

Family of man killed in officer-involved shooting demand tapes **A3**

Forum for county candidates set for Oct. 15 **A5**

Two hepatitis A cases confirmed at SW Va. Regional Jail **A3**

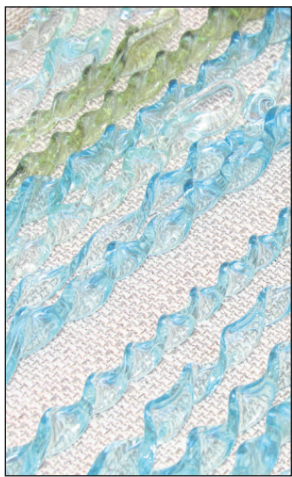


Washington County News

Wednesday, October 9, 2019 ♦ Washington County News

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ART



Glass artist makes jewelry, utensils and more in mobile studio **» B2**

AGRICULTURE



Pumpkin patches ready for season despite drought **» B1**

COMMUNITY



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HARBOR HOUSE



Melissa Owens, a server at Harbor House, talks to customers Jerry and Brenda Umbarger of Atkins, Virginia. The couple said they drove to Abingdon after a day trip to Boone, North Carolina, just to eat at the seafood restaurant.

‘Harbor’ out of house + home

For employees and customers, Harbor House more than a restaurant

BY CAROLYN R. WILSON
FOR THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS
ABINGDON, Va. — Teresa McCracken said she’s had little time to grieve over the closing of Harbor House Seafood and Steak Restaurant in Abingdon, her workplace since the

See **HARBOR**, Page A6



Teresa McCracken, a longtime server at Harbor House Seafood and Steak Restaurant, takes the order for customer Bill Branson of Saltville, Virginia. “I’ve always had good service here. I sure will miss this place,” said Branson.

Dry weather has firefighting helicopter crew at the ready

BY ROBERT SORRELL
WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS
ABINGDON, Va. — A firefighting helicopter crew is preparing to head home soon, ending a long, but relatively easy season, but first, they’re stationed in Abingdon to wait for any fires that could ignite in the dry and hot southern Appalachian Mountain region.

The crew of a massive Columbia CH-47D Chinook helicopter has been stationed since Sept. 26 at Abingdon’s Virginia Highlands Airport. The helicopter and crew, which includes two pilots, maintenance crew and fuel truck driver, have a 150-day contract with the

See **FIRES**, Page A5



Helicopter pilot Perri Hagen talks about flying the CH-47D Chinook helicopter with the capacity to carry 2,800 gallons of water to fight fires. The helicopter’s crew will be stationed in Abingdon to provide rapid response to fires in the area.

Attorneys speak out against moving courthouse

BY JOE TENNIS
WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS
ABINGDON, Va. — Abingdon attorneys John Lamie and Byrum Geisler urged voters Thursday to reject the Nov. 5 referendum that could result in the relocation of the Washington County Courthouse to a vacant Kmart.

“I personally am very opposed to moving the courthouse,” Geisler told the Booklovers Club at the Washington County Public Library in Abingdon as part of a presentation Thursday. About 60 people attended Thursday’s presentation, including Abingdon Mayor Wayne Craig, Vice Mayor Cindy Patterson, Town Manager Jimmy Morani and the town’s legal counsel, Cameron Bell.

Moving the courthouse See **ATTORNEYS**, Page A5

Abingdon approves bond to fund sports complex

BY JOE TENNIS
WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS
ABINGDON, Va. — Abingdon Town Council moved ahead with two projects near Interstate 81’s Exit 17 at its meeting last Tuesday.

On a motion by Councilman Al Bradley, council approved a general obligation refunding bond in a principal amount not to exceed \$7.5 million to fund the sports complex at The Meadows, which is under construction.

This move, according to Town Manager Jimmy Morani, allows the town to gain a lower interest rate — not to exceed 2.89% — on a 25-year bond that is part of a previously approved \$10 million line of credit, used to fund the sports complex and related projects at The Meadows.

