

# Morgan's Message carries on student's lasting legacy

By Aimée O'Grady

SPECIAL TO THE FAUQUIER TIMES

In October 2020, Morgan's Message was launched to honor the life of local student-athlete and youth coach Morgan Rodgers, who took her life in July 2019. The organization's mission is to remove the stigma of mental health issues among high school and college athletes.

Morgan's Message recruits and supports "ambassadors" at high schools, colleges and universities, who organize meetings to encourage dialogue around mental health. "Ideally we would like to have representatives from all the sports teams on every campus," said Morgan's mother -- and Morgan's Message founder -- Dona Rodgers.

"Morgan was very vocal about the complications of her injury; why wasn't she as open about her mental health recovery?" her mother Dona Rodgers wondered, a year and a half after her death. "We are not therapeutic in nature and not intending to replace the work of professionals. We want kids to normalize conversations surrounding mental health," she added.

## The inspiration for Morgan's Message

The last year of Morgan Rodgers' life has a lot of gaps in it for her family. She sustained an injury during a lacrosse practice at Duke University in January 2017; following surgery and six weeks of no-weight bearing recovery, she began the long process of physical therapy.

One year after her injury, her recovery wasn't where they had hoped it would be. "She was able to run, but not at full speed and wasn't cleared to play," said her mother. It was then that her grades began to slip. "In hindsight, if we were familiar with the signs, her mental health decline would have been clearer," said Rodgers about her daughter's gradual withdrawal from her friends and interests.

The Duke coach had seen the effect of athletic injuries hundreds of times and knew that Morgan's mental well-being needed to be considered. Following her injury, Morgan saw an off-campus counselor and had a local therapist to see when she was home. Dona Rodgers and her husband Kurt thought they had the bases covered. In March 2018, Morgan asked to take a semester off. She was granted medical leave by the university. In the fall of 2018, she reapplied to the school with her doctor's permission and appeared to be "her old self."

"She was so excited, and we all sighed a breath of relief, thinking she was going to overcome this," recalled her mom.

Unfortunately, back on campus, Morgan wasn't sure where she fit in, her mom recalled. She was no longer a senior, having taken a semester off and was more than a junior. Ultimately, they put her on the junior team to play. "Morgan was so proud. She didn't want anyone to worry about her and she put a lot of pressure on herself to be perfect," her mother said.

In July 2019, Morgan took her life and the family turned inward to heal.

Dona Rodgers said, "Morgan's birthday is in May and as that date approached following her death, we began to resurface a little to figure out how we were going to celebrate [our daughter] Aberle's first birthday without her twin sister." Morgan's teammates started coming around to talk about what happened and how they all could have missed her symptoms. "We don't have any experience with mental health issues in our family. It was never something that we thought was a problem. We knew Morgan was down, but knowing what she was going through, we weren't surprised it didn't seem like anything out of the ordinary," Dona Rodgers said.



COURTESY PHOTO

In addition to playing lacrosse, Morgan Rodgers also coached young athletes in local lacrosse clubs.

## Reaching out

The arrival of COVID-19 and the potential harm it could present for student athletes spurred Dona Rodgers to take action. She explained, "We knew COVID was impacting sports and I couldn't help but think about these student athletes who had their sports postponed. This is who they are. They crave the camaraderie and team that they have bonded with. Sitting in front of a computer for hours on end is against everything they know. I knew that mental health issues would be on the rise everywhere, especially with student athletes."

Today, Morgan's Message has more than 150 ambassadors at 84 schools (both high school and four-year colleges) in the United States and Canada. Dona Rodgers said, "The first ambassadors were people who knew Morgan and maybe had her as a coach in school. From there, word has gotten out, thanks to social media." Ambassadors can reach back out to Dona for presentations on a variety of topics, "We supply ambassadors with science-based, factual information and then encourage conversation," she said of the support the organization lends. If mental health issues come to light from an on-campus conversation, Morgan's Message offers resources and directs ambassadors to experts who can help navigate the situation.

