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Weather

Cool and clear today with highs in the low 50s. Friday through Sunday will see daytime highs in the mid-60s. Clouds moving in on Sunday.

NEWS & RECORD

50¢

Thursday
November 19, 2020

Volume 152 Issue 93

SERVING SOUTH BOSTON AND HALIFAX COUNTY, VIRGINIA SINCE 1869



HERE, EAGLES DARE

Majestic – and healed – bald eagle takes flight into the wilderness at Staunton River Battlefield Park

By LIZA FULTON
News & Record Staff

Several months ago, an ailing bald eagle was found in a horse pasture, unable or unwilling to fly. After being rehabilitated for several months, she was released Friday at the Staunton River Battlefield State Park, not far from where she was found.

“The bald eagle had some degree of lead poisoning and no significant injuries,” said Edward Clark, president and co-founder of The Wildlife Center of Virginia.

As Clark removed the bald eagle from the carrier in the back of his vehicle, he was able to tell the bird was about four years old.

Also, he could tell the eagle was a female due to the large curve of the beak and huge talons on the feet.

Reed Stanley, district resource specialist for Virginia State Parks, assisted Clark as he held the magnificent bird by removing the ruffler (hood) from the bald eagle’s head. The purpose of a hood is to calm the bird. These birds are so visually oriented, they are not fearful of what they cannot see. Hoods protect the bird and allow ease of control of situations that otherwise could prove startling.

After waiting a few minutes to allow the bald eagle to adjust her eyes to the sunlight and surroundings, Clark bent down



Edward Clark with The Wildlife Center of Virginia prepares to launch the eagle.

to get an upward motion as he launched the majestic bird into flight. The bald eagle completed a fly-by circle overhead before heading off into the forest. The young eagle will not be ready to mate or nest until next year.

The event was celebrated with a few members of Virginia State Parks.

“This was the closest I’ve ever been to a bald eagle,” said Stanley.

It was the second bald eagle release in at least 20 years, noted Tim Vest, who added that this is the neatest part of his job, but it doesn’t happen frequently. Vest is the district manager for state parks in Southern Virginia.

The bald eagle was first taken to The Southwest Wildlife Center in Roanoke. It was there they found traces of lead poisoning and stabilized the animal’s health. Then the eagle was transported to The Wildlife Center of Virginia in Waynesboro for recovery.

“It’s possible the bald eagle also suffered from soft tissue injuries which are hard to detect,” said Clark.

During recovery, the bird of prey received food and plenty of rest. Once well and showing signs of readiness to fly, she was

See EAGLE, page A7

Under stress, providers brace for surge of virus

‘So new and confusing, even to the doctors’

By LIZA FULTON
News & Record Staff

Around the country, hospitals are straining to treat a massive surge of patients with COVID-19, and while Virginia hospitals say the situation in the Commonwealth is not yet critical, frontline providers are fatigued and under enormous stress.

At Sentara Halifax Regional Hospital, “while our volumes change daily, we are able to care for our community while following necessary protocols to keep patients and staff safe,” said Joni Henderson, spokesperson for SHRH.

In the past nine days, four persons have died of covid-related causes in Halifax County, raising the local death toll to 12 persons since the pandemic’s onset. The Virginia Department of Health reported 751 cases in Halifax County through Wednesday, including more than 200 residents and staff members who have been sickened at South Boston

Health and Rehab, formerly Sentara Woodview. The nursing home is now operated under the new name by Ohio-based Saber Healthcare.

Health care workers at the hospital, speaking on the condition of anonymity to protect their jobs, said there have been moments in recent days when they felt overwhelmed by patients showing up at the ER with the coronavirus.

Over the past weekend, “there were multiple Code Black calls, meaning we needed extra help and had to hold patients in the ER because there was nowhere else to send them,” said a nurse at Sentara Halifax Regional Hospital who wished to remain anonymous.

The ER has 18 beds, nine for emergencies and the others for non-emergency care. The Intensive Care Unit has been full this past week, too, although additional room is available to accommodate more patients.