The sports complex will include baseball and soccer fields, a splash pad, a playground, a walking trail and a connector to the nearby Virginia Creeper Trail.

In a separate move, also on a motion by Bradley, council approved subdividing the old Magic Mart property, where a new Hampton Inn is slated to be built, at Washington Crossing.

In other business, Morani See **SPORTS**, Page A2

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Harbor

From Page A1

restaurant opened 28 years ago.

Ever since word spread through town that the fish house was closing its doors at the end of the month, faithful customers have flocked to enjoy one more meal.

McCracken, a longtime server, and other staff at the restaurant have been called in to work on their days off to help manage an overwhelming number of customers, even on weekdays when business is usually slower.

"We never dreamed it would be like this. We've been here nearly three decades, and we're doing more business now than we've ever done," said Allen Hashbarger, owner of the business. "The outpouring of support has been overwhelming to us."

Hashbarger has leased the building for 28 years from Bran-Bowie Investments in Bristol, Tennessee, with the option to purchase it, but a spiraling economy throughout the years never allowed him to take that option.

Now, the building is being sold, and the beloved restaurant that's attracted many families in town for years will close its doors at 8 p.m. on Sunday, Oct. 27.

Jamie Arnold and Ovene Sloan, both of Whitetop, Virginia, didn't know about the closing until they arrived in town one day last week. "We try to visit the restaurant every month. This is where we had our first date in 2006," said Sloan.

Douglas Lester of Honaker, Virginia, has been coming with family and friends to eat for years.

"We'll miss it," said Lester.

Emotional roller coaster

Coming to work the past few days has been like an emotional roller coaster for the employees.

"There have been a lot of tears and hugs. In a way, I feel like someone has passed. It just doesn't seem real," said McCracken, who has worked at the establishment since 1990 when it was first named Mayflower Seafood by a previous operator.

The server stayed on board with the restaurant when Hashbarger took over the business a year later, eventually changing the name to Harbor House Seafood and Steak Restaurant.

"I'm only as successful as the people who have been working for me all these years," said the owner. "They see the public every day. It's been these employees who have brought our customers back continuously."

Melissa Owens has worked nearly nine years as a server at the restaurant. "We're like family here. The closing has been very upsetting," she said.

Tracy Garrett, 33, started working at the restaurant when she was 18. "That's a lot of my life."

Weathering storms

Despite the ups and downs in the business world, the restaurant has weathered storms and remained open throughout the years.

"Business is good now, which, I think, makes the closing even harder to accept," said McCracken.

"We were holding our own in the late 1990s until Walmart opened at Exit

7 in Bristol and all of the restaurants opened at that location. It really hurt us. For about three years, it was touch and go.

"We almost have made a full recovery since Walmart recently came to Exit 19 in Abingdon. But I knew the property had been for sale for a good while. It was only a matter of time when things would change on this end of town."

Service with a smile

"It's been so much more than a job," said the server. "I never did decide what I wanted to be when I grew up. This job has been more like play," she said with laughter.

"But don't get me wrong. The job of a server is hard work, especially when dealing with not-so-pleasant customers.

"It can be physically demanding, too."

McCracken said restaurant servers often wear an invisible mask that never reveals the pain from a back that aches or feet that need to take a rest.

"You have to wear that mask all day even when you don't feel good or you're going through bad stuff in your personal life. Basically, it's like run, run, run all day, which I like. I'd rather be busy than bored at work."

McCracken has no idea how many steps she makes during a shift. "But, let's put it this way," she said, "my foot doctor told me I need a new pair of shoes every three months."

A heart for her work

The server has always exhibited a "heart" for her work and for the people who have become like her family. She recently

was awarded best server in the Best of Washington County awards.

After one of her elderly customers died, McCracken was faced with serving the family at the restaurant after the funeral services were held.

"I expressed my sympathies before they started to order, then I just lost it. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't hold back the tears. I had to walk away and come back."

