

# TIMES VIRGINIAN

Award Winning Newspaper

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## The dynasty continues!

### Raiders win 5th state football championship within 6 years

CHARLES CONRAD  
Times Virginian

In the 1970s, the Pittsburgh Steelers won four Super Bowls as the decade's greatest NFL team. After their fourth Super Bowl victory, which earned them yet another championship ring to fit on their fingers, their motto became "One for the Thumb."

The Steelers organization wouldn't earn a fifth ring to wear on their thumbs until 26 years later with a completely new roster and coaching staff.

But the Appomattox Raiders earned a fifth ring to place on their thumbs with a thrilling 48-41 win over the Stuarts Draft Cougars in the VHSL Class 2 State Championship on Saturday to claim their own "One for the Thumb." The win is the Raiders' fifth state championship in six years.

Many of the faces have changed over the six-year period, but some current members have won multiple rings. The most constant factor has been head

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Appomattox interim head coach Stephen Castello (center) signifies the Raiders finishing the 2020/21 season "number one" as the VHSL Class 2 Football State Champions while holding a "Smith Strong" cloth with senior Caleb Shaw in honor of head coach Doug Smith. Coach Smith was unable to coach the team on the sidelines this season because he is undergoing treatment for multiple myeloma.

Charles Conrad/Times Virginian

## Newspaper team wins VPA awards

C.E. ADAMS  
Times Virginian

The Times Virginian won two Virginia Press Association (VPA) Awards, which were virtually presented last week on the VPA website.

This is the third straight year that the newspaper has placed in the contest.

"I'm so proud of the Times Virginian team for the great job they do," said Editor and General Manager Chad Adams. "We work hard to make the Times Virginian a great newspaper and are grateful to be recognized by the Virginia Press Association for the third year in a row."

Winners of the 2020 VPA News & Advertising Contest were announced in stages from Monday, April 26, to Thursday, April 29, as a weeklong celebration.

The following awards were received in the news and photography categories.

### Second Place

The Times Virginian won second place in the "Special Sections or Special Editions" in its circulation group for its Back to School Special Section in the Aug. 12 issue of the newspaper.

See VPA, Page 7



Charles Conrad/Times Virginian archive photo

Charles Conrad of the Times Virginian won third place in the Pictorial Photo category of the Virginia Press Association Awards for this photo in the June 10 issue of the newspaper showing a woman clasping her hands in prayer during a prayer vigil at Bible Baptist Church in Appomattox.

## Top VPA award received Walker named Outstanding Young Sales Professional

Tommie Jo Walker of the Smith Mountain Eagle, who recently helping with ad sales at The Times Virginian, was presented the Virginia Press Association's Outstanding Young Sales Professional award during the association's virtual 2020 News and Advertising Best in Show awards presentation Thursday.

Both the Times Virginian and Smith Mountain Eagle are owned by Womack Publishing Company.

Walker competed against

countless sales professionals across Virginia to earn the award. According to the Virginia Press Association, the winner demonstrates "excellence in the field of advertising sales" and maintains "high standards of quality and ethics."

"I'm completely blown away!" Walker commented on winning the award. "Thank you to each and every one of my amazing clients who helped make this possible and making

See WALKER, Page 7

## Al Jones resigns as school board member Accepts position with ACPS

CHARLES CONRAD  
Times Virginian

After eight years of serving the Piney Mountain District as a member of the Appomattox County School Board, the

Rev. Alfred Jones III resigned from his seat at Thursday's school board meeting.

After a brief announcement, Jones shared one hug and several fist bumps with his fellow school board mem-

bers and other school staff that were present. And then he graciously left the room.

In an interview with the Times Virginian, Jones

See JONES, Page 8



Jones



Smith Mountain Eagle archive photo

Tommie Jo Walker is seen on Smith Mountain Lake after she moved on from the Times Virginian to sell for the Smith Mountain Eagle.

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# Sports

## Lady Raiders tennis results

### Undefeated at 5-0

#### Match 1 - April 21 (away) Appomattox 6, Altavista 3

##### SINGLES:

First Seed: Mariska Servis (Appo.) over Natalie Pickeral (Alta.): 8-1

Second Seed: Ashley Witt (Alta.) over Kaydence Gilbert (Appo.): 8-3

Third Seed: Anna Wright (Alta.) over Clara Campbell (Appo.): 8-6

Fourth Seed: Bella Cestaro (Appo.) over Savanna Hundley (Alta.): 8-6

Fifth Seed: Berkeley Jamerson (Appo.) over Alicia Dease (Alta.): 8-3

Sixth Seed: Appomattox by forfeit.

##### DOUBLES:

1st Seed: M.Servis & K. Gilbert (Appo.) over N. Pickeral & A. Witt (Alta.): 8-6

2nd Seed: A. Wright & S. Hundley (Alta.) over C. Campbell & B. Cestaro (Appo.): 8-5

3rd Seed: Appomattox by forfeit.

#### Match 2 - April 23 (away)

#### Appomattox 8, William Campbell 1

##### SINGLES:

First Seed: Sabrina Dickerson (WC) over Mariska Servis (Appo.): 8-1

Second Seed: Kaydence Gilbert (Appo.) over Megan Williams (WC): 8-2

Third Seed: Clara Campbell (Appo.) over Holly Clark (WC): 8-0

Fourth Seed: Bella Cestaro (Appo.) over Madison Roakes (WC): 8-1

Fifth Seed: Cameron Womack (Appo.) over Julie Jennings (WC): 8-1

Sixth Seed: Berkeley Jamerson (Appo.) over Ale'sa Bailey (WC): 8-3

##### DOUBLES:

1st Seed: M.Servis & K. Gilbert (Appo.) over S. Dickerson & M. Williams (Alta.): 9-8 (Tie Breaker Game)

2nd Seed: C. Campbell & B. Cestaro (Appo.) over H. Clark & M. Roakes (WC): 8-3

3rd Seed: C. Womack & B. Jamerson (Appo.) over A. Bailey & J. Jennings (WC): 8-1

See **TENNIS**, Page 13

## Girls soccer wins opener 1-0

On Tuesday night, the Appomattox Raiders varsity girls soccer team won their season opener, a road game at Tunstall by a score of 1-0. Cari Vrooman scored for the Raiders on an assist from Catey Paulette at the 63-minute mark of the contest.