See PROVIDERS, page A5

Schools close doors to slow spread, teachers sent home

By LIZA FULTON
News & Record Staff

School Board trustees on Monday approved a recommendation for school employees to work from home after the Thanksgiving break, taking action the same day Superintendent of Schools Dr. Mark Lineburg closed off school facilities to students in response to rising coronavirus infections in Halifax County.

The School Board met Monday night at the HCMS cafeteria and confronted the same community health concerns that have defined the trustees’ business agenda since spring. Monday night’s meeting also brought forth a contingent of high school student-athletes and coaches who urged trustees to go forward with the winter and fall sports seasons, already postponed by the public health crisis.

Lineburg announced Monday morning that school facilities will no longer be open to the small groups of students — high need special education



HCHS Principal Michael Lewis discusses arrangements for basketball season.

learners, homeless students and English language learners — who had been allowed by trustees to return to the classroom. In taking the action, Lineburg cited the surge of covid cases in the county, bringing the 14-day spread rate to 521.7 persons per 100,000 in population.

CDC guidance puts Halifax County at the highest risk for

See SCHOOLS, page A6



Edward Clark and Reed Stanley with Virginia State Parks remove the hood that keeps eagles calm while in captivity. (David Conner II photos)



INSIDE: ALTON STAGES DRIVE-THRU CHRISTMAS PARADE DEC. 12 | PAGE A3

4 sections, 36 pages ■ Obituaries, A3 ■ Opinion, A4 ■ Society, D1 ■ Classifieds, D4-C6 ■ Sports, B1-B2 ■ Comics, B3



PAGES A10-A11

SPRING HOMES & GARDENS



CELEBRATING 20 YEARS

@ Virginia International Raceway

SECTION B

Weather

Mid 60s today with partly cloudy skies. Warmer Friday with highs near 80. Mostly cloudy Saturday and rainy on Sunday. Highs around 80 on Sunday.

Volume 152 Issue 25

NEWS & RECORD

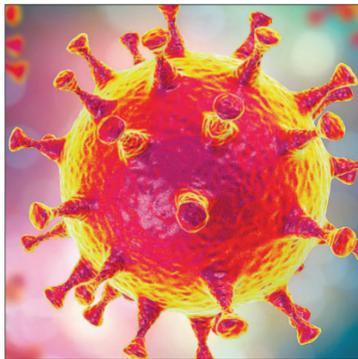
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Thursday March 26, 2020

SERVING SOUTH BOSTON AND HALIFAX COUNTY, VIRGINIA SINCE 1869

Halifax has first case, region sees first death



Hospital employee in his 30s tests positive; Gretna man dies after being infected

The coronavirus' relentless spread across Virginia shows no sign of letting up, with more cases being reported daily in the Southside area — including the first death of an area resident due to the disease.

On Wednesday, the Virginia Department of Health updated its tally of COVID-19 patients to show the biggest one-day jump since the coronavirus revealed its presence in the state. Virginia had 391 confirmed cases as of Wednesday, up from 290 the day before.

Two weeks ago, there were only nine confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the Commonwealth.

The updated accounting includes the first Halifax man to test positive — a member of the medical staff at Sentara Halifax Regional Hospital. The man is in his 30s and is isolating at home, according to the hospital and the Southside Health District.

Hospital and health district officials declined further comment on the case, citing the need to protect patient privacy.

Through a media statement, Sentara HRH said it is working proactively to identify possible contacts that the man may have had with others “so appropriate action can be taken

“We are assessing potential exposures to our staff and are taking the appropriate precautions to test if necessary. We are doing all we can to prevent further spread by using best practices and protective equipment to keep our employees, physicians

See VIRUS, page A3

SAD END FOR SENIORS

With high school careers cut short, these are frustrating times for 12th graders at HCHS

By MARY McLAUGHLIN

Special to the News & Record

Many students relish any chance to get out of school — snowstorms, holidays or flooding. However, Virginia Gov. Northam's unprecedented decision to close schools for the rest of the school year to prevent the spread of COVID-19 has saddened many Halifax County High School seniors, who had planned to walk across the stage on May 23 in cap and gown.

