

DIXIE YOUTH
BASEBALL TEAM
WINS AWARD AT
WORLD SERIES

» SPORTS

A BLOOM IN THE NIGHT

» ACCENT



MARTINSVILLE BULLETIN

THE VOICE OF THE COMMUNITY FOR 130 YEARS

Sunday, August 25, 2019 • MARTINSVILLEBULLETIN.COM • Martinsville, Virginia \$2

Is Monday's new role a problem for the city?

Council member questions if city attorney has a conflict of interest as the assistant city manager

Read full agreements

» To read the full employment contract and conflict-of-interest agreement between the city of Martinsville and attorney Eric Monday, visit www.martinsvillebulletin.com.

By Paul Collins
paul.collins@martinsvillebulletin.com

Martinsville City Councilman and former mayor Danny Turner, who has questioned the legitimacy of the contract under which Eric Monday has served as city attorney for more than a decade, now is asking whether there's a conflict of interest created by Monday's hiring as assistant city manager.

City Manager Leon Towarnicki on July 1 named Monday as his assistant, and Monday wrote then in an email then that he would continue to serve as attorney for the city and Martinsville City Public Schools and accept any as-

signments from the city manager.

Monday is being paid a combined salary of \$100,190, of which \$55,745 is from his now-12-year-old, rollover contract as city attorney. Monday said that his benefits and work requirements are the same as any full-time city employee.

Monday, who also was compensated for collecting delinquent property taxes, said he did not ask to be assistant city manager, that Towarnicki asked him if he would be interested, and after thinking it over, he said he decided that he was.



CITY OF MARTINSVILLE PHOTO

Eric Monday has served as city attorney for more than a decade and also has been hired as assistant city manager.

SEE **MONDAY** | A7

Answers aren't always in focus



TAYLOR IRBY/BH MEDIA

ABOVE: An officer wears a body camera. In Henry and Patrick counties and Martinsville, more than 100 body cameras are used by officers. BELOW: A police body camera is shown.



JAY WESTCOTT/BH MEDIA

Police body-worn cameras present issues of practicality, maintenance and fairness for county sheriff's offices, Martinsville police, prosecutors, public

By Paul Collins
paul.collins@martinsvillebulletin.com

A man in Martinsville in 2017 was stopped by police while driving his own vehicle, which was found to have drugs, guns and money inside. He was acquitted earlier this month. One of the possible reasons cited by prosecutors: The video captured by the body camera of the officer who made the traffic stop and the arrest hadn't been preserved in a manner that it could be used in court years later.

How critical visual evidence was not preserved, either by accident, by error or by a porous process,

raised questions about how law enforcement agencies capture and retain video from body cameras worn by the men and women patrolling the street and how this footage is used in prosecuting cases.

In Henry and Patrick counties and Martinsville, more than 100 body cameras are used by officers, but there is no state-mandated law or even a mutually adopted policy to specify how all of that footage is managed, even as state law has specified that more prosecutors be hired to deal with the volume of evidence created by the cameras.

There are guidelines in a "model

policy" distributed by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services that address privacy issues created by the video and restricted-usage protections, but that policy has been criticized by the Virginia chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union as possibly being unfair to citizens.

The policies for body-worn cameras of the Henry County and Patrick County sheriff's offices do not include as many specific privacy and restricted-use protections as that DCJS's policy, but the Martinsville Police Department's policy is almost identical.

SEE **CAMERAS** | A9

INDEX

Accent B6
Comics B7
Opinion A4
Bridge B8
Crossword B7
Sports B1
Calendar A2
Lottery A2
State A3
Classified B9
Obituaries A5
Television B8



WEATHER

Today will be mostly cloudy, and tonight will be partly to mostly cloudy.

75 HIGH | 59 LOW

For detailed weather information, see Page A2



Philpott Lake trail system expanded to 14 miles.

Page A3



Cameras

From Page A1

But, speaking generally about the Henry County, Martinsville and Patrick County law enforcement policies on body-worn cameras – not just the privacy and restricted-use protections aspect – several law enforcement officials, two commonwealth's attorneys, a deputy public defender and a private lawyer expressed support for the local policies or support for using body cameras.

Henry County Commonwealth's Attorney Andrew Nester said the decision about whether to use body-worn cameras at this time is determined by a county, city or town and is not required by the state.

And generally the DCJS model policy includes provisions on purpose and procedures, including use of body-worn cameras generally, equipment, officer/duty responsibility, supervisor responsibility, privacy and restricted use, access and video retention.

It also specifies policies for privacy and restricted use, elements that have come under question by the Virginia chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union:

» Whenever practical officers/deputies shall inform individuals they are being recorded.

» In locations, where individuals have a reasonable expectation of privacy, such as a residence, individuals may decline to be recorded unless the recording is being made pursuant to an investigation, arrest or search of the residence or individuals within the residence.

» Body-worn cameras are not to be used in communications with other law enforcement personnel without permission of the office of chief of police/sheriff or a designee; communications involving law enforcement tactical and strategic policy, procedures or plans; encounters with undercover officers/deputies and confidential informants; while conducting strip searches; when community members are reporting crime; appearing before a magistrate; when officers/deputies are on break or otherwise engaged in personal activities; or in restrooms or locker rooms.

» Officers/deputies must comply with individual federal, state and local courthouse policies and with medical facilities POLICIES about wearing cameras in those building.

The local policies

"At the Henry County Sheriff's Office, we support and appreciate the use of body cameras," Henry County Sheriff Lane Perry wrote in an email. "We believe in its ability to accurately capture situations encountered by our officers. This then turns into evidence in court, footage for training, and can be reviewed to ensure fair and impartial justice is taking place in our community."

"Occasionally, we review footage based upon a request and almost always find our officers have been very professional despite whatever they encountered."

Perry said in putting the policy together, the HCSO reviewed policies of several different agencies and pulled the best practices from each.

"We wanted a comprehensive policy, but also wanted it as concise as possible so the officer can easily read and implement it. We're coming up on the



A police officer wears a camera clipped to the right side of his head.

BH MEDIA

ACLU of Virginia's report

» In 2015 the ACLU of Virginia gathered that information by sending a Freedom of Information Act request to 368 local law enforcement agencies to collect existing policies for review. The ACLU received and reviewed 59 local policies in response to these questions. The ACLU also reviewed the DCJS model policy.

» Its findings:

» One in six Virginia law enforcement agencies use body-worn cameras.

» Only 3% of body-worn camera policies in place required officers to inform the public that they were being recorded. The DCJS model policy requires only that officers inform the public where "practical."

» Only 5% of body-worn camera policies in place required officers to allow a victim of crime to decline to be filmed. The DCJS model policy did not require officers to allow a victim to decline to be filmed.

» Only 3% of body worn camera policies in place prohibited the use of body-worn cameras to record First Amendment protected activities such as peaceful protests. The DCJS model policy did not prohibit filming First Amendment-protected activities.

» Only 5% of body-worn camera policies in

place addressed body-worn camera usage on school grounds, and the DCJS model policy didn't address that.

» Only 12% of body-worn camera policies in place prohibited the use of body-worn cameras in a private residence if the residence objects. The DCJS policy did not prohibit use of body-worn cameras in a private residence if the resident objects.

