

Abingdon Town Council candidates weigh in on their goals for the town A6

Police urge residents to stay at home to prevent infection A3

Bond increased for Angela Boswell in car theft case A2

Washington County News

Wednesday, April 8, 2020 ♦ Washington County News

www.swvatoday.com ♦ Vol. 75, No. 15 ♦ \$2.00

COMMUNITY



Holston High athletes honored with banners in Damascus

» B1

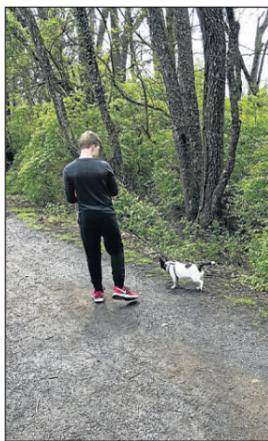
SPORTS



Patrick Henry's Yarber commits to play for Campbell Camels

» B3

OUTDOORS



Virginia Creeper Trail closed due to virus concerns

» B1

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Crime & Courts.....A3
 Opinion.....A4
 Homefront.....B1
 At a Glance/Obits....B2
 Sports.....B3
 Faith & Worship.....B4
 Classifieds.....B5-B6



'SW Va. is not immune'

- Mount Rogers health director warns of community spread in county
- Abingdon senior living facility resident tests positive for COVID-19

BY ROBERT SORRELL
WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

A resident at the English Meadows assisted living facility in Abingdon, Virginia, has tested positive for COVID-19 on the same day the Mount Rogers Health District reported that community transmission is now occurring in Washington County.

The Virginia Department of Health's Mount Rogers Health District and English Meadows Senior Living Community, an assisted living and memory care facility, are working together after a resident tested positive, the district said Friday. The individual is hospitalized.

Inside

- » Police encourage residents to follow stay-at-home orders. **A3**
- » Ballad Health ramps up rapid testing; furloughs possible. **B2**

English Meadows CEO and founder Mike Williams said the facility was informed of the

positive case Friday afternoon. The Abingdon facility has been working for months on COVID-19 preparations and has been meeting and exceeding all recommendations and orders coming from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Vir-

See **SPREAD**, Page A5

LIFE ON THE FARM



CAROLYN R. WILSON/FOR THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

Jennifer Kling holds a handful of lambs and watches a sheep feed at Grandview Farm in Abingdon, where the Kling family has shepherded different sheep breeds for decades.

Out like a lamb

Lambing season keeps family moving at Grandview Farm

BY CAROLYN R. WILSON
FOR THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

ABINGDON, Va. — Before the sun peeks over the hillsides on Grandview Farm, Jennifer Kling and her 85-year-old mother, Barbara Kling, pull on mud boots and dress in extra layers for an early morning jaunt to the barn.

It's lambing season for the Kling family, of Abingdon, who have shepherded a variety of breeds for more than three decades.

Their early morning visits will be followed by at least three more trips to the lambing barn throughout the day to check on the births of a new crop of lambs this spring.

During lambing season, it's important to check the ewes nearly round the clock, said Jennifer.

"That usually mean rising early and getting to bed late."

See **SHEEP**, Page A5



Abingdon officials: Absentee ballots up for May 5 election

BY JOE TENNIS
WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

ABINGDON, Va. — Five candidates are competing for two seats in the upcoming Abingdon Town Council election.

Inside

How to vote: Keep track of the process when it comes to registering, applying for absentee status and Election Day. **A5**

Voting guide:

Who's up for seats on Abingdon Town Council? Get a look at the candidates and their views. **A6**

And, due to health concerns, it appears the number of absentee ballots is on the rise, said election official Derek Lyall.

A total of 62 absentee ballots were mailed in the 2018 election, along with 113 absentee ballots cast in person, Lyall said.

"At this time, the May 5 election is scheduled to go forward," said Lyall, the director of elections in Washington County, Virginia.

So far, Lyall has mailed 80 absentee ballots to voters in the town of Abingdon. "And that's a pretty large increase over a traditional May election for the town of Abingdon," Lyall said.

Voters are set to choose from incumbents Wayne Craig and Cindy Patterson and challengers Roman D. Blevins, James R. "Scabbo" Anderson and Amanda L. Pillion.

Town residents who are not registered to vote at their current address must register by 5 p.m. on April 13 at the registrar's office or online (www.vote.virginia.gov).

