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FROM HISTORY**  
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Offers Message To Cadets



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# The News-Gazette

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## Study To Look At Jail Needs

RRJ Joining With Allegheny To Hire Assessors

BY EMMA COLEMAN

The Rockbridge Regional Jail Commission, in a partnership with the Allegheny Regional Jail, has released a request for proposals (RFP) to procure services to conduct a needs assessment of the region's jail facilities.

"This RFP will address, to the west of us and to our jurisdiction, current need and future need, and it'll address how we prepare for that need, whether we build, whether we renovate, whether we simply add on, whether we do nothing," Rockbridge Regional Jail Superintendent Derek Almarode said in an interview Tuesday. "I don't think that's going to be the outcome. Something's going to happen."

The Rockbridge area's jail at 258 Greenhouse Road was built in 1987 and was designed to accommodate 56 inmates. Almarode said in a presentation to Lexington City Council last Thursday that the jail currently houses about 115 inmates.

"Jails are communities within communities," Almarode said Tuesday. "I need bed space,

See Jail, page B10

## Patterson Arraigned On Charges

BY BRONSON WINSLOW

Jonathan K. Patterson, who has been charged in the murder of his father, Philip "Jay" Patterson, made his first court appearance in an arraignment hearing in Buena Vista General District Court last Thursday morning.

Jonathan Patterson told Judge Robin Mayer that David Natkin would represent him as his attorney. Natkin was not present.

Joining the court

See Patterson, page 4



## Fairfield Barn Destroyed

Area firefighters work to extinguish a massive barn fire near Fairfield early Saturday morning. Despite the efforts of firefighters and the farm owners to remove all of the cattle from the barn, two cows were killed in the fire and the rescued cows are in bad shape, according to one of the owners. Seven fire departments responded to the call. For more on the fire, see page A2. (photo by Raphine Volunteer Fire Department member Nick Iocco)

# Masks Going Optional

## Local School Divisions Follow New State Law

BY BRONSON WINSLOW

Buena Vista schools moved to a "mask-optional" learning environment Monday, the first of the area's school systems to do so.

Lexington and Rockbridge County parents will have the option to send their students to school without masks starting next Monday, Feb. 28.

The local decisions followed the signing of SB 739 by Gov. Glenn Youngkin last week, legislation that bars school divisions from imposing mask mandates.

Amendments were added to the legislation Wednesday that allowed the legislation to take effect immediately and

set March 1 as the date when school mask mandates across the state must end.

During the Lexington School Board's regular meeting last Wednesday night, the Board unanimously voted to follow SB 739 and removed masks from its school mitigation measures, effective Feb. 28.

On Thursday, Buena Vista followed suit in a special called meeting, but moved up its mask-optional start date to this past Monday.

Rockbridge County announced its decision to move to a mask-optional learning environment via a Facebook post Thursday, aligning its start date with that of Lexington's, Feb. 28.

Though masks are no longer required for K-12 in-school instruction under SB 739, federal law still requires masks to be worn on buses.



PARRY McCLUER High School students arrive at school Tuesday, the day after the school system's mask-optional went into effect. Masks will be optional for Rockbridge County and Lexington students starting next Monday. (Bronson Winslow photo)

Buena Vista Superintendent Dr. Tony Francis told the School Board last week, "It does not supersede the federal mandate concerning transportation which is still in

place that requires everyone to wear a mask while transported to school."

Lexington Superintendent Rebecca Walters stated, "The federal mandate for everyone

to wear a mask while riding on school transportation, which includes our shuttle bus, remains in effect until March 8."

See Masks, page B10

## Spotswood Proposals Review Starting

### Public Invited To Submit Questions

BY EMMA COLEMAN

Lexington City Council is about to begin the process of selecting a developer for the city-owned property on Spotswood Avenue, and it wants the public to participate.

On Tuesday, March 1, at 5:30 p.m., Council will meet

with the two developers that have submitted proposals for the property in a work session. Council has invited members of the community to submit questions about the developers to Council members prior to the meeting.

"We are really hoping that the residents and citizens here in the community will see their Council members and say, 'Hey, these are the important issues and important questions I'd like you to

discuss with the developers, or discuss as a body that day and maybe into the future,'" City Manager Jim Halasz said yesterday. "We really want the participation and input from the public in that way."

Halasz said that members of the community are also invited to attend the work session and submit their questions to Council in writing then, too.

"They can also come to the meetings, and if they have a

question that comes up, they can put that question in writing and provide it to City Council, so that there's some opportunity for Council to discuss it, or, if it seems beneficial, to address that to the developers," he said

But he hopes that the public's participation will not impede the productivity of the meeting.