The Raiders are scheduled to face Tunstall in a home rematch Friday at 7 p.m. at Bragg Stadium.

Appomattox County High School athletic events

scheduled for this week are as follows:

#### Wednesday, May 5

Varsity baseball at home vs. Gretna, 5:30 p.m.

Varsity softball at Gretna, 5:30 p.m.

Varsity boys soccer at Galileo, 5:30 p.m.

JV baseball at Gretna, 5:30 p.m.

Tennis at Nelson County, 5 p.m.

#### Thursday, May 6

Outdoor track & field at William Campbell, 5 p.m.

#### Friday, May 7

Varsity girls soccer, home vs. Tunstall, 7 p.m.

Varsity softball at home vs. Dan River, 5:30 p.m.

Varsity boys soccer at home vs. Dan River, 5:30 p.m.

Varsity baseball at Dan River, 5:30 p.m.

Tennis at Altavista, 5 p.m.

JV baseball, home vs. Dan River, 5:30 p.m.

JV softball at Dan River, 5:30 p.m.

## Sports coaches may send team information, results and photos to the Times Virginian.

Email to:

[news@timesvirginian.com](mailto:news@timesvirginian.com)

## Champs

Continued from Page 1

coach Doug Smith, who despite undergoing treatment for multiple myeloma, has been supporting the Raiders in various ways from afar this season while interim head coach Stephen Castello has stepped up to lead the team from the sidelines.

The Raiders and Cougars engaged in an old-fashioned “slobber-knocker” on Saturday, a hard-hitting matchup that also featured multiple big plays and wasn’t decided until the last two minutes on the Cougars’ home field in front of the largest crowd of the season.

The most crucial play occurred early in the fourth quarter when Stuarts Draft punter Bryce Dennison, who was standing near the Cougars’ own goal line, dropped the fourth down snap from center. The loose ball was recovered in the end zone by Tez Booker to increase the Raiders’ lead to 48-38 and provided the final margin of victory.

Appomattox was forced to hold off a resilient Stuarts Draft squad, which overcame an early 14-0 deficit to test the Raiders’ metal, coming within one score of the lead five different times — by far the toughest challenge the Raiders had faced all season long.

As per the season’s trend, Appomattox wasted no time changing the numbers on the scoreboard. Jonathan Pennix went up the middle for a 60-yard touchdown run only a few plays following the opening kickoff for an early 7-0 lead.

Stuarts Draft drove the ball downfield on a series of short pass completions and a long run by Blake Roach that put the ball on the Raiders’ 34-yard line. However, the drive would stall on a fourth down incompletion, giving the ball back to the Raiders on their own 29.

Running back JaQuan Walker then powered his way through the line of scrimmage, with the help of some good blocks, and romped 44 yards to give Appomattox a 14-0 lead late in the first quarter.

The Cougars narrowed the gap to 14-7 early in the second quarter on a four-yard touchdown run by Roach, on which he dove into the pylon at the goal line to avoid a tackler for the score.

A run by Raider running back Keyshawn Baker advanced the ball to the Cougar 17-yard line, but Baker was hurt on the play and walked off the field slowly with a little help from the Raider athletic training staff.

Quarterback Tre Lawing was nearly intercepted by Jo’el Howard, but regrouped on the next play for a screen pass to Booker,

who took the ball 17 yards to the end zone for a 21-7 Appomattox lead.

Cougar running back Cobey Rothgeb set up his team with a 31-yard run to the Appomattox 29-yard line on their next possession, which would result in 29-yard field goal (from the 12-yard line) that made the score 21-10 with 3:49 remaining in the first half.

The Raiders were forced to punt after a third down pass by Lawing sailed over the head of intended receiver Pennix downfield.

With under a minute to go before halftime, Stuarts Draft quarterback Fannon Vance threw an incomplete pass on third down but the Raiders were called for a personal foul, a 15-yard penalty that gave the Cougars another chance. Taking advantage of that chance, Vance fired the ball to Howard, who caught the ball in the end zone in tight coverage. The two-point conversion failed, making the score 16-10 with 39 seconds on the clock.

In a play that shocked Raider Nation, Stuarts Draft recovered its own kickoff at the Raider 32-yard line — a perfect opportunity to seize momentum with a lead going into the locker room. But to say that the Cougars shot themselves in the foot several times during the game would be an understatement.

A false start penalty set them back five yards to the 37-yard line. After gaining enough yards for a first-down, another false start put the ball back to the 32. With just enough time for one last play in the half, the Cougars made the decision to run the ball instead of throwing to the end zone and, therefore, had to settle on being behind at the half. The Cougars were supposed to receive the opening second half kickoff.

In an unexpected twist, Appomattox started the second half with an onside kick that kicker Bronson Williams recovered at the Cougars’ 42-yard line. On 3rd-and-14, Lawing connected with Ervis Davin, who made a cut inside and held off a would-be tackler for a 49-yard touchdown reception.

Unfazed by the development, Howard got the Cougars right back into the game on a 70-yard kickoff return to come within five points at 28-23.

During this point in the game, the scoring frenzy was one to remember. Appomattox struck back again with another big play, an 80-yard gallop for a score by Lawing on the Raiders’ first play following a touchback on the kickoff, giving the Raiders a 35-23 lead.

Not to be outdone, the Raider defense got in on the frenzy as Pennix scooped up a Cougar fumble on their next possession and ran the ball 42 yards for a

score and seemingly stable 41-23 lead, still in the third quarter.