Morgan's Message is always looking for new ambassadors. "We are looking for natural leaders who want to take this on," she said. The ambassadors hold monthly meetings at their schools and report back to Dona Rodgers. "We hope to get representatives from every sport. We are heavy on female representatives, but do have several male students representing lacrosse, football, track and field, baseball and basketball."

Dona Rodgers became involved with the Mental Health Association of Fauquier County and took the youth mental health first-aid course, something she'd like everyone to consider. She recently accepted an invitation to serve on the association's board.

"Looking at the ambassador response in just a few months, we know we have tapped into something. The timing is right to talk about student athlete mental health," said Dona Rodgers. The goal of Morgan's Message is to normalize the conversations surrounding mental health so that student-athletes who might be struggling will feel safe to reach out and get some help. "We want the treatment of mental health to be just as common and comfortable as the treatment of physical health," she said.

A few miles southeast of Warrenton off Meez Road is the Central Fauquier Sports Complex. The 74-acre facility used to be owned by Morgan's paternal family and has five natural grass multipurpose fields. One turf field is named Morgan D. Rodgers Field, in honor of a Fauquier hometown athlete who loved her community and her sport. To learn more about Morgan's Message, visit <https://morgansmessage.org/>.

## Ambassadors find their voice

I am a Morgan's Message ambassador at Highland School, and I am Morgan's cousin. Morgan's Message has turned such devastating loss into a community to give people who struggle the support they need.

Nothing makes me happier than seeing Morgan's legacy live on, and I am so grateful I am able to help spread her message throughout my community. Me and the team of ambassadors at Highland School have worked hard to educate our community and ensure that everyone gets the support they need, and we are so excited to keep moving forward in our efforts.

-- CHARLOTTE RODGERS, HIGHLAND SCHOOL

I first met Morgan when I played lacrosse for her at Highland School in the spring of 2018. I decided to become an ambassador because I wanted to give other athletes the kind of outlet I wish I had access to earlier. I also wanted to honor Morgan, as she taught me more about the mental aspect of sports than any other coach I had previously played for.

Morgan was a force, and playing for her and Kristin Conques that season truly made me fall in love with lacrosse. I want to spread that passion and love for every aspect of sports that Morgan had.

-- ELLIE SOLMS, FAUQUIER HIGH SCHOOL

I knew that I wanted to be a part of Morgan's Message because I think mental health is often overlooked, and people often feel embarrassed or ashamed to ask for help, and I want to help change that.

-- EMILY MARKLEY, LIBERTY HIGH SCHOOL

Morgan was one of my travel lacrosse team coaches when I was in 4th, 5th, and 6th grade at Cardinal Lacrosse. She was so full of laughter and could always make us smile. Since Morgan went to Kettle Run, I was really interested in becoming an ambassador with my close friends, helping break the stigma around mental health, and starting up a chapter at school. We started up our Morgan's Message through social media and eventually we were named a full club and organization at KR!

-- ABIGAIL BEATTIE, KETTLE RUN HIGH SCHOOL

Morgan was one of my travel team coaches for Cardinals girls lacrosse. We connected and then learned that she played at Kettle Run, where I would be attending. Not only was she a strong player and a great coach but she inspired me to want more of my lacrosse career.

-- JORDAN WHITE, KETTLE RUN HIGH SCHOOL

I am very passionate about mental health because I suffer from depression and anxiety, and being a student-athlete myself, I understand how much student-athletes are affected.

The stigma surrounding mental health needs to be broken, and I, along with my wonderful co-ambassadors, are going to work within our school and community to bring our stories and struggles as student-athletes to light, and to show others that they are not alone.

-- LILY VON HERBULIS, KETTLE RUN HIGH SCHOOL

As someone who's been playing competitive sports their whole life, I've most definitely had my struggles with mental health, both on and off the field. Be it body image, self-esteem, or dealing with being sidelined by an injury, I've been through it all, and I know how hard it can be to open up and talk about it. I want people to know that seeking help does not make you weak, but makes you so strong.