» The report added: While some individual policies do a better job in addressing some or all of these principles than others, as a whole, the 59 local agency BWC [body-worn camera] policies and DCJS BWC policy that the ACLU of Virginia analyzed fail to ensure that BWCs are deployed in a way that promotes transparency, accountability and trust. The policies often do not articulate clearly what actions and events should be filmed, and they miss the mark when it comes to protecting the privacy of individuals in sensitive situations. They do not properly safeguard footage from inappropriate sharing. They fail to provide ordinary citizens the access to their own data to which they are entitled. Finally, they lack mechanisms to hold officers accountable for intentionally or unintentionally violating policy."



Cassidy



Perry



Smith

5-year mark of use of body cameras and to my knowledge, we have not had an incident that a more expansive policy would have changed," Perry said.

Patrick County Sheriff Dan Smith said in an email that his department has followed the DCJS policy very closely.

"Some of the language has been changed here and there," he said. "But it is overall very similar."

"The DCJS model is, for the most part, a solid model to follow. We obviously have to give some discretion to the deputy on when to record because there would be absolutely no way to accommodate the vast amount of storage otherwise."

Nester wrote in an email that he believes the HCSO's policy is comprehensive and covers what is needed for this jurisdiction.

"The policy does not require the camera to be rolling for their entire shift and uses a 'common sense' approach," he said. "I will say that, by and large, the deputies do a very good job of using sound judgment on their body-camera use. More often than not they err on the side of caution and record way more than is actually needed or required."

Expanded workload

Vikram Kapil, deputy public defender for Henry and Patrick counties and the city of Martinsville, wrote in an email that the body camera is an important issue for Virginia citizens, that the General As-

sembly and localities have and are paying for law enforcement body cameras, and that the

people are in favor of the expense.

"Body cams tell the story of encounters with police and citizens," Kapil said. "Generally, our body-cam views show our LEs [law enforcement] to be professional and courteous."

"The viewings also show citizens in very stressful situations. However, without camera footage, both LE and citizens tend to be mistaken in their recollections as to what exactly happened. Body cam helps with this."

He noted – a point echoed by Nester – that the General Assembly places such importance with body cameras that lawmakers have provided additional prosecutors to assist in reviewing footage.

"The Commonwealth Attorneys in Henry, Martinsville and Patrick will all expand their offices by adding new prosecuting attorneys to accomplish the body cam workload," Kapil said. "The prosecutors are obligated to under Brady v. Maryland that if they have knowledge of evidence that tends to prove a person is innocent they must notify the defendant and their counsel."

"Therefore, if they view the encounters with body cam and they note this type of evidence, then they have that duty to inform the appropriate persons."

Opportunity for defense lawyers

Kapil said the burden to review body cameras also falls on the citizen and the defense lawyer.

ple: In domestic disputes between a couple, rarely do more than two people witness the crime, and they are the same people involved in the event.

"When an officer arrives with a body camera, you're able to see the demeanor and the physical appearance of the two individuals, as well as what is being said," he said. "At trial, the alleged victim may be unwilling to testify against the accused, or he/she may become forgetful of what happened.... This was once the BANE of the Commonwealth's existence in domestic cases, but the body camera footage is now able to be brought into evidence during the trial. This evidence is usually considered more reliable at that point because everything captured was done so in the heat of the moment rather than several months after the event," Williams said.

How it is used

Martinsville Commonwealth's Attorney Andy Hall said there are pros and cons regarding use of body cameras. He said body cams provide insight as to what actually happened that an officer responds to, with video accompanied by audio.

"But therein we start to see some of the problems with body cam, some of the limitations," he said. "We are not going actually to see what the officer sees, because we can't angle the camera behind her eyes. We will see things from an angle, so there is no way that we are going to see everything."

"If the officer has the body cam positioned on her chest, and she is 5 feet 10, that's the angle we will see. The body cam is stationary. It is not on a swivel; it does not move."

But Hall noted that body cameras are mechanical devices operated by human beings. Mechanical devices fail on occasion, and officers, being human, on occasion may forget to turn on the body cameras or to download the content and preserve it.

"But if we do not have body cam footage in a case, this fact is sometimes weaponized and used against us in court. And it is a very effective tactic," Hall said.

He did not mention any particular case or cases.

But in that case earlier this month, a Martinsville Circuit Court jury acquitted Will Antwan Witcher, 29, of Martinsville of possession of a gun with a Schedule I or II drug, possession of a firearm by a violent felon, distribution of marijuana and possession of cocaine with intent to distribute.

"A body camera can show, from start to finish, what was said, what happened, how each person present acted, the timeline of events, and what was said between individuals."

Williams gave this exam-

ple that might possibly have influenced the jury's verdict was that police officer body-camera footage had not been preserved for trial evidence, lawyers said in interviews recently.

Martinsville Police Chief Eddie Cassidy said on Aug. 14 said he didn't have the specifics about the body-camera footage in the Witcher case without looking into it further. But he said the police department's practice is to download the footage at the end of the officer's shift. The video file is kept on a server for 90 days, at which time it will be purged from the server unless it had been marked as evidence either by the police department or the commonwealth's attorney's office, which automatically preserves it.

"We do the best we can to present cases [to the commonwealth's attorney's office and the court], to find out the truth of what happened," Cassidy said.

Patrick County's Smith noted a key element of all of this for law enforcement agencies.

"Our biggest issue, like everyone else, is data storage," he said. "Even with the three-month overwriting, data storage space is always a challenge, and additional servers are costly, usually in the \$8,000 ball park."

The public's rights

In 2015 the Virginia ACLU conducted a study, based on hundreds of requests under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, about the distribution of body cameras in Virginia and the policies employed by various agencies. Its findings were used to underscore concerns about the rights and privacy of individuals that could be compromised without specific and carefully enforced policies for body cameras.

Bill Farrar, director of strategic communications for ACLU of Virginia, wrote in an email that that organization does not encourage or object to the use of these cameras by police or any technology.

"We do urge agencies to adopt usage policies that are Constitutional, in particular that protect people's privacy and due process rights," he said. "We feel that consistency in these local policies across the state is critical so that people know what to expect when they cross the line from one jurisdiction to the next."

"That includes rules on when cameras are to be used, how and when subjects should be notified, whether officers can look at video before filing a report, how long video is retained, whether victims and witnesses can decline to be videoed, whether the subject of a video is allowed to see it, whether police have to ask permission to use cameras inside one's residence, and many other issues."

Farrar added that police should fully embrace the notion that when they say body cameras are deployed with intent to increase transparency and accountability, "the public's trust is then eroded when video is withheld almost every time an officer is accused of wrongdoing."

"We encourage local residents to ask their law enforcement agencies these questions and insist that usage policies be published on their websites, and also that the public be notified and get to have a say anytime new surveillance technologies are being considered for purchase."

Paul Collins is a reporter for the Martinsville Bulletin. Contact him at 276-638-8801, ext. 236.