“It's horrible but I do understand why they closed school, to prevent the spread of a deadly virus that could affect thousands of people,” said Nicholas Harris. “I'm going to miss seeing everyone at school, honestly. I have friends that are seniors, and upperclassmen and underclassmen.”

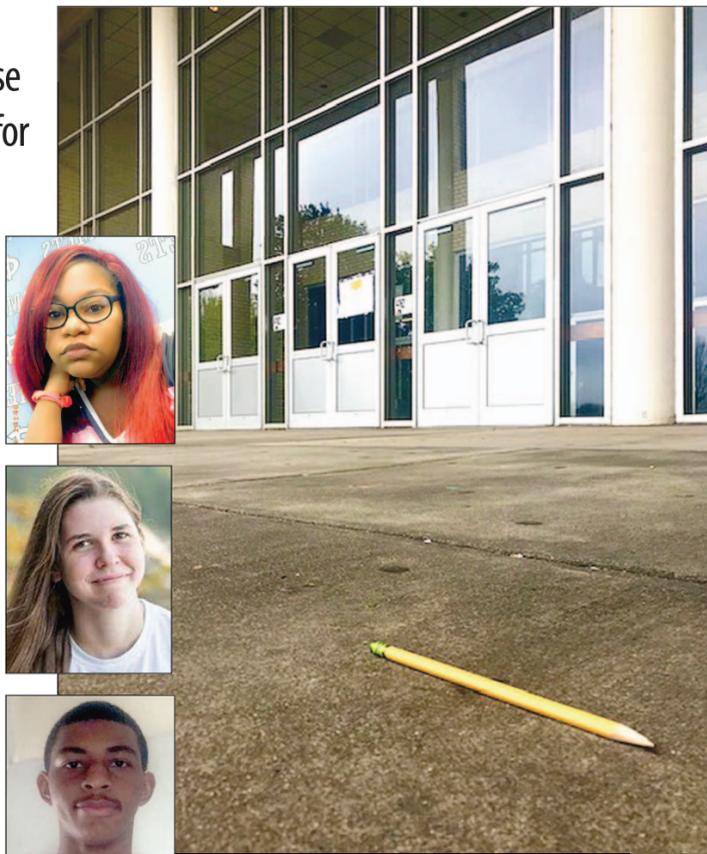
Peyton Gilbert agreed: “It's necessary, but it's a little frustrating. Some people need to realize that people's lives are at stake.”

For many students, the shutdown on March 13 marked the last time they were able to be in class with their friends or instructors.

“We didn't even get to say a proper goodbye to our teachers, many of whom were role models for us,” said Ethan Long.

Amaya Mitchell noted that her high school friends are old friends: “I've grown up around the same people my entire life,” she said. “We gotta stop taking things for granted, because none of us had any clue that that would be our very last day of high school together.”

Despite assurances from the



From top to bottom: Jada Younger, Grace Langford, Nicholas Harris, Amaya Mitchell, Ethan Long and Peyton Gilbert.

Virginia Department of Education, there are also fears about graduation. Gilbert said, “It's frustrating that we can't get our diplomas as soon as we usually would.”

For nursing students like Mitchell, the path to get licensed may become longer or more complicated. Two or three times a week, she and other nursing students visited nursing homes to help care for residents as part of their clinicals. The clinicals are something that Mitchell enjoyed, and they are also necessary for students to receive certification. Because of coronavirus fears, the homes are allowing fewer visitors, and the nursing students cannot do their clinicals.

“It's been a whole year, and we were at the very end,” Mitchell says of her quest to enter the healthcare

field. Now unsure of when she can receive her license, she said, “we're taking it day by day and playing it by ear. We worked really hard to get it.”

In addition to curricular and diploma concerns, there is also sadness over missing the pomp, circumstance and traditions that fill the spring semester.

