The first established Saturday, Oct. 31, as the night

Halloween will be observed in the Town of Grundy. Council member Bill Raines made the motion, and Council member Mike Lewis seconded it. The motion was approved unanimously.

Council then considered a request from Buchanan County Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Chad Cooper to close a portion of Walnut Street in downtown Grundy for Trunk or Treat.

Council member Rebecca Elkins made the motion to approve the event and allow Walnut Street to be closed from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. Council member Patty Street

seconded the motion, which also received unanimous approval.

The closure will extend from the corner of Walnut Street near the event area to the Grundy Post Office.

Cooper updated the Chamber's board of directors on the council's actions during the Chamber's Sept. 10 meeting at its office on Walnut Street.

While the event is approved and ready to move forward, Cooper told board members that a large amount of candy will be needed. Organizers said Trunk or Treat

SEE **HALLOWEEN PLANS** | 6A



A young festivalgoer raises his hand while taking a turn on the mechanical bull during Spirit Fest 2026 on Saturday in downtown Grundy (Photo by Chad Cooper).

Spirit Fest brings music, food and family fun to downtown Grundy



Winners of the Dolly Parton look-alike contest at Spirit Fest 2026 are Ariella St. Clair, front, winner of the "Coat of Many Colors" contest; Geraldine Bowman, back left, winner of the "Jolene" contest; and Rosa Keen, back right, winner of the "Glitz Dolly" contest (Photo by Angel St. Clair).

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

Downtown Grundy came alive Saturday as a large crowd gathered for Spirit Fest 2026, one of the community's biggest and most anticipated events of the year.

The free festival, held Sept. 12 near the Grundy Community Center, brought together 41 vendors, musical performers, artists, community organizations and food trucks for a full day of family entertainment.

Donna Smith of the Grundy Town Office was the driving force behind this year's celebration, helping develop, coordinate and bring the event together for the community.

People came and went throughout the day, filling the festival grounds from the 11 a.m. opening through the final musical performance Saturday evening.

Since its beginning in 2009, Spirit Fest has grown into a favorite fall tradition for Grundy and the surrounding communities. This year's festival offered something for nearly every age

SEE **SPRING FEST** | 2A

PSA crews praised for holiday response; Chitwood reflects on 42-year career

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

Buchanan County Public Service Authority employees were praised for working through the Labor Day weekend to repair numerous water leaks across the county.

PSA Executive Director Tim Hess told the authority's board during its Sept. 8 meeting that nine leaks were active at one point Saturday. Employees from other crews came in on their days off to help, with some remaining on the job for approximately 23 hours.

Hess said the response demonstrated the commitment of the authority's employees to the people they serve.

"That's what kind of people we've got with the PSA," Hess said. "They came out on their day off and helped."

Despite the number of leaks, Hess said the authority experienced no major service issues. He praised the employees for working together to locate and repair the problems during the holiday weekend.

The meeting also included an emotional farewell from Rick Chitwood of Thompson & Litton, who reflected on his career as he prepares to retire after 42 years of working on projects in Buchanan County.

Chitwood referenced his recent heart bypass surgery as he began his remarks and attempted to keep his emotions in check while thanking the board and PSA employees.

"I've been working for Buchanan County for 42 years," Chitwood said. "I've met some of the finest people in my life in all parts of Buchanan County."

Although he lives outside the county, Chitwood said Buchanan County has become a second home during the four decades he has spent working with its communities.

"I may live in Tazewell, but I consider Buchanan County home," he said.

Chitwood recalled that one of his earliest assignments

SEE **PSA CREWS PRAISED** | 6A

Owens found guilty in killing of pregnant Buchanan County woman

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

A jury has found Dustin Barrett Owens guilty on all counts in the October 2022 shooting death of his pregnant girlfriend, Amber Dawn Compton, inside her Buchanan County home.

The Russell County jury returned its verdict Sept. 3 following a trial that lasted slightly more than a week. Jurors deliberated for approximately 2½ hours before finding Owens guilty of first-degree murder in Compton's death, the killing of her unborn child and using a

firearm in the commission of a felony.

The trial was moved from Buchanan County to Russell County.

Owens, 42, a former correctional officer at Keen Mountain Correctional Center, is scheduled to be sentenced Nov. 20.

Compton, 35, was found fatally shot inside her Vansant home in October 2022. She was approximately seven months pregnant at the time. Authorities said she had been shot about nine times, with several bullets also striking her unborn child.

Buchanan County Common-

wealth's Attorney M. Nikki Stiltner issued a statement following the verdict, placing the focus on Compton, her unborn child and the family members who waited nearly four years for the case to reach a jury.

"Today belongs first to Amber Compton, her unborn child, and the family who has carried their loss for nearly four years," Stiltner said.

She acknowledged the difficult journey endured by Compton's parents, Rachel and Larry, as the investigation and court proceedings continued.

"Rachel and Larry have waited



Dustin Barrett Owens was found guilty of first-degree murder and other charges in the October 2022 shooting death of Amber Dawn Compton and the killing of her unborn child. Owens is scheduled to be sentenced Nov. 20.

SEE **OWENS FOUND GUILTY** | 5A

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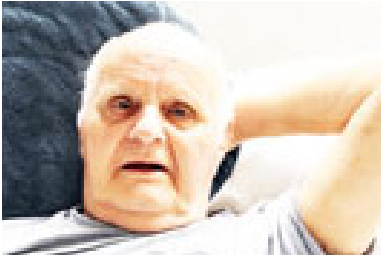
OBITUARIES

Clifford Thomas

CLIFFORD THOMAS, 85 years of age, of Grundy, VA, passed away on Friday, September 11, 2026, at Heritage Hall in Grundy. Born November 6, 1940, in Buchanan County, he was the son of the late Brady Thomas and Virginia Coleman Shultz. Clifford was of the Baptist faith. He took pride in being a truck driver and it was one of his greatest enjoy-ments. Clifford's life was filled with memories that will remain in the hearts who knew and loved him. He was truly one of kindest, sweetest people on earth with the biggest heart. He will be deeply missed and lovingly re-membered by his family, friends, and all who had the privilege of knowing him.

In addition to his parents, he is

preceded in death by his wife Fern Ratliff Thomas; and three sisters Patsy Sue Coleman, Joanna Pendergrass, and Sandra Kay Turner. Those left to cherish his memories will include his sisters Wanda Hutchinson of NC, Judy Thomas of Bristol, TN; brothers Brady Thomas and wife Bonnie of NC, William Stuart Thomas and wife Vicki of FL, Johnny Thomas and companion Shirley of Abingdon, VA, Wayne Thomas and wife Wilma of NC; special niece Denise Looney of Vansant, VA; along with several other nieces and nephews. Funeral services for Clifford Thomas were held at Shortridge-Ramey Funeral Home, Grundy, VA, on Wednesday, September 16, 2026, at



11:00 a.m. with Pastors Eddie Wilson and Ronnie Stiltner officiating. Entombment followed at Mountain Valley Memorial Park, Big Rock, VA. The family received friends at the funeral home on Tuesday, September 15 after 6:00 p.m. Online condolences may be sent to shortridgeramey.com. The family of Clifford Thomas has entrusted the care of their loved one to Shortridge-Ramey Funeral Home of Grundy, VA.



Courthouse News

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

Marriages licenses
Matthew Tyler Stacy, 31, and Christina Ann Blankenship, 24, both of Grundy, August 22, 2026.
Timothy Tyson Ramsey, 37, of Arrington, Virginia and Tina Louise Laquino, 45, of Bound Brook, New Jersey, August 30, 2026.
Deeds recorded
Aug. 3 – Arlene Stacy to Mack Estel Stacy, 20 acres Coon Branch, Knox Creek, \$1, deed of gift.
Aug. 3 – Industrial Development Authority to Appalachia Service Project Inc., 3.329 acres, Prater District, deed of gift.
Aug 3 – Kay Lynn Ratliff to Jonathan David Hughes, ETAL, lot number 8 of Map showing part of the Ben Ratliff Farm, Little Prater, \$100,000.00.
Aug 3 – Steve Davis, ETAL, to Ronnie Ray Lester, tract Knox Creek Highway Branch, Slate Creek, \$1, deed of gift.
Aug 4 – Karen Lee Vandyke to Kimberly Dee Jewell, 1.5 acres, Buchanan County, \$10.00.
Aug 4 – Linda Davis, ETAL to Bill Mullins, ETAL, tracts Rocklick Branch, \$24,000.00.
Aug 5 – Joshua Marchel, ETA to Angela E. Yachfine, two acres Bear Branch, War Fork, Russell Prater Creek, \$95,000.00.
Aug 6 – Patricia Ann Honaker to Seth Grove, ETAL, life estate, three tracts, one acre, .18 acres and 3.82 acres, Bill Young Branch, Garden District, deed of gift.
Aug 6 – Mark Douglas Deel to Bernice Yates, ETAL, six acres, Lick Branch, Russell Prater Creek, \$11,00.00.
Aug 6 – Sandra Kay O'Quinn to Randy Dean Looney, 1/3 undivided interest, Grassy Creek, Rock Lick District, deed of gift.
Aug 6 – Kristine Smith, ETAL to Linda Scherz, R/W, 2.25 acres, Seven Mile Branch, \$174,000.00.
Aug 7 – Loretta Blankenship to Loretta Lynn Blankenship, ETAL, 0.16 acres, Richmond Branch, Garden Creek, Garden District, deed of gift.
Aug 7 – Sharon Deborah Kelly to Amy Nicole Kelly, lot number 41 of Plat of Subdivision for Southern Gap, Phase 1D of Mountain Crest at Southern Gap, deed of gift.
Aug 7 – Raymond Robert Krebs to Nicholas Ryan Belcher, ETAL, 40 acres, Levisa River, Weller Yard, Rocklick District, \$179,286.00.
Aug 10 – Anna Peral Ratliff to Marianne Fletcher, et al., four tracts, Right Hand Fork, Youngs Branch, Garden Creek, deed of gift.
Aug 11 – Linda Lou Owens to Dicky Dion Fuller, ETAL, 17 acres War Fork, Russell Prater Creek, \$10,000.00.
Aug 12 – Curtis Mullins, ETAL to Roman Lee Mullins, 1,455 acres Dismal Creek, Levisa River, deed of gift.
Aug. 12 – Big Sandy Land Foundation to Robert Simpson, two parcels, Garden District, \$17,154.00.
Aug. 12 – Goff-Street Foundation, ETAL to Robert Simpson, 20 acres, Garden District, \$23,660.00.
Aug. 12 – Goff-Street Foundation, ET AL. to Robert Simpson, 1/2 undivided interest, Levisa River, Big Sandy River, \$2,420.00.
Aug. 12 – Goff-Street Foundation, Etal to Robert Simpson, 95 acres Garden District, \$2,533.00.
Aug. 13 – Frieda Ann Ruble to Ronnie Lee Stiltner, 0.4-acre Bull Creek, Levisa River, Rocklick District, \$1, deed of gift.
Aug 14 – John W. Grimes, ETAL to Donald Ray Hardin, lots 33 & 3in the Mathias Keen Subdivision, Hurricane District, \$136,000.00.
Aug 14 – Harold J. Mullins to Billy Joe Owens, ETAL, tract, Buchanan County, 1/2 each to Phillip Cook and Billy Joe Owens, \$2,500.00.
Aug 14 – Hershel Kenneth Justus, to Justus Holdings LLC, tract Knox Creek, Knox Creek District, deed of gift.
Aug 14 – Hershel Kenneth Justus, to Justus Holdings LLC, tract Knox Creek, Knox Creek District, deed of gift.
Aug 14 – Peggy Lynne Goble to Cory Dalton Cox, 0.99 acres, War Fork Creek, Buchanan County, deed of gift.
Aug. 17 – Jeffery Dale Street to William Ray Meadows, Rosin Camp Fork, Garden Creek, \$28,000.00.
Aug. 18 – Hazel Theresa Hutchinson to Makayla Therese Hutchinson, Browns Town, Rock Lick Creek, deed of gift.
Aug. 19 – Michael Keith Boyd, ETAL to M&R Homes and Rentals INC., 1/2 acre Dry Fork, Big Prater Creek, Levisa River, South Grundy District, \$1, deed of gift.
Aug. 19 – Gusta Elswick, by agent, to Blair Farms LLC, tract Right Hand Fork Rock Lick Creek, Levisa Fork, Big Sandy River, \$57,000.00.