Discussions between Mustangs and the league 'ongoing'

» SPORTS



THE PROCESS OF CANNING CAN BE A BIT JARRING

» ACCENT

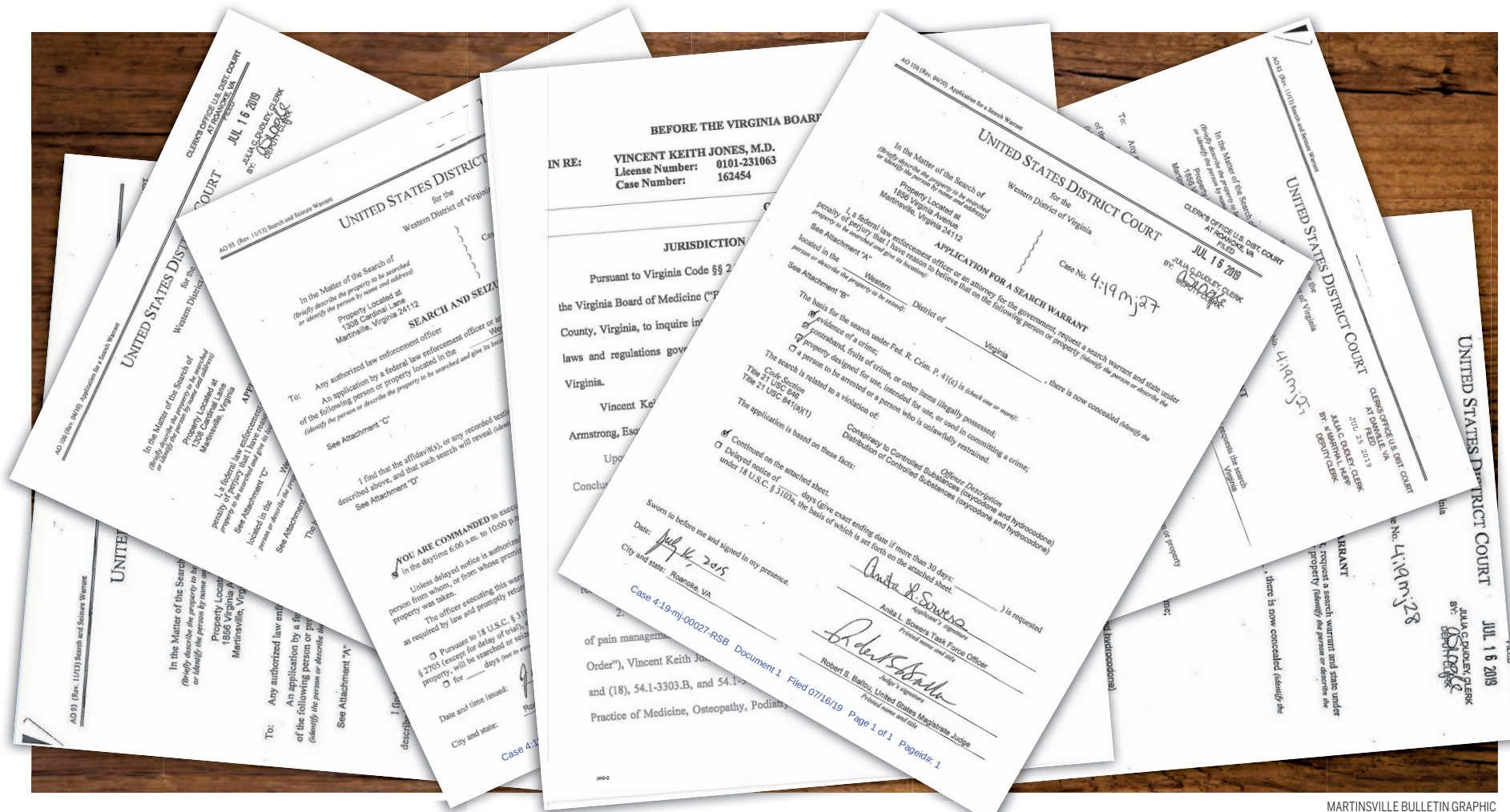
MARTINSVILLE BULLETIN

THE VOICE OF THE COMMUNITY FOR 130 YEARS

Sunday, August 11, 2019 • MARTINSVILLEBULLETIN.COM • Martinsville, Virginia \$1.50

Feds probe Martinsville doctor

Search warrants filed by federal DEA investigators detail a deep investigation of opioids prescribed by Dr. Vincent K. Jones from his practice in Collinsville.



MARTINSVILLE BULLETIN GRAPHIC

By Paul Collins
paul.collins@martinsvillebulletin.com

Documents online

To read the search warrant affidavits in this case and other documents, visit www.martinsvillebulletin.com.

Federal search warrants issued in July allege that there is probable cause to believe that Dr. Vincent K. Jones, an internist from Martinsville, has been illegally distributing controlled substances from his family practice in Collinsville.

The warrants say Jones and others are using his Community Family Care to distribute Schedule II and Schedule IV controlled substances (namely oxycodone and hydrocodone-acetaminophen and possibly others) and to commit health care fraud and wire fraud in violation of federal law.

Searches were conducted last month at Community Family Care, which is located at 1856 Virginia Ave. in Holiday Shopping Center in Collinsville, and at Jones' primary residence at 1308 Cardinal Lane in Martinsville.

Search warrants only describe the investigative process. Jones has not been charged with any crimes, and investigators won't speak about their work. But the documents provide keen insights into

information gathered from informants and other sources of documentation they have sought.

Anita Sowers, task force officer with the U.S. Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration's Roanoke Tactical Diversion Squad in Roanoke, filed the applications for search warrants.

Sowers was deputized as a task force officer with the DEA in January 2017 and had been employed with the city of Martinsville in 1997, serving as a corrections deputy until 2000 when she became a police officer for the city of Martinsville.

The documents don't specify when the investigation began, but they refer to a tip received about two years ago from a confidential informant of the Martinsville Police Department.



PAUL COLLINS/MARTINSVILLE BULLETIN

James Crews of Fieldale, a longtime patient, looks in the window of Community Family Care. He said he had an appointment Thursday morning and didn't know why the office was locked. "I want to know what's going on," he said.

SEE DOCTOR | A8

Linda Strange Dillard: The power behind FAHI

Founder of Fayette Area Historical Initiative dies 11 years after debilitating auto accident

By Holly Kozelsky
holly.kozelsky@martinsvillebulletin.com

Linda Strange Dillard, the first executive director of FAHI (Fayette Area Historical Initiative), has been laid to rest 11 years after a car crash that left her bedridden.

Dillard died Aug. 3, and her funeral was Saturday at St. John

Baptist Church in Axton. She was buried in the Strange Family Cemetery in Cascade.

Dillard was the first executive director of FAHI, which started about 15 years ago. Simon Spencer, Tyler Millner and Ben Murdock were among the founders, according to Curtis Millner, who joined the board later, and Bulletin reports.

"She was instrumental in



Dillard

getting it started. It was her brainchild," Millner said. "She was very passionate about it, and she worked very hard and often uncompensated. She was just determined to get it off the ground, and she did."

Dillard had a knack for motivating people to be involved, he said, and "if she couldn't get people to do things, she would do them herself."

Propelled by Dillard, the early FAHI was involved in several community initiatives. It revived the June German Ball, holding several since the first it coordinated in 2005; joined in roundtable discussions and community meetings about promoting local history, including of the Fayette Street area; put out a history book; hosted art exhibits; and engaged graduate students for potential landscape designs for where FAHI was then set.

