

SEVERE WEATHER

Northeast braces for Hurricane Henri » **A3**

Flooding kills at least 8 in Middle Tenn. » **B1**



DANGER AHEAD

Burton's Teasley presents major offensive threat for opponents

SPORTS » C1

BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

SUNDAY, August 22, 2021

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Virginia approves request for \$2M for new school

BY DAVID MCGEE
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

BRISTOL, Va. — State education officials last week agreed the Bristol Virginia school division could use \$2 million of federal COVID assistance toward building a proposed new school.

On Wednesday the Virginia Department of Education approved a plan to use \$2 million of the division's federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Fund III (ESSER) allocation toward helping fund a proposed new elementary school to better address learning loss caused by the pandemic. The city requested the funds earlier this month.

"This is exciting," Superintendent Keith Perrigan said. "I thought they might send the application back and ask more questions, but we got it approved on first submission."

City school leaders have been working for a decade to establish a new elementary

See **SCHOOL**, Page A5

RESTAURANTS AND COVID-19



DAVID CRIGGER/BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

Mamma Mia owner Ayeb Bassett carries a lunch order to his customers at his Abingdon restaurant.

Recipe for success

Restaurant owners share tales of COVID-19 survival

BY ALLEN GREGORY
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

It's a rainy Monday afternoon in Abingdon.

As is usually the case on the first day of the week, the pace is slow at area restaurants. There is an exception.

Welcome to Puerto Nuevo Fresh Mex & Seafood. Since Aug. 13, 2019, General Manager Heriberto Olivo has greeted a steady flow of diners to his sprawling business on East Main Street.

"The area has been very good to us," Olivo said. Due to COVID-19 and state health restrictions, the past 19 months have been brutal for restaurants across the region and country. Owners and employees have been hit with closings, layoffs and all sorts of cost-saving measures.

More than 100,000 restaurants closed in the United States in 2020 due to the pandemic. But Puerto Nuevo and some other restaurants in the region never closed or laid off workers. They managed to stay open — and some were even busy — by offering good food, opening drive-thrus, using popular delivery services like DoorDash and relying on loyal customers.

See **RESTAURANTS**, Page A4

BY THE NUMBERS

110,000

Number of restaurants and bars that closed in the U.S. in 2020.

2.5 million

Number of jobs lost.

\$240 billion

Decline in restaurant and food service sales.

SOURCE: National Restaurant Association



ONLINE

WATCH NOW: Abingdon restaurant owner Ayeb Bassett talks about surviving the pandemic.

Video at [HeraldCourier.com](https://www.heraldcourier.com).

US eyes options with IS threat in Kabul

BY AHMAD SEIR, RAHIM FAIEZ, KATHY GANNON and LOLITA C. BALDOR
Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Potential Islamic State threats against Americans in Afghanistan are forcing the U.S. military to develop new ways to get evacuees to the airport in Kabul, a senior U.S. official said Saturday, adding a new complication to the already chaotic efforts to get people out of the country after its swift fall to the Taliban.

The official said that small groups of Americans and possibly other civilians will be given specific instructions on what to do, including movement to transit points where they can be gathered up by the military. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss military operations.

The changes come as the U.S. Embassy issued a new security warning Saturday telling citizens not to travel to the Kabul airport without individual instruction from a U.S. government representative. Officials declined to provide more specifics about the IS threat but described it as significant. They said there have been no confirmed attacks as yet.

Time is running out ahead of President Joe Biden's Aug. 31 deadline to withdraw most remaining U.S. troops. In his remarks on the situation Friday, he did not commit to extending it, though he did issue a new pledge to evacuate not only all Americans in Afghanistan, but also the tens of thousands of Afghans who have aided the war effort since Sept. 11, 2001. That promise would dramatically expand the number of people the U.S. evacuates.

Biden faces growing criticism as videos depict pandemonium and occasional violence outside the airport.

See **AFGHAN**, Page A5

INSIDE

» For military leaders, Afghan news strikes personal chord. **A6**
» Europe fears Afghan refugee crisis after Taliban takeover. **A6**

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

LOCATION	#CASES	#DEATHS
Worldwide	211,303,900+	4,422,200+
United States	37,667,800+	628,200+
Virginia	734,079	11,647
Tennessee	977,230	13,142

% FULLY VACCINATED IN VA.: 55.6%
% FULLY VACCINATED IN TENN.: 41%

SOURCES: Johns Hopkins, Virginia and Tennessee Departments of Health, AP

Thank you, **Joseph W. Rowell**, for subscribing to the Bristol Herald Courier.