-- MARLEY OARE, FAUQUIER HIGH SCHOOL



**A CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON?** The *Fauquier Times* previews local basketball squads. **SPORTS, Pages 17-19, 21**



FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF PHOTO/COY FERRELL

## A bright start to the holiday season

Children react to the fireworks display in Old Town Warrenton Friday night at the conclusion of the Warrenton Christmas Parade. See pages 8 and 9 for more photos of the holiday parades held over the weekend in Warrenton, Marshall, Remington and Middleburg.

## Blazing the trail for future Scouts

By Aimée O'Grady  
SPECIAL TO THE FAUQUIER TIMES

The evolution of girls BSA Troop 360G happened naturally, but as with all “firsts,” there were some obstacles. But thanks to the efforts of 10-year-old Charlotte Kiffney, of Warrenton, and her family, the first Scouts BSA troop for girls is coming to Fauquier County next month.

It all started when Charlotte Kiffney tagged along when her older brothers, Owen and Eli, joined Scouts BSA in 2017. After seeing the kinds of activities they participated in, she expressed an interest.

See KIFFNEY, page 11

**“... all three of my children are enjoying scouting and are working toward becoming Eagle Scouts. I am excited that Charlotte now has the opportunity ...”**

JIM KIFFNEY

## Warrenton residents still have questions about stormwater fees

By Peter Cary  
PIEDMONT JOURNALISM FOUNDATION

One word came to Mark Nesfeder’s mind when he opened his Dec. 1 Town of Warrenton tax bill: “Unbelievable.”

Nesfeder was one of a group of Olde Gold Cup subdivision residents who had complained back in July that something was wrong with the \$77.52 stormwater fees on their June tax bills. Their objections resulted in town officials agreeing that the fees were \$34.64 too high; they met with 12 other homeowners’ associations through the fall to explain the stormwater fees and correct still other errors.

Now Nesfeder had gotten the same wrong bill again. “The bottom line is, it’s irresponsible to send out bills that are not correct,” he said.

**“The whole situation just flat makes me irate.”**

CORINNA O’SABEN  
Vice president, Olde Gold Cup Homeowners’ Association

The Town of Warrenton is winding up a year-long effort to impose a fee on residents to pay for stormwater runoff abatements. After two cycles of informational billing, the bills that went out in November – and are due Dec. 15 – were supposed to be correct.

See STORMWATER, page 6



COURTESY PHOTO

The Kiffney Scouts: Eli, Owen and Charlotte

**3 alleged cases of domestic violence reported.**

See page 4.



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# Blazing the trail for future Scouts

KIFFNEY, from page 1

Owen was in first grade at the time and Eli in second; Charlotte was still in pre-K. “When the boys started Scouting, Charlotte was still too young. Then when she started kindergarten, Girl Scouts was her only option, and we tried it for a little while, but it wasn’t a good fit for her,” said her mom, Amber Kiffney. “We are a very outdoorsy family. We enjoy hiking and camping and gravitate toward the activities offered by Scouts BSA,” she added.

In January 2018, Scouts BSA made national headlines with the launch of the Cub Scout Family Pack, permitting families to enroll their daughters along with their sons (in grades K through five) in Scouts BSA Cub Scout groups.

It was an easy decision for the Kiffneys. “Charlotte liked what the boys were doing and when it became available to her, it was convenient for our family to have all three kids in the same activity, since they share similar interests,” said Kiffney.

Kiffney became the family pack leader; a female must lead any Cub Scout troop that includes girls.

Since then, Charlotte has grown close to the members of her pack, who happen to all be boys. As a matter of fact, the pack made a pact; the boys told Charlotte that where she went, they would go, when they all aged out of Cub Scouts.

Now in fourth grade, Charlotte will be too old for the family pack in about a year, at the end of fifth grade. “She doesn’t want to leave her friends who she has grown very close to over the years,” said Kiffney. Without a troop inclusive to girls available to her after fifth grade, Charlotte would have to leave Scouts BSA.

This past fall, Kiffney and her daughter attended a recruitment campout where they met Kathy Kulick, the chartered organization representative for Scouts BSA. “When I met Charlotte and experienced her energy and passion toward becoming an Eagle Scout and saw that there were no options for her in the county, I knew we had to start a new Scouts BSA Troop for girls.”

The effort was met with mixed reactions.