"There's an online portal at the Virginia Department of

See **BALLOTS**, Page A5

BART LONG & ASSOCIATES
REALTY AND AUCTION, LLC

1430 Bluff City Hwy.
Bristol, TN 37620
(423) 573-5000
TN Lic. #6163

best
of Bristol & Washington County
Bristol Herald Courier

906 W. Main St.
Abingdon, VA 24210
276-466-4663
VA Firm #2908 00732

www.BartLongAuctions.com



Sheep

From Page A1

Barbara confessed she has slept in the barn to keep a watchful eye on the sheep during lambing — something she gave up years ago.

A flip of a light switch in the barn sheds light on new morning arrivals in the lambing barn. If all is well, the mother and daughter usually retreat back to the house to warm up with a cup of coffee and an overdue breakfast.

"It never gets old," said the daughter. "You do this kind of work because you really like it. It's something you connect with."

"Some people go on cruises, and other people enjoy being outside with their animals. That's where I'm at. "There are a lot of life lessons learned from raising sheep. The Bible compares people to sheep. We often stray like sheep."

"Sometimes, I stop what I'm doing and just watch the young lambs at play. It's kind of like a therapy. It's my way of dealing with all the sadness in this world."

Raising sheep is practically a way of life for Jennifer, who had just graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University with a degree in occupational therapy when her parents began caring for four bred ewes while living in Northern Virginia in the late 1990s.

"Sheep are good animals for women to raise. They are easy to handle since most of them weigh just over 100 pounds."

The family's three breeds of sheep — Cotswold, Icelandic and Texel — are raised for meat and wool.

The Cotswold is known for its long fiber, high-luster wool and sweet, inquisitive disposition; the Icelandic is one of the most beautiful and photogenic sheep, with its colorful fleece and clean-dished face; and the Texel, originally from the Netherlands, is a heavily muscled sheep that produces lean meat.

"The Cotswold rams have curly bangs, which produces wool good for spinning," explained Barbara. "The Icelandic sheep have dual coats. The inner coat is soft, and the outer coat is coarse and water-repellent."

You never stop learning about sheep farming, said Jennifer, who helps to manage the farm even while working as an occupational therapist with Ballard Health. As a result of the coronavirus outbreak, Jennifer has been home every day this month, helping her mother during lambing season.

Many of the daily tasks require her strength, such as pulling lambs when delivery is stalled.

"It's always exciting to see a new little lamb. They're up and walking in five minutes. It's such a miracle. You have to marvel at the Creator we have."

With 43 bred ewes this spring, the family already has welcomed numerous lambs to the Abingdon farm, with more to come for at least another month.

The ewes are not bred at the same time, allowing births to be staggered to make it easier to care for the herd.

"This spring, one ewe has given birth to triplets. We usually get a lot of twin births, but triplets are less common," she said.

"The mother doesn't have enough milk for all three lambs, so I am supplementing with bottle milk for one of her lambs."

After a ewe gives birth, she and her newborn are separated from the herd and put in small lambing jugs — or pens — to contain them, giving the mother and her baby time to bond. Once the mother and baby

are turned outside a few days later, the ewe and lamb can easily identify each other by scents.

"Just like other animals, not all ewes are good mothers," said Jennifer. When ewes reject their lambs, the babies are sometimes accepted by another ewe, but most of the time, they must be bottle-fed — one of the jobs for Barbara, who, even at her age, is very active on the farm caring for the sheep and guard dogs.

The sheep producers say it's been a challenging season on the farm.

"The mud caused by spring rains has made it difficult to move the sheep from one location to another," Jennifer said.

"We've got more lambs that, for one reason or another, will have to be bottle-fed this spring. That means feeding each of them three times a day."

At least 40% of their herd is used for meat sales each year.

Easter is a prime time for selling their lamb meat at the Abingdon Farmers Market, but now that COVID-19 has temporarily closed the market, she will have to make arrangements for individual pickup or delivery sales.

Keeping the sheep safe from predators is another challenge.

After moving to Abingdon in 1992, Barbara and John Kling continued to raise sheep, expanding from four ewes to more than 80 breeding ewes. But the prevalence of predators such as bears and coyotes has forced them to reduce the number of sheep on the farm during the past five years.

