

LOCAL

## Paving the way

*Plans for passing lanes move forward*

By Richard Burrell

Just about everyone can recount a story of being stuck behind a vehicle on Route 3 that single-handedly caused a mobile traffic jam. This problem is particularly bad when headed east after passing Flat Iron Road, where there are no passing zones for that particular lane until after passing the road to Stratford Hall at Lerty. However, plans have been in place to fix this for a while now, and they took another step towards completion last month during a special meeting of Westmoreland County's Board of Supervisors.

The Virginia Department of Transportation has been at work acquiring the rights of way needed for the construction of the passing lanes, even holding a public hearing on the subject in the summer of last year. At this point, plans had been reviewed and checked against state codes while land prices were researched for what VDOT had to do: they had to buy the property or property rights for the area. In this case, VDOT's offer for the rights to the area to make their passing lanes came in the form of \$5,600 after a study of the real estate market in the area was conducted so as to get a basis for the offer.

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**Early Deadline:**  
In preparation for Labor Day, we will have an early deadline of Friday, August 30 at 10 a.m.

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WEEKLY WEATHER

Friday	Saturday	Sunday
87°/70°	90°/71°	93°/71°

INSIDE



Above: This award-winning watermelon hardly fits in its wagon display. Right: The butterfly safari was a new attraction at this year's fair, that allowed guests to feed butterflies.



## A FAIR TO REMEMBER

*Richmond County Fair brings new attractions for community*

By Michelle Smith

The Richmond County Fair brought new flavor to town this year. Thanks to its partnership with Cole Shows Amusement

Company, the event included new rides, new games and new concessions, and the crowds turned out for it.

Early in the evenings, well before sundown, cars lined Community Park Drive, extending back to the Route 3, bringing fair-goers from every age group.

Tuesday was gospel night and the roster included all local groups, including Under His Wings, the Fred Paul Brass Band, Tommy Thompson and Sam Oliver. Over the next four days, the stage would

host performances by artists including Faron Hamblin, Hard to Tell Band, John Grisby and the County Line as well as Southern Bred. Some guests brought their chairs and lined the hill above the stage. Some took a seat on the hay bales, and other preferred to dance.

New attractions this year included a butterfly safari that offered guests the opportunity to find and feed butterflies.

See Fair, page 2



Mayor Randy Phelps presents Sheriff Steve Smith with a check for the new animal shelter.

## Friends of the shelter

*The Town of Warsaw shows their support of the Richmond County Animal Shelter*

By Michelle Smith

The Town of Warsaw has shown it can be counted as a friend of Richmond County's new animal shelter. Mayor Randall Phelps presented Sheriff Stephan Smith with a \$1,000 check at Thursday's town council meeting.

"An animal shelter was much needed in the county," said Phelps. "These funds are to show our support and that the town is happy to

now have that service."

The sheriff expressed appreciation for the money and told council members "we have really hit the ground running." Smith said animal control took in its first animal within hours of moving into the facility on July 16. On its second day, the facility received 13 dogs from Westmoreland. By the end of last week, the staff had completed nine adoptions.

The town office made the first kitten adoption, adding Midnight to its staff. The black cat now holds the title the of the town mascot. "He guards the office and is really great guy to have around," said town manager Joseph Quesenberry.

See more about the Town Council meeting on page 10

## County or bank?

*Several financial requests were addressed during August's Board of Supervisors meeting*

By Michelle Smith

Richmond County's Board of Supervisors appears to be trying to steer clear of creating a sense that the county is a bank. A significant portion of this month's meeting was spent considering financial requests from local organizations. None received exactly what it asked for.

As part of its upcoming expansion project, the YMCA requested that the county purchase a corner parcel near its Richmond County branch. Virginia Department of Transportation owns the property, which is approximately eight-tenths of an acre, and has offered it to the county at a 10 percent discount, lowering the price to \$41,400.

In addition to asking the county to make the purchase, the YMCA also requested money to make the purchase. The organization only has \$16,000 to contribute and asked the board to match it with a \$16,000 donation. According to the organization's proposal, the county would also need to pay the remaining \$9,400. That amount would be considered, a loan until next year when the county could recoup the funds by deducting them from the \$25,000 contribution that Richmond County makes to the YMCA's budget each year.

Members of the board discussed the options of giving the organization the money versus loaning it.

"I'm in favor to try to help you all, but I'm not in favor of another \$16,000 donation," Lee Sanders told the YMCA representatives in attendance. Sanders said he favored an arrangement similar to what the county has done for other organizations—loan the money and have it repaid through a payment plan. "I think that's more than fair on both sides," he said.

William Herbert disagreed. "I don't know where we could come up with the money right now from our budget. But the Y does such a tremendous job for our community, I would like to see us do whatever we can to get this property to go along with their expansion," he said.

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## Fighting back against the opioid epidemic

*Attorneys pitch opioid lawsuit to Richmond County board*

By Michelle Smith

Attorneys Chap Petersen and Jake Daniel came before the Richmond County Board of Supervisors last week to pitch the idea of the county joining in on a national class action opioid lawsuit.

