



Abingdon's Peyton Carter overcame setbacks B3

Tennessee releases pandemic crime data comparisons A3

OPINION Thank those who are still working today A4

Washington County News

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BUSINESS



Cider company grafts its own trees with native apple flavors
» B1

Abingdon gives initial approval to borrowing \$2M for sports complex

BY JOE TENNIS
WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS
ABINGDON, Va. — Abingdon Town Council gave preliminary approval to borrow \$2 million for

its sports complex during Monday's meeting. Yet two members of the council — Al Bradley and Cindy Patterson — voiced opposition to borrow-

ing the additional funds for the under-construction project. "I'm tired of looking at the sports complex like it is," said Patterson, the town's vice mayor. "I'd

like to at least get some grass seed or something sown on there." Still, Patterson expressed con-

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COVID-19



Curtis Rasnake, a Meadowview truck driver working for TCM Transportation, has traveled all over the country in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, which has raised obstacles for his daily routine.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Northam extends closures to May 8

BY DAVID MCGEE
WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS
Restaurants, theaters, hair salons and other Virginia businesses are to remain closed two additional weeks, until May 8, after Gov. Ralph Northam extended his closure order.

Northam extended the executive order — first issued March 24 — to close those businesses to reduce the spread of COVID-19. The order was to expire April 23 and will now remain in place for two more weeks.

"When people say that it's time to stop what we're doing and get back to normal, they're wrong," Northam said during his Wednesday news briefing last week.

"Right now, the models and our hospitals expect that we'll be able to handle the expected surge in patients. But if we let off the brakes and try to go back to the way things were, we'll see another spike in cases that could overwhelm our hospitals."

The order closes all "dining and congregation areas in restaurants, dining establishments, food courts, breweries, microbreweries, distilleries, wineries, tasting rooms and farmers markets" but allows those businesses to provide take-out service.

It also means all theaters, performing arts centers, concert venues, museums and other indoor entertainment centers, fitness centers, gyms, beauty salons, barber shops, tattoo shops, tanning salons, fitness centers, gymnasiums, recreation centers, indoor sports facilities, racetracks and historic horse racing facilities, bowling alleys and other indoor amusement businesses are to remain closed.

Northam said state officials would continue monitoring health data.

"I know this has been a frustrating time for all of us. People are out of work;

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AGRICULTURE



Family takes over Harvest Table Farm to cultivate vegetables
» B2

SPORTS



Abingdon coach plans training exercises for athletes at home
» B3

KEEP ON TRUCKIN'

Meadowview truck driver navigates virus hazards

BY CAROLYN R. WILSON
FOR THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS
MEADOWVIEW, Va. — Millions of Americans have been encouraged to work from home since the outbreak of the novel coronavirus, which has taken more than 170,000 lives worldwide.

But working from home isn't an option for Curtis Rasnake.

The Meadowview truck driver works for TCM Transportation, the largest flatbed company in America.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, there are nearly 2 million truck drivers in the country, a segment of the population who must come in contact with goods and people on a daily basis.

Just last week, he traveled to Logan, West Virginia, to deliver a load of sheet rock. He picked up a load of soft maple in

Princeton, West Virginia, that goes to Wisconsin. From there, he hauled 45,000 pounds of coiled rod to Greensboro, North Carolina, followed by a job in Middlesburg, North Carolina, where he hauled a 45,000-pound load of treated lumber to Grand Ledge, Michigan.

"Our sector of trucking is about to take a tremendous hit," said Rasnake, during a phone interview while he was taking a break in Brownsburg, Indiana.

"If people are not working, they're not going to have the money to remodel their homes, shingle their roofs or buy new auto parts."

Every day Rasnake makes the decision to keep on truckin', enduring long hours and stressful circumstances just to make sure essentials get where they are going.

"And to support my family. That's why I do what I do," he said.

"I think truck drivers sometimes get a bad rap. But since the coronavirus, we have superstar status. We're like the cavalry bringing in things people need," he said with a laugh.

"They're cheering us now because we're bringing in the toilet paper, but ordinarily, they're shaking their fists at us on the road because a big truck in front of them is going 40 mph on a really steep grade on a mountain.

"People are thanking us now, but when this is all over, will they remember what we do?" asked Rasnake.

Everyday stress tends to accelerate on the road, especially when the fears of catching

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This week's deaths

Anthony Ray Miller, 59
Frederic P. Wagner, 84

Information and wording for obituaries are provided by funeral homes and are published as paid notices.



Fredric P. Wagner

Fredric Porter Wagner, 84, passed away on April 9, 2020, after a brief yet valiant battle against the COVID-19 virus.

Fred was born in Mud Folk, in the beautiful mountains of Tazewell County, Virginia, relocating in 1978 to Mechanicsville, Virginia.