Johnsie Finney worked with Dillard on FAHI before FAHI was

FAHI. They started out in a room at the back of the MHC Chamber of Commerce building before moving to the first freestanding location, a house on Fayette Street around 2005.

As executive director of FAHI, Linda worked in the center, but when she needed to go out for any reason she'd call Finney to take her place, Finney said.

Finney and Dillard also worked together to put on the June German Ball.

SEE DILLARD | A6

INDEX

Accent.....B6	Comics.....B7	Obituaries.....A5
Bridge.....B8	Crossword.....B7	Opinion.....A4
Calendar.....A2	Lottery.....A2	Sports.....B1
Classified.....B9	Nation.....A10	Television.....B8



WEATHER

Today will be humid with sunshine, and tonight will be mainly clear and humid.

85 HIGH | 62 LOW

For detailed weather information, see Page A2



Defendant faces more life sentences.

Page A3



Doctor

From Page A1

And the executed searches, Sowers wrote, are based on interviews with several confidential informants who described how Jones transacted prescription drugs outside his office, dispensing them to at least one person he had not examined and how he exchanged medications for sex.

The documents also state that drugs Jones is alleged to have prescribed were distributed by others, who were arrested in both Martinsville and Henry County and indicted by grand juries.

The documents also state that there are hundreds of prescriptions that Jones is alleged to have authorized that were issued in Virginia to three to five employees of Community Family Care and account for nearly 45,000 doses.

Jones earlier this year was prohibited by the Virginia Board of Medicine from writing prescriptions for Schedule II and III narcotics, such as oxycodone and hydrocodone.

An officer for the DEA referred a call seeking comment to a DEA public information officer, who has not yet responded to requests for information.

Brian McGinn, a public affairs specialist for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Virginia, wrote in an email: "There isn't anything we can comment on in regards to the search warrants and there is nothing more to comment on at this time."

Jones was contacted on Thursday at his home in Martinsville and again outside his office on Friday but said he would not com-



Community Family Care is at 1856 Virginia Ave. in Holiday Shopping Center in Collinsville.

PAUL COLLINS/MARTINSVILLE BULLETIN

ment. He also declined to say who is representing him in this matter.

This investigation is being conducted by the same office that earlier this year helped to convict another doctor from Martinsville, Joel Smithers, of writing hundreds of illegal prescriptions for controlled substances accounting for more than a half-million illegal narcotics being distributed. Smithers is facing 20 years to life in prison and millions of dollars in fines.

The search warrants

The search warrants identify Jones as being a registered practitioner with the DEA who has the authority "to include prescribe, order, and/or administer, controlled substances in Schedules 2, 2N, 3, 3N, 4 and 5 under [a certain DEA registration number] issued Dec. 7, 1998, with an expiration date of Dec. 31, 2019."

On May 6, 2018, Jones received a waiver to treat a maximum of 30 patients at one time for maintenance

and detoxification treatment of opioid addiction in accordance with the Drug Addiction Treatment Act of 2000.

The documents allege that there is probable cause to believe that certain financial accounts held by Jones and Community Family Care "contain funds that have been derived from illegal activity and are all subject to seizure and forfeiture."

The documents list a BB&T business checking account in the name of Community Family Care; and a BB&T banking account, BB&T personal money rate savings account and BB&T personal regular savings account in the name of Vincent K. Jones.

Search inventories indicate that evidence seized included:

» From Community Family Care: computer equipment (including laptops, computer monitor, desktop PC), phone message book, patient schedules,

pharmacy correspondence, patient correspondence, patient workup sheets, lab requests, a list of non-compliant patients, drug test literature, prescription documents, patient appointments, dictation tapes, CDs, scales, charts, and other items.

» From Jones' home: prescription pads, computer equipment (including laptops and desktop computers), iPhone, bags containing green leafy substance, patient files, visit sheets, Department of Health Professions information and DHP complaints, prescription pads, other prescription documents and records, patient visit sheets, and other documents.

Confidential sources

The search warrants allege that at an interview at the Martinsville Police Department on March 14, a person identified as "Confidential Source 3" told Sowers and Human and Health Services Special Agent Robert Slease that

CS3 "had been a patient of Jones since 2014 and was being treated for high blood pressure, leg pain related to knee surgery and a torn anterior cruciate ligament, and back pain from a fall. CS3 stated Jones prescribes him/her high blood pressure and cholesterol medication as well as Xanax and oxycodone every month.

"CS3 stated that he/she has met Jones on the street to obtain his/her prescriptions when CS3 did not have money to pay for an office visit or when he/she did not have transportation. CS3 stated that Jones would present prescriptions for oxycodone and Xanax out of the window of Jones' vehicle to CS3. CS3 stated on another occasion he/she went to Jones' residence to obtain prescriptions for oxycodone and Xanax.

"CS3 stated that Jones had provided a prescription for oxycodone-acetaminophen 5/325 for CS3's daughter AK. CS3 stated that AK was not a patient of Jones and had not been examined by Jones.

"CS3 admitted to having a sexual relationship with Jones. CS3 stated the sexual relationship started in or around 2014 and that the encounters occur at Jones' residence. CS3 stated that Jones would send CS3 text messages when Jones wanted to meet."

On March 14, DEA investigators interviewed the person identified as "AK" at the Martinsville Police Department regarding a prescription of oxycodone-acetaminophen alleged to have been written to AK by Jones on May 15, 2018.

"According to AK, he/she had no knowledge of the prescription. AK stated that he/she is not a patient of Jones and has never met Jones. AK stated that his/

her mother was a patient of Jones and has been for a few years. AK stated his/her mother is seen monthly by Jones and is prescribed medication."

Another patient of Jones, identified in the documents as "PTH" told DEA investigators in an interview on March 14 at the Martinsville Police Department that he/she became Jones' patient in about 2017 when he prescribed 5 milligrams of oxycodone.

PTH said "she" knew about the confidential informant and about the sexual relationship CS3 had with Jones. She described how the informant would meet Jones for sex to get prescriptions.

Drugs traced elsewhere

Sowers stated in the search warrants that through the course of the investigation, she learned that several patients of Jones were alleged to have been distributing pharmaceuticals prescribed to them by Jones, and that further investigations by the Henry County Sheriff's Office and the Martinsville Police Department resulted in controlled purchases of narcotics from several patients of Jones.

These people later were "direct indicted" by grand juries in Henry County and Martinsville Circuit Courts (not going through General District Courts) and were arrested.

The search warrants allege eight patients of Jones were arrested on charges of unlawfully distributing pills obtained via prescriptions that Jones wrote. The search warrants identify those eight patients by initials: CSM, KL, SC, JF, MHS, GH, OT, MS.

SEE WARRANT | A9

MEET THE TEAM BEHIND OUR AWARD-WINNING CARE.



WHAT OUR PATIENTS SAY



On 1,090 recent surveys, patients rated our center **4.7 out of 5** on the quality of their experience.



4 Star CMS Rating With The State of Virginia

Liz Purcell (pictured left) has been with Stanleytown Health & Rehabilitation Center since 1990 when the facility first began serving patients in the Martinsville community. She started out as a part-time receptionist, but later moved into a full-time position on the Admissions team and is now the Director of Discharge Planning. She has seen Stanleytown grow through the years, adding beautiful, state-of-the-art renovations, with her daughter was often by her side.