At the conclusion of the play, Baker went down for the second time with a leg injury. This time, he was carried off the field on Castello’s shoulders — a show of respect for the senior team leader that led to applause from the fans. Baker would return to the game.

For Raider fans who assumed the state championship was “in the bag” with an 18-point lead, they were made to bite their nails, figuratively in most cases, by a Cougar squad that refused to back down.

But first, Appomattox recovered a Rothgeb fumble as the Cougars were driving deep into Raider territory — another shot to the foot, so to speak.

Fortunately for the Cougars, their defense held strong and forced a Raider punt that was returned to the Appomattox 14-yard line by Dustyn Fitzgerald. The short scoring drive was capped off by Fitzgerald on a one-yard run. After a two-point conversion, the Raider lead was cut to 41-31.

Bad field possession for Appomattox, caused by pressure from the Cougar defense that found a way to penetrate the Raiders’ offensive line and stifle their running attack, led to a punt that was fair-caught at the 36-yard line.

It took the Cougars only one more play to score again when running back Aaron Nice burst up the middle for a 36-yard touchdown run.

With the score at 41-38 at the start of the fourth quarter, Stuarts Draft continued to frustrate the Raider offense, bottling up running lanes and taking away Lawing’s ability to scramble.

However, the Cougars flirted with disaster as a 3rd-and-13 pass from Vance was nearly picked off for a score by Baker, except for the fact the ball bounced off his hands. It was the aftermath — the aforementioned punt that bounced off the Cougar punter’s hands and into the hands of Booker in the end zone — that put Stuarts Draft into another hole at 48-38. Booker made a great play on the ball by swinging the punter, Dennison, away from the play before pouncing on the ball. The score would prove to be the game-winner for Appomattox.

On the following possession the Cougars, with the ball at the Raiders’ 26-yard line, attempted a fourth down conversion on a run by Rothgeb. But Lawing sliced through the line and made a diving tackle to prevent the first down with 5:06 left in the game.

Not long after Lawing made the critical defensive stop, Cougar defender Ethan Cash picked off a short pass by Lawing to regain possession at the Raiders’ 10-yard line. On

third down, a pitchback to Roach resulted in a two-yard loss, so the Cougars settled for a 24-yard field goal to cut the lead to 48-41 with 2:44 remaining.

On the ensuing kickoff, the host Cougar fans erupted with excitement as Baker bobbed the short kickoff that was meant to keep the ball away from speedy Raider returners Booker and Ervin. The Cougars recovered the ball just 38 yards from the Raiders’ end zone.

With the championship on the line, the Raider defense came through, including a tackle-for-loss by defensive lineman by Quamea Gray that set the Cougars back to their own 48-yard line.

Stuarts Draft had one last chance to keep hope alive, but a 4th-and-seven pass to the right by Vance fell incomplete with a little over a minute to play. Several kneel downs later, the Raiders emerged from the battle as state champions of the Class 2 level.

During the post-game press conference, Castello gave credit to both teams for their effort during the hard-fought game.

“We’re just happy to get that win,” Castello said. “The kids played really hard, and it was a tight game. Stuarts Draft is a great team, and they just worked tooth-and-nail, fighting until the last play, and we’re just happy to get out of there. They make our community proud, me proud, and Coach Smith — you can’t beat going undefeated and winning.”

Lawing described his feelings about winning his second championship, the second being the toughest without long-time head coach Smith’s presence on the sideline.

“Honestly, it’s like a feeling that you can’t even explain,” he said. “I’m so happy for the team because we worked so hard for it. And not having Coach Smith here, it’s actually been pretty hard — Coach Smith, he makes an impact on a lot of us in different ways that people don’t even see behind camera and behind closed doors. He does stuff for the team that people will never realize and recognize. So I told the team the only thing that we can do is give it our all for him because if he was here he’d be giving his all for us.”

In a typical game during the regular season and much of the playoffs, the Raiders, for all practical purposes, had won their games by halftime by building up huge leads. But they found themselves in a legitimate challenge for the state crown Saturday against a Cougar team that could have conceivably won if not for their turnovers at crucial moments. Lawing stated that he is glad the Raiders won the championship by having to “gut it out” rather than with another blowout victory.

“This way,” Lawing said when asked which style of victory he preferred. “Because I know that everybody went out there and gave it their all. You know, sometimes when you get a big lead on teams, players will start to ease up because we’re up by so much. But today, I’d rather win like that because I know everybody left it all on the field and we fought until the very end — until the last play we fought.”

During the 2020/21 season that was played in the winter/spring instead of fall due to COVID-19, the Raiders had an almost predictable knack for countering their opponents’ scores with big plays or scores of their own. Seniors Bronson Williams and Keyshawn Baker, along with Lawing, a junior, explained how the Raiders are able to keep other teams from running away with the game’s momentum.

“After they score, I just usually say to our team, ‘Let’s put it back on them. Don’t let them get in our way; use the momentum that they scored on you and take it and say, ‘Hey, I wanna have that momentum,’ and just go back out there and score and then keep your momentum up for the rest of the game,’” Williams said.

“When most teams score on other teams, the other team will get down, they’ll beat themselves up,” Baker said. “But when they score on us, usually maybe five seconds we’ll get down, then everybody else around us is picking us up and then we just feed off of that. We understand that can happen but we can make something out of it.”

Lawing followed in saying, “I look at as the goal is not to give the other team momentum. Don’t take two possessions and lose both possessions. If a team just scored on you, you can’t go three-and-out on offense. Or if you just got stopped on offense, the defense has gotta make a stop. You never wanna lose two possessions in a row.”

Although this season was wrought with various challenges, Baker stated that every season presents a different set of hardships to overcome on the path to the championship game.

“This state championship is different from the last because (it’s a) different team, and then COVID, and then Coach Smith,” Baker said. “Everything is different through the seasons. No matter what happens, something’s gonna be different but you just gotta adapt to that and succeed.”