Fred was a 1956 graduate of Emory & Henry College. Mr. Wagner was a 3rd generation Master Mason and a member of the Masonic Lodge of Virginia, Metropolitan #10 AF&AM and was past Master of Dove #51 AF&AM.

Fred is survived by four children, Danita Rhett (Roland), Darren Waggoner, Dionna Kelleher (Barry) and Derek Wagner; a special daughter-in-law, Cassandra Nelson; 10 grandchildren, Jessica Vincent (John), Summer Tocci (Andrew), Dylan Waggoner (Eugena), Brooke Waggoner, Trent Kelleher, Miranda Kelleher, Jade Kelleher, Devan Wagner, Joshua Wagner and Lauren Wagner; two great-grandchildren, Bronwyn Leigh Tocci and Dean Dawes Waggoner; and four brothers, Bill Wagner, Allan Wagner (Judy), Larry Wagner, and Lynn Wagner (Barbara).

A celebration of life will be held in August when hopefully family and friends can once again gather together to honor Fred and a life well lived.



Anthony Ray 'Tony' Miller

Anthony Ray 'Tony' Miller, age 59, of Myrtle Beach, S.C., entered into the presence of his Lord and Savior on Easter Sunday, April 12, 2020.

He was born on January 23, 1961, in Jefferson, N.C. Tony graduated from Beaver Creek High School in 1979 and was a star athlete.

Shriner.

For over 30 years Tony endured a very rare brain tumor that cost him his sight, but Tony's faith never wavered. He used his journey to teach others about God's grace and love as a member of Pleasant View United Methodist Church.

He was preceded in death by both of his parents, Marion and Ilean Miller; one stepbrother, Charles Anthony Miller, and both sets of grandparents.

He is survived by his wife of 19 years, Catherine; one son, Bryan Miller; stepdaughter, Amanda Cook and husband Jake; and stepson, Brandon Eskridge.

He is survived by sister, Kelly M. London and husband, Glenn; brothers, Brandon Miller and wife, Lauren, Marty Miller, and Rusty Miller and wife, Melinda. He is also survived by several aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews.

There will be no service at this time.

Memorials may be made to Pleasant View United Methodist Church Helping Hands Ministry, 18416 Lee Highway, Abingdon VA 24210, or Zion United Methodist Church Cemetery, 580 Grant Houck Rd., Todd, NC 28684.

Lewis Crematory & Funeral Services in Myrtle Beach, S.C. is serving the Miller family.

MEETINGS

WASHINGTON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Abingdon, Va. Monday, April 27, 7-9 p.m., Board of Supervisors Auditorium, County Government Building, 1 Government Center Place. Call 276-525-1391 or email stephenr@washcova.com.

HOW TO SUBMIT INFO

Submission deadline is Monday noon for the items scheduled during the upcoming week. Email news@washconews.com.

Driver

From Page A1

the coronavirus begin to mount, he said.

Delivering primarily building materials to companies east of the Mississippi, Rasnake must interact with people and places every day at work.

'When I stop at a truck stop, I worry about every door handle and fuel pump handle I touch and every rest room I use.'

'I often step inside a store to grab a cold Diet Coke. I have to wonder if someone with the coronavirus opened that same door.'

Rasnake is finding that the rest of the world wants to keep a safe distance, too.

His company requires a signature when the goods have been delivered.

'Some people at these companies are refusing

to touch the paperwork that I must get signed when I make a delivery. When that happens, my company has instructed me to write 'COVID-19' on the paperwork and include information on why someone wouldn't sign it.'

Being on the road during this uncertain time is taking a toll on the mental health of truck drivers, he said.

'It's mentally affecting a lot of truck drivers now. I was checking in a transport in Wisconsin when another trucker flew off the handle in front of me.'

'I mean, everyone's on edge,' Rasnake said.

'The coronavirus — it's constantly in the back of your mind. I've had to turn off the radio in the truck because the news really gets you down.'

Rasnake, whose schedule permits him to come home most weekends, worries he may unknowingly take the virus to his family.

'The stress of this job on a good day combined with driving into the coronavirus hot spots really wears on you.'

'It's like a powder keg ready to explode because of all the attitudes.'

Rasnake, like other truckers, is seeing disruptions of food service and the availability of some items.

He keeps a stash of food in a refrigerator in his truck for the times when access to food is harder.

'Even the hot dogs are not out anymore. You know,' he said, 'the hot dogs that cook on the rollers out front in the stores in places like Pilot Flying J. I love those hot dogs.'

'I stopped at a restaurant in Indiana, and there were only two people working inside in the entire place. I had to wait an insane amount of time to get my food because most of their customers are now going through the drive-thru.'

'I don't know one fast food place in America that I can drive up to with my truck. I can't

very well pull my truck up to a drive-thru,' he said. 'I have to go inside.'

There's always a danger to eating out, too, he said. Rasnake said he pays attention to whether restaurant workers wear protective gloves.