"When we first moved down here, we did not have issues with predators and could let our sheep into any of the paddocks without fear that they would be attacked, but that has become more and more of a problem and has made us change what we do," said Barbara. "We have guard dogs that live with the sheep, we keep the sheep in a smaller paddock during the day, and we have to close the sheep into a barn at night. These measures have helped but not eliminated the problems altogether."

Despite the challenges, raising sheep can still be a profitable venture.

The family, which shepherds 120 sheep, spends many weekends preparing for the Abingdon Farmers Market, where they sell a variety of cuts of lamb, processed in a USDA-inspected plant, and colorful yarns made from the wool of their sheep.

"Favorite cuts are chops, legs, stew meat, shanks, racks and ground, which also is made into sausage. A leg of lamb seems to be a customer favorite," said Jennifer.

The highest quality of meat is produced by lambs that are 18 months or younger.

"But a lot of customers like the flavors of mutton, the meat from adult sheep."

In their spare time, Barbara and John use some of the wool for a process called needle felting that uses a needle to push the top layer of wool into deeper layers to make small sheep figurines and other designs. They make and sell "For the Birds," a round crocheted ball containing wool that is hung in trees for birds to use for nest-building. They make wool dryer balls that shorten drying time, soften fabric and reduce static.

The wool also is used to make yarn and roving, a long narrow bundle of fiber used to spin woolen yarn. Their crafts can be found at the Abingdon Farmers Market and at the Emory & Henry Arts & Crafts Fair in November.

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

How to vote

1. Register (April 13, 5 p.m.)

» **Log on** to <https://vote.elections.virginia.gov/Voter-Information>. Click **Register** under Apply to Register to Vote and begin the process. There is no need to mail anything when registering online.

» **Visit** Washington County Department of Elections, Washington County Government Center, 1 Government Center Place, Suite A, Abingdon, VA 24210

The main government center is closed due to the coronavirus. Voters who visit the elections office will need to drive to the rear of the building, park and call the Department of Elections at 276-676-6227 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday to request curbside assistance.

» **Call** 276-676-6227 to request a voting registration application be mailed to you.

» **Return** to Department of Elections by mail (address above) or in person by going to rear door and calling to request curbside service.

2. Apply for absentee ballot (April 28)

» **Log on** to vote.elections.virginia.gov/VoterInformation, type in your information, then request an absentee ballot be mailed to you.

» **Visit** Washington County Department of Elections and **call** 276-676-6227 to request curbside assistance.

» **Call** to request an absentee ballot be sent to you.

3. Vote by absentee ballot (By mail: May 5 at 7 p.m.; in person: May 2)

» **Fill out** ballot in the presence of a witness. **Sign** the ballot, then have your witness sign the ballot. **Return** by mail to the Washington County Department of Elections or in person by visiting the back door.

» **Vote early** at the Department of Elections with an absentee ballot before May 2.

Anyone is eligible to vote by absentee this year. When listing the reason you're requesting an absentee ballot, just check "concern for coronavirus" or "disability or illness."

4. Vote in person (May 5)

» **Visit** the Abingdon Municipal Building, 133 W. Main St. from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. on May 5 to cast a ballot. The Department of Elections encourages all to vote by mail if possible, as this is the safest way to vote.

Ballots

From Page A1

Elections website," Lyall said. "Or they can contact our office. We'll be happy to mail them an application."

Due to rising concerns over the coronavirus, the Washington County Department of Elections is closed at the government center building near Virginia Highlands Community College. Voters can still request service by parking in the rear of the building and calling the office's phone number for curbside assistance.

Voters should register online or by mail as much as possible, Lyall urged.

"They can request an absentee ballot online, and then we will mail a ballot to the voters, once we submit their request," Lyall said. "And we are encouraging voters to vote at home through absentee voting as much as possible."

The Abingdon Town Council is the only election coming up in May, Lyall said.

"The state has relaxed the absentee voting rules for this election," Lyall said.

Under current Virginia law, you have to have a valid reason to vote absentee, Lyall said.

The town's 5,773 voters can select disability or ill-

ness as part of the reason they want to choose an absentee ballot, yet they can also choose concerns over the coronavirus, Lyall said.

The deadline to request an absentee mail ballot is April 28. Call 276-676-6227 or visit www.vote.virginia.gov.

The last day to cast an in-person absentee ballot for the Abingdon Town Council election is May 2.

In all, according to Lyall, 1,495 voters cast ballots in the 2018 election by absentee ballot or by in-person voting.