In facing the challenges of 2020/21, Castello was commissioned with the task of keeping the team focused with the goal of winning their sixth state title in mind. He explained what it takes to keep everyone on the same page and

is proud of the overall attitude of the players.

“I’ve gotta be a little bit crazy,” Castello initially joked. “It’s just constantly trying to look out for them and see if somebody’s attitude is off one day, if they’re having a bad time in practice or in the game, and to calm them down and get their head back on straight. If they’re not doing well in school and we’re hearing that from teachers, we’re looking at what you’re doing. So, not having Coach Smith, that’s a lot of what he did as well. But for the most part, the attitude this season from the players has been great. They’ve been buying in, they’ve been working, and we haven’t had too many character issues. You get little things here and there because it’s teenagers but no major problems with any kids, so we’re grateful there were no major problems.”

Baker and Williams, in closing their playing days as Raiders, gave credit to Castello for his leadership as interim head coach and also acknowledged Smith’s leadership through the years.

“It feels amazing to think about back when we started (as freshmen) with who coached us to get to where we are now,” Baker said. “Teams might have changed but there was one constant: Doug Smith. He might not be here but you cannot take Doug Smith out of Appomattox County football. He’s been a mentor from when we started and gotten us here. With Coach Castello, too, I think it’s amazing how he was able to step up and provide for us and get us where we needed to be to succeed.”

Williams then stated, “So, winning (the state championship) three out of four (years) has been big to me because there aren’t a lot of schools that win state championships, and having a team and coaches that are there for you every moment of the day ... it really helped out and it’s made an amazing difference for me.”

Stuarts Draft outperformed Appomattox in several statistical categories, including total yards (371-322), first downs (20-4) and offensive plays (71-32). But the Raiders averaged 10 yards-per-play, compared to five yards-per-play by the Cougars.

Baker led Appomattox with 82 yards rushing on seven carries, followed by Pennix (6-81), Lawing (10-51) and Walker (2-45).

Davin caught one pass for 46 yards and Booker had one reception for 17 yards.

Lawing completed two of seven passes for 63 yards.

A date for a victory parade in Appomattox for the Raiders is still under discussion as of press time.

# Sports

## Appomattox, Town of Champions

### Raiders softball wins Class 2 state title

CHARLES CONRAD  
Times Virginian

In 1979, the City of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania was nicknamed "The City of Champions" after the Pittsburgh Steelers won the Super Bowl and the Pittsburgh Pirates won the World Series.

In 2021, perhaps the Town of Appomattox could be nicknamed "The Town of Champions" after the Appomattox County High School Raiders softball team claimed Saturday's VHSL Class 2 Softball State Championship with a 2-0 victory over the Randolph-Henry Statesmen. The softball Raiders join this year's state champion Raider football team as the elite Class 2 programs in their respective sports.

Courtney Layne pitched her fourth perfect game of the season, and Macee Hargis drove in Kelsey Hackett with a triple to right field in the bottom of the sixth inning to break a scoreless tie and catapult the Raiders to the win at Charlotte Court House.

It is the first softball state championship for ACHS since 1987, when current Raiders head coach Janet Rawes was a member of that team coached by Mary Tolley.

The first three innings Saturday produced only two base runners in a pitcher's duel between Layne and Danner Allen of Randolph-Henry. The only runner to reach base was Hackett with a lead-off single in the first inning and a double to the left field wall in the third. Ironically, Hackett and Allen are cousins.

The Raiders loaded the bases in the bottom of the fourth inning but couldn't capitalize on the scoring opportunity. Hargis got on base with a single, and the next two batters — Layne on an infield hit and Abby Wilkerson on a bunt — filled up the bases as the Statesmen defense made no play on both at-bats. However, Hargis was tagged out in a rundown between third base and home plate after a wild pitch, and Carrington Moore grounded out to second base to end the threat.

Raiders right fielder Emily Purcell helped to secure the perfect game for Layne with a spectacular diving catch of a short fly ball in the bottom of the fourth inning.

Hackett led off the top of the sixth inning with her third base hit of the game, a double to center field.

Two batters later, Hargis blasted a triple to right field and slid into third base after Hackett touched home plate for the first run of the game. Layne then grounded into a fielder's choice to second base that brought Hargis in from third for a 2-0 Raiders lead.

Hackett said that when her foot touched home plate that late in the game, she knew the championship belonged to the Raiders.

"I had so much confidence in Courtney and our defense that I was like 'We got this. We just did it.'"

Hargis, who had faced Allen two times prior to the game-winner, said she had developed a feel for Allen's pitching style and knew she needed to be patient until she saw the right pitch come her way.

"I feel like it's my mental state, kinda like I just tell myself that I'm confident that I can hit this pitch. I got a single on the (at bat) before that, so I kinda knew where the pitch was gonna be. I guess



Charles Conrad/Times Virginian

The Appomattox Raiders softball team poses in front of the scoreboard Saturday with their 2021 VHSL Class 2 State Championship trophy and medals. Kneeling, from left: Haleigh Tweedy, Carrington Moore, Kelsey Hackett, Emily Purcell and Michaela Williams. Standing, from left: Appomattox County High School Principal Poldi Moreno, Assistant Coach Davy Hackett, Assistant Coach Jennifer Hackett, Dixie Gordon, Kelsie White, Abby Wilkerson, Courtney Layne, Abbey Mann, Macee Hargis, Tori Hoffman, Julianna Southall, Assistant Coach Tuesday Van Engan, Head Coach Janet Rawes and Appomattox County High School Athletic Director Chris Dodge.

you could say my eyes do get wide but I was ready for anything she was gonna throw at me. She likes to throw outside pitches, so you have to wait a bit longer on those and I just had to work on my timing and making sure I didn't swing too fast," Hargis said.

Hargis said that although she was waved to third base on the play by third base coach Davy Hackett, she wasn't initially sure if she could make it safely. She feels good coming through for her teammates in the clutch, however.