Public invited to outdoor recreation open house

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

Buchanan County residents are invited to share their ideas for the future of outdoor recreation during the Gateways to Adventure Outdoor Recreation Master Plan open house. The community event will be held from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 23, at Southern Gap Outdoor Adventures, 1124 Chipping Sparrow Road in Grundy.

Organizers hope to hear from residents about the outdoor activities, amenities and opportunities they would like to see developed throughout Buchanan County. Attendees can share their ideas while enjoying a community campfire and s'mores. The event is free and open to the public. Gateways to Adventure is a partnership involving Buchanan County, Friends of Southwest Virginia, the Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission and SE Group.

SPRING FEST

FROM PAGE 1A

and interest. Children and families enjoyed free carnival rides and attractions throughout the day. The lineup included the Mind Winder, a funhouse super slide, the Pirate Ship and several spinning rides. Festivalgoers could also test their ability to stay aboard a mechanical bull. A new attraction, the Superfly, added a little more excitement for adventurous visitors. Riders lay face-down in a swing-style ride that carried them around, upward and outward. Young visitors also had opportunities to meet princess characters during three scheduled sessions near the main stage. The meet-and-greets were held from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., 2 to 2:30 p.m. and 4 to 5 p.m. One of the festival's newest features was a Dolly Parton look-alike contest, which invited participants of all ages to celebrate the country music legend's unmistakable Appalachian style. Contestants competed in categories inspired by Parton's colorful clothing, signature hairstyle and sparkling stage presence. Ariella St. Clair won the "Coat of Many Colors" contest, Gearldine Bowman won the "Jolene" contest, and Rosa Keen won the "Glitzzy Dolly" contest. Food vendors served many of the favorites visitors expect at fairs and festivals. Chillers, operated by Ellis and Teresa Owens, offered ice cream, frozen lemonade, icy drinks and other treats. Roy Baker's Lemonade Stand returned with fresh-squeezed lemonade. Piggin' Out, Eat with Otis, and Got Donuts were also among the food vendors serving the crowd. Festival selections included pulled pork, doughnuts, ribbon fries, funnel cakes and numerous other meals, snacks and sweet treats. The Grundy Community Center concession stand was open inside the theater, while an outdoor table made cotton candy and other concession favorites more accessible to festivalgoers.

Craft and retail vendors displayed candles, crocheted items, wax melts, polymer clay creations, paintings, drawings, soaps, lotions, pottery, quilts, handmade statues, jewelry, wall art, boutique clothing, T-shirts and tumblers. Visitors could also purchase homemade jams, jellies, pickles and baked goods. Jerry's Handmade Woodworks offered handcrafted wooden items, while Miss Alex displayed 3D-printed toys. The booths gave visitors an opportunity to meet area artists, support small businesses and shop for one-of-a-kind creations. Local agencies and community organizations also participated. The Buchanan County Public Library shared information about its free programs and upcoming fall activities, while the Department of Social Services and Ridgeline Health provided information about services available to area residents. Other booths offered wellness and AIC checks, black lung information, ministry outreach and additional community resources. WMJD Grundy's Rodney Davis served as master of ceremonies, introducing performers and guiding the crowd through the day's entertainment. Live music provided the soundtrack for the celebration. Cody Hagerman and Still Pickin' opened the main-stage entertainment, performing from 12:30 to 2 p.m. Ralph Stanley II and The Clinch Mountain Boys followed from 2:30 to 4 p.m., bringing the sounds of traditional mountain bluegrass to the heart of Grundy. Local favorite From the Edge closed the festival with a performance from 5 to 7 p.m., keeping the crowd entertained through the final hours of the event. The steady turnout, more than 40 vendors and a wide variety of activities once again showed why Spirit Fest remains one of Grundy's largest community celebrations.



A vendor prepares fresh-squeezed lemonade during Spirit Fest 2026. Food vendors offered everything from pulled pork and ribbon fries to doughnuts, funnel cakes and other festival favorites (Photo by Chad Cooper).



Young festivalgoers smile and reach toward the camera while enjoying one of the free carnival rides offered during Spirit Fest 2026 in downtown Grundy (Photo by Chad Cooper).

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LOOKING BACK

From our files

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

55 YEARS AGO

SEPTEMBER 16, 1971

Judge Glyn R. Phillips of Buchanan County Circuit Court has successfully completed a two-week graduate program at the National College of the State Judiciary in Reno, NV. The course entitled "The Role of the Judge in the Trial of a Lawsuit" was held from August 8 to August 20.

James W. McGlothlin, an attorney in Grundy, will be the guest speaker at the regular meeting of the Buchanan County Chamber of Commerce to be held tonight (Thursday) at 7 p.m. at the Dixie Cafeteria. McGlothlin will speak on the new mine laws and their effect on the economy in Buchanan County.

50 YEARS AGO

SEPTEMBER 16, 1976

Tonight (Thursday) will be "Pete Dixon Night" at the regular monthly meeting of the Buchanan County Chamber of Commerce to be held at 7 p.m. in the Dixie Cafeteria. E.E. "Pete" Dixon, Grundy Fire Chief for 29 years, will be the Chamber's guest of honor and will be recognized for his outstanding service to the people of Grundy and Buchanan County.

Barbara Edwards of Grundy is the winner of last week's Mountaineer Football contest. Barbara missed only three of the nineteen picks to claim first prize. Joyce McComas of Hurley and Orville Walsh of Grundy tied for second with just four wrong picks.

35 YEARS AGO

SEPTEMBER 19, 1991

Bobbie Nickole Pugh, daughter of Bob and Inez Pugh of Grundy, has been named to Who's Who Among American High School Students. Her biography will be published in the 25th anniversary edition of the publication.

St. Jude Children's Research Hospital has announced that Vicki Stiltner has agreed to be the coordinator of the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital Bike-A-Thon in Grundy on October 5. St. Jude Children's Research Hospital was founded by entertainer Danny Thomas.

25 YEARS AGO

SEPTEMBER 13, 2001

A resolution asking the Virginia Department of Transportation Commonwealth Transportation Board to name Rt. 643 the "Julius Hall Memorial Roadway" was adopted last Thursday by the Buchanan County Board of Supervisors. The resolution asks that the roadway—beginning at Rt. 83 on Slate Creek and ending at the Kentucky State Line — to be named in honor of Hall, a former Knox District Supervisor.

Grundy made it two wins in as many tries by easing past county rival Hurley, 68-34, in a non-district contest Sept. 4 at Grundy High School. Erin Scott recorded a double-double with a game-high 14 points and 12 rebounds to lead the Lady Golden Wave. Sophomore Lauren Fletcher also scored 14 points for Grundy (2-0). Amelia Thomas paced Hurley (1-1) with 12 points.



Pat Clark is pictured with a selection of his handcrafted wood-burned artwork at the Grundy Flea Market.

Clark turns heat, wood into lasting works of art

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

Inside the Grundy Flea Market, the smell of wood and the sight of Appalachian scenes draw visitors toward Pat Clark's booth.

Cabins, barns, trains, classic cars, wildlife and family homesteads are carefully burned into pieces of wood, with each dark line and shaded corner added by hand. Some pieces require several hours. The largest and most detailed may keep Clark working for more than a week.

For Clark, the work is more than something to sell. It is a way to preserve places, memories and pieces of mountain life.

Clark and his wife, Terri, operate a booth alongside other vendors at the flea market in the former Magic Mart building in Grundy. His artwork shares the space with the crocheted animals and other handmade items created by Terri.

Clark describes his work with one word: "Rustic."

"It's an old art form," he said. "People are doing nowadays laser, and it's nowhere near what this is. This here is much more detailed, much more artistic, because you can get the shading in it that you

can't get with the laser."

Wood burning, also known as pyrography, uses a heated tool to create designs on wood. Clark first draws the image, burns its outline and then returns to add shadows, highlights and texture.

The process is similar to painting, he said, because the artist must understand how light and dark areas work together. Holding the tool's tip against the wood longer produces a darker mark, while lightly moving it across the surface creates softer shading.

Those differences help bring smoke, trees, clouds, wood siding and other details to life.

"You draw it out, outline it, and then you go back in and burn the outline," Clark said. "Then you go back in and shade it. That's where it's like painting — your darks and the lights."

Clark did not begin seriously pursuing wood burning until after retirement, but his artistic foundation was established many years earlier.

A 1978 graduate of Lebanon High School, Clark took art classes for approximately three years. He considered pursuing art professionally but ultimately followed his talent for music. Clark earned all-state band honors during his final two years of high school and studied music education in college.

The lessons he learned in those high school art classes never completely left him.

"I remember a lot of it about shading and all that kind of stuff," Clark said. "I had a good teacher."

When he returned to wood burning decades later, those old lessons began coming back to him.

Music took Clark first to the classroom and eventually to the stage. After college, he worked as a substitute teacher in Russell County before accepting a position at Alleghany High School in Sparta, North Carolina.

Clark said the school had approximately 350 students and wanted to establish a competitive marching band. He began with about 12 students and, within three years, had built the marching band to more than 80 members. He also worked with a choir of approximately 45 students.

He returned to Southwest Virginia in 1987 for a teaching position in Grundy. That move also introduced him to Terri, who was teaching at J.M. Bevins Elementary School. The two became friends, married that summer and later moved to Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

Clark eventually left teaching and spent approximately 30 years working in retail management. Music, however, remained a signif-



Pat Clark works on a wood-burning depicting one of the earliest automobile models at his booth inside the Grundy Flea Market.

SEE **CLARK TURNS HEAT** | 6A

GOOD OL DAYS



Members of the Grundy Town Council gather for an organizational meeting in mid-September 1971. Seated, from left, are Pauline Tylenda, Russell Chaney and Barbara Berry, the town's first woman mayor. Standing are Ellis Goff, Dr. Thomas Penn, Larry Looney and Roger Powers. Chaney, Goff and Penn were the council's newest members.

Congressman Griffith: Fighting to Protect the Second Amendment

New cases are set to go before the United States Supreme Court.

As is custom, many outside groups with an interest in a case plan to submit amicus briefs.

Getting its term from Latin, “amicus” or “friend” of the Court review matters of a legal issue and provide findings in a legal document for Court consideration.

In particular, one amicus brief collected support with respect to Second Amendment rights.

I am a proud supporter and signee of an amicus brief filed by the American Center for Law & Justice (ACLJ) and led by Georgia Congressman Andrew Clyde.

The amicus brief addresses two cases currently before the U.S. Supreme Court, Viramontes v. Cook County and Grant v. Higgins. Chief Justice John Roberts and the other eight justices will examine the constitutionality of legal restrictions against semi-automatic rifles.

One attorney who is listed as a Counsel of Record drafting a separate amicus brief in Viramontes v. Cook County is former Virginia Attorney General Ken Cucinelli.

Earlier this year, Cucinelli tried to fight in Virginia courts against Governor Abigail Spanberger’s gun grab legislation that places new restrictions on semi-automatic weapons.

But with this new legal fight brewing in the U.S. Supreme Court, I signed my name onto the ACLJ amicus brief that uses similar arguments made by Cucinelli in the Virginia case.

The heart of the argument lies with previous laws tied to a Militia.

In June 1776, the Virginia Convention adopted the Virginia Declaration of Rights. This document is considered a major source of the Bill of Rights that later became part of the U.S. Constitution.

The Virginia Declaration of Rights included the Militia Clause as drafted by founding father George Mason.

The Militia Clause states: “That a well regulated militia, composed of the body of the people, trained to arms,



MORGAN GRIFFITH

WEEKLY REPORT FROM THE CAPITOL

is the proper, natural, and safe defense of a free state...”

Further, the Clause reaffirms that “the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed.”

This language is enshrined in Article I, Section 13 of the Virginia Constitution.

Further, the Militia Act of 1792 required ordinary citizens to provide themselves with the standard infantry arm of the era.

As our amicus brief states, the arms the citizen was expected to keep were the arms they would bring to militia service.

The establishment of an organized militia, what we know today as the National Guard, came as a result of the Militia Act of 1903. But this legislation did not change the fact that there remains an unorganized militia. Federal law continues to recognize this class of U.S. citizens who are not members of the National Guard.

Therefore, this militia class as proposed by Mason and our founders remains well intact. And with this class comes the access to bear arms for service to a militia.

