

# BUSINESS

## Home Feathers takes off in Independence

*New home decor business opens*

By SHAINA STOCKTON  
Staff

INDEPENDENCE — The community gathered recently to welcome a new business headed by interior designer Kit Marshall: Home Feathers Custom Home Decor.

Located at 116 W. Main St. in Independence, Home Feathers operates as both a home decor and gift shop (located at the front of the building), as well as a work studio for Marshall’s long-thriving custom fabric designs. Marshall offers custom made window treatments, bedding, pillows and upholstery for small items.

Marshall has been interested in interior design since she was a child, and has 34 years of experience working with fabric designs. Her fascination began at age 7, when she asked her grandmother to help her learn how to sew clothing for her dolls.

Years later, she studied art and color theory in school.

“As a new designer, working for an interior design firm in Charleston, S.C., a patient curtain maker mentored me as I experimented with sewing window treatments. Eventually, I was fabricating beautiful curtains and home accessories in Charleston’s historic Battery District and the surrounding Low Country,” Marshall said.

After working as a rep for a hard flooring treatment manufacturer, she left to start her own custom workroom business, sewing custom curtains for local designers and retail clients in Charleston and later Charlotte, N.C. “I love working with



textiles and I am always intrigued by their color and texture, how they relate to each other and perform in the home,” she said. “Finding creative ways to make the world around me more beautiful has always been very exciting and fulfilling.”

Marshall and her husband, Steve Marshall, are no strangers to local business scene. The couple owns and operates Paddleyax Kayaks just down the street from Home Feathers. They also rent a space next to Home Feathers out to Sparta Candle Company, another up-and-coming business in the area.

Mandy Archer, director of Crossroads Institute’s Small Business Development Center (SBDC), shared that she has worked with Kit and Steve Marshall since 2006.

“I don’t think a lot of people realize how difficult entrepreneurship



really is; there’s a lot of perseverance needed to make it work, and Kit and Steve represent that for us,” Archer said. “We want to thank them for all of their hard work to bring business and economic development to our area.”

Marshall says she is excited to share the new business with the community. “Home Feathers Custom Home Decor allows me to realize my dream of having a retail shop to showcase home accessories and gifts, all while enjoying the creative process and sharing the gift of design with my customers.”

*Home Feathers is located at 116 W. Main Street in Independence. For more information about the business, call (276) 237-5430, visit [homefeathers.com](http://homefeathers.com), or like “Home Feathers” on Facebook.*



## Cockerham Energy gives to scholarship foundation

Milo C. Cockerham Inc. and Cockerham Energy of Galax recently presented two checks for a total of \$1,500 to the Galax Foundation for Excellence in Education scholarship program.

The checks were presented by Danny Cockerham, president of Milo C. Cockerham Inc., on behalf of fuel suppliers BP Oil and Gulf Oil. “We are proud to be able to support an orga-

nization that contributes to the future success of local high school students,” Cockerham said.

The foundation receives and administers assets in a perpetual endowment and its income provides scholarships for graduates of Galax High School to continue their education and obtain a college degree.

The Cockerham family has been distributing

petroleum products to the Galax-Carroll-Grayson area for 63 years and was one of the first contributors to the foundation. Since its inception in 1988, the foundation has awarded \$1.7 million in scholarships to local high school students.

For more information on The Galax Foundation for Excellence in Education, visit [gcps.k12.va.us](http://gcps.k12.va.us).

## Lab

Continued from Page 1A

The lab will be the home of WCC’s practical nursing program and serve as a training site for WCC’s short-term nurse aid program. WCC’s other healthcare programs will use the space, too.

Additionally, WCC’s Workforce Development department plans to offer American Heart Association (AHA) certification trainings, as well as customized short-term train-

ing programs for area health providers and emergency service agencies.

The college has a long-term lease on space at The Crossroads Institute, and both entities have mutual desires to continue revitalization of the region’s economy, WCC said in a news release.

The lab “will provide students with more relevant experiences and

will also benefit all medical and nursing facilities in our area,” said Brenda Sutherland, executive director of The Crossroads Institute.