88/63
Weather » **A10**



INSIDE: CLASSIFIED E1-6 | COMICS INSERT | DEATHS B2-3 | OPINION A8 | SCOREBOARD C2 | TELEVISION B6

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As leaders reconvene at UN, climate and COVID-19 top the list

NATION & WORLD » A6



King Henry leads Titans' late rally to stun Seahawks 33-30

SPORTS » B1

BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

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Hometown Stories



Terri McCroskey, 68, celebrated her work anniversary in August, marking 49 years as a school bus driver for the Washington County Public Schools.

US begins expulsion of Haitian migrants

BY JUAN A. LOZANO, ERIC GAY, ELLIOT SPAGAT and EVENS SANON
Associated Press

DEL RIO, Texas — The U.S. flew Haitians camped in a Texas border town back to their homeland Sunday and tried blocking others from crossing the border from Mexico in a massive show of force that signaled the beginning of what could be one of America's swiftest, large-scale expulsions of migrants or refugees in decades.

More than 320 migrants arrived in Port-au-Prince on three flights, and Haiti said six flights were expected Tuesday. In all, U.S. authorities moved to expel many of the more 12,000 migrants camped around a bridge in Del Rio, Texas, after crossing from Ciudad Acuña, Mexico.

The only obvious parallel for such an expulsion without an opportunity to seek asylum was in 1992 when the Coast Guard intercepted Haitian refugees at sea, said Yael Schacher, senior U.S. advocate at Refugees International whose doctoral studies focused on the history of U.S. asylum law.

Similarly large numbers of Mexicans have been sent home during peak years of immigration but over land and not so suddenly.

Central Americans have also crossed the border in comparable numbers without being subject to mass expulsion, although Mexico has agreed to accept them from the U.S. under pandemic-related authority in effect since March 2020. Mexico does not accept expelled Haitians or people of other nationalities outside of Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.

When the border was closed Sunday, the migrants

See **MIGRANTS**, Page A4

Round and round ...

For 49 years, the wheels on her school bus have been going round and round

BY CAROLYN R. WILSON
SPECIAL TO THE BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

ABINGDON, Va. — Terri McCroskey never set out to be a trailblazer.

The Bristol, Virginia resident landed a job in August 1973 as one of the few women driving a school bus for Washington County Public Schools.

And she's still behind the wheel of a bright yellow school bus No. 85.



ONLINE — Watch video of Terri McCroskey with this story at [HeraldCourier.com](https://www.heraldcourier.com).

McCroskey, 68, celebrated her work anniversary in August, marking her 49th year as a school bus driver for the county.

"It's hard to tell how many kids I've hauled," she said. "I now have the

See **BUS**, Page A5



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

More school bus drivers are needed for Washington County Public Schools. Washington County system in need of bus drivers

BY CAROLYN R. WILSON
SPECIAL TO THE BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

ABINGDON, Va. — When public schools across the country opened to a new school year,

administrators knew they would face challenging issues — from battling the dangers of COVID-19

See **DRIVERS**, Page A5

Dems push to retool health care programs

BY RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR and LISA MASCARO
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Dental work for seniors on Medicare. An end to sky's-the-limit pricing on prescription drugs. New options for long-term care at home. Coverage for low-income people locked out of Medicaid by ideological battles.

Those are just some of the changes to health care that Democrats want to achieve with President Joe Biden's massive "Build Back Bet-

ter" plan. The \$3.5 trillion domestic agenda bill touches almost all aspects of American life, from taxes to climate change, but the health care components are a cornerstone for Democrats, amplified during the COVID-19 crisis.

For the nearly 145 million Americans covered by government health programs, along with their families and communities, the investment in the nation's services could make a difference in the quality of life for decades.

"It's a holistic look at how health care can be not just expanded, but better directed to the needs that people actually have," Kathleen Sebelius, federal health secretary under President Barack Obama, said of the Biden bill. "You've got a plan that's really aimed at the serious gaps in health care that are still causing people to either go totally uninsured, or run out of money in the course of their treatments."

See **HEALTH**, Page A5

COVID-19



PANDEMIC

LOCATION	#CASES	#DEATHS
Worldwide	228,458,100+	4,690,700+
United States	42,085,600+	673,700+
Virginia	827,197	12,242
Tennessee	1,178,168	14,341

% FULLY VACCINATED IN VA: 58.7%
% FULLY VACCINATED IN TENN.: 44%

SOURCES: Johns Hopkins, Virginia and Tennessee Departments of Health, AP



Thank you, **Michael Barbow**, for subscribing to the Bristol Herald Courier.