"We don't want the public disrupting the flow of that

See Spotswood, page A4

## Localities Seek Third I-81 Lane

BY ED SMITH

The heavily-traveled Interstate 81/64 corridor between Lexington and Staunton needs a third lane of travel in each direction, say members of the Rockbridge and Augusta counties' boards of supervisors.

The Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors ap-

See I-81, page 4

## Meet Lexington's Community Partners

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Sports/page A10  
**WATCH OUT  
 FOR THE KITCHEN**  
*Pickleball Growing  
 In Popularity In Area*



Photos/page B5  
**GOSHEN CELEBRATES  
 THE FOURTH OF JULY**  
*New Event Features Sand,  
 Music, Food - And Dunking*

# The News-Gazette



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## Grant For BV Collective Garner Support Youngkin Recommends A Grant For Ag Tech Center

**By ED SMITH**  
 A \$700,000 Appalachian Regional Commission grant has been recommended for approval by Gov. Glenn Youngkin for the Buena Vista-based Virginia Innovation Collective.

The collective is The Advancement Foundation's agricultural technology center that is being developed in the former Mundet-Hermetite factory building at 245 W. 21st St. The ARC funding is to go for developing a commercial kitchen, new bathrooms that are Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant and other renovations to the business incubator facility. TAF acquired the 39,000-square-foot former factory building last year with the intention of providing space, guidance and training to business startups in order to spur economic development in downtown Buena Vista. "We're very excited about this grant likely being awarded," said Tom Roberts, Buena Vista's director of community and economic development.

TAF was earlier awarded a \$500,000 Go Virginia grant that is being used for programs and staffing. A

See Grant, page 8

## Festive Fourth Crowds Take Advantage Of Multitude Of Events

**By TORI JOHNSON**

The Fourth of July weekend was packed with various local celebrations that drew large crowds. Braving through some minor hiccups, these celebrations gave local residents and visitors a memorable time.

Those events included the Balloons Over Rockbridge Hot Air Balloon and Music Festival, the Freedom Food Festival and Fourth of July Children's Bike Parade in Lexington, Goshen's first July 4th Beach Party, and music and fireworks in Buena Vista.

Balloons Over Rockbridge co-director Beth Armstrong estimated that at least 8,000 people attended the festival over Saturday and Sunday, July 2 and 3.

"We had great bands both days," Armstrong said. Vendors also seemed to be pleased with their business, she continued.

Due to unfavorable weather conditions, balloons couldn't fly on Saturday night or Sunday morning.



A HUGE CROWD filled two city blocks in Lexington Sunday for the second Freedom Food Festival, one of the newer Fourth of July events in the Rockbridge area. One of the longstanding events, the Balloons Over Rockbridge festival, sent balloons skyward three times over the weekend. (Stephanie Mikels Blevins and Joann Ware photos)

"We had put in our schedule an extra spot in case we needed it," Balloons Over Rockbridge co-director Dee Miriello said. Prospective passengers were rescheduled

to the extra slot on Monday morning. A total of 195 passengers booked balloon flights.

"Beautiful flights, so in the end we had enough people

from both of those cancelled flights to fill those flights Monday morning on the 4th," Miriello said.

See Fourth, page 2

## Missing Teenager Found In Michigan 19-Year-Old Charged With Abduction

A Michigan man was arrested last week in connection with a missing juvenile from Rockbridge County who was found safe in Michigan.

According to a statement from the Rockbridge County Sheriff's Office last Wednesday evening, the office had been notified the previous Monday evening of a 15-year-old female juvenile who had gone missing from the Goose Creek Road area of Rockbridge County. Sheriff's deputies and investigators immediately responded to the scene and began an investigation.

Based on the information and evidence that was gathered at the scene, sheriff's deputies and investigators were able to obtain and execute several social media/internet site/internet service type search warrants to help gather digital evidence and location information related to the missing juvenile, according to the RCSO statement.

After collecting and analyzing the digital evidence, investigators contacted the Kalamazoo Police Department in Michigan for assistance in locating the missing juvenile and a possible suspect. The Kalamazoo Police Department went to a residence in the Hawley Street

See Abduction, page 9

## Aflac Helps RAHC Fill Medical 'Gap'

Grant To Fund Wellness Program, Pre-, Postnatal Care

The Rockbridge Area Health Center received a \$100,000 Aflac Community Care Grant award on Wednesday, June 29, at a check presentation event held at Lexington's Kids Playce park as part of Aflac's commitment to improving medical outcomes for

individuals in communities throughout the country.

The funds will help RAHC advance medical outcomes locally through the funding of a school-based culture of wellness program, as well as a multidisciplinary program to increase pre- and postnatal care for those with limited resources.