The Tobacco Commission grant will pay for installation of new lighting, cubicles and dividers, along with support for simulation control room equipment, system configuration and cabling services to build the required network. The

grant will also be used to secure additional hospital furniture such as beds, night stands, chairs, sinks and closets to create a realistic hospital environment.

“The hospital simulation project is a perfect opportunity to showcase how three organizations are joining to fill a need in our region,” said Dr. Dean Sprinkle, WCC’s president. “We’re thankful for the grant sup-

port from the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission, and we are proud to have a trusted, longstanding relationship with The Crossroads Institute that allows for this project to be completed.”

Competitive bids will be solicited for the project. It is anticipated that construction will begin in January 2020 and be completed in May 2020.

## RECIPE COLUMN

## Rolling in dough

Women my age seem to repeat a phrase in one another’s company: “Oh, Lord, I’m turning into my mother.”

This can be a loud exclamation or a muttered aside, a lament or a joke or some combination of all the above. It’s a blessing in disguise and sometimes — rarely, pitifully — an outright curse (though even if a woman’s mother was an absolute dragon, at least that implies her daughter, however determined she is to be kinder and gentler, inherited considerable reserves of power).

I look more and more like my mother every day. I walk like her when I first get up in the morning, a fuzzy slipper-shuffle sort of thing. I talk to myself a lot, like she does (she’s going to kill me for telling you that if she ever reads this). My laugh sounds exactly like hers (and my grandmother’s, and my aunt’s). It all seems very warm and sweet, a familial, feminine continuity. Which is why it’s extra weird that, on the whole, I’m really turning into my late grandfather.

I don’t especially look like Granddaddy, and I’ve never shared his interests in gardening or sports or westerns. I used to go along on



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his hunting trips sometimes because I was a tomboy and he told me that meant I’d like hunting, but it turned out to be pure boredom punctuated by the terrifying loudness of rifle blasts and I hated it. I was a tomboy, but my masculine side was less “Call of the Wild” and more Oscar Wilde.

However, I do have a lot of behaviors in common with him. I mutter at other vehicles, even when I’m not on the road but merely near it, convinced I and I alone know how to drive correctly. I eat Reese’s Cups like I’m getting paid to. My personal space inevitably turns into a cluttered nest that nobody else is allowed to rearrange or criticize. I glare at everything around me when I’m in pain, somehow transmogrifying physical agony into spiritual malaise with my surroundings.

But the way we’re most similar is our relationship to spending. Once at a mall food court in 1980 he bought us all lunch at unexpectedly expensive baked potato bar. It shuttered six months later, but the place took on a new half-life because he complained about their prices for 20 years. Conversely, he spoke in glowing tones of a low bill from 1983 for an acid reflux-inducing dinner at a local pizzeria, well after the building had been remodeled for

an insurance company and I was in my third year of college.

I don’t have his staying power in terms of purchase-related grudges and loyalties, but I also brag or grumble based on how much something costs normally versus what I paid for it. Last month I bought a 45” flat-screen TV for a ridiculously low price, and I’m still proud of it. Why is less clear, since it was merely a case of being in the right place at the right time and not the product of any shrewd haggling skills, but if you set foot in my living room, you’re going to hear about it in exhaustive detail.

All I need to do now is fall asleep in front of it while “True Grit” is on, or maybe trim somebody’s lawn with a riding mower while looking inexplicably furious at passing cars, and my transformation will be complete.

That has only a little to do with this week’s recipe, which jumps on the edible cookie dough trend. All cookie dough is edible, obviously; the idea is that this doesn’t have eggs and you bake the flour for a bit, so there’s a much lower chance of any nasty bacteria lurking around in it. My grandfather was not a trendy person — I think the potato bar anecdote made that pretty obvious — but he liked sweet things, and there’s absolutely no saying you can’t make this and toss some chopped-up Reese’s Cups in it.

### Edible Cookie Dough

(from [thekitchn.com](http://thekitchn.com))

1 cup all-purpose flour  
1 stick unsalted butter, at room temperature  
¾ cup packed light brown sugar  
2 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature  
¼ cup regular or non-dairy milk  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
¼ teaspoon kosher salt  
1 cup mini (or regular) semi-sweet chocolate chips

Bake the flour to kill any bacteria. Arrange a rack in the middle of the oven and heat the oven to 375°F. Spread the flour out onto a rimmed baking sheet and bake for 5 minutes. Remove from the oven and cool.