The lawyers explained that they're part of a legal consortium of litigators that are

seeking to form a class action group in Virginia, an initial step in the process. Once the class is established, their complaint will be consolidated with pending litigation filed in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Ohio.

Big jurisdictions such as Fairfax, Richmond and Virginia Beach have hired separate counsel and are working on their own individual lawsuits. Smaller rural counties don't have the resources to go out and do that. Smaller counties need an economy of scale, said Petersen. And that's where he and his partner come in.

The attorneys are offering to work on Richmond County's behalf on a contingency basis. They will front all costs, such as filing fees, deposition costs, expert fees and travel costs, and then take up to 25% of the proceeds from any settlement to cover legal fees and up to 10% to recoup funds spent on costs.

"One of the reasons we're coming before you is to help you get compensated for the costs you've had to undergo related to this opioid epidemic," the attorneys reiterated throughout their presentation.

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LOCAL

## Leader for learning

Rappahannock Community College announces new president

By Michelle Smith

Rappahannock Community College selected Dr. Shannon L. Kennedy of Shelby, North Carolina to serve as its fourth president. She'll step into the role in early July.

Kennedy was chosen from over 70 applicants. "Shannon has more than two decades of higher education experience with a heavy emphasis in academic affairs and workforce development training," said Glenn DuBois, chancellor of Virginia's Community Colleges.

Beginning her career at Gardner-Webb University in Boiling Springs, NC, in 1996, Kennedy is currently executive vice president of Cleveland Community College in Shelby.

See Leader, page 5

## VDOT's new member

By Richard Burrell

Stephen McKeever, the VDOT rep for the region, introduced George Bowman, the new superintendent for the county the Westmoreland Board of Supervisors and the community.

Bowman was among the supervisors that aided the county in its recovery after what was left of Hurricane Michael charged through. Previously a supervisor in the Hampton Roads District, Bowman was enthusiastic about his new posting, already having a list of assignments at the ready.

See VDOT, page 5

WEEKLY WEATHER

Friday Saturday Sunday



79°/62° 68°/57° 70°/56°

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INSIDE



Residents and staff work together to create detailed costumes almost entirely out of paper.



## LOOKING BACK

Seniors reminisce with historic displays

By Jackie Nunnery

Residents at Commonwealth Senior Living in Kilmarnock have been looking "Back to the Future" with a monthly display featuring historical pictures, artifacts and mannequins costumed for each time period.

Evon Smith, Program Director, has been working with staff, residents and community members to put together the monthly displays. Starting back in January, they began focusing on a decade, beginning with the 1910s. Each month, a character is created, complete with name and costume, all done with the participation of and "lots of input from the residents," she said.

See Looking Back, page 5

## Off to the races!

Annual Kentucky Derby party brings the community together

By Colston Newton

The Rice's Hotel/Hughlett's Tavern annual Kentucky Derby party has become a regular rite of spring in Heathsville. On Saturday, this event lived up to its billing as the ultimate spring event with clear weather, warm air, and a happy crowd.

See Races, page 2



From left to right, Heather Young, Lauren Vinski, Erin Merkin enjoy the sunny day at the derby party.

## 'GREATER TUNA'



Lucas Wigfield portrays Didi Snaveley in "Greater Tuna." Photo by Marca Clark

## Westmoreland Players bring community laughter

By Colston Newton

Probably the best recommendation the current Westmoreland Players production, "Greater Tuna," could have is that the New York Times' theater critic hated it in 1982.

The critic, Mel Gussow, said "'Greater Tuna' arrives Off Broadway after popular engagements

in Houston, Hartford and Atlanta, which only proves that some people will laugh at anything." Well, Northern Neck folks aren't New Yorkers and they laughed through the Players production from start to finish. As Larry the Cable Guy might say, "I don't care who you are. That right there is funny."

See Greater Tuna, page 6

## Specialist discusses 'scary' snake season

Is it as severe as some stories say?

By Michelle Smith

There's talk that this is going to be a record year for the snake population. But in Virginia it's just that—all talk, according to John Kleopfer, state herpetologist with Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

"There's no evidence to support that. It's pure speculation," he said.

Kleopfer attributes the rumors in large part to news stories that have gained a lot of traction. An NBC12 News segment reported that experts say this snake season is already shaping up to be one for the books. The segment included an interview with one of those experts, Richard Perry, owner of Virginia Wildlife Management and Control, a company that offers an on-call snake removal service.

Perry told the network this is one of the worst seasons he has seen and said he's already getting a lot of calls. He cited warm spells early in the year and the fact that we have had a lot of rain. Perry's claims have since been re-quoted.

"[Perry] may be responding to more calls. But that's probably a product of them promoting their company and more people knowing where to call," said Kleopfer. "And of course social media is exacerbating that claim because more people are able to post pictures when they find snakes. But there's no science whatsoever behind saying that snake populations in Virginia are increasing due to weather patterns" and there's no official data to support those claims.