Some Scout leaders felt that Scouts BSA should remain an opportunity only for boys. Kulick didn’t agree.

“Our son, who is now 25, achieved the rank of Eagle Scout in 2011. A family friend wrote to Robert Gates, former U.S. Secretary of Defense, to request a letter of congratulations for him. Secretary Gates did indeed send a letter back. In it, he referred to all the awards and honors he’s received, but that none has meant more than being an Eagle Scout. He described arriving in Washington for the first time as a young man. Everything he owned could fit his car; he didn’t know a soul, had no money and no connections.

“But he had one thing that gave him the confidence he could achieve

## Eagle Scouts

Until recently restricted to boys, the rank of Eagle Scout is one of society’s most-recognized achievements. Scouts can begin achieving the 21 merit badges required for Eagle Scout when they enter sixth grade. It can be done in as little as three years, but typically takes until their senior year of high school.

According to Scouts BSA, only 8% of scouts ever achieve the rank of Eagle Scout. The merit badges needed to become an Eagle Scout cover fitness, public speaking, first aid, citizenship, financial management and dozens of other subjects. The purpose of the rank is to equip young people to become well-rounded future leaders. It also gives a competitive advantage for college admissions, job applications and military service.

Source: Scouts BSA

whatever he put his mind to: his Eagle Scout badge. And that ultimately led him to become the president of Texas A&M University, director of the CIA and secretary of defense for two presidents. Achieving the rank of Eagle Scout changed the course of that man’s life. Why shouldn’t it also be a life-changing opportunity for girls?” she asked.

The first week in December, she received the charter; in January 2022, Troop 360G will launch with Amber Kiffney in the role of troop leader. It will be the first Scouts BSA Troop for girls in the Piedmont District. Leaders have already received interest from local families about joining.

The formation of the first female Scouts BSA Troop in the Piedmont District comes just one year after Boy Scouts celebrated the first group of 1,000 female Eagle Scouts in February 2021.

Before meeting Kulick, the Kiffneys encountered troops that were less accepting of having a parallel troop for girls. “It is unfortunate to see segregation in the Scouting community. Jim [Charlotte’s father] and I hope that when our kids are grown, we can tell their children how Aunt Charlotte helped form one of the first girls’ troops in Scouts BSA. We hope their reaction is surprise that gender segregation was ever a thing in the Scouting community,” said Kiffney.

Charlotte’s father agreed, “Achieving Eagle Scout demonstrates the ability to follow-through with difficult, long-duration tasks at a young age. Regardless of where she ends up, Charlotte will benefit from this opportunity to grow as a young lady and leader.”

Girls ages 11 and older with an interest in Scouts BSA are encouraged to attend a Scout meeting held every Monday from 7 to 8 p.m. at The Boys and Girls Club of Fauquier located at 169 Keith Street, Warrenton. Find them on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/WarrentonBSATroopCrew360/> or visit the website: <https://www.troopwebhost.org/Troop360Warrenton/>

## NOTICE OF SUBSTITUTE TRUSTEE’S SALE

12394 Marsh Road, Bealeton, VA 22712

In execution of a Deed of Trust in the original principal amount of \$600,000.00, dated January 4, 2016 and recorded in the Clerk’s Office of the Circuit Court of Fauquier County, Virginia, at Book 1504 and Page 2451, default having been made in the payment of the Note thereby secured and at the request of the holder of said Note, the undersigned Substitute Trustee will offer for sale at public auction at the entrance to the Fauquier County Circuit Court on **December 28, 2021 at 9:30 AM** the property described in said deed, located at the above address and briefly described as:

**Address: 12394 Marsh Road, Bealeton, VA 22712**

**Tax ID #: 7807-32-4635**

**ALL THAT certain or parcel of land, located in the Lee Magisterial District, Fauquier County, Virginia, containing 250.0507 acres more or less, and more particularly described by metes and bounds within the deed recorded in Deed Book 805, page 1609, in the Clerk’s Office of the Circuit Court of Fauquier County, Virginia.**

The property is sold “AS IS”, WITHOUT REPRESENTATION OR WARRANTY OF ANY KIND, AND SUBJECT TO conditions, restrictions, reservations, easements, rights of way, and all other matters of record taking priority over the Deed of Trust to be announced at the time of sale. The Noteholder reserves the right to bid at the sale.