Building relationships has also been an important ingredient in her work.

"I held myself together pretty good when Allen first told us about the closing, until he mentioned our customers."

McCracken said the hardest part of closing has been telling the customers, many of whom she's served for decades.

"I know I'm going to miss the people I work with and the customers I serve. And I feel very fortunate to have worked for Allen all these years. He's



CAROLYN R. WILSON/FOR THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

Melissa Owens prepares a tray in the kitchen at Harbor House. After working at the seafood restaurant for nine years, Owens said the employees and regular customers are just like family to her.

been such a good employer," she said.

"I've made so many friends working here. I've seen young parents carrying their babies into the restaurant. Now, I'm seeing those grown children carrying their kids in."

McCracken isn't sure

where her path will lead her next.

"I don't know if anything will ever feel like home again."

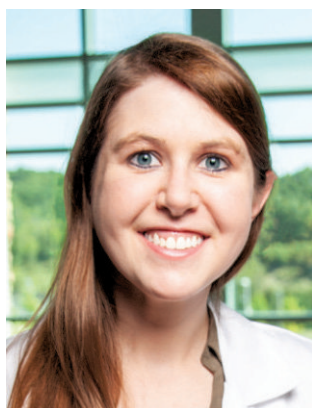
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Growing up overseas - Denmark, Romania and Pakistan - gave Dr. Jacquelyn Wentworth a worldly perspective on different cultures and their approach to medicine. She witnessed desperate situations in which people gave up anything they had to get the medical care they needed. When she returned to the States at 17, she decided to go into medicine. She was particularly drawn to treating women so she could share in the milestones of their lives: OB/GYN affords her the opportunity to provide continuous care to women as they make the transitions from puberty to menopause.



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Off on the right foot

E&H Marching Band gears up for the season

BY CAROLYN R. WILSON
FOR THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

EMORY, Va. — Band members are putting their best foot forward this week as the Emory & Henry Marching Band gets a head start on the marching season.

The beat goes on for 85 Emory & Henry students — 27 of them are freshmen — who have arrived on campus two weeks before classes begin to practice from morning until night each day this week.

Giving up the opportunity to sleep late may not bother Parker Kitts and Sydney French, both senior band members who are on a band camp leadership team to orient new freshmen band members.

“We just finished up camp for first-year students today,” said Kitts last Saturday. “The potential of this group is really awesome. We were ahead of schedule for everything we did.”

According to Matt Frederick, associate provost and director of bands at the college, this year’s band students are very talented and bring a high level of discipline and professionalism with them.

“Two new students, Emily Blevins, who plays clarinet, and Alec Roberts, who plays euphonium, are Virginia All-State Band members, the highest individual band honor for high school musicians in Virginia. We also have more All-State audition-eligible students than any other year in the history of the band.”

Frederick said this is turning out to be a big year for the Emory & Henry Marching Band.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Freshmen band members at Emory & Henry College arrived on campus last Friday for orientation and practice on the field. On Sunday, upper class band members joined them, bringing the total to 85 students participating in the Emory & Henry Marching Band this school year.

“In addition to our football game performances, we sponsor the Chilhowie Apple Festival Band Competition. We also are performing in exhibition at the Lonesome Pine Marching Band Competition.

“And then we will travel to Rome, Italy, to perform in their New Year’s Day parade.

“We had to go through an audition process, and we were selected to be one of two bands to represent the United States for this year’s parade,” Frederick said. “The students will have the opportunity to not only represent Emory & Henry in the parade but to experience all of the wonders and history of Rome and Florence.”

For now, the band is busy preparing for pregame and

halftime shows for the first home football game on Sept. 7.

“Our pregame show features traditional Emory & Henry College music and marches, and it will end with a patriotic tribute to our great country,” said the band director.

“Our halftime shows this year feature music from the hit movie, ‘The Greatest Showman.’ All of the music for the halftime shows is custom-written for our ensemble, which is an exciting experience for our students.”