The polling place for the May 5 election, held 6 a.m.-7 p.m., will be the Abingdon Municipal Building, 133 W. Main St. in downtown Abingdon.

"We expect it to be open for Election Day," Lyall said.

Still, Lyall added, "We're concerned about voting safety and the election officials who work in the polling places."

Many of the election officials are older and could be more at risk to contract the coronavirus, Lyall said.

"Our goal is to keep our voters safe and our election officials who work in our polling places safe from COVID-19," Lyall said. "Voting by mail helps to ensure that safety."

jtennis@bristolnews.com
276-791-0709
@BHC_Tennis

Spread

From Page A1

public in a letter Friday.

"We have been on our highest alert and lockdown since early March," Williams wrote.

English Meadows already had visitor restrictions in place, Mount Rogers Health Director Dr. Karen Shelton said.

"When COVID-19 occurs in a setting where there are many older people with underlying health conditions, we are concerned," Shelton said. "We'll be working very closely with the facility over the coming days to protect other residents and staff and prevent further spread."

Working with facility management, the Mount Rogers Health District is investigating potential sources of exposure and will continue working with English Meadows to provide guidance on infec-

tion control, Shelton said.

Williams said the safety of residents is the facility's top priority.

"We have amazing caregivers that have dedicated their lives to the care of our residents," Williams wrote. "We have also spent the last two months making sure that we are doing everything possible to also support those amazing caregivers."

Prior to Friday's reported case at English Meadows, there were three positive cases of COVID-19 in Washington County, according to the Virginia Department of Health. A total of 2,637 cases had been reported statewide Sunday.

The Mount Rogers Health District said minimal-moderate community transmission of COVID-19 is occurring in Washington County. Earlier this week, the widespread community transmission was reported throughout Virginia.

Minimal-moderate community transmission means there is a high

likelihood of sustained community transmission or the potential for a rapid increase in suspected cases, the district said.

"Community transmission indicates that you can get COVID-19 from anywhere within the community; you don't have to travel or know a person with the disease in order to get it. This means everyone should stay home and only go out for essential needs as rarely as possible," Shelton said. "Southwest Virginia is not immune to COVID-19. If you have to go out for critical things like grocery shopping or medical care, stay at least 6 feet away from others. Wash your hands and clean surfaces often. These personal precautions apply to all of us — stay home!"

rsorrell@bristolnews.com
276-645-2531
Twitter: @RSorrellBHC
Facebook.com/robertsorrelltn

SHOP & COMPARE! Why Pay More?

Soundz Hearing Centers

- Best Technology**
- Best Service**
- Best Price**
- Why go anywhere else?**

WE ACCEPT MOST INSURANCES!

CUSTOM 100% DIGITAL SERIES FULL SHELL

ONLY \$795
Reg. \$995

Our most affordable entry level hearing instrument maximizes the ear's sound gathering design in a convenient size. ITE instruments offer the right combination of appearance and affordability to meet a variety of hearing losses.

CUSTOM 100% DIGITAL CANAL SERIES

ONLY \$995
Reg. \$1495

Our custom 100% Digital canal series is made with the precise electronic circuitry controls to match your particular hearing requirements. The components are contained within the customized shell that fits snugly and comfortably in your ear.

100% DIGITAL MULTI-MEMORY

ONLY \$1395
Reg. \$2595

These 100% Digital Instruments automatically adjust to enhance speech clarity and manage background noise! Unwanted sounds are faded into the background. Hear phone in both ears with BiPhone. Wireless streaming accessories. Any size!

Marion, Virginia
1575 North Main St.
beside Ollie's
276-783-HEAR (4327)



Zina Cornwell, ACA BC-HIS

Bristol, Virginia
102 Bonham Rd.
in the Food City Plaza
276-466-HEAR (4327)



Don Cornwell, ACA BC-HIS

BATTERIES
Box of 60 Batteries **\$15**

\$99 Hearing Aid Repairs

ALL SIZES

Faceplate and shell repairs are extra. Any custom make or model. All work guaranteed for 6 months.

Starkey Hearing Technologies

HANSATON hearing & emotions

unitron

ReSound rediscover hearing

SIEMENS

WIDEX

PHONAK life is on

oticon PEOPLE FIRST

REXTON

BBB ACCREDITED BUSINESS

soundzhearingcenters.com