"The ability of the Rockbridge Area Health Center to respond to the community health care needs is due in part

to the special relationships we develop with like-minded people and with organizations such as Aflac," said Suzanne Sheridan, RAHC CEO. "As we look forward, RAHC is committed to creating a culture of wellness in our community and we believe that success starts with our youth and working with families to support healthy choices."

Following the check presen-

See Aflac, page 4



THERESA WHITE, president of Aflac U.S., speaks at last week's check presentation event at Kids Playce. With her is Suzanne Sheridan, CEO of the Rockbridge Area Health Center. (Tori Johnson photo)



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Lifestyle/page B1  
**EVERYONE LOVES  
A CHRISTMAS PARADE**  
Santa And Friends Roll  
Through Goshen, Fairfield



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Labor Day 2021

## Delegate Campbell Remembered

When he was making his first run for the Virginia House of Delegates four years ago, Ronnie Campbell said he'd spent his life "trying to make the community safer."

That was his primary objective when serving as a Virginia state trooper for 25 years,

retiring in 2003. Safeguarding his community continued to be foremost in his mind in later years while he held public office – first as the South River District member on the Rockbridge County School Board, then

See Campbell, page 5

## Suspect Killed Resisting Arrest

### Man Pointed Gun At Deputies, Say Police

A Rockbridge County man was shot and killed by deputies at a Timber Ridge area residence Friday night after he pointed a firearm at them as they were seeking to make an arrest, according to a statement from the Rockbridge County Sheriff's Office this week.

The suspect, Michael Fredric Stevens, 57, died at the scene.

The sheriff's office said the deputies responded to a residence in Lee Hi Acres at approximately 10 p.m. on Dec. 9, following reports of "a wanted subject at the residence."

The deputies arrived with arrests warrants, and made contact with Stevens who retreated into a bedroom in the home and would not respond to requests by the deputies that he come out and speak to them.

After speaking with negotiators, Stevens exited the room at approximately 11 p.m. and pointed a firearm at the deputies in the hallway, according to the police statement. The deputies fired their weapons, hitting Stevens. Emergency medical services were called to treat Stevens, but he died at the scene.

See Shooting, page 5



THIS THREE-dimensional preliminary rendering of the proposed apartment building planned for the city-owned property on Spotswood Drive was among the images presented to the Lexington Planning Commission by Edwin Gaskin, the project manager with Echelon Resources, as the city considers a conditional use permit for the project.

## Project Proceeding Echelon Permit Request Goes To Council

BY JOSEPH HANEY

The Lexington City Planning Commission last Thursday voted 4-2 to approve a conditional use permit for Echelon Resources Inc. to develop a parcel of land on Spotswood Drive, despite protests from the public.

Edwin Gaskin, the project manager for Echelon, presented a preliminary site plan to the Commission as part of his applicant statement, noting that this was unusual for this stage of the project, but with the site being so small "every inch counts" and Echelon was working on incorporating required elements

now so that there wouldn't be "significant changes at a later date."

The current plan for the proposed development calls for 62 apartments - 41 single-bedroom units and 21 two-bedroom units. The apartments, which will be market-rate apartments and not affordable housing units, will be located in a building consisting of three full stories and a fourth, partial level to best utilize the terrain of the lot. The site will also hold a parking lot with up to 84 spaces for renters.

The exterior of the building incorporates "more of a modern look," Gaskin noted, because, "frankly, we wanted to differentiate it from historic Lexington. It's a new site, a new construction; it's an opportunity to have a new era of aesthetic appeal." He also noted that the idea was to "play off of" the more modern design of the hospital and to "create sort of a transition cosmetic from that to the more traditional Lexington look."

Gaskin noted that a number of changes had

See Spotswood, page 2

## Baskets: 75 Years And Going Strong

### Residents Come Together Again For Each Other

BY LUKE FOUNTAIN

A hallmark of the Christmas season in the Rockbridge area, the 75th annual Rockbridge Christmas Basket program was a resounding success, say many leaders, volunteers, and citizens in the community.

On Saturday, hundreds poured into the Virginia Horse Center to pack and deliver boxes filled to the brim with nutritional food and to fill gift bags with toys for children.

According to event organizers, about 1,900 boxes of food were packed and served roughly 3,200 residents. Every household in need receives around 40 pounds of healthy food and every child - 556 this year - receives an age-appropriate toy.

See Baskets, page 12



TWO SOUTHERN VIRGINIA University students (in front) help out at the Buena Vista checkout table during the final stages of the Rockbridge Christmas Baskets packing Saturday. (Claudia Schwab photo)

## Missing Man's Body Found

BY DARRYL WOODSON

A nearly month-long search for a man who went missing on the James River ended last week with the recovery of his body in the Snowden area.

According to a post on the Facebook page of the Glasgow Fire Department, the body was discovered

See Body, page 5



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