"It feels great. I really love my team and I'm proud of every one of them, so winning with them is the best feeling ever," she said.

Layne retired the side in the sixth and seventh innings. The game ended on a fly ball by Statesmen batter Allen to left fielder Tori Hoffman.

When Hoffman secured the final out in her glove, Raider players and coaches rushed the infield in celebration. Raider fans — who showed up in full force to support the softball girls in their quest to wear to the 2021 state crown — erupted joyfully as yet another Appomattox team brings home a state championship trophy.

Rawes, who was a catcher and utility player on the 1987 Appomattox state softball championship squad, felt "ecstatic" for the 2021 team that overcame the odds — losing six seniors to 2020 graduation and losing a year's experience due to last season's COVID-19 shutdown.

"Right now, it's kinda crazy. You don't know how to feel. I don't think it's really set in yet. You know, these kids got so much taken away from them last year, and to win this year it's great. There's no words, I don't think, that you can put to that," Rawes said.

Layne, who hurled 15 strikeouts against Randolph-Henry, has held the same mental approach to all of the teams she's faced in the 2021 regional and state playoffs because she knows every team at this level is capable of winning.

"This entire post-season all the teams that we've played, they've come out swinging and they're really aggressive, so I've got to take it pitch by pitch and get some swing and miss-



Charles Conrad/Times Virginian

Appomattox Raiders assistant coach Davy Hackett gives a safe sign while an umpire watches Macee Hargis slide into third base and beat a tag attempt. Hargis' triple on this sixth-inning play was the game-winning hit in the Class 2 State Championship win over Randolph-Henry.

es," Layne said.

Although Layne was a bit nervous because of the game's magnitude (which many players likely were), the team bus ride from Appomattox to Charlotte Court House, helped to keep her mentally grounded.

"I was pretty nervous but I had trust in all my teammates. We were having a good time on the bus ride, so they calmed me down," she said.

Just a few hours prior to the 1 p.m. start of the game, the Raiders were escorted out of town by the Appomattox Volunteer Fire Department, Appomattox County Rescue Squad and Appomattox County Sheriff's Office. Many well-wishers lined the bus route, holding signs and cheering on the team as they embarked on their journey.

"It was a community effort and we had the whole town backing us," Layne said of the fan support. "We had a parade that led us out (of town), so I know it wasn't just a team effort — it took an entire community for this one."

Moore commented on the competitive nature of the championship game, symbolized on a play she was involved in during the top of the seventh inning. Moore belted a double to left field and later collided with Statesmen third baseman Taylor Trent on a fielder's choice infield ground ball by Julianna Southall that was thrown to third. Moore was hurt on the play, having gotten



Charles Conrad/Times Virginian

Appomattox Raiders pitcher Courtney Layne, shown here in Saturday's 2021 Class 2 State Championship game at Randolph-Henry, threw her fourth perfect game of the season to help the Raiders win the championship.

the wind knocked out of her. When she came off the field, she exited the dugout and bent over in pain but returned to the field in the bottom of the seventh.

"The girl bobbled the ball and I thought she was gonna throw it to first ... It just knocked the breath out of me," Moore said. "I think (both teams) wanted it. It just came down to the hitting, for the most part. They had a pretty solid team, they had some good hitters and some good

players in the field, and so did we. But I think we hit the ball better than they did."

Moore, a sophomore, said she felt "happy" and "successful" after Saturday's championship win, but did not make any bold predictions regarding a Raider repeat in 2022.

"I don't know, we'll see. We just have to take it game by game," Moore said humbly in regard to next season.

Michaela Williams, who

split time in right field with Purcell this season, was thrilled with the victory but didn't sense the magnitude of the game until after play began.

"It's crazy; I can't even believe it, honestly," Williams said about the win. "When we showed up it really didn't feel like a state's game at first but when we got to playing it felt awesome."

Summing up the 2021

# Sports

## Champs

Continued from Page 5

season with the word “extraordinary,” Williams complimented her right field platoon partner and the rest of her team for the way they’ve interacted with one another.

“She’s a great teammate,” she said of Purcell. “I love the entire team, we get along better than any other team I’ve been with.”

In her last game wearing a Raider softball uniform, Southall — also the 2020/21 Homecoming Queen — said that leaving with a state title was a perfect ending and well-deserved by her teammates.

“I couldn’t have had a better outcome for my senior year,” Southall said. “These girls did so good this whole season, we improved so much and we really did deserve this.”

Randolph-Henry finished the season at 15-1, a record that head coach Mike Adams said was widely unexpected after a three-win season in 2019. Adams attributed his

team’s turnaround to “hard work and young players still listening to you.”

Even though the Statesmen fell short in the championship game, Adams said the future looks bright for the young team and congratulated Appomattox for their victory.

“It was great ballgame; two very, very good pitchers,” Adams said. “We were just not able to put the ball in play today. But we feel good, we started four freshmen and they played most of the year so we’ve got a good group coming back and we’re excited about that. But Appomattox deserves all the credit in the world. They were well-coached, well-prepared, and they looked very good.”

