

happy new year

The Free Lance-Star

SERVING FREDERICKSBURG, SPOTSYLVANIA, STAFFORD, KING GEORGE, CAROLINE, ORANGE, CULPEPER AND SURROUNDING COUNTIES

\$2.00

WEATHER: HIGH 71, LOW 63. B6

FREDERICKSBURG, VA. FOR 24-HOUR UPDATES, GO TO FREDERICKSBURG.COM

SATURDAY, JANUARY 1, 2022

Variant sending more to hospital

MWHC DATA SHOW PATIENTS INCLUDE BOTH VACCINATED AND UNVACCINATED

BY CATHY DYSON
THE FREE LANCE-STAR

After Virginia set a new record for COVID-19 cases on Wednesday—a number that was soundly trounced each of the next two days—Gov. Ralph Northam said rising case numbers were cause for concern, not panic, because of the prevalence of vaccines.

Data from around the world has shown that if people get vaccinated and then get COVID, their symptoms are likely to be minor, the governor said, stressing: “Nearly everyone going to the hospital with COVID is unvaccinated.”

That’s not what data from Mary Washington Healthcare and the state show.

Since September, MWHC has posted graphics in which gold stick figures represent unvaccinated patients and green stick figures represent vaccinated ones. When the graphics began, the charts were mostly honey-colored images, noting those who had not been inoculated.

The graphics have gotten a bit greener since Thanksgiving as the number of vaccinated people admitted to the hospital with COVID-19 has risen, according to MWHC data.

Friday’s chart shows that 41 people—more than one-third of the 115 patients at Mary Washington Hospital and Stafford Hospital with the virus—were vaccinated.

Among the older set—
SEE HOSPITALIZATIONS, A6

COVID-19 RECORDS

Three times this week and even with limited tests available, Virginia set new pandemic records for the most COVID-19 cases in a single day: 12,112 on Wednesday, 13,500 on Thursday and 17,618 on Friday.

The Rappahannock Area Health District did the same, but a few days apart. It reported 556 new cases on Christmas Eve, then broke that record on Thursday with 720 new cases and again on Friday with 943 cases. By year’s end, 50,838 people in the RAHD had been infected by the virus since the pandemic began and 412 had died from it.

—Cathy Dyson

REVIEWING THE TRIUMPHS OF AN OFTEN TRAGIC YEAR



FILE / DAVE ELLIS FOR THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Chancellor High’s Jonas Lohr is hoisted in the air by his teammates after the Chargers defeated Patrick Henry 3-1.



FILE / TRISTAN LOREI / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

William Gardner hugs his wife, Allison Bragg, after renewing their wedding vows in their custom-made Christmas village.

Picturing joy in the silver lining of 2021

This year, COVID-19 and its variants endured, tarnishing many aspects of life in the Fredericksburg area. But amid the tumult, there have been moments of hope, perseverance and even normalcy. We hope these photographs, captured by Free Lance-Star staff and contributing photographers, convey the resiliency of local residents and the natural beauty of our region.



FILE / MIKE MORONES / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Snow falls near Chancellorsville on Feb. 7. There wasn’t a lot of snow in 2021, but even a dusting can bring out the beauty.



FILE / PETER CIHELKA / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Theresa DiCicco and her 9-year-old grandson, Tanner Hall, join in a swing dance event at Picker’s Supply in downtown Fredericksburg.



FILE / PETER CIHELKA / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Ed Clark, president of the Wildlife Center of Virginia, releases a juvenile female bald eagle.

CONTINUED >> What Free Lance-Star photographers saw in 2021, page A10.



FILL UP ON SAVORY GAULETTES
HEARTY MEAL WORTH EFFORT
C1

< **FOOD**



IN GOOD COMPANY
A RECORD MONTH FOR QUITTING JOBS
A6

< **BUSINESS**



SORRY, IT'S NOT 'WOLVES'
WASHINGTON'S NEW NAME DROPS FEB. 2
B1

< **SPORTS**

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WEATHER: HIGH 48, LOW 32. **B6**

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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 5, 2022



TRISTAN LOREI / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

A snow plow clears a section of Interstate 95 in Spotsylvania after the road was closed Tuesday.