Respect for this concept has notably frayed, with more Democratic states challenging gun laws on the basis that

military-grade style weapons are not protected.

Of course, not every militarily useful weapon is protected.

Nuclear or chemical weapons, tanks and the like fall outside of the scope that an ordinary citizen would be expected to keep or bring for lawful purposes.

A semi-automatic rifle is a class of weapon that extends to tens of millions of Americans, however. The National Shooting Sports Foundation estimates that some 24 million Americans own some modern sporting rifle.

Moreover, numerous state court decisions cited in the brief show no link of weighing military usefulness with the restriction on a firearm.

To this point, we argue that the Second Amendment protects Americans from prohibitions on guns on the grounds that mere possession of an arm with a military characteristic or usefulness is not unlawful.

For a militia to carry out its goals of self-defense as well as the defense of the State, access to the kind of weapons that are in common use for lawful purposes and bear a reasonable relationship to the citizen-militia tradition is protected.

It is my hope that the Supreme Court considers the amicus brief I signed onto, addresses these fundamental issues and rules that bans on semiautomatic weapons are unconstitutional.

I will continue to oppose radical Democratic Party policies that attack our constitutional rights, restrict the Second Amendment and weaken the concept of a militia of ordinary men and women.

If you have questions, concerns, or comments, feel free to contact my office. You can call my Abingdon office at 276-525-1405 or my Christiansburg office at 540-381-5671. To reach my office via email, please visit my website at <https://morgangriffith.house.gov/>. Also on my website is the latest material from my office, including information on votes recently taken on the floor of the House of Representatives.

Savvy Senior: How to Better Protect Your Social Security Number

By JIM MILLER

Dear Savvy Senior,

I’m retired and was a victim of identity theft a while back. I’ve already frozen my credit to protect myself, but I recently heard that I can also “lock” my Social Security number. What exactly does that mean, and is it something I should do?

--Recently Scammed

Dear Recently,

Freezing your credit was one of the smartest steps you could take after identity theft. But there’s another layer of protection many people don’t know about: limiting how your Social Security number (SSN) can be used.

While you can’t actually “lock” your Social Security number the way you can freeze a credit report, you can block two of the most common ways criminals misuse it – using it to get a job and gaining access to your online Social Security account.

Your Social Security number is the master key to much of your financial life. It’s linked to your taxes, Social Security benefits, Medicare, banking and employment records. With data breaches becoming routine and identity thieves using increasingly sophisticated tactics – including AI-generated scams – protecting your SSN is more important than ever. Criminals don’t need your Social Security card; they only need the number.

E-Verify Self Lock

The first tool is E-Verify Self Lock. It prevents someone from using your SSN to get a job with employers that participate in the federal E-Verify system.

If someone uses your Social Security number to get a job, the wages they earn may be reported to the IRS un-



JIM MILLER

SAVVY SENIOR

der your name. That can trigger IRS notices, delay tax refunds and require months of work to correct your tax and Social Security records.

To activate Self Lock, create a free myE-Verify account at e-verify.gov and answer a few identity-verification questions. Once the lock is in place, employers using E-Verify won’t be able to confirm your Social Security number unless you first remove the lock. It remains in effect for one year and can be renewed annually. If you ever return to work for an employer that uses E-Verify, you can temporarily remove the lock online and reactivate it afterward.

Electronic Access Block

The second protection is the Social Security Administration’s Electronic Access Block, which helps prevent criminals from taking over your online Social Security account.

An Electronic Access Block disables online and auto-

mated telephone access to your Social Security record – including your own. That prevents scammers from changing your direct deposit information, redirecting your benefits or updating your personal information.

To set it up, call the Social Security Administration at 800-772-1213 or visit your local Social Security office and request an Electronic Access Block. If you later want online access restored, you’ll need to verify your identity before the block can be removed. For many retirees – especially those who’ve already experienced identity theft – that extra step is well worth the added security.

Extra Safeguards

A credit freeze remains one of the best defenses against identity theft, but it only prevents someone from opening new credit in your name. It won’t stop someone from using your Social Security number for employment or trying to access your Social Security account.

For even greater protection, create your personal my Social Security account before a scammer does by visiting ssa.gov/myaccount. Keep your credit reports frozen unless you need to apply for credit, and request a free IRS Identity Protection PIN. The six-digit PIN acts like a second password for your tax return, preventing someone else from filing under your Social Security number. You can get one by searching “Get an IP PIN” at irs.gov.

Identity theft has become a fact of modern life, but taking a few simple steps now can help protect your Social Security benefits, tax records and financial future, and give you greater peace of mind.

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

God warns us not to boast against Israel. Look at what the Bible says about this subject in Romans 11:18-21:

Verse 18: “Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.”

Verse 19: “Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.”

Verse 20: “Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear.”

Verse 21: “For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.”

This is God’s warning to the Gentiles to be careful about boasting. Beginning in Romans 11:11, Paul explains how the fall of unbelieving natural Israel — the natural-born Jews — led to the salvation of the Gentiles.

In verses 17-24, the apostle uses the metaphor of two olive trees: one natural, representing Israel, and one wild, representing the Gentiles. Because of Israel’s unbelief, many natural branches were severed from the tree, and God grafted many new Gentile branches into the tree of Israel.

The root of the tree was Israel, and the Gentile believers and churches were the branches. This veil of blindness mentioned in verse 7, however, is not permanent. In the future, if they do not continue in unbelief, as stated in verse 23, they will be grafted in again through a renewal of faith.

Note that verse 26 says all Israel shall be saved when

the church age ends and the Second Coming commences. Then Israel will accept Christ and be saved, as it is written in Isaiah 27:9 and Isaiah 59:20-21.



JERRY WARD

THE WATCHMAN:

There shall come out of Zion a deliverer. Jesus Christ will be the deliverer and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. Christ will deliver Israel from the Antichrist and, more importantly, from its sins.

This conversion of Israel to the Messiah, Jesus Christ, will begin when the fullness of the Gentiles comes in, as stated in verse 25. This phrase has numerous interpretations, including one that asserts it refers to a set, predetermined number of Gentiles who will be converted before God turns his full attention back to Israel.

The prediction of the deliverer coming from Zion, seen in Romans 11:26, was foretold in Isaiah 59:20. The

removal of Israel’s sins at that time is a theme in Isaiah 19:20-21.

Because of God’s covenant with Abraham, Romans 11:28 says the Hebrew people are his beloved. Romans 11:29 says God’s gifts and callings are irrevocable.

Paul argues that the Gentiles were once in unbelief and are now provided with faith. Israel, which once walked in unbelief as a nation, could rediscover faith. See Isaiah 11:1-2.

From a prophetic perspective, the church today is filled with Gentile believers in every nation of the world, along with a small remnant of Jewish believers who have received Christ as the Messiah.

This pattern will persist until the Gospel is preached around the world, and then the end will come. See Matthew 24:14.

After the gathering together of the church in heaven, as described in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18, the Great Tribulation will be unleashed upon the earth.

During this time, God’s full focus will be on releasing judgment upon the Gentile nations while also protecting and sparing national Israel and the Jews. He will save them from destruction and eventually bring them into the knowledge of Christ, their Messiah.

This is when their unbelief will turn to faith, and the natural branches will be grafted back into the tree of Israel. At the conclusion of the Tribulation, all Israel shall be saved. See Romans 11:26 and Zechariah 12:7.

Stay tuned: The Watchman.



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Hello Readers

I got up early and went to church. Brother Ronnie Sliger brought the message. He read Exodus 2:23-25, Exodus 3:1-10 and John 3:15-21.

Our revival starts Wednesday evening at 7 and continues Thursday and Friday before ending Sunday morning with dinner after the service.

I missed Wednesday night but went Thursday and Friday, and Lord willing, I'll be there in the morning. Brother Rodney Stiltner is bringing the message, followed by dinner.

The revival is available on the Harman Freewill Baptist Church Facebook page and YouTube channel.

It's been 18 days since Ray passed away, and I'm still waiting for him. I guess I'll always be looking and waiting for him.

Our little Chihuahua, Minnie, is still hanging on. She's about 16 now, but she's getting around, eating well and doing everything little dogs need to do.

Love you all, and continue to pray for us.

"For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

— Psalm 30:5 KJV

Adult education connection



BEVERLY
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Improving reading comprehension is an important part of success in adult education. Strong reading skills help students understand lessons, complete assignments, prepare for tests, and use information in everyday life. While reading may sometimes feel challenging, comprehension can improve with practice and the right strategies.

One helpful strategy is to identify the main idea of what you are reading. Ask yourself, "What is this passage mostly about?" Then look for details that support the main idea. Learning to separate important information from less important details can make reading easier to understand.

Students can also improve comprehension by building their vocabulary. When you come across an unfamiliar word, take time to figure out its meaning. Use context clues, a dictionary, or ask your instructor for help. Learning new words will make future reading easier.

Another effective strategy is to summarize what you have read. After reading a paragraph or section, explain the information in your own words. Discussing the material with classmates can also help you understand different perspectives and remember important information.

Most importantly, students should practice reading regularly. Reading a little each day can build confidence and improve skills over time. Adult education classes provide a supportive environment where students can ask questions, practice new strategies, and learn from their mistakes.

Improving reading skills is a gradual process. By incorporating these strategies, you can enhance your reading skills and boost your confidence. With dedication and the right resources, anyone can become a proficient reader. A great resource to take advantage of is your local adult education program. For more information, call Southwest Regional Adult Education at 276-889-5424 to see what opportunities are available to the adults in your community.

Shuckin' Corn

By LARRY FIELDS

"Hope that whopper don't get loose down the valley," Frank Colley said in mid-September when he visited me on the mountaintop many moons ago.

"Henry Deel told me you wuz a raisin' some monster pumpkins, Corn. I had no idée you'd surpass the perportions of last year's big boy — but danged if you ain't gone and done it," Frank continued.

"When I drove up, I thought fer sure the sun was a settin'," Frank said, taking off his hat and swattin' the no-see-ums.

"How'd you do it, Corn?" Frank finally asked.

"Well, truth to tell, you gave me the idea, Frank, with the IV Miracle-Gro drip you used for your big tomatoes last year," I answered, remembering his juicy whoppers.

"I just built on your idea, Frank. Hope you don't mind," I implored.

"There was a thousand-gallon water tank not being used, and I just got me a case of Miracle-Gro . . . and a garden hose. Granted, my IV handles a little more than a drip — more like a steady flow. Also, for good measure, Junior Vandyke gave me several buckets of horse manure from his barn," I said, spilling all of my secrets.

"Don't reckon there's any danger of stoppin' up the creek like last year?" Frank said, a touch of apprehension in his voice.

"And for sure ain't nobody gonna steal this baby," Frank said. "You'd hafta pack a lunch just to walk around it."

"And I don't reckon there's a remote possibility of this giant getting' loose down the valley — what with all the timber being cut, it would have a straight shot to my house," Frank said, shuddering at the thought.

"Not to worry, Frank. It's a good two miles to your house, and the way I've got it tethered, it'd hafta uproot this big oak to leave the mountaintop," I said as he climbed back into his pickup.

After Frank left, I checked the tether — seven sheets tied together — and threw the camouflage netting over my pumpkin. For sure, I didn't want too many people knowing about my giant pumpkin. I could only imagine the thousands of people climbing the mountain to get a look at it.

I remembered my dad telling me about a man who was too lazy to scotch pumpkins. He said one got loose behind the man's house . . . and rolled into his house, knocking it off the foundation. So . . . every day I checked the tether and scotches. A person can't be too careful.

The thousand gallons of Miracle-Gro had almost seeped through the garden hose, so I disconnected my IV feeder. Seemed like I had more miracle than God ever intended for a man to have.

Already, I was having trouble sleeping. Every day — and night — in September, I couldn't go through the house without looking out the window to assure myself the pumpkin was still there. Amazingly, the giant continued to get bigger.

Reflecting on my dilemma, I began to wonder what a person would do with a pumpkin that big. For sure, my wife didn't have a pie pan that big. She's great when it comes to making pumpkin rolls — but what would a person do with a million pumpkin rolls?



Larry Fields poses beside a larger-than-life pumpkin in the photo accompanying his Tall Tale about a mountaintop giant that broke loose during a storm and rolled down the valley.