Jordan Cox (pictured right), Liz's daughter loved coming to work with her mother as a child. She helped with activities during the summer and as she grew older, she started volunteering in the rehab gym. She became passionate about the care our therapists provide and her experience drove her to pursue a degree in Physical Therapy. She received a company scholarship for all four years of undergraduate school, completed her Doctorate of Physical Therapy in 2019 and started her career at Stanleytown shortly after.

Both Liz and Jordan began their chosen paths at Stanleytown. Even better, they now get to work together and use their combined abilities to help their patients.



Stanleytown Health & Rehabilitation Center

240 Riverside Drive • Bassett, VA 24055 • 276-629-1772 • StanleytownRehab.com



4.5 Satisfaction Rating on Google



4.8 Satisfaction Rating on Facebook

Warrant

From Page A8

After Jones' patient MHS was arrested, he/she told investigators that he/she provided a urine sample for drug screening every three months and that on two occasions, he/she had provided a urine sample that did not contain trace of the medication that MHS was prescribed.

Sowers wrote in the documents that she believes the absence of prescribed medication in a urine sample is significant because it can indicate that the patient is taking the medication too quickly or is diverting (or selling) some of the pills prescribed.

"MHS and other patients of Jones did claim that their prescription medication is a necessity to managing their pain," the search warrants note.

MHS told investigators that Jones advised MHS that he/she "better have the medication in his system on the following drug screen. MHS stated that Jones did not mention nor was any action taken following the two failed drug screens," according to the search warrants.

Urine drug tests commonly are used in pain medicine practice to determine if a patient is taking illicit drugs or diverting the drugs prescribed, the warrants stated.

Investigators also interviewed defendant GH, who "stated that Jones administers drug screenings about every three months. GH said he/she is unaware if he/she had ever failed a drug screen but said one time in 2017, he/she 'didn't have enough in (him/her),' " according to search warrants.

In another interview defendant "OT" told investigators that he/she had been a patient of Jones for about four years and was being treated for pain from kidney stones and that "he/she heard about Jones on the street and that Jones has a reputation of being a physician who will prescribe 'whatever you need.' "

OT told investigators that Jones has a number of patients who are able to walk directly into the back office area and obtain a prescription, the documents explained. OT told investigators that most visits were for approximately five minutes. OT also stated that Jones has posted signs in the office stating that patients should not come to Jones' house.

"OT stated that he/she had direct knowledge that CS3 has received prescriptions from Jones on days that the office was not open," the search warrants allege.

Prior directives

The search warrants allege that in a series of investigations dating back to 2007, the Virginia Board of Medicine at least twice ordered Jones to undergo continuing education related to the prescribing of opioids.

"Nonetheless, a review by the Department of Health Professions [DHP] of his patient records show inconsistent and inadequate patient visits, and effective May 1, 2019, Jones was prohibited from prescribing Schedule II or III controlled substances, and prohibited from supervising any prescriber of such substances by the Virginia Board of Medicine," the warrants state.

In August 2016, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued a safety announcement about when serious risks and death when combining opioid pain or



This shows part of the waiting area at Community Family Care, as seen through a front window.

PAUL COLLINS/MARTINSVILLE BULLETIN

Search warrants

The search warrants allege these eight patients of Dr. Vincent K. Jones were arrested on charges of unlawfully distributing pills obtained via prescriptions that Jones wrote (they are identified only by initials): CSM, KL, SC, JF, MHS, GH, OT, MS.

» On March 21, 2018, CSM was arrested by the Henry County Sheriff's Office on a charge of distribution of oxycodone. According to the Virginia Prescription Monitoring Program (VAPMP) database, CSM allegedly received 11 prescriptions for oxycodone HCL 10mg tablets totaling 1,290 dosage units, two prescriptions for oxycodone HCL 5mg tablets totaling 120 dosage units from January 2017 to March 2018 that were prescribed by Jones.

» On Nov. 8, 2018, KL was arrested on a charge of distribution of hydrocodone-second offense and a charge of distribution of fentanyl-second offense. According to VAPMP, KL did not receive hydrocodone or fentanyl but did receive five prescriptions for oxycodone HCL 15mg tablets totaling 390 dosage units, 15 prescriptions for oxycodone HCL 10mg tablets totaling 390 dosage units, 15 prescriptions for oxycodone HCL 10mg tablets totaling 1,070 units, two prescriptions for oxycodone HCL 5mg tablets totaling 120 dosage units from June 2017 through October 2018 prescribed by Jones.

» SC was arrested on three charges of distribution of oxycodone. SC received four prescriptions of oxycodone-acetaminophen 10-325 for a total of 240 dosage units on Dec. 18, 2017, and the charges for the offense allegedly happened on Dec. 20 and 21, 2017. SC received 13 prescriptions of oxycodone-acetaminophen 5-325 for a total of 780 dosage units. According to VAPMP database, the prescription was filled on Jan. 16, 2018, and the offense date for the charge happened on the same date. All the prescriptions were prescribed by Jones.

» JF was arrested on one charge of distribution of Alprazolam and two charges of distribution of oxycodone. According to VAPMP database, JF received four prescriptions for oxycodone HCL 10mg for a total of 240 dosage units, four prescriptions for oxycodone HCL 15mg for a total of 240 dosage units, three prescriptions for oxycodone HCL 20mg for a total of 360 dosage units, eight prescriptions for oxycodone HCL 30mg for a total of 960 dosage units, 11 prescriptions for Alprazolam 1mg for a total of 720 dosage units, three prescriptions for Alprazolam

.25mg for a total of 180 dosage units and five prescriptions for Alprazolam .5mg for a total of 300 dosage units from January 2017 through November 2018, all of which allegedly were prescribed by Jones.

» MHS was arrested on two charges of distribution of hydrocodone. According to VAPMP database, MHS received 18 prescriptions for hydrocodone-acetaminophen 10-325mg for a total of 2,160 dosage units and four prescriptions for hydrocodone-acetaminophen 5-325mg for a total of 480 dosage units from January 2017 through October 2018. One prescription was filled on June 18, 2017, and the offense date leading to the charge was on June 19, 2017. Another prescription was filled on July 18, 2017. All prescriptions were prescribed by Jones.

» GH was arrested on charges of distribution of oxycodone, distribution of methadone and conspiracy to distribute oxycodone. According to VAPMP database, GH received one prescription for oxycodone HCL 30mg for a total of 120 dosage units, 13 prescriptions for oxycodone HCL ER 80mg for a total of 1,170 dosage units and nine prescriptions for OxyContin 80mg for a total of 780 dosage units prescribed by Jones. A prescription for oxycodone was filled on Dec. 15, 2017 and the offense date for the charge happened on the same date.

» OT was arrested on charges of distribution of morphine-second offense, distribution of hydrocodone-second offense and distribution of oxycodone-second offense. OT received 24 prescriptions for oxycodone HCL 10mg for a total of 2,010 dosage units from January 2017 through November 2018 prescribed by Jones, according to VAPMP database. A prescription for oxycodone was written by Jones and filled on Jan. 19, 2018, the same date as the offense date, according to VAPMP.