The college’s marching band, which was revived in 2015 after more than 50 years without a marching band, is a big attraction for high school band students who are looking for a college to attend.

Sydney French, of Chilhowie, has been a band member all four years and spent three as drum major. She also plays tenor saxophone during concert season in the spring.

“Band was something that really drew me to Emory & Henry. I’d always really liked band in high school, and it was something I didn’t want to give up when I came to college,” she said.

Parker Kitts, of Knoxville, Tennessee, said his experience in the college’s marching band has been “absolutely fantastic.”

Kitts is a music education major with a focus on instrumental music. “If the college had not offered a band program, I probably wouldn’t be here now,” said Kitts, who plays trombone in the college band.

“I’m three hours from home. Band is what really plugged me into the college and helped me make those connections four years ago.”

The college’s band members come from locations as far away as Atlanta, Georgia, and as close as Glade Spring and Meadowview.

“Our band is much larger than it was five years ago,” said Frederick. “With 85

members, that’s almost 10% of the student body.

“The biggest difference between now and when we started the band is that the level of talent that we are attracting is significantly higher. The band has grown and developed into a very fine ensemble that attracts a lot of very fine musicians from our regional high schools.

“We are continuing to strive to set the standard for bands within our athletic conference and for schools similar to Emory & Henry.”

Heading up the college’s first band since 1958 is really something Frederick can cheer about. The college has always had a pep band to play in the stands at football games — but no program to put on the ambitious halftime shows marching bands are known for.

“It is a great privilege to be able to work with young people in an environment that they are so passionate about — being in a marching band.

“Giving students an opportunity to earn a college degree while doing what they love is a wonderful thing to call your job.”

Carolyn R. Wilson is a freelance writer in Glade Spring, Virginia. Contact her at news@washconews.com.

Mendota Trail’s grand opening Friday

WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

The long-awaited Mendota Trail — with 3 new completed miles of the former railroad turned scenic footpath — will hold its grand opening this Friday at the Bristol trailhead.

Starting at 10 a.m. on Aug. 16, a ceremony beneath the I-81 underpass on Island Road will show off the trail’s entrance and the work made possible by financial and volunteer support from the local community.

The first mile of the Mendota Trail was completed in October 2017, from a Mendota trailhead, and the ribbon-cutting ceremony will mark the opening of the Bristol trailhead on the opposite end. Eight more miles of trail need to be completed to make a full connection between the two, but after many delays and some controversy from local property owners, the project has finally picked up steam.

“Many volunteers have generously given their time, energy and financial support in order to have this 3.1 miles completed for the public to enjoy,” said Bob Mueller, the trail’s volunteer project manager.

The ceremony will be attended by leaders from Washington County, the City of Bristol and Virginia’s General Assembly, with Del. Todd Pillion scheduled to speak.

For more information on the Mendota Trail, visit <http://mendotatrail.org>.

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Feeding America of Abingdon delivers meals on Thanksgiving A2



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COMMUNITY



Christmas markets open in Glade Spring town square

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MUSIC



Emory & Henry band prepares for New Year's parade in Rome

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EDUCATION



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Committee to study options for Washington County Courthouse

BY JOE TENNIS
WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

ABINGDON, Va. — It may take more than two years, according to Washington County Administrator Jason Berry, before the Washington County Courthouse sees a reconstruction and expansion.

“That’s the million-dollar question,” Berry said, now that a referendum to move the court

functions was defeated in the Nov. 5 election.

Voters soundly said they did not want the courts moved to a vacant Kmart, instead opting to keep functions atop Courthouse Hill, where the first courthouse at that site was built in 1779 at the center of Abingdon.

Now, Berry said, the Courthouse Committee should soon

meet again in January or February and work with town of Abingdon officials on what steps can be taken to improve the county courthouse facilities.

“The issue is space, and the issue is security,” Berry said. “As for construction, you’re probably not doing anything until late 2021. And if something stalls us, it may be early 2022.”