“It's a bummer because we're supposed to have our senior banquet this week, two games of soccer this week, and prom in three weeks,” Harris said. “I haven't bought my prom stuff yet, but I know people who bought \$200 or \$300 prom dresses, and now they can't even wear it or use it.”

Jada Younger, a member of the Cometbots robotics team, was unable to attend from last year and no lon-

See SENIORS, page A12

Farmers mart kicks off drive-thru sales

Service launched to protect customers

The Downtown South Boston Farmers Market is launching a drive-thru system for the purchase of locally produced foods and goods as it adjusts to the coronavirus.

“It is extremely important to us to keep the market going in order to provide our wonderful patrons with fresh nutritious products during this time while keeping health and safety in mind,” said Market Manager Megan Throckmorton-Harris.

With implementation

of the drive thru system, patrons will be required to pre-order by telephone, or by using online platforms. Customers also can fill out an order form at the market while staying inside their vehicles. The Farmers Market will limit personal contacts by asking drive-up patrons to remain in their cars at all times.

Farmers Market sellers and handlers stress that it is important for the public to know that COVID-19 is not transferred through food consumption.

“Our vendors and Farmers the Market

See MART, page A2



Face masks sewn by Barbara Estes

Sew helpful: Church groups crank out homemade face masks for medical providers

By LIZA FULTON

News & Record Staff

With hospitals, medical providers and first responders facing widespread shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE) due the coronavirus pandemic, county residents and church groups are doing what they can to help by donating hand-sewn face masks.

While the homemade coverings do not provide the level of protection of surgical masks, they do help to shield caregivers from droplets that may be expelled by a cough or sneeze from sickened patients. In many locations around the U.S., medical providers and first responders have jumped at the chance to secure locally-made masks, figuring they are better than nothing.

See MASKS, page A3



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INSIDE: JOBS PICTURE WORSENS IN REGION WITH START OF 2020 | PAGE A3

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DRAFT DREAMS

Abbott enters MLB draft day with solid shot to be chosen



SPORTS
page B1

A SALUTE TO THE HALIFAX CO. CANCER ASSOCIATION



SPECIAL FEATURE, PAGES B6-B9

Weather

Partly cloudy today with highs in the low 90s. More fair skies Friday and through the weekend, with daytime highs falling to the mid 80s on Sunday.

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Thursday
June 4, 2020

SERVING SOUTH BOSTON AND HALIFAX COUNTY, VIRGINIA SINCE 1869

'No justice, no peace'

As turmoil rages in U.S., Black Lives Matter movement takes local stage

By TOM McLAUGHLIN
News & Record Staff

Looking out at a crowd of some 600 fellow protestors at Constitution Square in South Boston, 17-year-old Nevaeh Hodges admitted to being amazed by what she was witnessing.

"I was guessing there was going to be 10 or 15 people and as you can see, I definitely underestimated that," said Hodges, a rising senior at Halifax County High School who called the demonstration to protest the deaths of George Floyd and other African Americans in encounters with police.

Hundreds of Halifax County residents responded.

Chanting "I can't breathe," "Say their names," and "No justice, no peace," the huge crowd — black and white, young and old, many carrying signs and wearing t-shirts declaring that Black Lives Matter — filled Constitution Square for a 90-minute rally that featured remarks from mostly young speakers, punctuated by prayer, rap beats and song.

The event peacefully tapped the sense of outrage and dismay that has erupted with the killing of Floyd, whose death at the hands of Minneapolis police has sparked protests around the coun-

try and convulsed cities where cops have clashed with crowds, vandals and looters have stirred mayhem and normal life has come to a standstill.

In contrast, the event in South Boston, under sunny skies, took on more of an air of a unity rally. In addition to the student speakers, Sheriff Fred Clark and South Boston Police Chief Jim Binner each offered brief remarks, acknowledging the crowd's concerns and pledging to fairly administer their duties as law enforcement officers (see story, page A8).

Hodges, after introducing herself early in the event, spoke later for several minutes before asking the crowd to march in a loop around Constitution Square for nearly nine minutes — the span of time that Minneapolis officer Derek Chauvin, initially charged with third degree murder in Floyd's death, pressed his knee on Floyd's neck, pinning the 46-year-old man to the city street where he died. On Wednesday, the criminal charge against Chauvin was upgraded to second degree murder.