JAMES SCOTT BARON / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

A motorist waits for a tow truck after sliding off the road in southern Stafford neighborhood.



PETER CIHELKA / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Kiara Davis (left) and Aja Brown walk up the southbound I-95 on ramp near Dumfries.

STORM LEAVES AREA RESIDENTS, MOTORISTS STUCK, POWERLESS

HUNDREDS OF TRAVELERS ENDURE LONG, FRIGID NIGHT STRANDED ON I-95

BY SARAH RANKIN AND MICHAEL KUNZELMAN
ASSOCIATED PRESS

RICHMOND—Hundreds of motorists were stranded after a winter storm snarled traffic in Virginia and left some drivers stuck in place for nearly 24 hours in freezing temperatures along an impassable stretch of Interstate 95.

Problems began Monday morning when a truck jackknifed on Interstate 95, triggering a swift chain reaction as other vehicles lost control, state police said. Lanes in both directions became blocked across a 40-mile stretch of I-95 north in the Fredericksburg area. As hours passed and night fell, motorists posted messages on social media about running out of fuel, food and water.

Meera Rao and her husband, Raghavendra, were driving home from visiting their daughter in North Carolina when they got stuck Monday evening. They were only 100 feet past an exit but could not move for roughly 16 hours.

"Not one police [officer] came in the 16 hours we were stuck," she said. "No one came. It was just shocking. Being in the most advanced country

SEE INTERSTATE 95, A9



HOGP

This image from the Virginia Department of Transportation shows vehicles stuck on I-95.



PETER CIHELKA / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

A tow truck pulls a semi-tractor off southbound Interstate 95 and onto State Route 234 in Dumfries Tuesday.

BY ADELE UPHAUS-CONNER AND JAMES SCOTT BARON
THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Utility crews continued working Tuesday to restore electricity to thousands of homes in the Fredericksburg area while thousands of motorists became trapped on a frozen stretch of Interstate 95 during a winter storm that encased the region in ice and snow.

Lanes in both directions of Interstate 95 became blocked across a 40-mile stretch through the Fredericksburg area after a truck jackknifed Monday morning. That set off a chain-reaction series of crashes, stranding motorists on the highway.

There were been no reports of serious injuries or deaths, but the interstate was eventually closed as crews

worked to remove many vehicles and to clear away ice and snow Tuesday afternoon.

Traffic spilled over onto U.S. 1 and State Route 3, causing backups there. Area hotels filled up as many motorists exited the backup.

VDOT Fredericksburg District Engineer Marcie Parker wrote in a press release that the situation on I-95 was "unprecedented."

"We continue to steadily move stopped trucks to make progress toward restoring lanes," Parker said. "In addition to clearing the trucks, we are treating for snow and several inches of ice that has accumulated around them to ensure that when the lanes reopen, motorists can safely proceed to their destination."

Gov. Ralph Northam said in a 4 p.m.

press conference with VDOT, Virginia State Police and the Virginia Department of Emergency Management that state agencies were "prepared for the storm that was predicted, but instead Mother Nature sent a foot of snow to the Fredericksburg area."

VDOT Commissioner Stephen Brich said that crews could not adequately pre-treat I-95 prior to the storm because of the rain that fell Sunday night.

"Rain would have washed all of the chemicals and salt off the road and provided no additional protection," he said.

Brich said traffic continued to flow on the interstate until around midnight Monday, when it came to a standstill. A decision was made to

SEE STORM, A9

COVID case counts may be losing importance

SOME EXPERTS BELIEVE FOCUS SHOULD BE ON HOSPITALIZATIONS

BY CARLA K. JOHNSON
ASSOCIATED PRESS

The explosive increase in U.S. coronavirus case counts is raising alarm, but some experts believe the focus should instead be on COVID-19 hospital

admissions. And those aren't climbing as fast.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, for one, said Sunday on ABC that with many infections causing few or no symptoms, "it is much more relevant to focus on the hospitalizations as opposed to the total number of cases." Other experts argue that case counts still

have value.