Cream together the butter, cream cheese and sugar. Place the butter, cream cheese and brown sugar in a large mixing bowl. Beat on medium speed with an electric hand mixer until fluffy, about 5 minutes. (Alternatively, use a stand mixer with the paddle attachment.)

Add the milk, vanilla, and salt and beat on medium speed for 1 minute more.

Fold in the flour and mini chocolate chips. Add the cooled flour and chocolate chips and fold them in with a rubber spatula.

Enjoy right away or refrigerate for up to 1 week in an airtight container, or portion out the dough into small scoops on a baking sheet, refrigerate until firm, and then transfer to the container for up to 1 week.

Do note that it won’t bake up properly because there’s too much fat and no egg protein for structure, so don’t waste the money trying to. It’s probably better spent on baked potatoes anyway.



# STATE News

## Virginia preparing for 75th anniversary of D-Day

A week of events commemorating pivotal battle of World War II to take place at National D-Day Memorial in Bedford

Capital News Service

RICHMOND — The National D-Day Memorial is gearing up for the 75th anniversary of D-Day, an amphibious invasion considered the largest and most successful in history — and often cited as a turning point in World War II.

Several events are lined up throughout the week of June 4-9, including a reception showcasing artwork drawn by soldiers during the war, aerial tributes flown by vintage planes, live footage from the joint ceremony in Normandy, concerts and a parade.

All events will take place in Bedford, about 140 miles west of Richmond. The National D-Day Memorial was erected there in honor of American D-Day veterans, including the 19 young men from Bedford who died during the invasion.

The organization has been planning for the anniversary for more than two years and has put \$800,000 into the celebration.



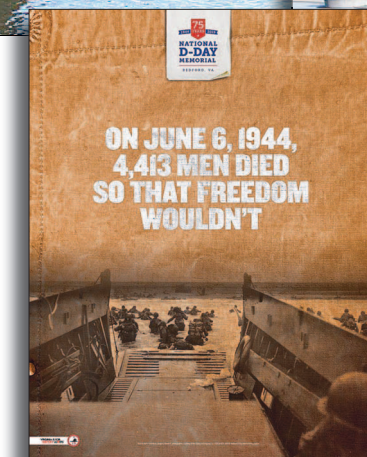
A poster (right) from the National D-Day Memorial promoting the festivities surrounding the 75th anniversary of the invasion.

“I know for me, I’m extremely excited for this,” said Kirk Cox, speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates.

April Cheek-Messier, president of the National D-Day Memorial, pointed out the magnitude of the event and said that every Allied nation during the war will send representatives. About 15,000 people are expected to attend.

Of the 16 million Americans who served in the military in World War II, fewer than 500,000 are still alive, according to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Cheek-Messier said she would be thrilled to have 50 to 75 veterans in attendance.

The upcoming festivities were discussed last week at a meeting of



the Virginia World War I and World War II Commemoration Commission. Cox chairs the commission, which includes state legislators and veterans.

The panel was created by the General Assembly to mark the 100th anniversary of World War I and the 75th anniversary of World War II.

At the commission’s meeting,

officials also highlighted recent activities such as:

- The Profiles of Honor Mobile Tour, which has been bringing an interactive exhibit of World War II artifacts to museums, libraries and historic sites throughout Virginia.

- “Operation: Digitization,” an effort to scan family photographs or historical artifacts so they can be featured on the commission’s

website.

Rusty Nix, the communications manager at Virginia Tourism Corp., said the scanning program is advantageous because the public can access archival information never seen before and people can still hold on to their families memories.

“So far, we have done over 4,600 scans,” Nix said. “We’ve had incredible outreach.”

## Governor signs bill requiring clergy to report child abuse

Capital News Service

RICHMOND — In response in part to the child sex abuse scandal in the Catholic Church, Virginia will have a new law on July 1 requiring priests, ministers, rabbis and other clergy members to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect.