"The most important thing to take from this protest today is that racism is the biggest disease in America," Hodges told the crowd. "And in order for each



Rally organizer Nevaeh Hodges leads the crowd at Constitution Square. (David Conner II photos)

and every one of us to have a better future for our children and our children's children and the children after that, we have to make the change now.

"I'm specifically talking to

people my age when I say this, but you have to speak out. You are never too young to speak out. I mean, I'm 17 years old and I'm doing this, so each and every one of you can do the same exact

thing."

Hodges, a cheerleader at HCHS, spoke of growing up with the sense that she didn't fit into any particular crowd — a segue

See RALLY, page A8

Mothers, children, pastors united in protest

By LIZA FULTON
News & Record Staff

People converged on Constitution Square Tuesday for a Black Lives Matter protest in South Boston mostly for a single reason — to express outrage at the police killing of a black man half a country away.

The sense that unjust death can happen anywhere made the event feel personal for many in the crowd.

Gabrielle Wilkins of South Boston, an African American

mother of four children, said she could not bring herself to show the cell phone video of George Floyd's death to her teenagers, but "we had a hard talk with all the children over the dinner table" about what it means to be young and black in America.

"I am out here tonight for them, and the black community," said Wilkins, who added, "I'm here for those who stood before me and to show those who are scared, we have something to fight for."

For Tuesday's protest, Wilkins brought signs encouraging people to speak out against injustice and police brutality, and speak up for the value of black lives.

Lee and Beverly Smith, residents of the Sinai area, have been married for 12 years. Dating as teenagers — one white, one black — the couple believed they received an unwarranted amount of attention by police. "We got pulled over all the time, and I felt

See UNITED, page A9



Sweet treat makes for big agribusiness

Cole Farms reaps juicy rewards with blackberries

By LIZA FULTON
News & Record Staff

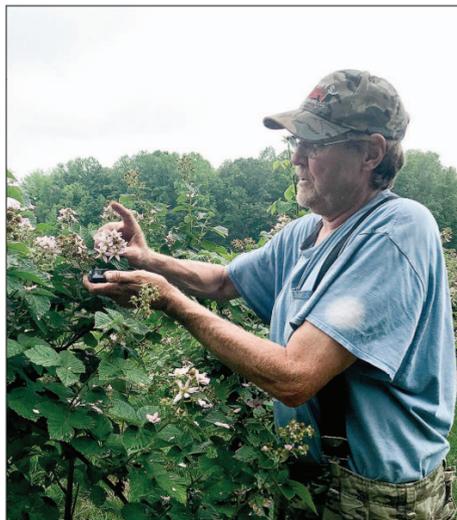
Cole Berry Farm, the largest blackberry farm in Halifax County, has been owned and operated by brothers Jeff and Joey Cole for nearly 32 years.

The Cole brothers didn't originally plan on becoming berry farmers. Before going into local agriculture, they debated getting

their own commercial fishing boat to harvest swordfish and tuna in the waters around Florida and Gulf of Mexico. At the time, however, the fishing market was starting to drop off. So they came up with the idea of berry farming.

On the family farm in Vernon Hill, their father, Joel Cole Sr., had tended apple orchards since

See COLE, page A2



Jeff Cole checking for plant pests

County sees first COVID-19 death

Halifax County has recorded its first COVID-19 death even as the number of positive tests for the virus locally has remained constant for more than a week.

Health department officials offered no information about the individual who has died, although all 25 deaths from the disease in the Southside Health District — of which Halifax is a part — involve persons who are 60 or older.

Mecklenburg County has suffered 23 deaths from COVID-19. The two other counties that make up the Southside Health District, Halifax and Brunswick, now have one death each because of the virus.

See VIRUS, page A2



INSIDE: VIRGINIA MOVES TO PHASE 2 OF REOPENING PLANS | PAGE A2

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