TERMS OF SALE: Cash. A deposit of 10% of the sales price, cash or certified check will be required at the time of sale, with settlement within fourteen (14) days from the date of sale. Sale is subject to post sale confirmation that the borrower did not file for protection under the U.S. Bankruptcy Code prior to the sale, as well as to post-sale confirmation of the status of the loan with the loan servicer including, but not limited to, determination of whether the borrower entered into any repayment agreement, reinstated or paid off the loan prior to the sale. In any such event, the sale shall be null and void, and the Purchaser’s sole remedy, in law or equity, shall be the return of his deposit without interest. Additional terms may be announced at the time of sale. Pursuant to the Federal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, we advise you that this firm is a debt collector attempted to collect the indebtedness referred to herein and any information we obtain will be used for that purpose.

Gemini Trustees, LLC, Substitute Trustee. FOR INFORMATION CONTACT: Parker, Simon & Kokolis, LLC, 10400 Eaton Place, Fairfax, VA 22030, (301) 656-5775.



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Questions about Walk-In Wednesdays, email [dkregel@valleyhealthlink.com](mailto:dkregel@valleyhealthlink.com)





TIMES STAFF PHOTO/COY FERRELL  
Jax Leigh works at the Great Harvest Bread Company on Main Street in Warrenton.

LIFE SKILLS TAUGHT HERE

## Program helps transition students with disabilities

By Aimée O'Grady  
SPECIAL TO THE FAUQUIER TIMES

This July, Jax Leigh will celebrate five years of employment at Great Harvest Bread Company on Main Street in Warrenton. Leigh is a graduate of the Transitions program, operated by Fauquier County Public Schools for students aged 16 to 22 who have documented intellectual and developmental disabilities.

"Jax's experience is what we hope for all of our students," said Transitions teacher Joanna Kuta. During a typical school year, Transitions students learn life skills and engage in unpaid work experience throughout the community. The opportunity gives them hands-on experience in a variety of work environments. Whenever possible, Kuta said she tries to match students' interests with work opportunities.

Students meet at the Odd Fellows Lodge in Old Town Warrenton. It is fitting that the Odd Fellows lease their building to the Transitions program, since the Odd Fellows' mis-

**"We want students to become valuable contributors to the community and local businesses help us achieve that goal."**

JOANNA KUTA

sion is "to improve and elevate the character of mankind by promoting the principles of friendship, love, truth, faith, hope, charity and universal justice."

"The location in downtown Warrenton is fundamental to supporting the goal of integration into the community. The hands-on exposure to life skills -- including cooking, cleaning, on the job training, fitness and social skills -- have been immensely valuable and uniquely irreplaceable," said Marilyn McCombe, whose daughter Jenna is a second-year Transitions student.

See TRANSITIONS, page 11

## Vint Hill Lofts win final approval

By Coy Ferrell  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

The proposal to transform the former Vint Hill Farm Station Barracks into 183 "upscale" apartments won final approval from Fauquier County supervisors March 11. The developer has indicated that construction could begin this year.

Supervisors unanimously approved a special exception for the project after planning commissioners recommended the approval last month. The special exception was the third and final procedural hurdle before the project could break ground.

The proposal had won widespread support from residents, business owners and elected of-

**"This, to me, is an example of how this process should work."**

SUPERVISOR HOLDER TRUMBO  
Scott District

ficials since the project was first conceived in 2018. The former barracks have not been used since 1997 and have deteriorated significantly since the military intelligence installation was closed.

"This, to me, is an example of how this process should work," said Supervisor Holder Trumbo (Scott District), whose district includes Vint Hill.

See VINT HILL, page 11



TIMES STAFF PHOTO/COY FERRELL  
Supervisor Holder Trumbo (Scott District) speaks during a March 11 board of supervisors meeting.