Gov. Ralph Northam has signed into law two bills — HB 1659, sponsored by Del. Karrie Delaney (D-Fairfax), and SB 1257, introduced by Sen. Jill Holtzman Vogel (R-Fauquier). The measures mandate that religious officials must report any suspected abuse to local law enforcement.

The bills passed unanimously in the House and Senate in February.

Existing state law lists 18 categories of people who must report information to local authorities if they “have reason to suspect that a child is an abused or neglected child.” They include health-care providers, police officers, athletic coaches and teachers.

The new law will add a 19th category to the list of “mandatory reporters”: “Any minister, priest, rabbi, imam or duly accredited practitioner of any religious organization or denomination usually referred to as a church.”

However, the law will exempt clergy members from the reporting requirement when confidentiality is required by the religious organization, such as anything a priest hears during confession. A

minister who hears about possible child abuse while counseling a parishioner, for example, would not have to tell authorities.

Delaney said she filed her bill after a church in her Northern Virginia district failed to act on a case of child abuse. She said 27 other states have laws making clergy mandatory reporters.

“Members of the clergy are in a role of trust and authority and they should not be held to a different standard than every other professional whose duty it is to protect children,” Delaney said.

Child abuse by clergy has been a national concern in recent years with disclosures that some Catholic priests had sexually abused children and their superi-

ors had covered up the incidents.

Last month, the Diocese of Richmond released the names of 43 clergy members who “have a credible and substantiated allegation of sexual abuse involving a minor.” The Diocese of Arlington released the names of 16 such individuals.

The Virginia Catholic Conference, which represents the two dioceses on matters of public policy, supported the legislation introduced by Delaney and Vogel.

Grier Weeks, senior executive of the National Association to Protect Children, sees Virginia’s new law as a step toward change but also a reflection of how much work is left to do.

“Any action is great, but you

shouldn’t need laws for people to do the right thing — especially when protecting children,” Weeks said.

Weeks warned parents that predators are usually those they trust most around their children, not strangers.

“Predators often seem friendly,” Weeks said. “It is important to stay vigilant.”

Northam signed the legislation just days before the start of National Child Abuse Prevention Month on April 1.

To receive reports of sexual abuse of a minor by clergy, the Virginia State Police have a website, [virginiaclergyhotline.com](http://virginiaclergyhotline.com), and a toll-free hotline, 1-833-454-9064. Callers may remain anonymous.

## Hole-y goodness

An acquaintance I know through work was hanging around the office once and casually dropped a reference to “the Tater Hole.”

“The WHAT?” I asked.

Honestly, I cover Galax, which is all of eight square miles or so, and yet every day I’m hit in the face with something brand new.

So he explained to me that years ago, on Interstate 77 — please tell me this is new to someone besides myself — a truck full of potatoes crashed around milepost 22. Its payload burst out and rolled all over the place; some tumbled downhill, off the road, through a gap in the vegetation, put down roots and started to grow. For years, I was told, there were potatoes growing free down in that little spot, nicknamed “the Tater Hole.”

Twin Counties, be honest: is that a real thing, or do y’all take turns coming up with new stories to make my head spin?

I heard this a couple of years ago and every time I’m on I-77 I have an urge to pull over and go looking for feral tubers, in thrall as I am to the glamour that is the Legend of the Tater Hole. Thankfully, I’m always in too much of a hurry to stop, so some luckless state trooper or sheriff’s deputy doesn’t have to stand there silently



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reciting to himself a list of every other thing he’d rather be doing while I explain I’m looking for a vegetable that sits in cheap abundance in a grocery store all of five miles away. For the sake of a story, you understand.

Which brings us to this week’s recipe, the potato-based Moravian sugar cake. I found it on the Facebook page of Southern lifestyle magazine “Garden & Gun.”

It turns out the Moravians — pacifist, German-speaking Czechs who settled in Winston-Salem, N.C., among other places — were (and are) really excellent bakers.

Moravian sugar cake has a dimpled surface and an intensely sweet cinnamon topping. Traditionally, it’s baked around Easter — I’m not certain as to the symbolism, or if there is any to speak of — and I immediately started prepping a potato. The results were so delightful I honestly don’t know why we don’t do more potato-based baking.