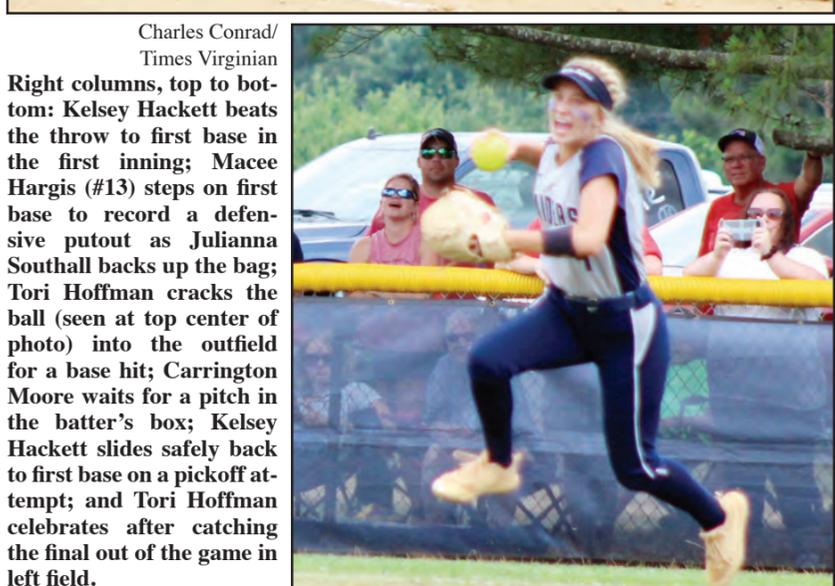
Likewise, Appomattox, which finished 2021 undefeated at 15-0 (one game against Gretna was called due to rain with Appomattox leading 1-0 after one inning), returns most of their starters in 2022, losing left fielder Southall, center fielder Abbey Mann and pinch runner Kelsie White to graduation.

No matter what happens next season or in the future, the 2021 softball team has left a legacy that will be remembered in the Appomattox community for ages to come with their name to be listed on the Louise Martin Field scoreboard and the two Raider championship signs at opposite town entrances.

“It’s great,” said Rawes in expressing what the championship means to the community and the current status of Raider athletics. “It just shows the caliber of athletes that Appomattox has right now, and the hard work that they’re putting in when nobody’s looking.”

Southall will be able to tell the 2021 softball state championship story to others well into the future, and is grateful to be a part of placing the Raider program on a higher level at ACHS as well as earning statewide recognition.

“I feel like it really put softball in one of the (ACHS) sports that’s big now,” she said, “and really puts Appomattox on the map.”



Charles Conrad/Times Virginian  
Right columns, top to bottom: Kelsie Hackett beats the throw to first base in the first inning; Macece Hargis (#13) steps on first base to record a defensive putout as Julianna Southall backs up the bag; Tori Hoffman cracks the ball (seen at top center of photo) into the outfield for a base hit; Carrington Moore waits for a pitch in the batter’s box; Kelsie Hackett slides safely back to first base on a pickoff attempt; and Tori Hoffman celebrates after catching the final out of the game in left field.



Charles Conrad/Times Virginian

Top: Appomattox Raiders fans erupt in cheers after the softball team won the Class 2 State Championship. Second from top: Raider players rush the infield in celebration after the final out of Saturday’s championship game. Third from top: Raider player Michaela Williams (center, facing forward) hugs senior teammate Kelsie White following the game. Bottom row, left: Raiders head coach Janet Rawes (right) poses with her former Appomattox County High School 1987 State Champion softball coach Mary Tolley. Bottom row, right: Raider player Kelsie Hackett (facing forward) hugs Randolph-Henry opponent Taylor Trent in a show of good sportsmanship at the conclusion of Saturday’s battle between the two squads for the Class 2 State Championship.

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Contributed

Shown is the no-kill Appomattox County Animal Shelter at 3074 Morning Star Road after members of WoodmenLife Chapter 71 in Appomattox volunteered their time to preparing the exterior of the facility for reopening Jan. 1.

## County to reopen no-kill animal shelter on Jan. 1

### WoodmenLife beautifies building and landscape

JEFFREY WESTBROOK  
*Times Virginian*

The Appomattox County Animal Shelter plans to reopen its facility Jan. 1 under county management and will remain a no-kill shelter for animals.

To prepare for the reopening, the

property at 3074 Morning Star Road needed some TLC (tender loving care) after sitting unused all year. The WoodmenLife Chapter 71 in Appomattox learned of the need, stepped up and completed a service project preparing the exterior of the facility for reopening.

WoodmenLife representatives

Rodney Deaner and Allen Austin spearheaded the project.

“Rodney saw the article on the front page of the Times Virginian that the animal shelter was opening back up in January; it was at that time that we had some funds, and so put we it together,” Austin explained.

They applied a WoodmenLife Giving Together program to meet the need.

“WoodmenLife is a fraternal insurance company, and Giving Together is a community service program.

See **SHELTER**, Page 2

## Water rates increasing as of Jan. 1 Town raises are discussed again

JEFFREY WESTBROOK  
*Times Virginian*

The Appomattox Town Council opted in its December regular meeting to take a do-over on a water rates change it voted to approve earlier this year. The council had voted to increase out-of-town water rates to one and a half times the in-town rates back in August following a public hearing on the matter.

But they later learned that they must get a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) from the county's board of supervisors before doing so, explained Clerk of Council Roxanne Casto. The supervisors voted in October to approve the MOU, and the town received it in Novem-

ber. And even though the town council had already voted on the change, they decided to make sure that everything was completed correctly and in the proper order.

So in the Dec. 13 meeting, the council held another public hearing and re-voted on the increase. Nobody from the community spoke at the public hearing, and the vote passed unanimously.

It should be noted that this is not another increase in water rates, but rather a reaffirmation of the one first passed in August. Originally the 1.5 times-the-rate hike was to go into effect Oct. 1, noted Casto. Because of all that had

See **WATER**, Page 7

## Football player joins Army in school ceremony

CHARLES CONRAD  
*Times Virginian*

Dec. 15 was the Early Period National Signing Day for NCAA Division I football, but for one member of the Appomattox Raiders football team, it was signing day in a different walk of life.

Appomattox County High School senior Tanner Gunter signed a letter of commitment and performed his Oath of Enlistment to join the United States Army. The oath was administered by Lynchburg Army Recruiting Company Commander Kaitlin Harrison.

Gunter will not be playing college football at the Army. Instead, he will be trained as a striker system maintainer — performing mechanical work on armored tank vehicles.

The ceremony was held at 10 a.m. in the ACHS conference room with a

number of people in attendance including several of Gunter's family members, friends, teammates, coaches and school officials.