## County officials take another shot at fixing fill dirt conundrum

By Peter Cary  
PIEDMONT JOURNALISM FOUNDATION

"If at first you don't succeed, try, try again." It might be an old proverb, but it fits a new effort by Fauquier County to get a grip on a vexing issue -- the piles of dirt and construction debris growing into towering mesas on some local farms. The first attempt, a zoning amendment passed by the Board of Supervisors two years ago, is now considered a failure. The planning commission will be meeting Thursday to see if new wording can do the trick.

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# Transitions program helps students chart a path to independence

TRANSITIONS, from page 1

McCombe is the executive director of The Arc for North Central Virginia. The organization's mission is to support people with developmental disabilities and their families. The Arc serves a five-county region and helps to connect families with state and local resources.

Jenna McCombe completed her first year at Transitions during the 2019/2020 school year. "From the first day it was clear what a positive impact the program was having on her growth and independence. An important aspect of transitioning to adulthood is interaction with new people and places and learning new skills," said her mother. Because of COVID, Transitions was moved online. Jenna McCombe learned to navigate the computer and access virtual platforms. "While all the instruction at Transitions was valuable, the life skills Jenna learned will help her with future independence," said McCombe.

According to Leigh, "If you want to get an apartment later in life, this class will help because we simulated it. We did chores, helped cook lunch; we even learned how to sew and iron. Even men need to know how to do those things. Go out there and try new things. If you don't like one new thing, you can always try another new thing."

For additional hands-on experience, Transitions students also volunteer at local nonprofits like the Fauquier FoodBank and have helped pack Weekend Power Packs with Fauquier FISH.

"We want students to become valuable contributors to the community and local businesses help us achieve that goal," said Kuta.

Pablo Teodoro, owner of Great Harvest, believes that small business owners have a responsibility to offer all members of the community an opportunity to engage in their businesses. He grants interviews to individuals with special needs whenever he's asked. "You never know when you will find the right candidate. And for those who aren't right for your business, they are learning how to deal with rejection, which is also a valuable life lesson," he said.

Since starting at Great Harvest, Leigh has grown into a valuable employee. "It was important that we all treat Jax as a team member. He is fully engaged in the bakery. He began at the prep-counter for sandwiches and advanced to a member of the kneading team. We are working to give him more time interacting with customers," said Teodoro.

"Over the years, I have seen him become more confident," he said.

Leigh said, "I like working there because we are a good team. Everyone works hard and works as a team. Because I was in extracurricular activities (like marching band) over the years, I learned that teamwork helps everyone go a long way, especially people with disabilities. I stay there because of all

## The Transitions program

The Fauquier County Public Schools Transitions program was launched in 2017 and serves county students ages 18 to 22 with documented intellectual and developmental disabilities who have earned an applied studies diploma.

Transitions accepts up to 10 students annually from county high schools with a teacher recommendation and application. Once accepted into the program, they begin preparation for independent living and employment.

The program is assembling a directory of local businesses willing to have Transitions students work in their businesses for hands-on experience. "Because of the varied interests of our students, having a business directory will help us match our students' interests," said Transitions teacher Joanna Kuta.

Area businesses that would like to be listed in the Fauquier Transitions Directory are invited to contact Kuta at [jkuta@fcps1.org](mailto:jkuta@fcps1.org).

the friends I have, and Pablo is an awesome boss for everyone. And I'm proud of the work we did for the food banks, especially in the last year," said Leigh.

Teodoro admitted that he was hesitant to hire someone with special needs. "It took me about five years of running the bakery before I hired Jax. I don't have a child with special needs, and there were a lot of unknowns for me. I just didn't know what to expect," said Teodoro.

Prior to hiring Leigh, Teodoro was a member of the VA CareerWorks board, one of several federally funded employment programs for individuals with disabilities. Sara Drebes, senior case manager with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, which works in partnership with VA CareerWorks, said, "We had a relationship with Pablo, so I approached him about interviewing Jax. Pablo hired Jax for the 300-hour internship program." (WIOA covered both salary and insurance expenses for Leigh during the 300-hour internship.)

"During the internship, as his case manager, I checked in with Pablo each pay period. At the end of the internship, Pablo submitted a brief evaluation and hired Jax, who was put on the [Great Harvest] payroll. His employment with Pablo and his attendance at Transitions closed his case."