Anyway, the very thought of a knife or chainsaw touching my giant pumpkin kinda made me sick to my stomach. The more I thought about it, the more I resolved to keep it just the way it was. For that matter, I could charge people a buck or two just to get their picture taken beside it . . . make a bundle . . . and have enough to buy all the pumpkin pies and pumpkin rolls I could eat in several lifetimes.

I recollected how fortunate I was to even grow my giant pumpkin. My giant was one of 150 pumpkin plants sown so optimistically in my garage as I waited anxiously for the rainy June days to give way to sunshine. By the time that happened, however, 149 of the plants had expired. Only one plant survived . . . but that one pumpkin plant produced a pumpkin that had taken over my psyche. Its continued survival became my obsession.

Then tragedy struck during the predawn hours last Wednesday morning when remnants of Hurricane Jeanne paid a visit to Baldwin Mountain. I was pacing the floor when she struck. High wind and torrential rain combined . . . as flying leaves and tree limbs pelted my windowpanes.

C-R-R-RACK . . . and I knew something terrible had happened.

Praying it was just another tree limb breaking, I donned my rain slicker and ventured out in the storm to check on my giant pumpkin. Scanning the area with my high-beam flashlight, my heart pounding, I began to take in the scene. My giant pumpkin was gone. All that remained were parts of the camouflage netting . . . and a torn sheet. The giant pumpkin had broken loose from its tether and catapulted down the mountain. I was devastated.

Deciding to wait for daylight, I went back into the house to make a pot of coffee. The brief storm was over, but I now found myself chilled to the bone . . . my imagination running away with me. Hard as I tried, I couldn't picture my giant pumpkin surviving its certain roll down the valley.

Blery-eyed and apprehensive, I climbed into my pickup just as the sun climbed over the horizon. Traveling down the mountain road, all I could think about was my giant pumpkin. Could it be wedged between two trees? Did it roll to the bottom and back up a hill? Did it burst open on a rock or tree? And worse . . . did it roll into Frank Colley's house?

I didn't have to wait long to find out. Ten minutes later, when I pulled into Frank Colley's driveway, the answer was oh so obvious.

"Bout time you showed up, Corn," Frank said . . . not appearing one bit happy.

Bits and pieces of my shattered giant were strewn across his house, garage, driveway and yard. I couldn't help myself — I shed a tear or two . . . partly from relief, for there didn't appear to be any real damage.

Already, Frank had taken his end loader and dumped the bigger portions over an embankment. Right then, he was busy hooking up his pressure washer to wash down his house and garage.

Silently, for I could sense that Frank was seething inside, we worked for two hours washing away the orange slime from my broken giant. Most of the orange slime found its way into the Dry Fork creek bed.

As we put away the hose and pressure washer, Frank began to vent his pent-up anger.

"Corn, do you realize what you've done? The only thing that saved my house from that giant pumpkin rollin' was that giant oak yonder. My dogs, Fleabag and Susie, have plumb run off . . . and me and my wife had to take half a bottle of nerve pills — each. Don't you ever grow no more giant pumpkins on the mountaintop."

"You're right, Frank. My mistake — I thought I had it all scotched and tethered. It won't happen again — and that's for sure."

"Dang it. No real harm done no how . . . but I sure thought we were goners for sure when I heard that giant pumpkin rollin' down the mountain like a runaway freight train."

"These big pumpkin seeds can just float on down the creek," Frank said as he kicked several into the orange-tinted waters of upper Dry Fork.

"I've learned my lesson, Frank," I said . . . picking up one rather large pumpkin seed . . . and slipping it into my pocket.

I don't know . . . but I've been told that pumpkin seeds keep quite well in a freezer . . .

Aftermath:

Junior Vandyke told me recently he took his horse to the creek to water her last Wednesday mornin'.

"At first, I thought iron was seepin' into the Dry Fork creek bed," he said. "But then my ol' horse got a pumpkin seed up her nose."

Susie and Fleabag returned home two days later . . . and I took Frank and Freda a freshly baked pumpkin pie last Sunday.

A bunch of folks came looking for the damage after reading this Tall Tale.

OWENS FOUND GUILTY

FROM PAGE 1A

by the family, but it did provide accountability under the law.

"Nothing we did in that courtroom can give Rachel and Larry their daughter back," she said. "Nothing can restore the life Amber should have lived or the life of the child she was preparing to welcome. A guilty verdict cannot undo what happened to this family. But today, twelve jurors heard the evidence, considered it carefully, and unanimously held Dustin Barrett Owens accountable under the law."

Stiltner thanked the jurors, law enforcement officers, investigators, expert witnesses, victim advocates, witnesses and members of the prosecution team who worked on the case.

"There were many people from many agencies who carried a piece of this case, and today's verdict would not have been possible without their work," she said.

Stiltner closed her statement by expressing hope that the verdict would bring some comfort to Comp-ton's family.

"Most of all, I hope today gives Amber's family some measure of peace," Stiltner said. "Justice cannot make this family whole again. But today, Amber and her child were heard. Today, they mattered. And today, there was accountability."

The Buchanan County Commonwealth's Attorney's Office said it would offer no additional comment while the case remains before the court through sentencing and may be subject to further judicial proceedings.

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Community members gather for an evening of music, food and fun during Karaoke Night at The CAM's Courtyard on Sept. 4. Singers ranged in age from 8 to 80.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE CAM

A new tradition begins at The CAM

By **JODI REYNOLDS**
Theatre Guild of Buchanan County

Last Friday, September 4, The CAM hosted its first-ever Karaoke Night on The Courtyard, and if the response was any indication, it certainly won't be the last.

Close to 50 people filtered through The Courtyard during the evening, some stepping up to the microphone and others perfectly content to grab some food, find a seat and cheer on the singers. Dave's Dawgs food trailer was onsite serving dinner, and the beautiful late-summer evening provided the perfect setting for a casual night of music and fun.

What made the evening especially exciting was the mix of people who attended.

Along with familiar faces and CAM regulars, Karaoke Night brought new patrons through our doors, including visitors from both West Virginia and Kentucky. One of our goals at The CAM is to continue finding new ways to introduce people to our facility and give them reasons to come

back, and events like this are proving that there are plenty of ways to do just that.

Perhaps the best part of the evening, however, was seeing just how universal karaoke can be.

Our singers ranged in age from just 8 years old all the way to 80!

There were young performers who had no hesitation about taking the microphone and older singers who knew exactly which song they wanted when it was their turn. Different generations sang different songs, but everyone shared the same stage and the same enthusiasm. And really, that is exactly what we want at The CAM.

While theatre will always be at the heart of the Theatre Guild of Buchanan County, our vision for The CAM continues to grow beyond traditional productions. Concerts, art classes, children's programs, special events and now Karaoke Night are giving people more opportunities to gather, participate and enjoy the arts in ways that feel accessible to everyone.

Not everyone wants to audition for a play. Not everyone considers themselves an artist. But plenty

of people are willing to pick up a microphone and sing their favorite song or at least have a great time watching someone else do it!

After such a positive response to our first event, Karaoke Night will now become a regular part of The CAM calendar, with plans to host it at least once each month. And, we're not stopping with ordinary karaoke nights. Be on the lookout for themed evenings, special karaoke events and a few other ideas that may give you an excuse to choose

your song, gather your friends and take your turn behind the microphone.

If you missed the first one, don't worry. There will be another chance very soon. Whether you're 8 or 80, a seasoned performer or someone whose usual stage is the shower, there's a microphone waiting for you at The CAM.

Keep up with all of our events by visiting our website at www.seeyouatthecam.com and be sure to follow us on our social media channels. See you at The CAM.



Guests take the stage during The CAM's first Karaoke Night on Sept. 4. The event drew nearly 50 people and will become a regular part of The CAM's calendar.

CLARK TURNS HEAT

FROM PAGE 3A

icant part of his life.

As a professional musician, Clark performed on the euphonium, an instrument similar to a smaller tuba. His musical experiences included appearing with or opening for nationally known performers, including Three Dog Night, Kenny G, Al Jarreau and America.

After Clark and Terri lost their mothers within a short period, they eventually returned to Buchanan County and settled in Vansant.

Clark had experimented with wood burning years earlier, including during his time in North Carolina, but he did not devote himself to the craft until retiring at age 64.

Since then, it has become part of his daily routine.

"Every day," Clark said when asked how often he works on his art.

Years of practice show in the growing detail of his pieces. Clark signs his work with his first name and the year it was completed, so he can look back and see how his technique has developed.

A large piece featuring a cabin took approximately eight days to complete. Clark carefully burned the porch shingles, fireplace and other small architectural details into the wood.

He priced the piece at \$150, far less than an hourly wage would produce for eight days of work.

"You don't really get what time you put into it," Clark said.

His goal is to make enough from the pieces to purchase wood and other supplies, but financial gain is not what keeps him working.

It is, he said, about the love of the art and seeing the finished image emerge from an ordinary piece of wood.

Clark works primarily with curly maple and basswood. A friend near Haysi cuts pieces for guitar companies and lets Clark collect scraps that might otherwise be discarded. Many of those pieces are already close to the size he needs, so he only has to sand the edges and prepare the surface.

Basswood is softer and burns easily, so Clark has to be careful with how much pressure he applies. Curly maple is harder, but its natural grain, curves and imperfections can become part of the finished artwork.

"Sometimes the weirder, the better it turns out," Clark said.

A curve in the grain might become part of an animal's body, while a light spot may resemble sunlight breaking through a scene. Clark said cracks and uneven areas do not necessarily ruin a piece. Instead, they often add character to the finished work.

His subjects reflect both his interests and the requests he receives from customers. Clark has burned images of abandoned Southwest Virginia homes, covered bridges, Pilot Mountain in North Carolina and family farms. Other pieces feature Elvis Presley, Willie Nelson, Native Americans, elk, bears, dogs, cats, trains and vintage automobiles.

Custom orders can carry special meaning. Customers bring Clark photographs of family homes, barns, farms, pets or favorite vehicles and ask him to preserve the images in wood.

For one family project, Clark combined a house and a grandfather's barn into a single scene. He produced 10 copies so members of the family could each have one.

Classic-car owners also bring photographs of vehicles they want recreated. If a treasured car eventually

rusts or is sold, Clark said, the owner can still keep its image.

Not every attempt goes exactly as planned. While working on a 1957 Cadillac Eldorado, Clark accidentally burned the year as 1987.

Unlike ink on paper, however, a wood-burning mistake does not always mean starting over. Clark keeps a sander nearby and can sometimes remove the damaged portion and smooth the surface for another attempt.

"It's not over," he said.

Clark generally avoids one subject: human portraits. "I will not do portraits," he said.

The fine lines of a person's face can be unforgiving when burned into wood. A misplaced or overly dark line can change someone's expression or make the person appear much older.

Clark once completed a portrait of his nephew that turned out well, but his attempt to duplicate it was another matter.

"He looked like about 80 years old," Clark said.

Terri has watched her husband's skill grow with every new piece. She said she always knew he was artistic, but years of practice have taken his work to another level.

"He's super talented," she said.

Terri brings her own creativity to the booth. She has crocheted since she was a teenager and makes toys, animals and other items. Crocheted turtles and chickens have been among her strongest sellers.

The couple initially attended festivals and craft shows with Terri's work. Pat brought a few wood-burned pieces to a later event, and his side of the display grew from there.

Traveling to festivals became more physically demanding as their inventory increased. Each show required them to pack their work, load it, unload it, arrange the display and repeat the process afterward. Their permanent booth at the Grundy Flea Market now gives them a place to display their creations without rebuilding the shop at every event.

Clark believes the market could provide the same opportunity to other local artists and craftspeople.

"There's a lot of people who talk to me that do different crafts and stuff, and I keep telling them they need to open up a booth here," he said.

Clark sees no shortage of artistic talent in Buchanan County and the surrounding region. What artists often lack, he said, is a consistent place where the public can find their work.

The flea market helps fill that need, offering Clark a place to display everything from small decorative boxes to detailed scenes that required days of patient work.

For him, the appeal remains the transformation — taking a plain piece of wood, applying heat one careful mark at a time and watching a familiar scene slowly take shape.

After decades spent teaching, managing stores and making music, Clark has found another instrument for his creativity. This one does not produce a sound. It leaves a permanent mark.