Gunter will be leaving for Fort Jackson, South Carolina, on July 5 to undergo a 10-week basic training before advancing to a 20-week Advanced Individual Training (AIT) program where he will be trained extensively to repair the vehicles.

The enlistment period is three years and 32 weeks with an option to re-enlist. In order to receive retirement benefits, military personnel must serve at least 20 years. In the meantime, Gunter will receive military benefits for the duration of his service period.

Gunter said he hadn't thought seriously about enlisting in the military until about six months ago and got more serious about the decision after speaking to a recruit who visited with

him at ACHS.

“I didn't have plans to go to college or anything, so I thought at least I could go in the military, serve the country and come out with training and get a good job,” Gunter said.

Gunter's father, Daniel, who currently works for the Appomattox County Sheriff's Department as a school resource officer, said that Tanner showed a knack for working with his hands as a child.

“I'm proud of him,” Daniel said. “When he was growing up, we didn't know what he was going to do ... We always saw the engineering side of him. You buy the kid a Lego set, and he won't put it down until he's done. The he scored real high on the mechanic part of the PiCAT (aptitude test) that he took — the Army version of ASVAP.”

See **ARMY**, Page 4



Contributed

Appomattox County High School senior Tanner Gunter is shown with, from left, Appomattox Raiders Athletic Trainer Amelia Martin, Football Head Coach Doug Smith and Football Assistant Coach Stephen Castello at a signing ceremony Dec. 15 at the high school. Gunter decided to join the Army instead of a college football team.



Contributed

Shown is a ribbon cutting marking the opening of the Taco Wagon's new indoor location Dec. 13.

### Small Business Spotlight

## Food truck moves to permanent location

KARIN ROBERTSON  
*Times Virginian*

Anyone who has ever traveled down Confederate Boulevard in Appomattox has likely seen The Taco Wagon. Now customers can enjoy their food inside at its new location at the Triangle Plaza.

The Taco Wagon has been a town favorite for five years and has become a staple for many during lunch breaks or after practices, or just for those craving tacos. They could also be found catering events and at the Railroad Festi-

val.

Since moving to the Triangle Plaza and opening Dec. 13, the restaurant has been busy and the community has been positive about the move.

“The inside was nicely done,” customer Keith Coleman commented in an online review. “Huge menu, and the food was excellent.”

Another customer, Wendy Boswell, stated, “It was amazing! Hands down the best Mexican

See **TACO**, Page 8

## Pamplin driver injured, passenger dies in Christmas Day vehicle crash

A male driver from Pamplin received serious injuries from a single-vehicle crash on Route 460 on Christmas while a female passenger died from her injuries.

At 3:13 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 25, Virginia State Police responded to a single-vehicle crash on Prince Edward Highway (Route 460) just west of Milford Lane.

A 2000 Chevrolet Blazer was traveling east on Prince Edward Highway when it ran off the right side of the road, struck a ditch and overturned.

The driver, Wayne A. Alegre, 64, of Pamplin, was transported for treatment of serious injuries. He was not wearing a seatbelt and was ejected

See **WRECK**, Page 8

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# Words from the Chamber

by John Redding

The end of 2021 and the beginning of 2022 are just a couple of days away. It is time to reflect on the year that we are leaving behind and make our resolutions and predictions for the one that is approaching.

COVID has certainly been the forerunner in what has come to pass during the past year and, unfortunately, will likely be the elephant in the room for the upcoming year, if not years. I am personally not optimistic that it will ever be eliminated, barring some major technological advancement beyond the current vaccination efforts.

The real challenge brought about by the COVID pandemic is the management of our health system resources to treat those that become infected. Many that tout an overwhelmingly high survival rate from the virus as ammunition to oppose any government mandates are missing a couple of points. The survival rate is such because of the ability of our health system to meet most of the demands for care, but it is already being greatly strained. Resources such as doctors, nurses and

hospital beds are limited. How will our society be if we reach a saturation point and many patients are denied access to care, simply because it is nowhere to be found? What about all of the other health needs that go ignored because of the inability to address them?

Your chamber has had a successful 2021 in that we have survived and continue to seek ways to promote our commerce. Efforts via its participation in the Appomattox Tourism Committee have produced demonstrable benefits as associated tax revenues continue to increase. As we hopefully emerge from restrictive concerns, we will seek new avenues to promote retail and other business efforts. Such will be made more possible with the participation of a greater percentage of our business entities.

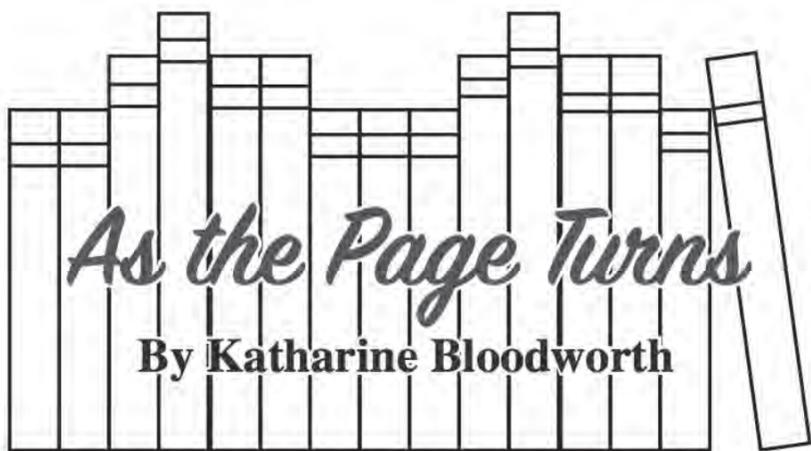
A personal resolution that I made for 2021 was to avoid any political postings on social media and, if I can bite my tongue for another couple of days, I will have fulfilled the quest. I must admit that it has brought more peace of mind than at-



tempts to save the world by argument ever did.