'Some workers wear masks and gloves, but not all of them.'

During his routes, the long-distance driver is met with closed rest stops and filled-to-capacity truck stops.

'Many rest areas have been shut down for weeks. The parking areas are still available, but the amenities are off-limits. There are no restrooms or vending machines available.'

'A lot of the mom and pop stores do not allow their restrooms to be used,' said Rasnake, who has been turned away more than once while on the road.

The truck driver has to endure long waits when he drops off a load. 'I've seen truck drivers in a line with 100 trucks ahead of them. Businesses are placing so many orders for products. You end up sitting there all day. And it's all from panic-buying from customers,' Rasnake said.

'The shortages are not because the truckers are not getting the products delivered. It's because of panic-buying.'

There's plenty of food, supplies and, yes, toilet paper, in the country, he said. 'The reasons the shelves in grocery stores are empty is because people are stocking up instead of just buying what they need right now.'

He's stopped at numerous places on his routes to buy hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes. 'I would feel better if I had them,' said the truck driver.

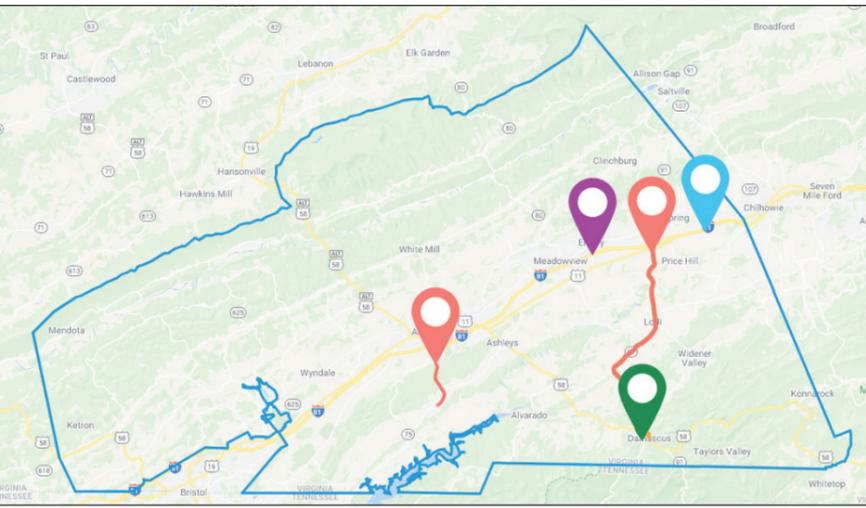
But. 'I can't find them for sale anywhere.'

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

THE WEEK AHEAD

April 22 - 29, 2020

ROAD CLOSURES



ROUTE 75: This week, be alert to the possibility of lane closures and workers along a portion of Route 75 near the Abingdon area, prepping the road in anticipation of latex paving. The work will take place between the Abingdon corporate limits and Route 672 in Washington County. (Completion: April 2020)

INTERSTATE 81 - EXIT 26: Be alert to shoulder closures along I-81 southbound at Exit 26 in the Emory area of Washington County due to a project to extend the acceleration/deceleration lanes for the southbound on- and off-ramps. The majority of activities for the project will occur along VDOT's right of way; however, motorists should be alert to workers and heavy equipment in the area. (Completion: late June 2020)

WATER STREET BRIDGE CLOSURE:

Due to recent bridge inspection findings, the Virginia Department of Transportation has closed the Route 1203 (Water Street) bridge in Damascus. The bridge is located across from the Damascus Public Library and crosses Beaver Dam Creek.

ROUTE 91: This week, be alert to the possibility of lane closures and workers along Route 91 between Damascus and Meadowview in Washington County, prepping the road in anticipation of latex paving in the coming weeks. (Completion: April 2020)

INTERSTATE 81 - EXIT 32: This week, be alert to daytime lane closures on I-81 southbound at Exit 32 due to guardrail installation associated with a safety project. Use caution in this area and be alert to the possibility of delays while improvements are being made.

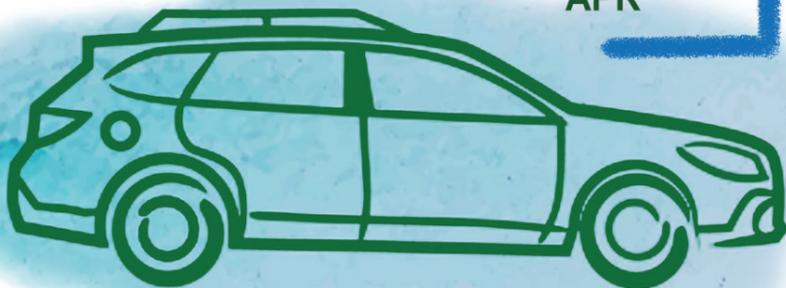
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