As the super-contagious omicron variant rages across the U.S., new COVID-19 cases per day have more than tripled over the past two weeks, reaching a record-shattering average of 480,000. Schools, hospitals and airlines are struggling as infected workers go into isolation.

Meanwhile, hospital admissions averaged 14,800 per day last week, up 63 percent from the week before, but still short of the peak of 16,500 per day a year ago, when the vast majority of the U.S. was unvaccinated.

Deaths have been stable over the past two weeks at an average of about 1,200

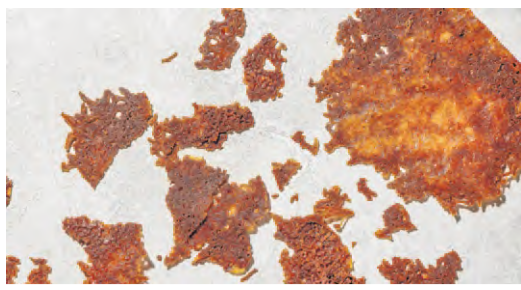
per day, well below the all-time high of 3,400 last January.

Public health experts suspect that those numbers, taken together, reflect the vaccine's continued effectiveness at preventing serious illness, even against omicron, as well as the possibility that

SEE VIRUS, A9



RICK BOWMER / ASSOCIATED PRESS
A health worker in Salt Lake County, Utah, tests someone for COVID.



FRIED CHEESE FOR DINNER
ADD FLAVOR AND TEXTURE TO TACOS
C1

< **FOOD**



TWITTER FILES LAWSUIT
MUSK BACKED OUT, BUT IT'S NOT OVER
A6

< **BUSINESS**



ROONEY TAKES OVER
FORMER STAR IS D.C. UNITED'S NEW COACH
B1

< **SPORTS**

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WEDNESDAY, JULY 13, 2022

Panel holds 7th Jan. 6 hearing

CONCERNS ALSO CITED OVER POSSIBLE 'EFFORTS TO INFLUENCE' WITNESSES

BY LISA MASCARO AND FARNOUSH AMIRI
AP CONGRESSIONAL CORRESPONDENT

WASHINGTON—Abruptly raising the question of witness tampering, the Jan. 6 committee revealed Tuesday that Donald Trump had attempted to contact a person who was talking to the panel about its investigation of the former president and the 2021 attack on the Capitol.

"We will take any effort to influence witness testimony very seriously," said Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wyo. She said the committee had notified the Justice Department.

The person Trump tried to contact declined to answer or respond to his call, Cheney said. Instead the person alerted their lawyer who contacted the committee.

The disclosure by Cheney was not the first time the panel has raised concerns about witnesses being contacted by Trump's team in ways that could reflect or at least create the appearance of inappropriate influence. It divulged examples last week of other times witnesses have received outreach from Trump allies, some suggesting he was aware they were talking to the committee, ahead of testimony before the panel.

SEE RIOT, A9

Spotsy still looking for new schools leader

SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH CONTINUES; BOARD GETS UPDATE ON JOB VACANCIES

BY ADELE UPHAUS-CONNER
THE FREE LANCE-STAR

The search continues for a new superintendent of Spotsylvania County schools, School Board Chair Kirk Twigg said during Monday's School Board meeting.

Twigg officially introduced new interim superintendent Kelly Guempel to the public early in the meeting. Guempel has been principal of Spotsylvania High School for four years and was appointed interim superintendent June 21.

"[Guempel] has accepted the role of interim superintendent indefinitely, while our search continues," Twigg said Monday.