The Courthouse Committee, according to Berry, should include town officials like the town manager and mayor plus an independent attorney, chief judge of the circuit court, commonwealth’s attorney, clerk of the court and two members of the Washington County Board of Supervisors.

See **COURTHOUSE**, Page A3

REACH OUT AND READ



Dr. Sarah Seeley-Dick gives 4-year-old Cameron Ellis a new book to read at home. The nationwide Reach Out and Read program supplies books to pediatricians to help children develop healthy minds.

Patient readers

Why local pediatricians are prescribing books for children and their families

BY CAROLYN R. WILSON
FOR THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

ABINGDON, Va. — During a checkup last week, 4-year-old Cameron Ellis not only received a clean bill of health; he also got a new book, handed to him by his pediatrician, Dr. Sarah Seeley-Dick, one of four doctors at Highlands Pediatrics in Abingdon.

It’s not the first book the youth has received at the doctor’s office. His mother, Sarah Ellis, of Meadowview, said her son has received at least two free books to take home through

the program, Reach Out and Read, a national nonprofit organization designed to be implemented by medical professionals who provide primary care to children.

“Cameron loves to be read to. We’ve read the book he recently received every night at home,” said the mother.

Since becoming members of Reach Out and Read, the local pediatricians prescribe reading time for all their young patients.

The program highlights the importance of

See **READ**, Page A5

Supervisors unanimously pass ‘Second Amendment’ resolution

BY JOE TENNIS
WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

ABINGDON, Va. — Dozens of people packed the Washington County Board of Supervisors meeting last Tuesday, and about a dozen people voiced opposition to proposed gun laws in Virginia.

“This crowd of people here tonight and this resolution sends a strong message,” said Supervisor Randy Pennington, who made a motion to adopt a resolution deeming Washington County a “Second Amendment Sanctuary.”

This symbolic resolution, passed unanimously, says that Washington County’s government supports the Second Amendment right to bear arms.

“It’s a very, very important issue,” said Board of Supervisors Chairman Saul Hernandez, who said Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam’s proposed gun restrictions have been “dismissive” of Washington County’s way of life.

“If we don’t have our guns to protect our rights, we’re not going to be able to worship freely,” said Dr. Mark J. Matney, one of several speakers at the meeting.

“Law-abiding citizens don’t need any more gun law restrictions,” Matney said.

Another speaker, Rex Carter, said, “Our Second Amendment rights matter.”

Roman Blevins, another speaker, called the proposed restrictions “an attack on gun owners” and added, “Our rights as free Virginians are at stake.”

Blevins said the proposed laws “are a direct infringement” on the Second Amendment.

“Washington County is going to send a message to Richmond,” Blevins said. “This county needs to take a stand, even if it is a symbolic one.”

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Dr. Sarah Seeley-Dick checks the supply of books at Highlands Pediatrics, which are given out to young patients. The books are provided through donations and grants from local charities.

Read

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reading to both kids and parents, and then it gives them the tools to get started.

According to Seeley-Dick, she and her colleagues gave away 1,900 books from in the first six months of 2019.

The intervention program provides children with books during pediatric checkups, putting books in the hands of children from five months to five years.

According to its website, Reach Out and Read is the only national pediatric literacy model endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics. The organization serves 4.8 million children each year, half of whom are from low-income families.

Highlands Pediatrics is among more than 6,400 program sites throughout the country that are participating in the model, including Primary Care Center of Abingdon.

A new book, a bright smile

Seeley-Dick became familiar with the program while completing her residency in Chattanooga nearly 10 years ago and wanted to adopt the program once she moved to the Abingdon practice.

"It's such a nice experience to see kids' faces light up when they receive a new book that becomes their own," said the doctor. "The nice thing about this program is I get to hand the book to the child, talk about the pictures and have fun interaction with the child."