78/66
Weather » A8

INSIDE: CLASSIFIED B6-8 | COMICS B4 | DEATHS A4 | OPINION A7 | SCOREBOARD B2 | TELEVISION B5

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LOADED

Amarillo, Texas team to feature three Division 1 signees at upcoming Arby's Classic

SPORTS » B1



Transferring

Virginia Tech starting QB Braxton Burmeister will enter transfer portal

SPORTS » B1

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Hometown Stories



Marilou Preston, who has played the piano and organ at Rock Spring Presbyterian Church for 64 years, is retiring at the end of the month.

Easing off the pedal

Organist at Glade Spring, Va., church hanging it up after 64 years

BY CAROLYN R. WILSON
SPECIAL TO THE BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

GLADE SPRING, Va. — Marilou Preston was just 21 when she started playing the piano at church. Now she's 86 and still making a joyful noise to the Lord on Sundays.

For the past 64 years, most of the morning worship services at Rock Spring Presbyterian Church in Glade Spring have included the piano and organ music of Preston.

She will retire at the end of the month as a volunteer who has served as organist perhaps longer than anyone at the church.

"It's meant a lot to me. The church has depended on me, and I've tried to be reliable and arrive on time," said Preston, who has rarely missed a Sunday worship service all these years.

The longtime organist became a member of Rock Spring Presbyterian Church in 1957, a year after she and her husband, Bob, were married. At the time, the church only had a piano, but after the death of a well-loved member of the congregation, Charles Brown Snodgrass, the church dedicated a new organ to his memory.

That was two organs ago. Pres-

ton now plays on the third organ the church has purchased.

"I've played for weddings, funerals and special events like Bible School and Presbytery meetings throughout the years. I can't even count how many funerals," she said.

During the six decades, she's seen the appointments of as many as 15 ministers at the church.

Preston grew up playing the piano at her Damascus home, taking lessons from the late Marion Graybeal of Damascus.

See **ORGANIST**, Page A5



ONLINE
Watch video of the retiring Marilou Preston by clicking on this article at **Herald Courier.com**.

Omicron 'raging around the world'

Biden prepares to issue 'stark warning' to unvaccinated

BY JOSH BOAK
Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. — The COVID-19 omicron variant is "just raging around the world," the White House's top medical adviser said Sunday as President Joe Biden prepares to issue "a stark warning of what the winter will look like" for unvaccinated Americans.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the country's leading infectious disease expert, told NBC's "Meet the Press" that "the real problem" for the U.S. hospital system is that "we have so many people in this country who are eligible to be vaccinated who have not yet been vaccinated."



Fauci

The prospect of a winter chilled by a wave of coronavirus infections is a severe reversal from the optimism projected by Biden some 10 months ago, when he suggested at a CNN town hall that the country would essentially be back to normal by this Christmas. Biden has been careful not to overpromise, yet confidence in the country has been battered by an unrelenting wave of COVID-19 mutations and variations that have left many Americans emotionally exhausted, dispirited and worried about infections.

See **OMICRON**, Page A5

INSIDE

- » Across US, houses of worship struggle to rebuild attendance after halt due to virus. **A4**
- » Omicron may sideline two leading drugs against COVID-19. **A6**
- » Troops find religious exemption for vaccines unattainable. **A6**
- » Sens. Warren and Booker test positive. **A6**

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

LOCATION	#CASES	#DEATHS
Worldwide	274,692,200+	5,354,100+
United States	50,846,800+	806,400+
Virginia	1,013,390	15,083
Tennessee	1,348,635	17,986

% FULLY VACCINATED IN VA.: 67%
% FULLY VACCINATED IN TENN.: 50.7%

SOURCES: Johns Hopkins, Virginia and Tennessee Departments of Health, AP

Thank you,
Rebecca C. Heath,
for subscribing to the Bristol Herald Courier.

47/26
Weather » A8

Manchin not backing Dems' \$2T bill

Decision potentially dooms Biden initiative

BY ALAN FRAM and HOPE YEN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin said Sunday he cannot back his party's signature \$2 trillion social and environment bill, dealing a potentially fatal blow to President Joe Biden's leading domestic initiative heading into an election year when Democrats' nar-



Manchin

row hold on Congress was already in peril.

Manchin told "Fox News Sunday" that after five-and-a-half months of negotiations among Democrats in which he was his party's chief obstacle to passage, "I cannot vote to continue with this piece of legislation. I just can't. I've tried everything humanly possible. I can't get there."

Manchin's choice of words seemed to crack the door open to continued talks with Biden and top congressional Democrats over reshaping the legislation. But the West Virginia senator all but said the bill would die unless it met his demands for a smaller, less sweeping package — something that would be hard for many Democrats in the narrowly divided Congress to accept.

See **MANCHIN**, Page A5

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