» MS was arrested on two charges of distribution of hydrocodone. MS received 12 prescriptions for hydrocodone-acetaminophen 5-325 for a total of 720 dosage units and 10 prescriptions for hydrocodone-acetaminophen 10-325 for a total of 900 dosage units from January 2017 through October 2018 prescribed by Jones, according to VAPMP database. A prescription for hydrocodone-acetaminophen 5-325mg was filled on Oct. 25, 2017 and the offense date for the charge occurred on Oct. 26, 2017, according to VAPMP. Another prescription for hydrocodone-acetaminophen 5-325mg was filled Dec. 24, 2017, prescribed by Jones.

cough medicine with benzodiazepines.

Sowers notes in the documents that opioids and benzodiazepines are desirable drugs of choice for illegitimate recreational use and are a commodity in the illicit market.

Prescriptions written

Investigators examined raw prescription data for controlled substances filled in Virginia between January 2014 to January 2019 by employees of Jones' that indicate approximately 449 controlled-substance prescriptions were issued or authorized by Jones and given to three of the five presumed employees of Community Family Care.

This amounted, the documents said, to approximately 44,850 dosage units.

The documents explained how that is alleged to have worked:

» "Employee 1 received 247 prescriptions accounting for 21,910 dosage units, 138 being opioid prescriptions accounting for 13,849 dosage units, and 54 times a combination of an opioid and benzodiazepine was prescribed."

» "Employee 2 received 74 prescriptions accounting for 7,140 dosage units, 42 being opioid prescriptions accounting for 6,180 dosage units."

» "Employee 3 received 128 prescriptions accounting for 15,800 dosage units, 67 being opioid prescriptions accounting for 9,440 dosage units, and 56 times a combination of an opioid and benzodiazepine was prescribed."

Inside the practice

On Aug. 31, 2017, investigators spoke with a person described as a "Source of Information" (or SOI1), who is described to have spent about five weeks

working at Community Family Care as an intern between June and July of 2017.

"SOI1 recalled that some patients never saw Jones at all – the patients would ask if they were going to see Jones as SOI1 was handing them their prescriptions at the end of the appointment," the documents state. "SOI1 further stated that he/she observed a lot of cash at CFC and that every patient paid \$70 in cash whether they had insurance or not. The SOI1 recollected several instances where patients complained that they were charged multiple times for the same visit."

SOI1 told investigators about several occasions when Jones provided a prescription to patients when the SOI1 believed the patient should not have been given one.

"SOI1 stated on one occasion a patient appeared

to be intoxicated to the point that they were unable to stand up and needed assistance to their seat in the waiting room," the warrant stated. "The patient left CFC with a prescription for pain medication written by Jones."

The sources of information told investigators that Jones did not give prescriptions to every single patient — that some patients left Jones' clinic without prescriptions.

SOI1 described a patient who was given a drug screen, which subsequently was positive for cocaine.

"SOI1 stated that he/she observed Jones give directions to throw the test out and Jones then proceeded to give the patient a prescription for pain medication. The SOI1 stated that Jones often skipped scheduled drug screening of patients," the search warrants allege.

SOI1 also told investigators that Jones was worried about patient "JS," who had died about four days after his last visit. SOI1 stated that Jones had opted not to give JS a drug screen on his last appointment before his death, the search warrants allege.

"Even though he sometimes failed to give drug screens, the SOI1 stated that Jones would have every patient that smoked go through a 'spirometry' [breathing] test because Jones made more from Medicare when Jones could bill for the test," the search warrants allege.

Another informant, identified in documents as CS2, met with investigators on May 30, 2018, and described how the patients were processed at Community Family Care.

CS2 said that appointments would be scheduled at 8 a.m. but that Jones wouldn't arrive until approximately 10 a.m. By that time there were about 20 patients. CS2 said an employee would call patients into an exam room. That employee would take blood pressure before Jones came in.

"CS2 stated that Jones will come in the exam room and ask if a prescription is needed. CS2 stated that Jones never asks about the patient's medical condition. CS2 stated that he/she has seen patient files in the office but has not seen Jones bring patient files into an exam room with him," the search warrants allege.

Tip in Martinsville

Beginning in or about August 2017, federal investigators received information from Lt. Richard Barrow of the Martinsville Police Department Special Investigation Unit stating that a confidential infor-

mant for that unit allegedly was able to purchase illegally on the street Schedule II controlled pain medication from an employee of Community Family Care.

The documents name a specific employee of the practice, but the records are unclear what that person's role is and why that specific employee is the only one named. Neither Jones nor someone who answered the locked door of the practice on Friday would address that employee's role. Messages left by the Bulletin seeking comment from that employee drew no response.

According to this confidential informant, that employee "acts as a sponsor by paying for patients' appointments in exchange for the patient supplying that employee with a portion of the patient's prescription," the search warrants allege.

The Martinsville Police Department's confidential informant "stated that if a patient was worried about passing a urine drug test, [the employee mentioned above] would tell Jones to bypass the drug screen," the search warrants allege.

The introduction to the search warrants allege, in part: "There is probable cause ... to believe that Vincent K. Jones, MD, and [others known and yet known] are operating businesses and/or managing bank accounts in furtherance of a conspiracy to distribute Schedule II and Schedule IV controlled substances (namely oxycodone and hydrocodone-acetaminophen and possibly others)...."

It's a federal case

Community Family Care was closed Thursday morning when a Martinsville Bulletin reporter stopped by there. At one point, James Crews of Fieldale, a longtime patient, stopped by and looked in the window of the locked front door. He said he had come by because he had an appointment.

"I want to know what's going on," Crews said, referring to the office being closed.

Crews called the office phone number on his cell phone while he was standing there. Crews said Dr. Jones' son answered and told him the office would be open the next day (Friday). An employee on Friday told the Bulletin that the office routinely closes when no patients are scheduled.

A Bulletin reporter drove to Jones' house Thursday after leaving the site of Community Family Care. Jones came to the door of his home and the reporter told him that he wanted to give Jones an opportunity to tell his side. Jones asked if this could be done at another time and he took the reporter's contact information.

On Friday, Jones was locking the door and departing his office shortly after noon when a Bulletin reporter asked him questions. He declined to provide answers.

Martinsville Police Chief Eddie Cassidy declined to comment about the investigation, saying, "I cannot comment on a federal case," although he conceded that he is not legally prohibited from discussing matters involving his department.

He referred questions to the U.S. Attorney's Office in Roanoke and the Drug Enforcement Administration.

Martinsville Commonwealth's Attorney Andy Hall has not responded to a request for comment.

Paul Collins is a reporter for the Martinsville Bulletin. Contact him at 276-638-8801, ext. 236.

Is the bus a better way in life?

» ACCENT



Magna Vista brings down Lynchburg

» SPORTS

MARTINSVILLE BULLETIN

THE VOICE OF THE COMMUNITY FOR 130 YEARS

Sunday, September 1, 2019 • MARTINSVILLEBULLETIN.COM • Martinsville, Virginia \$2

Immigration arrest turns into standoff

A standoff occurred Friday at the King's Court motel, where Ravindra H. Patel, 50, the motel's manager, was trying to avoid immigration paperwork.

PAUL COLLINS/
MARTINSVILLE
BULLETIN



Man holds woman hostage, barricades himself in motel before SWAT batters in to arrest him

By Paul Collins
paul.collins@martinsvillebulletin.com

RIDGEWAY – After more than four hours of waiting and having secured the release of a hostage, members of a Henry County Sheriff's SWAT team battered their way into a motel room and found the man they wanted hiding in a closet.