While there are plenty of places you can find a recipe, all a little different but producing mostly the same cake, I got this from the P. Allen Smith website ([pallensmith.com](http://pallensmith.com)).

Some helpful hints: the original recipe as given requires you to cut the butter into the brown sugar and cinna-

mon to make the topping, which just resulted in clumps that didn’t melt enough to form an even layer. With that in mind, I’m recommending you melt the butter, brush that on first, and then just sprinkle the dry mix on top. It seems a lot more accurate in terms of results.

Also, earlier on, please note you should not salt the potato or the water you cook it in (I peeled, diced and boiled mine). And make sure you mash it very thoroughly before you mix it with the yeast. I’ll also admit that the “soft but not sticky” consistency of the dough is a matter of opinion, but if you don’t go over 4 cups of flour (I think mine took 3¼), you should be fine.

Please note that this doesn’t rise a whole lot until it’s baked. Also, when dimpling the dough, don’t punch all the way to the bottom of the pan, but don’t be afraid to give it firm pokes like you’re jabbing someone in the arm during an argument.

And of course, start with a good, fresh potato, one that’s not turning green, or leaking a smelly brown fluid or sprouting eyes.

If the stores come up empty, I’ve heard of a great place where you can get one. If a state trooper should show up while you’re looking, even better; ask them if they’ve seen the Tater Hole. Explain that you’re baking a cake; I’m sure it’ll make perfect sense.

### Moravian Sugar Cake

1 package active yeast, or 2¼ teaspoons if you use it from a jar  
¾ cup cooked mashed potatoes, room temperature (Idaho russet is good)  
¾ cup milk, room temperature  
1 egg, room temperature  
¾ cup sugar  
3 to 4 cups all-purpose flour  
1 teaspoon salt  
6 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted  
¾ cup brown sugar  
2 teaspoons cinnamon  
6 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

Butter or spray two 8” square pans or one 9”x13” pan. Mix yeast and cooled potatoes together and let sit for at least 1½ hours at room temperature.

Stir the sugar, milk and egg into the yeast mixture. Whisk together the flour and salt, then add this to the dough, a half cup at a time, until you have a soft but not sticky dough. Work the melted butter into the dough. If it gets too sticky, add more flour. Put the dough into the prepared baking pan or pans, and coax it gently to the edges. Cover and leave to rise for 1½ hours. Blend the brown sugar and cinnamon together.

Preheat oven to 350°F. After rising, use your knuckles or fingertips to make indentations in the top. Brush the top of all the dough with the melted butter until it’s used up. Scatter the sugar cinnamon butter mix evenly to cover the top of the dough. Bake for 30 minutes, or until the cake is lightly browned.



# OPINION

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Washington politicians afraid of losing influence

Those that do not know they do not know cannot learn. Those that know they do not know can learn. Think about it. President Obama: what did he do for the American citizens? He left office with \$9 trillion added to our national debt for someone else to carry. Try to understand the interest on this huge amount of money. I believe he slept well and enjoyed the ride at our expense.

Thousands of jobs and businesses left the USA, military not properly kept up. Older citizens saw their savings shrink with next to nothing interest rates.

Politicians in Washington slept well and made plenty of money. No lost jobs. Many are millionaires. How about you?

Thanks for a businessman as president, not well accepted by our Washington politicians.

I wonder why. They do not hate him; they are scared to death of someone breaking their wealthy, cozy bubble.

Many all talk, no action that is positive for our citizens. Democrats have accused our president of much of what they did themselves.

Still haven't blamed President Trump of being an alien from outer space. Maybe next?

Might be worth a try. Illegal immigrants have cost over \$200 billion this year and rising. New legislation and wall will help keep costs down.

Cost of Mueller investigation more than \$30 million. Do you know why? Do you like these cost for political reasons? I do not. Go Trump.

Wayne Travis  
Woodlawn

## HOW TO WRITE US

The Gazette reserves its editorial page for the exchange of ideas and opinions. Letters to the editor are welcomed. Certain guidelines apply. Letters should be typed, if possible, and signed in the writer's original handwriting. The author must include an address and daytime telephone number so the letter can be verified. **Letters will be edited to 350 words or less for publication.** Writers are limited to one letter every 30 days. The deadline for letters is noon Wednesday. The Gazette reserves the right to edit or refuse any letter.