"The kids love them. They love the distraction of having a book handed to them during a well-check [checkup]. I like to remind parents to read, sing and talk to their children. I also try to model how to read to children. Just talking about the pictures is beneficial, too."

Reading to your children, she said, not only helps parents and children bond, but it gives kids a strong sense of well-being.

"Feeling warm and snuggly on the lap of a parent or grandpar-

ents helps children feel loved," said the pediatrician.

"There are so many benefits to reading a book that you do not get from a child watching TV. Pages are turning slower than images on a TV screen, so the child has a chance to absorb the images better."

The pediatrician recognizes that not all families have the resources to purchase books for their children.

"A young family recently told me they didn't have books at home to read to their young child, and they lacked transportation to get to a local library. It feels good to be able to supply books to families in need."

Raising funds

Reach Out and Read affiliate sites in Virginia are responsible for raising their own book funds.

The program was implemented at Highlands Pediatrics in July 2018 after receiving initial funding from a grant through Niswonger Children's Hospital in Johnson City.

According to Seeley-Dick, Niswonger Children's Hospital and East Tennessee State University's book program, funded through the First Tennessee Foundation, supported them with 1,720 books. United Way of Southwest Virginia also donated 500 books as part of their third grade reading level initiative.

"East Tennessee State University has graciously funded our program again this year with an 800-book donation, but we are running short on those books."

"I wasn't sure we would be able to continue the program without continued financial support," said Seeley-Dick, who recently approached community organizations for help to keep the program going.

Rotary clubs donate

As a result, the Abingdon clinic has received donations of \$1,500 from local groups to purchase more books for children.

The Washington County Rotary Club donated \$1,000; the Abingdon Rotary Club donated \$250; and the Washington County Public Library

Foundation matched the \$250 donation.

"I'm hoping we will be able to purchase 800 to as many as 1,500 of books with this money," she said.

"We are so pleased that we will be able to continue giving out books at our well-checks through the funding provided by our local rotary clubs this fall."

"My vision for our program," she said, "is that every child who visits our practice will sit and read with their parents or caregivers every single night for at least 20 minutes. It will help stimulate their brains and increase their vocabularies so that they will do better in school and develop a love of learning and reading."

To learn more about the Reach Out and Read program, visit www.reachoutandread.org.

Carolyn R. Wilson is a freelance writer in Glade Spring, Virginia. Contact her at news@washconews.com.

Council fills appointments for town leadership

BY JOE TENNIS
WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

ABINGDON, Va. — Abingdon Town Council approved a series of appointments at its Monday meeting.

That included naming Police Chief Tony Sullivan as the town's Coordinator of Emergency Management, reappointing Mike Rush to the town's Redevelopment and Housing Authority, filling a va-

cancy left by former Martha Washington Inn manager Chris Lowe on the town's Tourism Advisory Committee with Samir Patel, appointing Callie Hietala to the arts and culture position of Tourism Advisory Committee and naming Tim Wade to Susain Abingdon to replace Melissa Kalb.

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Enjoy a better quality of life through pain management

Welcome pain management specialist Deneene Booth, MD

As a child, Deneene Booth, MD watched her father take cars apart and put them back together, making comparisons between mechanical parts and human anatomy all the while. She knew from the age of 5 that she wanted to go into medicine.



When patients come to Dr. Booth, they might be in pain for any number of reasons - from osteoarthritis to chemotherapy-related discomfort - but she knows the best treatment plans begin with listening, as well as taking her patients' personal beliefs into consideration. She also finds listening itself can be therapeutic.

Dr. Booth works with her patients and their care team to develop an effective treatment plan. Options could include:

- Behavioral healthcare to reduce depression and anxiety
- Epidurals and cortisone shots
- Lifestyle changes, such as exercise, healthy eating, weight management and reducing stress
- Medication that temporarily eases discomfort
- Occupational therapy for everyday tasks
- Physical therapy, massage and warm-water therapy

To learn more about pain management services, please call 276.258.1670 or visit balladhealth.org.

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