And thus ended a tense Friday afternoon at the King's Court motel on Greensboro Road, where Ravindra H. Patel, 50, the motel's manager, was trying to avoid immigration paperwork from the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the U.S. Marshals Service.

Patel retreated Friday morning into his room behind the motel's office and kept with him

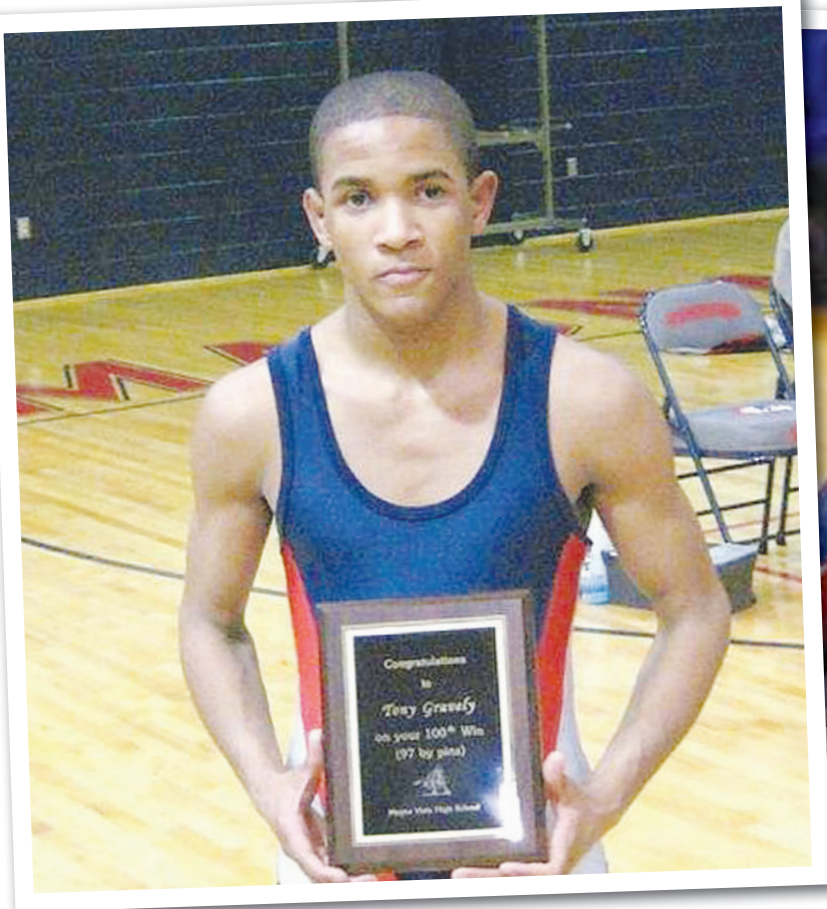


Patel

a woman who lived with him. And he didn't come out.

The sheriff's office was called just before noon because of the abduction. They were not certain if Patel was armed or the severity of the threat to the woman. And thus began the peaceful effort to win her release.

SEE ARREST | A9



BULLETIN FILE PHOTOS

Tony Gravely was a stalwart wrestler at Magna Vista High where he celebrated titles such as the 100-pound class in 2009 (left) and pinned James Rivers' Tyler Gore in the 112 weight class semifinals in 2008.

He wrestles with career in fighting

Martinsville native Tony Gravely long has wanted to make a career as an ultimate fighter. He recently signed a contract to get that chance.

By Cara Cooper
cara.cooper@martinsvillebulletin.com

The dreams of being a mixed martial arts fighter started for Tony Gravely when he was about 6 or 7 years old.

Dreams of being a professional fighter in the Ultimate Fighting Championship. Dreams of getting signed to a professional contract. Dreams of hearing them announce his name as he walked into the ring.

That dream now is a reality.

Gravely was signed by the UFC on Aug. 13, and he is awaiting word on when he will have his first fight as a UFC professional.

Gravely was born and raised in Martinsville and started taking taekwondo lessons from his dad when he was about 3 or 4. Those are some of his earliest memories. He was barely old enough to walk.

He started wrestling in middle school and followed the sport through school, winning two state championships at Magna Vista be-

fore graduating in 2009 and receiving a scholarship to Appalachian State.

He said he kept dreaming of UFC, which was growing in popularity and scale, but was unable to move to mixed martial arts until after college.

UFC is a mixed martial arts promotion company that started in 1993. Sixty-five fighters have signed contracts to join UFC so far this year, and the league has nearly 600 fighters signed worldwide.

Gravely graduated from Appalachian State with a degree in construction management, but he said working as a construction project manager was never his passion.

In the back of his mind, he always wanted to fight.

"I pretty much went to college just to wrestle," Gravely said. "I wanted to wrestle. I had no idea what I wanted to do. I picked something that really wasn't for me."



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY TONY GRAVELY

SEE WRESTLE | A9

Tony Gravely was given a UFC contract after competing on Dana White's Contender Series.

INDEX

AccentB6
 BridgeB8
 CalendarA2
 ClassifiedB9
 ComicsB7
 CrosswordB7
 LotteryA2
 NationA10
 ObituariesA5
 OpinionA4
 SportsB1
 TelevisionB8



85 HIGH | 63 LOW

WEATHER

Today will be partly sunny and pleasant. Tonight will be partly cloudy and humid. For detailed weather information, see Page A2



Griffith discusses a variety of issues with Bulletin staff. Page A7



Arrest

From Page A1

In the early afternoon, just before deputies were preparing the break into the room to rescue her, the woman walked out unharmed. But Patel stayed inside. The waiting game continued.

After an arrest warrant and a search warrant were obtained at about 3:45 p.m., the SWAT team entered the motel through its unlocked front door. Deputies then used a ram to enter the portion of the motel that is the manager's residence and arrested Patel. The whole incident took about five minutes.

"Once he was discovered, he was taken into custody without further incident," Sheriff's Capt. Wayne Davis said.

Patel, whose address was listed as the same as the motel's, 6570 Greensboro Road, was charged with abduction (felony) and obstruction of justice (mis-

demeanor). He is currently held in the Henry County Jail without bond.

At least one machete was found in Patel's residence, Davis said. A release from the sheriff's office did not specify any weapons having been recovered.

Davis said the woman shared Patel's residence. He wouldn't reveal her name or any additional information about her.

The standoff lasted about 4½ hours. Davis said the hotel was evacuated (he estimated about 10 people), and the sheriff's office brought in its armored rescue vehicle. Traffic also was stopped on U.S. 220 while the SWAT team was conducting its operation.

No shots were fired and there were no injuries. Two dogs on the scene were removed without incident.

The strip motel was cordoned off by yellow crime tape, and a variety of tactical vehicles were in the parking lot from just before noon. Traffic for most of the day proceeded unimpeded on

U.S. 220, but the general public was kept at a distance.

The Sheriff's Office was assisted by Martinsville Police Department, Henry County Public Safety, Ridgeway Fire Department, Ridgeway Rescue Squad and the Virginia State Police were on scene. VSP handled the traffic interruption on U.S. 220 during the raid.