According to the timeline approved in May, the board had anticipated naming a new permanent division leader as early

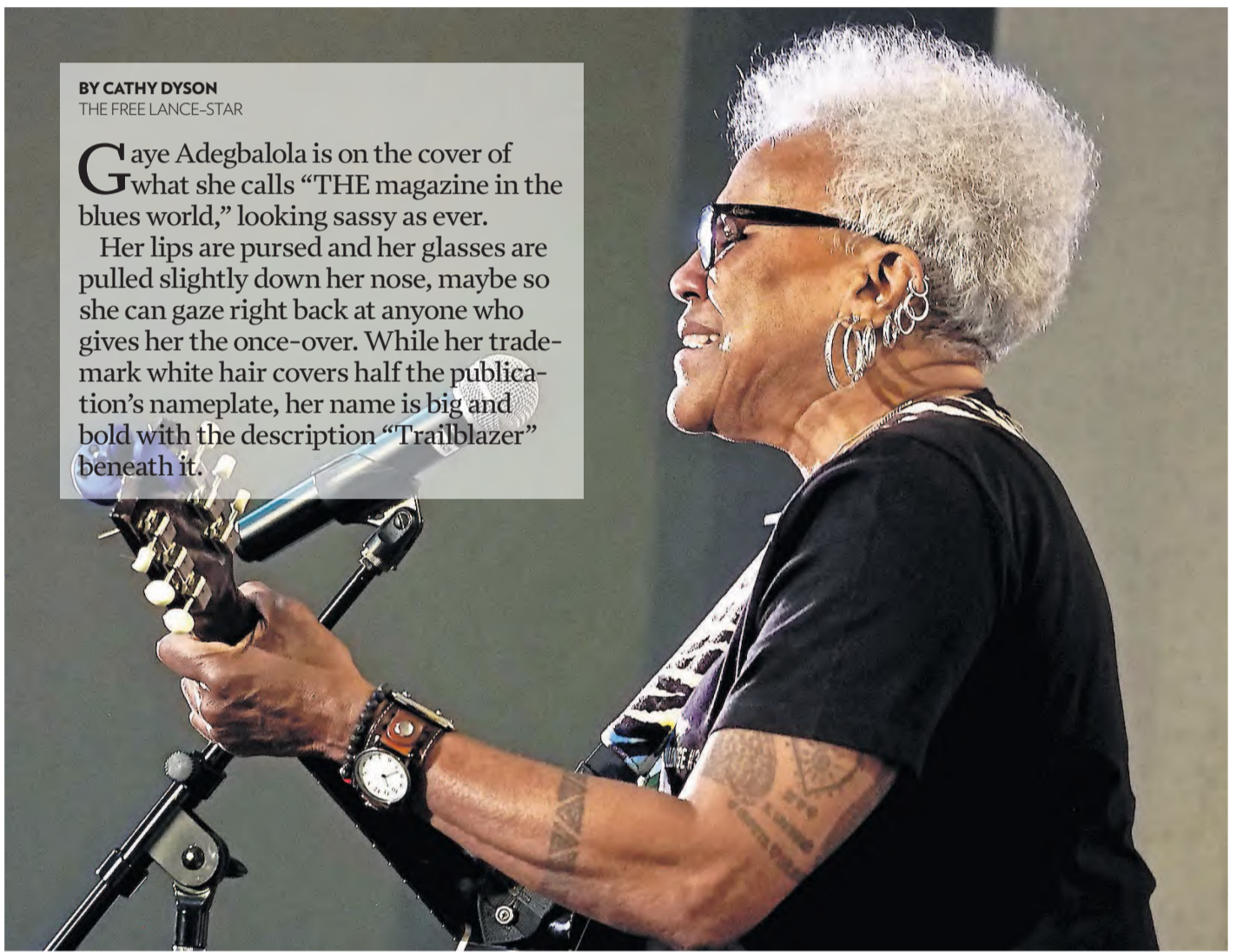
SEE SCHOOLS, A4

TRAILBLAZING ACTIVIST-MUSICIAN IN THE SPOTLIGHT Blues magazine heralds life of local performer