My resolution for 2022 will involve some indirect political involvement, in that I will continue to promote the consolidation of our local governments into a single entity. The Appomattox Town Council moving in that direction is the major element in making such a transition possible and, with elections of each seat scheduled for November, our community has the capability to make it happen. It will require candidates that pledge to support such an effort and voters that will put them in the position to do so. Future columns will address this in more detail.

As we change the calendar on the wall, sing Auld Lang Syne and toast the old and new, your chamber wishes each and every one of you a Happy and Prosperous New Year. Challenges exist but, if we remain optimistic and diligent in our efforts, even better days are ahead.



## Out with the Old and in with the New

The library staff and volunteers would like to wish you a safe and happy New Year. With 2022 upon us, it is a good time for self-discovery, renewal of inspiration, and to reflect on personal and life's goals. Your local library has a lot to offer you including free online courses, non-fiction books to help you on your journey, magazines and DVDs to help you re-do, remodel, or remake your home, career or yourself. The library will have displays up through the month of January for adults and children to help you find a new hobby or get back to one you may have set aside. Keep us in mind during this time of new resolutions, we are here to help.

The J. Robert Jamerson Memorial Library is celebrating our return to the TLC (The Library Cooperation) catalog software. This is a new year and a new start for the library. We look forward to starting off the New Year right with a "SHOUT OUT TO SCOUT." Who is Scout? Scout is the cute TLC puppy mascot that you could win. We will be hosting a free raffle, including a tin of butter cookies and holiday candy. One chance per person, per visit, please. Winner to be announced on Friday, Jan. 28. You do not need to be present to win.

For the Wednesday, Dec. 29, Preschool Story & Craft Time, the library will feature the book, "If Winter Comes, Tell It I'm Not Here" by Simona Ciralo. The library has received a very positive response from expanding to two Story and Craft time hours. Going forward, we will continue to

host two Story & Craft Times, at 11 a.m. and noon, with crafts and snacks to follow. This program is open to all children but is created for children of preschool age.

Starting your spring cleaning early? The library would like to remind patrons that we accept donations of books, magazines and DVDs with the understanding that if we can't use these items they will be placed into ACLA's (Appomattox County Library Association) book sale, passed on to another organization, or disposed of, according to library guidelines.

In observance of the New Year's Holiday we will be closed on Friday, Dec. 31 and Saturday, Jan. 1. We will reopen on Monday, Jan. 3. You may return all library-owned materials to the book depository, located at the back of the building. Please remember, the rack at the front of the library is not a book depository and any book left there will not be considered returned.

If you have any questions or concerns about this article or other library-related topics please feel free to call us during normal business hours at 434-352-5340.

The library receives a steady supply of new and donated items, we would like to highlight the following titles:

### Adult Fiction

- Autopsy by Patricia Cornwell
- The Dark Hours by Michael Connelly
- Flying Angels by Danielle Steel
- The Becoming by Nora Roberts
- Claws For Alarm by Rita Mae Brown
- The Christmas Promise by Richard Paul Evans

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

With your good will and grace, your Christmas season should be progressing as well as expected with the love and joy of family and friends.

Our festive season is coming to a close, and the new year is nigh. What promises to yourself are you contemplating? Lose weight? Save money?

Curse less?

While all of those are nice, especially the latter, have you considered any of these: Be more neighborly? Volunteering – anywhere? Writing more letters (yes, with stamps)? Hug your family more?

These are small and easy rituals to accomplish, and the rewards will be power-

ful – not only to you, but to those you reach out to. I learned these things in Appomattox – from my neighbors and friends.

God bless all of you and have a wonderfully, happy New Year – and don't forget to wave to your fellow motorists.

- Steven Boyer, Spout Spring

## Army

Continued from Page 1

Daniel believes that Tanner's visit with the recruiter, Sgt. Derek Handy of Lynchburg, opened his eyes to what the Army had to offer.

"It actually kind of took me by surprise when he said he wanted to talk to a recruiter just to see what it was and what everything was about," Daniel said. "And he knows I'm friends with the recruiter – him and I talk a lot ... He sat down and talked to him, and I think he found out a lot more of what was available to him as far as benefits and different things that they do, and it kind of got his interest."

Among the benefits that attracted Tanner are health and dental insurance at minimal cost, college scholarships, R&R (rest and relaxation) opportunities, and

world travel.

Past family ties to the military (grandfather and great-grandfather in the Navy), a desire to defend the community like his father who works in law enforcement, a sense of patriotism, and former Raider football teammate Christian Thompson joining the infantry striker brigade are other contributing factors in Tanner's decision.

"I just feel like it's best for me to go and try to serve at least," he said. "I've always found it fascinating just to go out there and whether it's fix vehicles or go to war – just contribute ... There's just a lot going on right now that I feel like I could contribute somewhat."

Tanner was sidelined with a knee injury for most of 2021 football season, getting hurt on a cut block by an LCA tight end during the annual preseason benefit game between Appomattox

and LCA.

Fortunately, the knee didn't require surgery and should not present an issue moving forward. Tanner has been undergoing rehabilitation and receiving treatment from ACHS athletic trainer Jennifer Martin and Dr. Andrew Pieleck, a Lynchburg physician who specializes in sports medicine.

The time spent in football training will help prepare Tanner for what lies ahead in the military, including the teamwork aspect.

"With already playing a sport, you're already in the weight room, already working out and running, so it's already a good step to basic (training)," he said.

Tanner, who has four younger siblings – Caleb, Noah, Aiden and Addison – said he will miss home when the time comes but takes comfort in knowing he has plenty of local support to aid him in his journey.



Scout is shown along with his tin of cookies and candy for the SHOUT OUT TO SCOUT free raffle.



Contributed At left, Appomattox County High School senior Tanner Gunter is shown with, from left, his grandmother Relia Padgett, mother Suzanne Gunter and father Daniel Gunter on Dec. 15 at Appomattox County High School. At right, Captain Kaitlin Harrison gives the Oath of Enlistment to Tanner Gunter, who will be joining the Army instead of a college football team.



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