The public is invited to visit the Grundy Flea Market, now under new management, inside the former Magic Mart building in Grundy. The market features a variety of local vendors offering handmade crafts, artwork, collectibles and other merchandise. Visitors are encouraged to stop by, browse the booths and support local artists, craftspeople and small businesses.

HALLOWEEN PLANS

FROM PAGE 1A

could attract more than 800 children and families.

Chamber members discussed purchasing candy and asking local businesses, organizations and community members to make candy donations. Donations may be dropped off at the Chamber office. The Chamber will determine how much additional candy must be purchased after reviewing the donations it receives.

Local businesses, organizations and area residents are also invited to participate by setting up a decorated vehicle, table or booth and distributing candy during the countywide celebration.

For more information, to reserve a space or to donate candy, contact Cooper at 276-935-4147 or director@bcchamber.net.

The Chamber and council also acted on a proposed location for the Buchanan County Hall of Fame plaque.

The plaque originally was expected to be displayed in the Buchanan County Courthouse. However, County Administrator Craig Horn ruled out that location because items cannot be hung on the courthouse walls following the building's renovations.

Cooper asked Town Council to allow the plaque to be displayed in the lobby of the Grundy Community Center theater.

The wooden plaque recognizes Hall of Fame members from across Buchanan County and weighs no more than 15 pounds. Council members discussed placing it on a wall near the theater entrance, where it would be visible to visitors.

Street made the motion to allow the plaque to be displayed in the Grundy Community Center. Raines seconded the motion, and council approved it unanimously.

During its Sept. 10 meeting, the Chamber board discussed the council-approved location and agreed that more people may see the plaque in the community center lobby. The Chamber board then voted unanimously to move forward with displaying the plaque at the theater.

PSA CREWS PRAISED

FROM PAGE 1A

ments was flood-repair work on Slate Creek approximately 42 years ago. Since then, he has helped the county respond to repeated floods and worked on numerous water, sewer and infrastructure projects.

He drew laughter while describing how frequently the county has experienced major flooding during his career.

"I've had a 100-year flood that comes every three years," Chitwood joked.

Chitwood told the board that he has enjoyed working with the authority and helping address the challenges facing Buchanan County residents. He said Thompson & Litton has always tried to be honest with its clients and help the communities it serves.

He also expressed confidence in Zach, a Thompson & Litton representative who will continue working with the PSA. Chitwood acknowledged that Zach is still learning parts of the job but said board members would never have to question his honesty.

"He may tell you something you don't want to hear, but it's going to be the truth," Chitwood said. "That's what you all need to know."

Chitwood said that commitment to honesty and service has guided his own career. He thanked the board on behalf of Thompson & Litton and personally expressed his appreciation for the relationships he has developed in Buchanan County.

"I have thoroughly enjoyed my career," Chitwood said.

Although he will no longer be involved in the PSA's projects in the same capacity, Chitwood told board members he would remain available if they needed his experience or assistance in the future.

Board members and PSA officials thanked Chitwood for his service and the role he has played in projects across Buchanan County during his 42-year career.



Rick Chitwood, left, speaks to the Buchanan County Public Service Authority Board as Zach Russell, the new project manager for Thompson & Litton Engineering Services in Buchanan County, looks on during the authority's regular September meeting Sept. 8 at Peking Restaurant. Chitwood is retiring after a 42-year engineering career that included extensive work throughout Buchanan County.

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Lady Eagles sweep Virginia High in first-district match

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

Southern Gap's volleyball team added another first to the school's growing list of milestones Tuesday night. The Eagles swept Virginia High 25-18, 25-21, 25-22 to win the first Southwest District match in program history. Senior Leah Rasnake led Southern Gap with 10 digs and eight kills as the Eagles controlled the match from beginning to end. "Being a senior and getting to be part of our first-ever district win is something I'll never forget," Rasnake said. "I'm so proud of this team, how far we've come, and everything we've accomplished together."

Southern Gap received contributions throughout its lineup. Bella Hurley distributed eight assists, and Adyson Bell added nine assists. Lucy Savage recorded seven kills, Madison Lester finished with four blocks and Addy Boyd contributed four kills. Claire Griffey anchored the defense with 20 digs, while Kendall Brown served four aces. Cecilia Hernandez led Virginia High with 29 digs. Kileeah Tucker recorded 13 digs and nine kills for the Bearcats. The victory came in the first district match for Southern Gap, the consolidated Buchanan County school formed from Grundy, Hurley, Twin Valley and Council high schools.



Senior Leah Rasnake recorded 10 digs and eight kills as Southern Gap swept Virginia High for the first Southwest District victory in program history.



Members of the Southern Gap Soaring Eagle Marching Band join the Marching Virginians on the field at Lane Stadium during Virginia Tech's Sept. 5 game against Virginia Military Institute. The Hokies won 73-3. (Contributed photo)

Soaring Eagles take flight with the Marching Virginians

SGHS Media Reporter- ELIJAH SANDERS Southern Gap Soaring Eagle Marching Band students recently had the opportunity of a lifetime when they took part in Virginia Tech's "Be an MV for a Day" experience, joining the Marching Virginians for an unforgettable day of music, friendship and Hokie spirit. Sixteen Southern Gap students participated in the special event, which allowed high school musicians to experience what it is like to be a member of a college marching band. Through a sign-up process, students earned the opportunity to spend the day alongside members of the Marching Virginians, learning, performing, and getting a firsthand look at college music life. Representing the Soaring Eagle Marching Band were Paris Sanabria (saxophone), Elijah Sanders (trumpet), Rachel Tackett (drum major), Abby Miller (snare), Nathaniel Stiltner (snare), Natalie Lester (color guard), Eli McNeil (trumpet), Mia Sanders (color guard), Kyrie Taylor (tenor saxophone), Jennilee Deel (clarinet), Gwen Woods (mellophone), Brianna Adkins (clarinet), Logan Belcher (trombone), Chelsey Endicott (color guard), Emma Hale

(baritone saxophone), and Zoey Owens (clarinet). The day began at the Virginia Tech Performance Studio, where the students warmed up and practiced alongside the Marching Virginians. They also had the opportunity to eat with the college musicians, talk with them, and learn more about their experiences as members of a collegiate marching band. But the highlight of the day came when the Southern Gap students joined the Marching Virginians as they made their way through the tunnel and onto the field at Lane Stadium. Walking out beneath the bright stadium lights in front of a roaring crowd gave the students a memory they are unlikely to forget. The performance included music from artists such as Beyoncé and Jay-Z, along with the crowd favorite "Hokey Pokey." For these young musicians, performing in such an iconic college football atmosphere went far beyond simply playing music. Throughout the day, students formed friendships with Marching Virginians and

SEE SOARING EAGLES | 3B

In the Locker Room

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

Three weeks into the high school football season, the landscape across Southwest Virginia is taking shape. Several teams have established themselves as legitimate contenders, while others are still searching for answers. We saw dominant performances, narrow escapes, a last-minute defensive touchdown and a historic road victory for Southern Gap. We will start close to home, where the Eagles delivered an offensive explosion in their 63-21 victory at Giles. The win evened Southern Gap's record at 2-2 and marked the first road victory in program history. It was also the best and most complete game the Eagles have played through their first four weeks. Southern Gap is loaded with promising young talent, including freshmen Carson Blankenship, Gunner Baker, Mason Rife and Devin Mullins. Blankenship rushed for 106 yards and a touchdown against Giles, while Baker accounted for four touchdowns and made plays as a runner, receiver and kickoff returner. Baker rushed eight times for 105 yards and two touchdowns, caught a 15-yard touchdown pass and returned a kickoff 60 yards for another score. The Southern Gap offense also appears to be finding its rhythm with Brayden White under center. White completed 6 of 7 passes for 129 yards and two touchdowns in his second start at quarterback. The move also benefited Ayden Whited, who transitioned from quarterback to receiver—Whited caught three passes for 97 yards, including a 56-yard touchdown, in the victory. Southern Gap's defense also deserves plenty of credit. The Eagles remained disciplined and did an excellent job containing Giles' traditional single-wing offense. The Eagles now enter a much-needed bye week before hosting Honaker on Sept. 25 for Little League Night at Smiley Ratliff Field at the Red Robertson Athletic Complex. That should be another good test for a Southern Gap team that is becoming more confident each week. Elsewhere, Chilhowie might be playing as well as anyone in the region. The Warriors improved to 3-0 with a 50-0 victory over Narrows on Thursday. Chilhowie has outscored its first three opponents 141-7 after defeating Marion 47-0 and J.I. Burton 44-7. The Warriors will receive a much tougher test this week when they visit Eastside. The Spartans bounced back from a surprising 24-23 loss to Wise Central in their opener by rolling past Rural Retreat 56-29. Keldon Hamilton's return from injury provided a major boost for Eastside and should make the matchup with Chilhowie one of the most interesting games on this week's schedule.



IN THE LOCKER ROOM

SEE IN THE LOCKER ROOM | 5B

Eagles erupt for 63 points, earn first road win in program history

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

Southern Gap's young football program reached another milestone Friday night — and did it with an offensive performance that will be difficult to forget. The Eagles piled up nine offensive touchdowns and added another on special teams as they rolled past Giles 63-21 for the first road victory in Southern Gap High School history. Southern Gap improved to 2-2 with what may be its most complete performance of the season. Giles fell to 0-3. The Eagles controlled the line of scrimmage behind the War Pigs, Blake Childress, Chase Baker, Henry Brown, Riley Hancock, Matt Thompson, Colin Wolfrum, Kanan Justice and Trever Blankenship. Their work up front helped Southern Gap rush for more than 300 yards while giving senior quarterback Brayden White time to deliver several big plays through the air. White looked increasingly comfortable in his second start at quarterback, completing 6 of 7 passes for 129 yards and two touchdowns. He also contributed on three successful 2-point conversions. Southern Gap wasted little time taking control. Freshman Gunner Baker scored on a 4-yard run in the first quarter, and White connected with Baker for the 2-point conversion to give the Eagles an 8-0 lead. The offense exploded in the second quarter. Freshman Carson Blankenship broke loose for a 34-yard touchdown run before White found Baker for a 15-yard scoring pass. Blankenship added the 2-point conversion following Baker's touchdown reception.



Carson Blankenship rushed for 106 yards and a touchdown on eight carries as Southern Gap defeated Giles 63-21 for the first road win in program history (Photo by Chad Cooper).



Gunner Baker rushed for 105 yards and two touchdowns, caught a touchdown pass and returned a kickoff 60 yards for another score in Southern Gap's 63-21 road victory over Giles (Photo by Chad Cooper).

White then delivered the Eagles' biggest passing play of the night, connecting with Ayden Whited for a 56-yard touchdown. Southern Gap carried a 28-7 advantage into halftime. The Eagles continued pouring it on after the break. Baker scored on a 21-yard run, and White added the 2-point conversion. After Giles found the end zone, Baker answered immediately by returning the ensuing kickoff 60 yards for another Southern Gap touchdown. Junior Aidan Baker joined the scoring parade with a

SEE EAGLES ERUPT | 3B

New People's Bank

PLAYER OF THE WEEK

SOUTHERN GAP EAGLES.

GUNNER BAKER

Southern Gap High School freshman Gunner Baker is the New People's Bank Player of the Week.

Baker rushed for 105 yards and two touchdowns, caught a touchdown pass and returned a kickoff 60 yards for another score in Southern Gap's 63-21 road victory over Giles on Friday, Sept. 11, 2026, in Pearisburg, Virginia.

NP New Peoples Bank

www.NewPeoples.Bank

CONGRATULATIONS!

