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Washington County News

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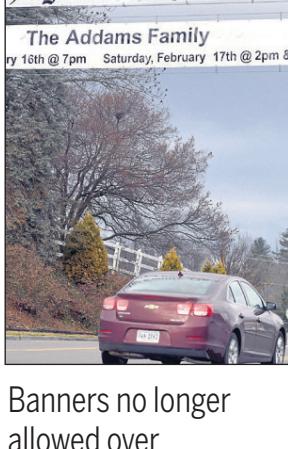
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SHEEP SHOW



Kylie Blevins, 10, grooms the lambs for show day. Kylie has participated in Washington County 4-H and the State Fair of Virginia.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Runs in the family

Three generations
make winning team
in livestock shows

BY CAROLYN R. WILSON
FOR THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

ABINGDON, Va. — It's plain to see that 10-year-old Kylie Blevins is following in her family's footsteps.

The fourth grade student at Abingdon Elementary is a member of the Washington County 4-H, the same organization her mother Hayley Blevins participated in as a youth.

And success in the show ring is another similarity for the mother-and-daughter team.

Just like her mother, Kylie is turning judges' heads when it comes to showing market lambs and commercial ewe lambs on state and national levels, allowing her to meet people with similar interests throughout the country.

Kylie recently was awarded second place in the State Fair of Virginia Youth Scholarship Program, receiving \$1,620, which will be escrowed for college.

She is among 15 youth who placed for their exhibitions of beef, cattle, sheep, meat goats and swine in the 2020 state fair held in Doswell, Virginia, earlier this month.

A total of \$23,000 in scholarships was given to the winning youth who participated this year. The fair has awarded 1,500 scholarships since 2013 and has given more than \$570,000 in support of education for kids and teenagers who participate.

Because of COVID restrictions, a modified youth livestock show was held in place of the traditional 4-H and FFA youth livestock programs.

Participants were judged on their performances in the show ring, as well as leadership, community service activities and written essays.

As a first-time fair exhibitor, Kylie earned one of her biggest accomplishments at the State Fair of Virginia in 2019 when she exhibited the Grand Champion Market Lamb and won Junior Showmanship.

In October 2020, Kylie was awarded Premier

See SHOW, Page A5



Hayley Blevins (right) shows daughter Kylie Blevins how to prepare sheep for the show ring several years ago. Each generation of the Blevins family helps raise the sheep for competitive 4-H shows.



Ten-year-old Kylie Blevins holds a belt buckle she won in October 2020 as the Premier Exhibitor in the Junior Sheep Show at the State Fair of Virginia.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

**Area
COVID
cases
climbed
last week**

BY DAVID MCGEE
WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

On the one-year anniversary of this region's first COVID-19 case, new cases rose 57% in Southwest Virginia over the past week and 7.7% in Northeast Tennessee, which had nearly twice as many cases.

There were more than 840 new cases across the region this week, up from 697 during the previous seven days — a 20% overall jump. Cases were generally declining in both states in recent weeks.

Sullivan County, which identified the region's first case on March 10, 2020, reported 184 new cases during the past week, compared to 157 in the prior seven days, Feb. 25-March 3, according to the Tennessee Department of Health.

Sullivan had 303 active cases after reporting an average of nearly 30 new cases daily during the past two weeks, down from 40 new cases daily over the prior 14 days. Sullivan has recorded 14,615 cases during the past year, and there have been about 88,000 cases regionwide.

There were 291 new cases of the novel coronavirus identified across the 10 counties and two cities of far Southwest Virginia March 4-10, about 100 more than during the previous seven days, according to the Virginia Department of Health.

Buchanan County, which reported no new cases between Feb. 25 and March 3, documented 24 new cases during the week. Wythe County added 64 new cases during the past week, 40 more than the prior week, and Tazewell County had 53 new cases, an increase of 30 compared to the previous week.

The region's seven-day testing positivity average is also up, climbing to 11.1% after lingering near 9% a week ago. At 13.1%, Sullivan's positivity rate was highest in this region and among the highest in Tennessee. The state average was 5.1%.

Washington County, Tennessee, which reported 89 new cases this week, was at 6.5%, Hamblen County was at 8%, with 82 new cases, and Carter County was at 7%, with 32 new cases.

Seven-day testing aver-

age See COVID, Page A5

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NAA
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Show

From Page A1

Exhibitor in the Junior Sheep Show at the State Fair of Virginia, another huge accomplishment for her.

"Kylie is amazing," said Crystal Peek, Washington County Extension Agent, 4-H. "She's so young to have so many accolades under her belt, which shows tremendous ambition. Kylie is smart, hard-working and so kind to others."

Kylie's advice to other students is to "always keep trying, and never give up."

A lot of hard work is the secret to success, said her mother.

The Blevins family has been raising and showing lambs for decades. "It's a family sport," said Kylie's grandmother, Natalie Blevins.

"Each of us has a specialty, and together we make it work."

Natalie said she is the dietician in the family. She helps Kylie put together their feed rations and develops exercise plans for the lambs.

Hayley was so successful at competitions and showmanship with her lambs that she paid for a lot of her college tuition with scholarship money. Now, the mother helps her daughter prepare lambs for shows.

"We call my husband, Ed, the driver and the loader," laughed the grandmother. "He also has a good eye for selecting lambs to purchase for the farm. He's a master at picking out really good stock."

Kylie and her family work with the lambs every day in order to achieve good results at the shows.

"We exercise the lambs at intervals once they get enough fat coverage," said

Hayley. "They're almost like body builders."

Kylie is at the barn bright and early at 7 most mornings to help her family feed the lambs, just before she has to leave for school.

"I look forward to coming home to work my nine lambs," said the youth, who confessed she thinks about them during her school day. "Each of my lambs has a unique personality. They like to learn."

In the evenings, the family comes back together to feed and exercise the lambs to ensure the sheep are getting the proper exercise.

Every little task is important for the show sheep.

"We rinse the legs of the lambs, which promotes hair growth," said the mother. "You want to have as much hair growth on the legs as possible when show time comes around."

The grandmother said she is delighted Kylie enjoys showing sheep as much as the family has throughout the years. "I think it helps young people to develop character and integrity."

Kylie believes showing sheep has helped her gain more patience and confidence.

When Kylie is not working with her livestock and other 4-H projects, she enjoys playing Upward Bound Basketball and going to the gym. She is hopeful that basketball will resume this fall after COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

She's also a member of the Wythe County Livestock Club, where she is actively involved in livestock judging and livestock skill-a-thons.

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

Carrying on the Tradition of Hickory Smoked BBQ

COVID

From Page A1

ages are lower in Southwest Virginia, with Mount Rogers Health District at 5.7%, Cumberland Plateau at 6.5% and LE-

NOWISCO at 8.4%, according to the Virginia Department of Health. Virginia's statewide testing positivity average was 5.7%.

Ballad Health reported three more admissions than discharges and 69

COVID-positive inpatients in its hospitals, including 13 in intensive care units, with six of them on ventilators. Another 10 patients exhibited COVID-like symptoms and were awaiting test results.

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