MAIL TO: LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, THE GAZETTE,  
108 WEST STUART DRIVE, GALAX, VA. 24333  
OR E-MAIL TO: NEWS@GALAXGAZETTE.COM



## READERS' HOTLINE

236-5178, EXTENSION 6

### Bakker's back

Hey, he's back. Channel surfing the TV the other day trying to find something to watch, I could not believe my eyes when I saw the second biggest conman in America, the Rev. Jim Bakker, bragging on the first biggest conman in America, Donald Trump. Said Trump was a great, good, honest Christian man and a great president. Trump and Bakker. Now, wouldn't that make a great ticket for people to vote for? Ha ha. Anyone out there want to buy some oceanfront property on Prayer Mountain? Hmm. Give me a break. The only thing that's going to save this country is bring back disco. God bless America.

### Consequences

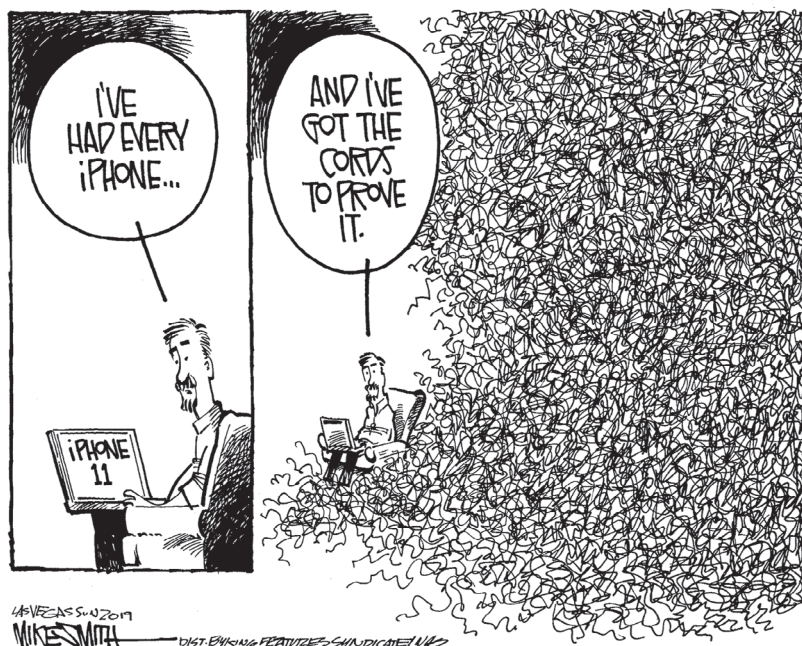
It was very disturbing to see in the Sept. 18 Gazette 101 indictments. Most of these were drug-related charges, especially meth, and sadly, there were several child abuse and neglect charges. I hope these people are being locked up without bond and that we are simply not slapping them on the hand saying "now, don't you do this anymore." Our children are suffering because of this horrible drug problem and these people need help and they need to have strong consequence for being stupid and messing with stuff to start with.

### More lies

All this Ukraine garbage. Let's see if I can get some facts straight. How many millions of dollars did Trump make off Ukraine? Oh, no, no, that was Joe Biden's son. Every document that they've wanted Trump to give, he's turned over. Now wait a minute, didn't he bleach bit it? Oh no, that was Hillary. You Democrats are just stupid and if you think us people, the public, is stupid then you've got another thing coming. You wait until November 2020. How does your paper feel about the lies the Democrats just keep telling when Trump releases the transcripts and the transcripts have nothing on them? Why don't they just shut up and admit the truth? They can't even admit the truth. They can't even admit they lost the election three years ago almost. How ridiculous. And you think we're going to put people like this back in power ever? And I did say "we" because the public is the ones who control the government. If you don't believe it, look who's in the White House right now. Everything that you've done for three years to try to bring Trump down, you don't have one shred of evidence and he's pulled back the covers on y'all and y'all are shivering in the cold on account of it. See ya at the polls in 2020. It's going to be a great next five years.