Member FDIC

SAFE SPORTS

WORD SEARCH

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

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

WORDS

ATHLETE
BRACE
CLEATS
CONCUSSION
CONDITIONING
CONTUSION
COOL DOWN
ERGONOMICS
GOGGLES
HELMET
HYDRATION
IMPACT
INFLAMMATION
MOUTH GUARD
PADDING
REFEREE
REHABILITATION
SPORTSMANSHIP
SPRAIN
STAMINA
STRAIN
SUPERVISION
TEAMWORK
WARM-UP

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

CLUES ACROSS

1. Egyptian bull god
5. A young canine
8. North Carolina university
11. "Oddbod" actor Tom
13. Midway between northeast and east
14. A place to shop
15. Mysterious "Severance" family
16. Single Lens Reflex
17. Malaria
18. Informal loan organizations
20. Twitching
21. Holm oak
22. Willing to consent
25. In an early way
30. Stuck it out
31. Language in Ghana
32. Obtain
33. Ancient Greek currency
38. One point east (clockwise) of due north

CLUES DOWN

1. Bridge-building degree
2. Expression of sorrow or pity
3. Lizard species
4. Turkish leader title
5. A way to bother
6. Blank
7. A fine, closely woven cotton fabric
8. Sports broadcaster Ian
9. Popular whodunit board game
10. Alkali flats mineral
12. Large African antelope
14. It's delivered most days
19. Satisfy
23. Water soaked soil
24. Of a past era
25. Chest muscle (slang)
26. Ribonucleic acid
27. Doctor of Education
28. Coffee receptacle

29. Where rockstars work
34. International airport in Connecticut
35. Russian river
36. It's used to make cabins
37. OJ trial judge Lance
39. A means to persuade
40. Short poem
41. A way to begin hostilities with
42. Multi-function radar (abbr.)
44. Joints
45. Blatted
46. Swedish rock group
47. Millisecond
48. ___ podrida: Spanish stew
51. Doctors' group
52. Trunk of a tree
53. Tattle
54. Metrical foot
58. ___ Angeles

PUZZLE SOLUTION

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

SUDOKU

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

Level: Intermediate

Word Scramble

Rearrange the letters to spell something pertaining to sports.

I E F D L

Answer: Field

GUESS WHO ?

I am an athlete born in Texas on September 17, 1995. I played football, basketball and baseball while in high school. But football is where I eventually gravitated, despite my father playing professional baseball. I have led the Kansas City Chiefs to several Super Bowl victories.

Answer: Patrick Mahomes

CRYPTO FUN

Solve the code to discover words related to sports safety. Each number corresponds to a letter. (Hint: 22 = E)

A. 2 22 17 19 22 10
Clue: Protects head

B. 23 22 15 6
Clue: Equipment

C. 6 25 17 22 13
Clue: Govern play

D. 21 22 5 15 17 10 26
Clue: Punishment

Answers: A. helmet B. gear C. rules D. penalty

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

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

SUDOKU SOLUTION

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

Horoscopes

ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20
Aries, this week calls for a break from your usual fast pace. If you've been burning the candle at both ends, your energy reserves will be depleted. Focus on fortifying yourself and your space.

TAURUS – Apr 21/May 21
Miscommunication is likely if you rush your words, Taurus. Take an extra breath before responding when someone asks you a question or when addressing emails.

GEMINI – May 22/Jun 21
It's time to audit where your money is going, Gemini. If you've been overspending as a balm to stress, hit the brakes. Look for areas where you can plug any financial leaks.

CANCER – Jun 22/Jul 22
The spotlight is firmly on you right now, Cancer. You might feel a sudden urge to change your style, update your resume or shed an old identity that no longer fits. Trust this instinct.

LEO – Jul 23/Aug 23
The universe is asking you to clear out some psychic debris this week. It is a great time for journaling and heavy solo time. If secrets or old resentments bubble up, just let them go.

VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22
Your social life is getting a bit of a reality check, Virgo. You might realize that certain friendships have felt a bit one-sided. Seek people who inspire you.

LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23
The spotlight shines brightly on your professional zone this week, Libra. Instead of waiting for recognition, create your own. Update your portfolio or pitch an idea you have been sitting on.

SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22
Scorpio, you may be craving a breakdown of boredom. If you can't physically travel right now, satisfy this urge by stretching your mind another way.

SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21
This week drags you into deeper psychological waters than you might care to swim in, Sagittarius. It's a powerful time for intimacy or understanding behaviors.

CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20
Relationships take center stage, Capricorn. If there is an imbalance of power, it will need to be corrected. Approach conversations this week with diplomacy.

AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18
Aquarius, your daily habits are catching up to you. If you've been eating poorly or skipping sleep, your body will demand a reset. Focus on micro-habits to get back on track.

PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20
Your playful side is begging for attention, Pisces. Make time for hobbies, art or romance that serve no purpose but to bring you joy.

FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS

SEPTEMBER 13
Niall Horan, Singer (33)

SEPTEMBER 14
Kimberly Williams, Actress (55)

SEPTEMBER 15
Tom Hardy, Actor (49)

SEPTEMBER 16
Alexis Bledel, Actress (45)

SEPTEMBER 17
Baz Luhrmann, Director (64)

SEPTEMBER 18
James Marsden, Actor (53)

SEPTEMBER 19
Jimmy Fallon, TV Host (52)

VIRGINIA MOUNTAINEER PIGSKIN PROGNOSTICATORS							
THIS WEEK'S GAMES		CHAD COOPER	SAM BARTLEY	RYAN KEENE	TERESA MATNEY	MARK COOPER	BRIAN MOORE
							
1	Bluefield W.V. at Ridgeview	Bluefield W.V.	Ridgeview	Bluefield W.V.	Ridgeview	Ridgeview	Ridgeview
2	Richlands at Abingdon	Abingdon	Abingdon	Abingdon	Abingdon	Abingdon	Richlands
3	Honaker at Holston	Honaker	Honaker	Honaker	Honaker	Honaker	Honaker
4	Chilhowie at Eastside	Eastside	Eastside	Eastside	Chilhowie	Eastside	Chilhowie
5	Twin Springs at J.I. Burton	J.I. Burton	J.I. Burton	J.I. Burton	J.I. Burton	J.I. Burton	J.I. Burton
6	Lebanon at Rural Retreat	Lebanon	Lebanon	Rural Retreat	Rural Retreat	Lebanon	Rural Retreat
7	John Battle at Wise Central	Wise Central	Wise Central	John Battle	Wise Central	Wise Central	Wise Central
8	Gate City at Marion	Gate City	Gate City	Gate City	Gate City	Gate City	Gate City
9	Virginia High at Tennessee High	Tennessee High	Tennessee High	Tennessee High	Tennessee High	Tennessee High	Tennessee High
10	Northwood at Bland County	Northwood	Northwood	Northwood	Northwood	Northwood	Bland County
11	George Wythe at Patrick Henry	George Wythe	George Wythe	George Wythe	George Wythe	Patrick Henry	Patrick Henry
12	Tazewell at Union	Union	Union	Union	Union	Union	Union
OVERALL RECORDS		29-7	25-11	28-8	30-6	27-9	26-10

SOARING EAGLES

FROM PAGE 1B

gained valuable insight into college life, music programs, and the possibilities that await them after high school. For some, the experience even helped influence their future college decisions.

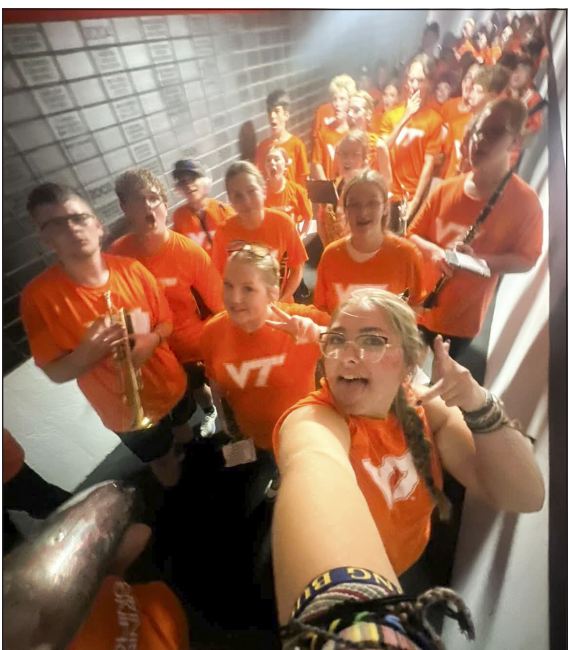
The students returned home with plenty to say about their experience.

“We had a great time!” Chelsey Endicott shared, while Jennilee Deel enthusiastically added, “I can’t wait to come back next year.”

The experience provided much more than a day of performing. It allowed Southern Gap musicians to see firsthand where their passion for music could take them and to connect with other students who share that same passion.

The Soaring Eagle Marching Band is incredibly grateful for the opportunity to participate in “Be an MV for a Day.” The experience brought students closer to music, introduced them to new possibilities, and created memories and friendships that will last a lifetime.

From the mountains of Buchanan County to the bright lights of Lane Stadium, the Southern Gap Soaring Eagle Marching Band continues to soar.



Members of the Southern Gap Soaring Eagle Marching Band wait in the Lane Stadium tunnel before taking the field with the Marching Virginians during Virginia Tech's 73-3 victory over Virginia Military Institute on Sept. 5, 2026, in Blacksburg, Virginia (Contributed photo).



Southern Gap Soaring Eagle Marching Band members take in the view from the stands at Lane Stadium during Virginia Tech's 73-3 victory over Virginia Military Institute on Sept. 5. (Contributed photo)

EAGLES ERUPT

FROM PAGE 1B

12-yard touchdown run before fullback Caden Justice powered into the end zone from 20 yards out. Reid Stiltner ran in the 2-point conversion following Justice's score, giving Southern Gap 28 points in the third quarter alone.

Stiltner completed the Eagles' scoring with a 9-yard touchdown run in the fourth quarter. Thompson kicked the extra point to produce the 63-point total.

Gunner Baker delivered a standout all-around performance, rushing eight times for 105 yards and two touchdowns. He also caught a 15-yard touchdown pass and returned a kickoff 60 yards for a score, finishing the night with four touchdowns.

Blankenship surpassed the century mark for the second time this season with 106 yards and a touchdown on eight carries. Justice added 87 yards and a score on seven attempts, while Aidan Baker carried

three times for 26 yards and a touchdown.

Whited led Southern Gap's receivers with three catches for 97 yards and a touchdown. Baker had one reception for 15 yards and a score, Mason Rife caught one pass for 12 yards, and Justice added a 5-yard reception.

Southern Gap's defense also turned in one of its strongest performances of the season. The Eagles remained disciplined against Giles' traditional single-wing offense, limiting the Spartans' ability to control the ball and sustain drives.

The victory sends Southern Gap into its bye week with momentum and an even record through the first four games in school history.

The Eagles return to action Sept. 25 when they host Honaker for Little League Night at Smiley Ratliff Field at the Red Robertson Athletic Complex at Southern Gap.

Southern Gap tops Graham for second win in as many nights

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

Southern Gap passed another early test Wednesday night, defeating Graham 3-1 for its second Southwest District victory in as many nights.

The Eagles entered the match less than 24 hours after sweeping Virginia High in Bristol for its second district contest. Despite the quick turnaround, Southern Gap remained composed when Graham applied pressure and found a way to finish the match.

Kendall Brown provided a spark from the service line with four aces. She credited the Eagles' success to the trust developed during a summer of preparation under coach Hannah Stiltner Lester.

“Even though we are a new team, Coach Lester had us in the gym all summer so now it feels like we have played together throughout our high school years,” Brown said. “I also think what led us to success against Graham was the way we refused to let each other get in our heads. When things got tough, we picked each other up, stayed focused and kept the momentum going. We trusted each other, and that’s what allowed us to finish strong.”

Leah Rasnake recorded 10 digs and eight kills, while Lucy Savage finished with seven kills. Madison Lester controlled the net with four blocks.

Adyson Bell distributed nine assists, and Bella Hurley added eight. Claire Griffey anchored the Eagles' defense with 20 digs while contributing 10 service points.

Brown said years of offseason work in travel volleyball have helped her develop confidence behind the service line.

“I’ve also worked hard to improve my serving over the years through travel volleyball in the offseason,” Brown said. “The biggest difference now is that I trust myself. Every time I step behind the line, I have more confidence in what I can do, and I believe in my serve.”

The victory completed an impressive two-night stretch for Southern Gap, which moved to 2-0 in Southwest District play during its inaugural season.



Sophomore Kendall Brown served four aces as Southern Gap defeated Graham 3-1 for its second Southwest District win in as many nights.