The motel has been the site of two earlier drug-related search warrants executed by the sheriff's office, but the actions on Friday were not related to drugs, Davis said.

Henry County Sheriff Lane Perry said the situation escalated between 11:30 and 11:45 a.m. when his office was notified of the hostage situation.

"When he took the woman, and she couldn't leave, now we have an abduction," Perry said. "That's when we came down with the concerns, we want to get him out safely, but now you have someone against their free that is inside, but she was able to get out safely."

"The person went back into the hotel, wouldn't come out. As they [agents] were trying to work with the individual, we get communications that a woman is now inside with him and can't leave of her own free will. We responded."

Perry said there were various communications when Patel would come to the window, when he confirmed the woman was inside.

"Then he wouldn't come to the window anymore. She would come and said, she actually even held up a note at one point that said, 'I'm scared. He has a gun.' But she wouldn't come out."

Perry said agents were within minutes of forcing their way into the room when she emerged and sought safety. He said she didn't need medical attention to his knowledge and that she was being interviewed by investigators.

"We had periodic attempts to communicate through the PA," Perry said. "We've tried his cell phone. ... Our foremost con-

cern is we want everyone to be safe. We don't want to harm anyone and we do not want to be harmed."

Perry also had said he was concerned because there were two dogs belonging to the hotel in the room with the suspect.

"We don't want to harm the animals, but we also don't want our officers aggressively hurt by protective dogs," he said.

Other than residents of the motel, Perry said he didn't know if anyone in the area had to be evacuated. He said that customers at Clarence's Seafood Restaurant next door were asked "not to work on this end" of the grounds. One guest reported that they were asked to leave by a rear entrance.

"We did make a sweep of what [hotel] rooms we could efficiently," he said. "We don't know 100 percent that we've hit every room, but we are watching and making sure."

Paul Collins is a reporter for the Martinsville Bulletin. Contact him at 276-638-8801, ext. 236.

Wrestle

From Page A1

'What's the hold up?'

Gravely started training in MMA after graduating from App State, and soon he was fighting as an amateur. But, not getting paid to fight, the sport was just a hobby at first. The long hours at work coupled with 2-3 additional hours at the gym made for long days, and Gravely kept up that schedule for about a year and a half.

Eventually, he was able to turn professional, but he still maintained his full-time construction job.

It was in 2016 when he sat down with his wife, Kayla, and both their parents to discuss turning his focus to fighting.

"I think I had three pro fights and I was like, 'Man, if I could just do this and just train full time, be a professional fighter, just fight and that's all I did I would be so much better,'" he said. "I was talking to my wife, and I was like, if I could do anything with my life it would either be fighting related, wrestling related, or do something with kids or animals because I love kids and I love animals. So we talked about it ... and finally somehow I let them convince me to be a full-time fighter. Just train full time, fight full time."

The switch was difficult at first for Gravely and his wife. They went from two steady incomes to just one. Kayla Gravely was working at a school, but she also quit to take a job at a daycare that would be more lenient with letting her off work to go to Gravely's fights. That was another pay decrease.

"That was really rough as far as you get comfortable with a certain amount of income and being able to do all this stuff with your money, especially when you're young and you start getting money," Gravely said. "And you go from that to, oh now it's one-fourth or one-third of what we used to be making."

The money situation was rough enough, but training for MMA full time was rougher. Win or lose, he was putting his body on the line every fight. Sometimes it was almost too much.

"It's been a long journey. ... I've hit my bumps, my low points where there have been times where I wanted to quit, I thought about quitting, and I didn't for multiple reasons," he said. "I had to remember why I started doing this. And my wife wouldn't let me quit, my family wouldn't let me quit, and they still believed in me. Even at my low points they still believed that I could do what I said I was going to do."

His lowest point came about two years ago. His



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY TONY GRAVELY

Tony Gravely competes on Dana White's Contender Series, a show that takes up-and-coming UFC fighters and gives them a chance to compete for a UFC contract from the league's president.



BULLETIN FILE PHOTO

Appalachian State wrestler Tony Gravely (left) of Martinsville takes the mat for one of three matches, all of which he won, on his way to a SoCon title in 2010.

break came earlier this summer.

Gravely was invited to compete on Dana White's Contender Series. White, the president of UFC, invites 10 up-and-coming fighters and top prospects to compete in what Gravely called a "job interview" of sorts. There are no guaranteed contracts given out to winners after five fights, but White will offer contracts to fighters who he feels are good from a business standpoint: fighters with good personalities, exciting and popular with fans, as well as skilled in the octagon.

Following this season, White offered contracts to four fighters on the Contender Series. Gravely was one of them.

"That makes me feel so much better that I was chosen by the president him-

self," Gravely said.

Finally signing his UFC contract was a weight lifted off Gravely's shoulder. Going into each fight, the fear of losing and getting pushed further away from your dream of making a living in the sport gets ever more difficult.

But after more than two years since quitting his job to focus on MMA full time, he said, "It's about time."

"It seemed like it was so far away and it was impossible, and I got to a point where I was like, 'It's going to happen I just don't know when,'" he said. "And it got to a point where I was like, 'Man, hurry up already. When's it going to happen? What's the hold up?'"

Representing Martinsville

In every interview and

at every fight, Gravely has made sure to mention his hometown and be a good representative for Martinsville and Henry County.

Even though he doesn't live here anymore – he lives in Radford and trains at Tech MMA and Fitness Academy, where he also teaches kids and adults and works as a personal trainer – Martinsville will always be home, and he said he is thankful those he grew up with are following his career.

With very few UFC fighters from Virginia, and none from the southern part of the state, Gravely said he knows he's representing more than just himself when he fights.

"I take pride in that," he said. "I always make sure that I represent Virginia and especially small towns.

Every time I get a chance to talk I always talk about Martinsville and being from Virginia and all the small-town people.

"I feel like it helps inspire people or motivate people. Just because they're from a small town or a small gym and don't think they have a lot of opportunities doesn't mean they can't go on to do cool things or big things or whatever it is they want to do."

From his wife to his family, coaches, teammates, and neighbors back home, no one has given up on Gravely, and he's felt the support from home every time he fights.

With each of his fights getting bigger and bigger, the more fans he draws.

"The amount of support I've received from them, people I've never met be-

fore watching my fights. People that aren't even fans of mixed martial arts watching my fights just because somebody from Martinsville was there. It just means a lot to have support from everybody and everybody from my community to watch not just me but to watch something positive and unite for something felt really good to me."

What's next

Gravely hasn't heard when his first official UFC fight will be, but he's hoping to get at least one in before the end of the year.

Whenever that happens, he will get to hear his name announced as a UFC fighter, and his dream from his childhood will finally be a reality.

It may only have been two years, but to Gravely it seems like a long time, especially given the number of fights he has had and the struggles he has gone through to get to this point.

He said his hope is maybe some other young athletes in a small town in Virginia will watch him and get their own dreams. He's proof that working hard will get you there one day.

"As a child, this is what I wanted to do. My dad and I would watch it and this is what I always wanted to do," he said. "It's what I told them I was going to go do when I was six or seven years old. I don't know if I really meant it, but I said it and as I got older I really meant it."

"To finally get to this point, it's really surreal."

Cara Cooper is the sports editor of the Martinsville Bulletin. You can reach her at (276)638-8801, ext. 241.