### Voting verification

I was just wondering if your paper could please put in there between now and the 2020 elections the voting rules for illegal aliens that come in, because when we come up there and voted at the high school the last time they was allowed to vote. They got to fill in a paper to check their ability to be able to



vote, to see if they was legal to vote, and the paper was laid to the side and they was allowed to vote. Unless one of two things is going on, you know exactly how everybody votes. If you go through the information that the illegal alien has filled out on a piece of paper and you find out he's not valid to vote, how do you take his vote back off if you don't know what it is? That's a simple question that you can't answer because you got caught with voter fraud and we're going to be watching the ballots really close this November, and anybody that's not filling out a paper and voting, you won't do that because you're going to have to have your information verified and it's going to have to be verified. Explain to me that. If you don't know how they're voting, how do you take their vote back if you find out they're illegal? You just got caught. The covers have been pulled back again, but it won't happen in November 2020.

*Editor's note: Several things in this call need to be addressed, the first being: how do you know the person was an illegal alien? Second, illegal aliens and non-citizens are not allowed to vote. It is prohibited by federal election code (see Title 18-Crimes and Criminal Procedure, Part 1-Crimes, Chapter 29-Elections and Political Activities). Third, what you described seeing at the polls wasn't fraud; it was a provisional ballot, which records a vote when there are questions about the voter's eligibility. The questions must be resolved before the vote can count. The federal Help America Vote Act of 2002 guarantees voters can cast a provisional ballot if the they state that they are entitled to vote. They can be cast if, for example, a voter's name does not appear on the electoral roll for a precinct, or if a voter lacks photo ID, or if the address on the roll is incorrect. If the information checks out — usually the day after the election — the vote is counted. If not, the vote isn't filed. If, as you claim, the voter was a non-citizen or otherwise ineligible, their vote would not be counted.*

### Horses need help

I'm having trouble getting anything done about some starving horses in Grayson County. They have nothing to eat, have called several times, cannot seem to get anything done. Who do I need to call to get them to do their job? Just wondering if anyone knows. These horses really need help.

*Editor's note: You can contact Grayson County Animal Control at (276) 773-8553 or animalcontrol@graysoncountyva.gov.*

### Children in danger

This is in reference to the Oct. 7-8th Hotline calls "Taken away" and "Solemn reminder." Imagine a cool, fall morning. People trying to get to work on a highly traveled road. Imagine turning a curve and finding three small children in the middle of the road in nothing but a diaper. Thank God they were seen and drivers stopped to find where they belonged. Imagine the tragedy this could have been. Three small children in such danger. Imagine what you would feel if they hadn't been seen, and instead hit by a vehicle. How would you ever recover from that if you hadn't seen them in time? What happened? I'm not saying drugs were in this. I don't know the cause of this situation. All I know is that morning it happened. I tell you this to wake our community up to the fact that we have a problem. A big problem. Each week the paper is full of arrests and persons arrested with drugs or drug paraphernalia with the intent to sell. Our area has reached a point where so many people are being involved with drugs. These people have children, unprotected and neglected children, so how dare you "Taken away" and "Solemn reminder" criticize the social services? This is the only hope that these children may have. Ask yourself this: "What did you do to warrant your children being taken?" You might not like the answer if you're honest with yourself. What is sad is, the children's lives being affected by too many adults not being responsible for the lives they have created. We have a crisis. The Twin Counties has woke up. Perhaps you should.

## RECIPE COLUMN

### In the crunch

Let me start this week by saying thank you to the nice lady ahead of me in the drive-thru line who bought my lunch on Tuesday at something like 2:45 p.m., because her order took longer than usual and she felt bad about me waiting so long. You are a kind soul.

Let me also say I sincerely hope it wasn't because I was gesticulating and talking to myself and you also felt bad that I was having what appeared to be a seizure. Once within the confines of my car I have a tendency to forget that glass works both ways and get engaged in lively imaginary arguments with people who aren't there at the moment, which I am sure is totally normal and common and not at all this weird thing that only I do. That is, when I'm not channeling my grandfather and being annoyed with everyone else on the road.