Overall, the contrary is more likely true, Kleopfer explained. When considering all snakes populations on a statewide basis, you are probably looking at a decline for several reasons, including road mortality. "Cars are killing thousands every year and people

are also killing snakes," he said. "But these animals do go through boom and bust cycles. For example, you may have a drought year when there's a lower level of food sources like frogs, so there may be fewer snakes around."

Most snakes in the Northern Neck are harmless. There are common species like garter snakes, brown snakes and worm snakes. There is the Eastern Rat snake, which has a wide variety of nicknames including being called the Chicken snake, and there are Black Racers.

While there isn't a population boom per se, warmer weather is here and snakes will start appearing more.

See Snake Season, page 2





LOCAL



Master Sergeant Edward Colston "Coley" Newton V

## A hero on overwatch

Resolution passed remembering local Master Sergeant

By Steven M. Waterfield

"I loved Coley," Delegate Margaret Ransone said, choked up as she introduced a joint resolution to the General Assembly that recognized Master Sergeant Edward Colston "Coley" Newton V. Ransone spoke in front of Coley's widow and son at the Blake T. Newton Memorial Library on Saturday, April 26.

See Hero, page 6

## Northern Neck News gets statewide recognition

See story on page 2

### WEEKLY WEATHER

Friday	Saturday	Sunday
84°/63°	79°/60°	75°/57°

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### INSIDE



## Up to our 'Neck' in litter

Pride of place: Working to preserve the beauty of the Northern Neck

By Jackie Nunnery

It's a curious thing. People have chosen to live in this region because they appreciate being surrounded by the natural beauty of land and water. Yet at the same time, many are noticing a not so pretty problem that's definitely not natural, but rather entirely man-made.

See Litter, page 10



Julie Hendrickson makes a fashion statement in her outfit of litter. Photo by Gena McKinley



Citizens of all ages helped collect trash that littered the Northern Neck.

## Raiders soccer wins three

By Vernon L. Newton

The Raiders varsity soccer team is at it again! They defeated the Essex Trojans, the Lancaster Red Devils, and the West Point Pointers on Wednesday, April 17, Monday, April 22, and Wednesday, April 24. The games against the Trojans and Red Devils were halted early because of

the mercy rule (one team is ahead by eight points after 60 minutes of playing). Head Coach Jordan Clary said, "Our efforts were great, we are finally starting to link-up and figure each other out. We've had five different players score in the last two games."

See Soccer, page 9



Edward Headley runs by the defender to put the ball in the net.

## Driver competes from Virginia to California

Bay Transit driver wins state competition, heading to national

By Michelle Smith

Bay Transit bus driver Ronnie Ryals is preparing to go to Palm Springs, California to compete in the National Community Transportation Rodeo after winning first place at the state-level.

The annual competition tests drivers' skills with a focus on

safe operations and passenger sensitivity. Ryals is the only Bay Transit driver to ever win first place.

Before going to the state competition, Bay Transit holds a company-wide competition. Ryals was one of the two finalists who qualified to proceed.

This year's state competition was held in Williamsburg. Like the upcoming national competition, it consisted of a written safety exam, a wheelchair securement task, a pre-trip inspection and an obstacle course.

In addition to being deemed the Virginia's top body-on-chassis driver, Ryals also won first place for five of nine obstacles on the driving course.

"I was blown away by that," said Ryals. "I thought I did well but I didn't know I did that well. That was pretty humbling."

"When they started calling my name, my wife started crying. Then, I started crying. And she said 'Ronnie you did it.' I told her God did it. When I got on the bus I was kind of nervous and then I just felt peace come over me."

Ryals has qualified to go to the

state level about 10 or 11 times, and has received second place honors twice. Ahead of this year's competition, Ryals said he really focused on areas of the obstacle course where he had difficulty in the past.

"I was pretty confident about the other three parts," he said. Bay Transit set up practice obstacle courses at their facilities in Warsaw and Gloucester, allowing drivers to practice. That helped me a lot this year."

See Driver, page 2

## Sexual assault charges alleged

Local innkeeper and prominent music teacher arrested for allegedly sexually assaulting students

By Jackie Nunnery

Jeffrey Cummins, owner of the local Essex Inn, was arrested last week at Dulles International Airport as he was returning from a trip. According to Fairfax County police, Cummins, 56, has been charged with eight counts of indecent liberties by a custodian. He is currently out on bond.

According to published reports, the investigation into Cummins began in May 2018 when the first juvenile victim came forward, alleging that they had been inappropriately touched by Cummins over several years. Since then a second similar allegation has occurred. Detectives from the Major Crimes Bureau's Child Abuse Squad, which headed up the investigation, said the alleged abuse occurred during lessons as well as times when they were at Cummins' home.

See Charges, page 6



Marquise Lanier

## Warsaw athlete continues to amaze

Marquise Lanier, a senior from Warsaw, is the first Chowan baseball player in program history to earn "Conference Carolinas Player of the Year" honors. Lanier finished second in the league with a .407 batting average with 13 doubles, 15 home runs, 44 RBI, and 11 stolen bases.

As if that wasn't enough, Lanier was also honored with "Male Athlete of the Year at Chowan University" and "First Team All Conference." Congratulations, Marquise!