Southwest Virginia Football Scoreboard

WEEK 3

Thursday's games

Chilhowie 50, Narrows 0
Eastside 56, Rural Retreat 29
Grayson County 32, Tazewell 20
Holston 44, John Battle 20
Lebanon 18, Marion 12
Lee High 33, Richlands 0
Northwood 46, Eastern Montgomery 6
Virginia High 20, George Wythe 15

Friday's games

Gate City 41, Abingdon 28
Graham 14, Union 12
Patrick Henry 39, J.I. Burton 10
Pineville (Ky.) 34, Twin Springs 10
Ridgeview 43, Wise Central 7
Rye Cove 31, Honaker 30
Southern Gap 63, Giles 21
Thomas Walker 48, Lynn Camp (Ky.) 6

YOUR HOMETOWN NEWS IS JUST A CLICK AWAY



LOCAL NEWS



SPORTS



OBITUARIES



COMMUNITY EVENTS

www.VirginiaMountaineer.com

CLASSIFIEDS

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LEGAL NOTICES

TRUSTEE'S SALE OF 1058 SQUIRE BRANCH ROAD, GRUNDY, VA 24614. In execution of a certain Deed of Trust dated October 20, 2006, in the original principal amount of \$132,000.00 recorded in the Clerk's Office, Circuit Court for Buchanan County, Virginia as Instrument No. 060003504. The undersigned Substitute Trustee will offer for sale at public auction at the front steps of the building housing the Circuit Court for Buchanan County, Main St., Grundy, Virginia, or any such temporary alternative Circuit Court location designated by the Judges of the Circuit Court, on November 12, 2026, at 2:30 PM, the property described in said Deed of Trust, located at the above address, and more particularly described as follows: ALL THAT CERTAIN TRACT OR PARCEL OF LAND, AND EASEMENT FOR RIGHT OF WAY, SITUATE ON SLATE CREEK OF LEVISA RIVER, IN BUCHANAN COUNTY, VIRGINIA, AND BEING TRACT NO. 1 AND EASEMENT OF THE PROPERTY ACQUIRED BY KERRY ANDREW STACY AND ANNA MARIE STACY, HIS WIFE, AS TENANTS BY THE ENTIRETY WITH RIGHT OF SURVIVORSHIP AS AT COMMON LAW, FROM GREGORY NEIL RIFE AND A. D. RIFE, III BY DEED DATED SEPTEMBER 27, 2006, AND INTENDED TO BE FORTHWITH RECORDED IN THE OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT OF BUCHANAN COUNTY, VIRGINIA, REFERENCE TO WHICH DEED BEING HERE MADE FOR A MORE PARTICULAR DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTY HEREBY CONVEYED, AND THE EXCEPTIONS THEREFROM. THE PROPERTY HEREBY CONVEYED IS DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS, TO-WIT: "TRACT NO. 1: BEGINNING AT A POINT IN THE CENTER OF SLATE CREEK, CORNER TO CONNIE SUE BARNETTE (REFERENCE DEED BOOK NO. 361, PAGE 330) AND CORNER TO A 0.079 ACRE TRACT THIS DAY CONVEYED BY GRANTORS TO GREGORY JUSTUS AND ROBIN JUSTUS, HIS WIFE; THENCE WITH THE LAST

LEGAL NOTICES

MENTIONED TRACT, S 30 46 37 W, 155.25 FEET TO AN IRON PIN; THENCE, WITH SAID JUSTUS LINE AND AN EXISTING WIRE FENCE, S 44 54 06 W, 284.16 FEET TO AN IRON PIN; THENCE N 48 32 42 W, 216.11 FEET TO AN IRON PIN; THENCE N 41 27 18 E, 331.12 FEET TO A POINT IN SLATE CREEK; THENCE, UP SLATE CREEK, S 62 04 00 E, 87.99 FEET TO A POINT; THENCE S 83 57 31 E, 145.86 FEET TO THE BEGINNING, CONTAINING 1.93 ACRES, MORE OR LESS, AND BEING MORE PARTICULARLY SHOWN ON PLAT ENTITLED, "PLAT SHOWING A PART OF THE PROPERTY IN THE NAME OF GREGORY RIFE & A.D. RIFE, SITUATE ON SLATE CREEK ***, WHICH PLAT IS INTENDED TO BE FORTHWITH RECORDED IN SAID CLERK'S OFFICE. TERMS OF SALE: ALL CASH. A bidder's deposit of ten percent (10%) of the sale price or ten percent (10%) of the original principal balance of the subject Deed of Trust, whichever is lower, in the form of cash or certified funds payable to the Substitute Trustee must be present at the time of the sale. The balance of the purchase price will be due within fifteen (15) days of sale, otherwise Purchaser's deposit may be forfeited to Trustee. Time is of the essence. If the sale is set aside for any reason, the Purchaser at the sale shall be entitled to a return of the deposit paid. The Purchaser may, if provided by the terms of the Trustee's Memorandum of Foreclosure Sale, be entitled to a \$50 cancellation fee from the Substitute Trustee, but shall have no further recourse against the Mortgagor, the Mortgagee or the Mortgagee's attorney. A form copy of the Trustee's memorandum of foreclosure sale and contract to purchase real property is available for viewing at www.aldridgepите.com. Additional terms, if any, to be announced at the sale and the Purchaser may be given the option to execute the contract of sale electronically. This is a communication from a debt collector and any information obtained will be used for that purpose. The sale is subject to seller confirmation. Substitute Trustee: Equity Trustees, LLC, 8100 Three Chopt Road, Suite 240, Richmond, VA 23229. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Virginia Pre-Sale Department of counsel for Equity Trustees, LLC at 301-961-6555, website: www.aldridgepите.com. VA-352668-2. VAM-09-17,24;10-22;2026

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 chestnut on a spur; thence down said spur North 45 degrees West 41 poles to a small chestnut; thence North 11 degrees

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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 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 466 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 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,

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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 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 566 at Page 820, Deed Book 566 at Page 824, Deed Book 566 at Page 828, Deed Book 566 at Page 832, Deed Book 567 at Page 49, Deed Book 567 at Page 53, Deed Book 573 at Page 70, Deed Book 573 at Page 073, Deed Book 573 at Page 077, Deed Book 573 at Page 80, Deed Book 573 at Page 084, Deed Book 573 at Page 088, Deed Book 573 at Page 091, Deed Book 573 at Page 094, Deed Book 574 at Page 403, Deed Book 577 at Page 066, Deed Book 577 at Page 069, Deed Book 577 at Page 080, Deed Book 577 at Page 083, Deed Book 577 at Page 560, Deed Book 577 at Page 564, Deed Book 585 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; Hurlley 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; Delores McGowan, 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;

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Joseph Daniel Boyd, who is believed to be deceased and whose last known address is unknown; Brenda Joyce 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 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; 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 Un-

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known 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. (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 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. 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

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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

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://hiltonoliverattorney-va.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

BCPS students to receive free breakfast and lunch this school year

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

All Buchanan County Public Schools students will receive breakfast and lunch at no cost during the 2026-27 school year, the school division announced.

Every school in the division will participate in the Community Eligibility Provision, a federal program implemented under the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010.

Through the program, students attending Buchanan County schools may receive a nutritious breakfast and lunch each school day without being charged. Families will not be required to complete free or reduced-price meal applications for their children to participate.

A copy of the school division's meal policy is available for review at each school and through the central School Nutrition Office.

For more information, contact Rhonda

Musick at 276-935-4551, ext. 243, or rhonda.musick@bcpsk12.com.

The Buchanan County School Nutrition Department is an equal opportunity provider.

Federal civil rights laws and U.S. Department of Agriculture regulations prohibit discrimination in USDA-funded or administered programs based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, marital status, family or parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for previous civil rights activity. Not all prohibited bases apply to every program, and remedies and complaint-filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

People with disabilities who need program information in an alternative format, including Braille, large print, audiotope or American Sign Language, may contact the state or local agency administering the program or reach the USDA through the Telecommunications

Relay Service by dialing 711. Program information also may be made available in languages other than English.

Anyone wishing to file a discrimination complaint may complete USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form AD-3027, available online through the USDA's "How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint" page or at any USDA office. A person also may submit a letter containing all the information requested on the form.

You can request copies of the complaint form by calling 866-632-9992. You may mail completed forms or letters to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Mail Stop 9410, Washington, DC 20250-9410; or fax to 202-690-7442; or emailed to program.intake@usda.gov.

The USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.

Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program returning to BCPS

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

Students at each of Buchanan County's four elementary-middle schools will again have opportunities to sample fresh fruits and vegetables during the 2026-27 school year.

The Buchanan County School Nutrition Department announced that all four schools will participate in the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program.

The program introduces children to a variety of fresh, high-quality fruits and vegetables while teaching them about nutritious foods and healthy eating. Students will be offered taste-testing opportunities on multiple days each week.

School nutrition officials said the program is intended to encourage healthy habits, support students' well-being and introduce children to new foods and flavors. Fresh food can also help students stay focused and prepared to learn.

For more information, contact Rhonda Musick at 276-935-4551, ext. 243, or rhonda.musick@bcpsk12.com. Additional information is available from the Virginia Department of Education's Office of School and Community Nutrition Programs at 804-418-4735.

The Buchanan County School Nutrition Department is an equal opportunity provider.

Federal civil rights laws and U.S. Department of Agriculture regulations prohibit discrimination in USDA-funded or administered programs based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, marital status, family or parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for previous civil rights activity. Not all prohibited bases apply to every program, and remedies and complaint-filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

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The USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.

BUCHANAN COUNTY PUBLIC SERVICE AUTHORITY
Employment Opportunity

The Buchanan County PSA is taking applications for a full time meter reader position for Buchanan County. This is a full-time job with benefits and may require extended hours as needed. Applications may be obtained online or at Buchanan County PSA office at 1023 Old Benns Branch Rd. Oakwood, Va. 24631. The deadline for applicants will be Wednesday, September 23, 2026 at 4:00PM. This job requires physical manual labor, a valid drivers license. Successful candidate will be subject to drug screening and background check. Only applications received during this time period will be considered. For any questions regarding this position, please contact the Buchanan County PSA business office at 276-935-5827

Buchanan County PSA 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.

IN THE LOCKER ROOM

FROM PAGE 1B

Gate City also made a statement by traveling to Abingdon and defeating the Class 3 Falcons 41-28 in an important Mountain 7 District game.

The Blue Devils' only loss came against a talented Dobyns-Bennett team, which escaped with a 28-21 victory in Week 2. Gate City has shown that it can compete with larger programs, and the Blue Devils will be a difficult opponent for anyone in the Mountain 7.

One of the week's biggest results came at Bullitt Park, where Graham edged Union 14-12.

Union entered the game following consecutive 42-0 victories over Lee High and Daniel Boone, but the reigning Region 2D champions were handed their first loss. The Bears are now 2-1, and I would not be surprised if we see Graham and Union meet again when the playoffs arrive.

Graham is also 2-1. The G-Men opened with a thrilling 40-33 victory over Bluefield in the annual Graham-Beaver game before falling to Heritage 21-6. Their win at Union reminded everyone that the G-Men remain one of the teams to beat in Region 2D.

Tazewell entered Thursday's game against Grayson County riding the momentum of a 30-27 season-opening victory at Pulaski County. The Bulldogs, led by quarterback Ty Whittaker, could not keep it going against Grayson County, however, falling 32-20.

Coach J'Me Harris' Bulldogs were outmanned by a Grayson County team that earned its first victory and improved to 1-2.

Holston moved to 2-2 with a 44-20 victory over John Battle.

The Cavaliers opened their season with a 22-6 loss to Southern Gap in the first football game in Eagles history. Holston then defeated Eastern Montgomery 49-16 before suffering a narrow 19-17 loss to Narrows. Thursday's win returned the Cavaliers to the .500 mark, while John Battle remained winless at 0-3.

Lebanon also had a good week.

The Pioneers learned their program will drop to Class 1 next season and return to the Hogoheegee District. They followed that announcement by earning their first victory of the year, defeating Marion 18-12.

Lebanon came painfully close to opening the season with a victory before falling to Honaker 21-20 in the Coal Bowl. Patrick Henry then defeated the Pioneers 35-14. Lebanon is now 1-2, while Marion remains winless at 0-3.

Things are not getting any easier for Richlands.

The Blue Tornado suffered a 33-0 loss to Lee High, dropping to 0-3 under interim coach Bubba Edwards. Richlands opened with a 21-6 loss to Virginia High before being shut out by Gate City 49-0.

The Richlands fan base expects the program to compete at a much higher level, but I hope Edwards does not become the scapegoat for problems that were already there when he accepted the job. Turning around a struggling program takes time, stability and support.