I have no idea why I'm still single, do you?

And now, segueing into the opening I originally wrote, I learned some facts about rail travel last weekend, which I don't engage in often enough to have given you any pertinent info about before.

I occasionally visit a group of friends in Northern Virginia for a bad film night; and another friend I usually brunch with the next day



SHANNON  
WATKINS

offered to buy me a train ticket up and back, to save on gas money, as a late birthday present. I said yes, and in no way is anything that follows an indictment of my friend's incredible generosity. It's just an illustration of why I'm not the bold adventurer I like to fancy myself.

Here is the first thing you should know: the Saturday train from Roanoke headed north (that I know of; please check timetables before you book anything) leaves at 8:39 a.m., which means you need to leave the Twin Counties in time enough to tap the snooze button at least once, down some coffee, wash up, dress, grab your stuff and get out. I'll let you figure out how long that is, and how anxious you'll be about potentially oversleeping.

When you get there, you will find that there's no station as such, and no automated ticket kiosk set up that I could see, so you need to buy your tickets online, in advance, which leads us to the second thing you need to know: THERE IS NO PUBLIC RESTROOM AT THE TRAIN PLATFORM IN ROANOKE.

For me personally, this information went from abstract to concrete in the space of about a half-hour waiting for the train in question; I had thought it left at 8:09 a.m. for some reason, and the ensuing wait put me in mind of Danish astrono-

mer Tycho Brahe.

Brahe was a genius in his field, though his life ended tragically. While in dispute, one school of thought says his death was caused by a ruptured bladder when he couldn't breach etiquette to excuse himself from a banquet. Though as far as I know, he died in Prague in 1601 and not on the Roanoke Amtrak platform in 2019.

Thankfully, the train pulled up just as things were getting fully desperate, and all was soon well again.

But that was only the beginning of my travel anxiety, because a series of questions went crashing through my head like a violently derailing train and refused to stop: What if I fall asleep and miss my stop? What if my friend forgets all about me? What if she thinks it was next weekend and can't pick me up because she's out of the state right now? What if I got my movie dates mixed up and it really IS next weekend? What if she crashes on her way to get me? What if my car gets towed from the Roanoke garage in my absence? What if I lose my phone? What if my card gets stolen and nobody from the bank believes me and I have to pay endless overdraft fees? What if through a series of misfortunes I end up losing everything and wind up friendless, penniless and homeless, living, ironically enough, in a cardboard box next

### Nekisia Davis's Olive Oil & Maple Granola (from Food52.com)

- 3 cups old-fashioned rolled oats
- 1 cup hulled raw pumpkin seeds
- 1 cup hulled raw sunflower seeds
- 1 cup unsweetened coconut chips
- 1 1/4 cups raw pecans, left whole or coarsely chopped
- 3/4 cup pure maple syrup
- 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/2 cup packed light brown sugar
- 1 pinch coarse salt, to taste

Heat oven to 300°F. Place oats, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, coconut, pecans, syrup, olive oil, sugar and 1 teaspoon salt in a large bowl and mix until well combined. Spread granola mixture in an even layer on a rimmed baking sheet. Transfer to oven and bake, stirring every 10 to 15 minutes, until granola is toasted, about 45 minutes. Remove granola from oven and season with more salt to taste. Let cool completely before serving or storing in an airtight container for up to one month.

to the train tracks?

Well, you see why I was exhausted. Say what you will, but I slept like a baby on Sunday night, after I got back. Anxiety is emotional CrossFit. (P.S. Literally nothing bad happened the entire trip.)

It was only afterward that I found this recipe, which I wish I had done sooner, because I could have packed it with the 3,856 other foodstuffs I brought just in case I got hungry, or the train broke down and we all had to resort to luggage snacks and/or cannibalism. It's in that category of healthyish and

also very tasty that makes for good travel eats.

If you like, I guess you could make up little gift baggies of it and share with your seatmates (although it's also my experience that you could literally pull out a chainsaw on an Amtrak and nobody would acknowledge it, so maybe not).

If you're not feeling that brave, more for you. You could always show them courtesy instead by letting them win an imaginary argument, or get to the restroom ahead of you.