In 2019, then 21-year-old Leigh visited Airlie Conference Center during a Transitions class trip. He made such a good impression that he was offered a job. Leigh, who was already employed at Great Harvest, accepted the new part time job washing dishes at Airlie for its banquet facility, as well as Harry's at Airlie restaurant.

"I got the job at Airlie because of the Transitions

## The Groundwork Project

The Groundwork Project is a partnership between Rappahannock Goodwill Industries and Verdun Adventure Bound. The leadership development and career readiness program runs for eight weeks, one day a week for six hours. Weekly session topics include team building, initiative and self starting, communication, collaboration, relationships, conflict resolution and problem solving, resiliency, CPR, first aid and personal safety training.

The Groundwork Project seeks to "strengthen an individual's mind and body, providing practical skill building that leads to sustainable employment, therefore, strengthening the community as a whole."

The Groundwork Project is open to any person age 16 to 24, who has a life circumstance that makes it difficult to find employment. Each participant in The Groundwork Project is expected to work independently and be able to complete all activities of daily living skills.

With questions contact: Sara.Drebes@FredGoodwill.org.

program allowing me to go in and sample the work at Airlie. They watched me and evaluated my skills and hired me because of that experience. I really liked working there before COVID shut everything down. I knew lots of friends from school and karate who worked there, so it was comfortable. The work was hard but safe. A friendly place for people with disabilities. There were lots of us there," said Jax Leigh.

Before graduating from Transitions, students prepare plans to move forward; parents have access to local resources to help with their individual needs. The eight students from the original Transitions class from 2017 are currently employed at the FBI Academy at Quantico and locally at Safeway and IHOP.

Jax Leigh's mother Cindy Leigh is grateful for the program. "I talk to a lot of parents who have children with special needs. Those outside of our region are envious of our Transitions and WIOA programs and the opportunities they afford young adults with disabilities," she said.

She praised the community for embracing the program. "When word got out, people really latched onto it." Cindy Leigh also serves as a substitute teacher for Transitions and a coach.

While the pandemic has delayed Jax Leigh's goals, it hasn't derailed them. He will be attending the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center that helps Virginians with disabilities enter and remain in the workforce. There, Jax will take a six-month materials management and forklift operation program and looks forward to joining the workforce and contributing to his community. "Every industry needs employees with these skills so I should be able to find a job after training," he said.

## Vint Hill Lofts win final approval

VINT HILL, from page 1

Each of the four members of the public who spoke – two business owners, a realtor and the Vint Hill Homeowners Association president -- expressed enthusiastic support for the project, pointing out it means an historic building will be preserved while serving as a boost to businesses in Vint Hill. Cheering could be heard outside the meeting room after the vote.

The resolution approved by supervisors requires two parking spaces per unit, as recommended by a planning commission resolution passed last month. The



TIMES STAFF PHOTO/COY FERRELL  
The former Vint Hill Stations barracks were left to deteriorate after 1997.

developer had initially proposed providing 1.85 parking spaces per unit, but planning commissioners were concerned that number would be insufficient.

## Fauquier man arrested for alleged home invasion, armed robbery in Maryland

Justin Easom, 33, of Warrenton was arrested March 12 at his home on Broad Run Church Road for the alleged home invasion, first-degree assault and armed robbery of an 81-year-old victim in Maryland on March 11, according to Sgt. Steven Lewis of the Fauquier County Sheriff's Office.



Justin Easom

A spokesman for the Montgomery County Police Department Major Crimes Division said that a male suspect forced entry into the home through the front door and threatened the victim. The suspect stole property from the victim and fled. The victim was not injured during the alleged robbery,

added the spokesman.

Detectives determined that Easom had recently completed home improvement projects at the victim's home, the spokesman said.

Fauquier County detectives, working with Montgomery County Police, processed the scene for evidence and took Easom into custody after locating him at his home.

Lewis said that Easom was transported to the Fauquier County Adult Detention Center and is being held without bond, pending extradition to Maryland.

The investigation is ongoing, said Lewis.