BY CATHY DYSON
THE FREE LANCE-STAR

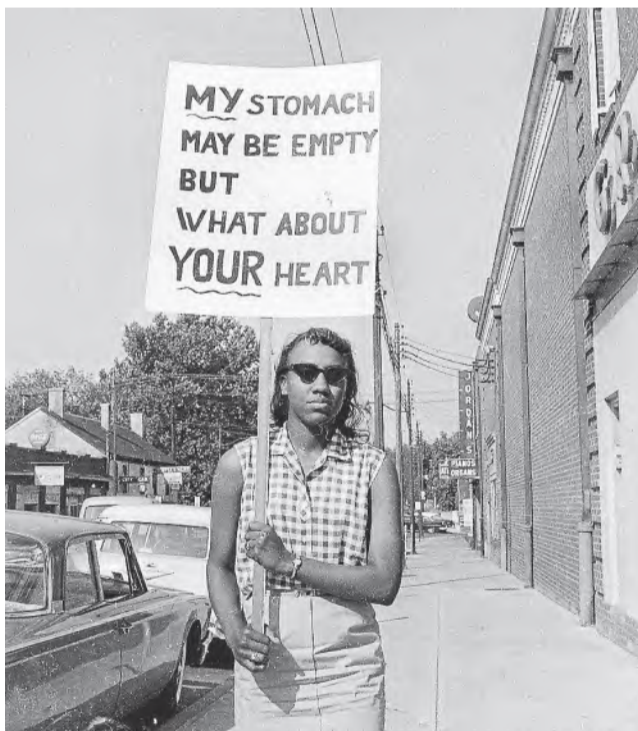
Gaye Adegbalola is on the cover of what she calls "THE magazine in the blues world," looking sassy as ever.

Her lips are pursed and her glasses are pulled slightly down her nose, maybe so she can gaze right back at anyone who gives her the once-over. While her trademark white hair covers half the publication's nameplate, her name is big and bold with the description "Trailblazer" beneath it.



ROBERT A. MARTIN FOR GERMANNA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Performer and activist Gaye Adegbalola puts on a show during a Black History Month program at Germanna in 2019.



FILE / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

In 1960, Gaye (Todd) Adegbalola walks the picket line around the W.T. Grant store in Fredericksburg.

"To me, it's really a marvelous depiction of who Gaye is," Janice Davies, a longtime mentor of the performer, said of both the cover photo by local photographer Suzanne Carr Rossi and the story. "There's a glint of humor in her eyes that's blended with that serious knowing that she has. When you look at it, you see a combination of her unique vision along with her solid issues and solid sensibilities."

Adegbalola says "Living Blues" magazine writer Frank Matheis has chronicled acoustic blues musicians like her for a long time and "worked hard to get this feature." While many blues songs delve into love and heartache, Adegbalola's goal, of getting the pain out, has always drawn from a broader pool of experiences, and the article spells that out in the first paragraph.

It says her deep blues are shaped by her dual struggles as a Black lesbian and civil rights activist growing up in Fredericksburg, where she still lives.



Adegbalola graces the cover of what she calls 'THE magazine in the blues world.'

In describing her lifetime of achievements and sorrows, the writer calls her a courageous trailblazer and hell-raiser, and she's proud of it.

SEE ADEGBALOLA, A4

Stafford approves new stormwater management requirements

BY JAMES SCOTT BARON
THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Builders developing neighborhoods in Stafford County will have to manage stormwater runoff more efficiently, thanks to a new ordinance approved by county supervisors July 5.

By a 7-0 vote, supervisors passed an ordinance that requires builders to place stormwater management sites in new neighborhoods on open parcels, capable of handling the stormwater runoff from multiple

homes. Unmanaged, stormwater causes erosion, flooding and property damage, but can also carry excess nutrients, sediment and other contaminants into rivers and streams.

The new ordinance requires builders to enter into a stormwater management maintenance agreement with the county to ensure the future HOA or the homeowners served by the site will be responsible for maintenance and repairs of the stormwater facility, should the HOA cease to exist.

Stafford Planning and Zoning Director Jeff Harvey told supervisors the previous county subdivision ordinance allowed builders to follow a "national menu of best management practices for stormwater" established by the Environmental Protection Agency.

The former ordinance allowed stormwater management sites to be placed on individual homesites, but in some of those cases, those sites ended up handling stormwater runoff channeled there from multiple homes

in the neighborhood. Harvey said that practice eventually created problems in some subdivisions where homeowners associations were first created then later folded or never renewed the necessary documents to stay in business. That left the burden of maintaining the sites on the homeowners.

"That saddles the underlying property owner with the maintenance responsibility for that facility that serves multiple

SEE STORMWATER, A4