Northwood quietly remained unbeaten with a 46-6 victory over Eastern Montgomery. The Panthers opened with a 26-0 win over Twin Springs before having a bye. At 2-0, Northwood has allowed only six points all season.

Patrick Henry is another team turning heads.

Coach Austin Cooper's Rebels defeated J.I. Burton 39-10 behind another strong performance from star running back Jeb Stewart, who has emerged as one of the state's leaders in all-purpose yards.

Patrick Henry is 2-1, with its only loss coming in a 7-0 double-overtime battle against Class 2 Virginia High. Since that defeat, the Rebels have beaten Lebanon 35-14 and handled Burton by 29 points. The Rebels appear capable of making plenty of noise this fall.

Twin Springs fell to Pineville, Kentucky, 34-10. The Titans' only victory came against Unaka, and it has been a difficult start for the Nickelsville team. Twin Springs faces J.I. Burton this week in a matchup that should give one of those programs a much-needed boost.

Ridgeview continues to look like one of the region's strongest teams.

The Wolfpack overwhelmed Wise Central 43-7 to improve to 3-0. Ridgeview now turns its attention to a highly anticipated matchup with Bluefield, a game coach Kent Grant circled during the preseason.

Rye Cove delivered the week's most dramatic finish.

The War Eagles broke Honaker's heart with a 31-30 victory, scoring the winning touchdown on a scoop-and-score in the closing moments. Rye Cove is now 3-0 behind star running back Cole Barnette and West Virginia University commit Ethan Lawson.

The War Eagles opened with a 12-9 victory over Lord Botetourt before defeating Southern Gap 35-24. Rye Cove now enters a favorable portion of its schedule with Thomas Walker, Castlewood and Lee High ahead.

Next comes the game many Region 1D football fans have already circled. Rye Cove hosts Eastside on Oct. 9 in a rematch of the past two regional championship games, both won by the War Eagles.

Thomas Walker earned its first victory by defeating Lynn Camp, Kentucky, 48-6. The Pioneers are now 1-3 after finally breaking into the win column.

Virginia High continued its perfect start with a hard-fought 20-15 victory over George Wythe on Thursday.

The Bearcats are now 4-0 and have found different ways to win throughout the opening month. Virginia High defeated Richlands 21-6 in Week 0 before squeezing past Patrick Henry 7-0 in double overtime. The Bearcats followed that victory by beating John Battle 28-3 before holding off George Wythe.

Virginia High might not be putting up the eye-catching point totals of some other unbeaten teams, but the Bearcats have played strong defense and shown that they can win close games. At 4-0, they have earned their place among the teams to watch as the season moves forward.

Week 3 gave us a little bit of everything. Chillhowie, Ridgeview and Rye Cove remained unbeaten. Virginia High improved to 4-0. Graham reminded everyone that the G-Men are still dangerous, Gate City earned a statement win against a larger opponent, and Southern Gap's young offense took a major step forward.

"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 High School wrestler and National Honor Society member Colten Clevinger completes the 9/11 StairMaster Challenge while wearing his firefighting gear. Clevinger, a member of the Big Rock Fire Department, joined teacher and fellow firefighter Eddie Smith in honoring the courage and sacrifice of the first responders who answered the call on Sept. 11, 2001.



Southern Gap High School chemistry teacher Eddie Smith completes the 9/11 StairMaster Challenge on Friday evening in remembrance of the first responders who climbed the World Trade Center towers during the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Smith is also a member of the Big Rock Fire Department.

Southern Gap student, teacher honor 9/11 heroes through stair challenge

By CHAD COOPER
coopkam@gmail.com

Two members of the Southern Gap High School community honored the courage and sacrifice of America's first responders by completing the 9/11 StairMaster Challenge on Friday evening. Southern Gap wrestler and National Honor Society member Colten Clevinger joined chemistry teacher Eddie Smith in completing the stair-climbing challenge in remembrance of those who responded to the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. The challenge represents the stairs climbed by firefighters and other emergency personnel inside the World Trade Center towers. While thousands of people

were attempting to escape the buildings, first responders climbed toward the danger to help those still trapped inside. For Clevinger and Smith, the tribute carried an even deeper meaning. Both are members of the Big Rock Fire Department and serve their own community as firefighters. The physical challenge offered the pair an opportunity to reflect on the strength and determination shown by the first responders that day, including the 343 members of the New York City Fire Department who lost their lives. By completing the challenge, Clevinger and Smith helped ensure that the bravery and sacrifice displayed on Sept. 11 will not be forgotten.



Members of the Buchanan County Public Service Authority Board and staff are pictured during the authority's Sept. 8 meeting. From left are Terry Colley, Dennis Ramey, David Rowe, Chairman Wendall Harris, Jeff Cooper, Lee Dotson, Assistant Director Joshua Horn and Executive Director Tim Hess.

PSA advances water, sewer and office projects

By CHAD COOPER
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The Buchanan County Public Service Authority received updates on several water and sewer projects, approved contract reductions and adopted the county's employee health insurance plan during its Sept. 8 meeting. PSA Executive Director Tim Hess updated the board on existing and proposed water projects, including the authority's recent testing of Starlink satellite internet equipment. The PSA received three Starlink units intended to improve communication for employees working in areas where cellular service is limited or unavailable. The equipment was tested in Hurley and Dickenson County. Hess said the units performed well when crews could find areas with clear views of the sky. Buchanan County's mountains and heavy tree cover could affect the service in some locations, but the equipment could provide another communication option for employees working in remote areas. The board also received an update on the Dry Fork project, which has been completed. Record drawings are being prepared for Virginia Energy, and officials expect to conduct one final walkthrough. Board members approved a change order reducing the Dry Fork contract by \$55,962.75. Because the project used American Rescue Plan Act funding, officials plan to ask the Virginia Department of Health to redirect the remaining money to reimburse engineering expenses. That would return the funding to the PSA. The authority also approved a change order that reduces the Levisa project contract by about \$5,700. Hill Construction is the project contractor. Officials praised Hill Construction's progress and said the company had completed most of the work included in its original contract. The change order will allow the contractor to continue camera inspections and repair additional problems discovered during the project. Another project has a scheduled substantial completion date of Oct. 27, although officials said delays involving meters and other materials have affected the timeline. Officials expect to provide a clearer update during the board's next meeting. The PSA has requested \$2 million for the Conaway wastewater project. The request advanced to the next round of funding consideration, although the authority had not been notified how much money it could receive. The project has a tentative substantial completion date in March, but officials said it was too early to determine when the system would become operational. The Lee Master Meter project also continues to move forward. Officials said a 90% completion meeting was

expected soon, and the project could be ready for bidding toward the end of the year. The authority was not selected for a funding application for a backup generator this year. However, the authority was encouraged to submit another application during the next funding cycle. PSA employee Philip Vandyke also updated the board on sewer issues. Crews have completed work at several locations in Garden Creek and have shifted their attention to Looney's Creek. Vandyke said crews discovered two significant problem areas in Looney's Creek. One had been repaired, and work on the second was expected to begin during the week. The board also discussed the sprinkler and fire alarm systems at the PSA's new office building. Officials initially believed one contract would cover the work but later learned the systems required separate contracts, even though divisions of the same company are handling the work. The fire alarm contract totals \$57,500. The sprinkler contract is complete and signed, and the contractor has begun the design and material-ordering process. In other business, the board approved the county's employee health insurance resolution. The plan includes a 10% increase and minor changes to dental coverage. The insurance carrier will remain the same, and the new plan year will begin in October. Board member Terry Colley made the motion to approve the insurance resolution, and David Rowe seconded it. The motion passed. In other business, Colley moved to advertise for a meter reader position, and Rowe seconded. The measure received unanimous approval. The action allows the authority to begin seeking applicants for the position, which collects information used to prepare customers' monthly water bills. Meter readers often travel throughout the county to record water usage and identify potential problems, including damaged meters, unusual consumption and possible leaks. The work can be challenging in Buchanan County because of its mountainous terrain and the distance between customers. The authority did not discuss an application deadline, salary or hiring timeline during the recorded portion of the meeting. In other business, the board approved minutes from its August meeting and authorized payment of the authority's bills. Rowe moved to approve the bills, and board member Jeff Cooper seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The authority also changed the date of its October meeting because a board member would be unavailable on the originally scheduled date. The meeting had been scheduled for Tuesday, Oct. 20. Board members agreed to move it one week earlier to Tuesday, Oct. 13.

Bear concerns return before Grundy council

By CHAD COOPER
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Concerns about black bears approaching homes and residents surfaced again during the Sept. 8 Grundy Town Council meeting. A resident told council that bears near a home were no longer afraid of people and asked whether the town could take action. Grundy Town Police Chief Seth McGlothlin said guidance he had received placed responsibility on the town to address unsecured trash and other human behavior that attracts bears, rather than trying to remove every bear that enters town. Officials said wildlife authorities generally intervene when a bear poses a direct threat, such as when an animal attempts to enter an occupied home. Council took no formal action on the matter. The discussion also touched on hunting inside town limits. Officials said any hunting would require the landowner's permission and approval from the Grundy Police Department. Residents should confirm all state and local requirements before taking any action involving wildlife.

Grundy police and fire departments present August reports

By CHAD COOPER
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The Grundy Police Department handled 185 calls in August, including 22 outside the town limits, according to a report presented to Grundy Town Council on Sept. 8. Police Chief Seth McGlothlin said 39 calls resulted in reportable incidents or investigations. Officers made 13 arrests, served 15 criminal papers and investigated two reportable motor vehicle crashes. Officers also conducted 50 traffic stops that resulted in 39 summonses. McGlothlin said about a dozen of those summonses were connected to dirt bikes and should help address complaints the department has received. McGlothlin also outlined upcoming professional development for the department. He will attend executive in-service training at Breaks Interstate Park. Officer Dale will attend instructor development school from Sept. 28 through Oct. 5. McGlothlin and Dusty Childress will attend an accreditation training conference in Radford from Sept. 29 through Oct. 1. In other business, Grundy Volunteer Fire Department Capt. Corey Vires updated council on the department's August activities. Vires said the department responded to 13 calls during the month, including six inside the town and seven outside the town limits. The department also received a grant for a pallet of Gatorade valued at \$2,100. The supplies were shared with the Grundy Police Department and the town shop. Firefighters have worked with the Buchanan County Public Service Authority on a list of 23 hydrants needing attention. The department's new fire trucks remained scheduled for delivery near the end of September. Four department members passed Fire Instructor I testing administered Aug. 1, bringing the department's total number of instructors to 11. Vires said the department moved its regular training sessions to Sundays, allowing members with children to spend more time at home during the week. Additional members were scheduled to attend training during September in areas including fire instruction, Firefighter I and II, hazardous materials and search-and-rescue operations.

Grundy adopts hydrant burial and trail ordinances

By CHAD COOPER

Grundy Town Council unanimously approved three ordinances Sept. 8 addressing access to fire hydrants, burials on private property and permitted uses of the Michael D. Young Walking and Bike Trail. The fire hydrant ordinance prohibits parking too close to or otherwise obstructing a hydrant and establishes a 15-foot clearance requirement. During the discussion, council members raised questions about two hydrants near the post office, including one that officials said is not in service. Town officials said emergency personnel would still have authority to move a vehicle if they needed access to a working hydrant. A second ordinance requires town approval before someone may bury a person on private property within the town limits. Officials emphasized that the measure does not impose an outright ban. Instead, it creates a permit process. The proposal followed a recent inquiry from someone interested in burying a person in a backyard within town limits. Council also approved an ordinance designating the Michael D. Young Trail for pedestrian and bicycle use. The measure is intended to keep motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles and other motorized traffic off the walking trail. All three ordinances passed without opposition following roll-call votes. Council later discussed open burning after a request was made for a possible town ordinance. Officials said state law already restricts what may be burned and that household trash cannot be mixed with brush for burning. The council did not adopt a new burning ordinance during the meeting. Town Attorney Vern Presley of Street Law Firm also advised council to begin preparing for the possibility of legal retail marijuana sales in Virginia. Presley said state law would allow localities to impose an additional tax of up to 3% on retail sales if and when those sales begin. Council voted to have a proposed local tax ordinance prepared for a future meeting and set the tax at its highest rate. The vote did not impose the tax. Any new tax would require council to advertise the proposal, hold a public hearing and later vote on the ordinance.