

# Suffolk NEWS-HERALD



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Community Calendar 3

PUBLISHED WEDNESDAY AND SUNDAY • SUFFOLK EDITION

MAY 22, 2022

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# Chief, mayor address 'unprecedented' violence

BY JIMMY LAROUÉ  
STAFF WRITER

Gun violence in Suffolk is "way beyond the norm," and Police Chief Al Chandler vows

to make a serious and significant impact in curbing it.

In May alone, three people have died and four have been injured in shootings in the city, and four people have died

this year, according to Suffolk Police, including a man with life-threatening injuries after being shot Friday morning in the 600 block of East Washington Street.

In the 23 publicly disclosed shooting incidents this year, 14 have come within a one-mile radius of East Washington Street and the BALM Church East Campus in the downtown

area. Five other shootings have occurred within a two-mile radius of College Drive in North Suffolk.

See VIOLENCE, 12

## Roc Solid play

BY JIMMY LAROUÉ  
STAFF WRITER

On the hottest day of the year, a cool kid got a cool playset, and for a moment, all was right in his world.

Brayden Vinson couldn't wait for his new playset to be built, so he decided to pitch in, and when it was all finished and it was time for the reveal Friday afternoon, he sprinted out of the back door of his Nansemond Parkway home, climbed the steps to the slide and gave it his seal of approval before joyfully sliding down.

"I like it," Brayden said, enthusiastically.

The Roc Solid Foundation, as part of its Play Defeats Cancer Tour, gifted and built 30 custom playsets in 30 days for families of children fighting pediatric cancer throughout the United States.

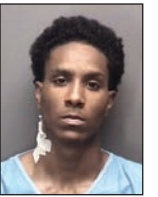
See PLAY, 7



JIMMY LAROUÉ/SUFFOLK NEWS-HERALD  
Nine-year-old Brayden Vinson uses a hammer as he helps put together a playset in the backyard of his Nansemond Parkway home.

## Murder suspect in court

BY JIMMY LAROUÉ  
STAFF WRITER



The man accused of second degree murder in the shooting death of a Windsor man at the Hoffer Apartments off East Washington Street appeared in Suffolk General District Court Thursday, saying his mother had hired an attorney for him.

In a brief appearance via video from Western Tidewater Regional Jail, Maleek Sailuan Meyers, 18, told Presiding Judge Alfred W. Bates III that after an issue with his first attorney, his mother had just hired a new attorney, James Broccoletti.

Bates said Meyers would have another week "to get it done" and have his attorney

See MURDER, 9

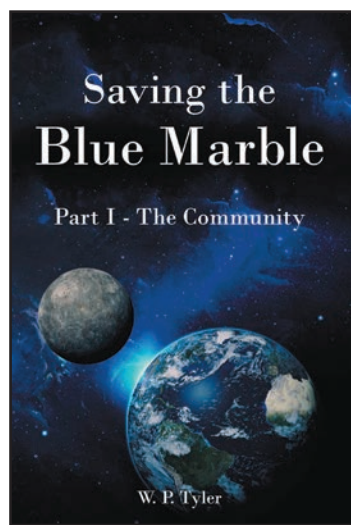
## New author writes sci-fi

BY RACHEL WARTIAN  
STAFF WRITER

In April, Suffolk author William Tyler released his first book, "Saving the Blue Marble," which mixes personal experiences with science fiction.

Tyler, originally from Portsmouth, spent most of his career in Washington, D.C., and Illinois before coming to Suffolk in 2013 when his wife retired and he was getting ready to also. He spent 27 years with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' National Disaster Medical System teams.

He helped with hurricanes, floods, terrorist bombings like the Alfred P. Murrah Building in Oklahoma City and major transportation accidents like the Alaska Air Flight 261 crash in California. In 2001 after the attack on the World Trade Center in New York City, he was recalled to duty to assist with medical asset management. He retired in 2018 from Abbott Laboratories, which



had him traveling worldwide doing food and drug clinical research.

"I retired in 2018, and I got bored," Tyler said. "I watched the movie 'The Accountant,' and there's a song in the movie that talked about wanting to leave something behind ('To Leave Something Behind,' by Sean Rowe). Wanting to leave something behind, I decided I would write science fiction."

See BOOK, 9

## Live entertainment hours at issue for downtown restaurants

BY JIMMY LAROUÉ  
STAFF WRITER

It comes down to what the city wants its downtown to look like.

Will it be a vibrant area full of restaurants and bars that offer entertainment, or will it be stifled by restrictive hours?

That's at least the perception of Rennee's Restaurant and Lounge owners Jeffrey and Rennee Townsend, who want to have extended hours until 2 a.m. during the week, and 24 hours per day on Saturdays and Sundays to offer live entertainment to their patrons. Their restaurant is at 156 W. Washington St. near North Saratoga Street.

"So if you want downtown to grow, you've got to allow me to grow," said Rennee's Restaurant and Lounge co-owner Jeffrey Townsend during a May 17 public hearing before the Planning Commission. "You've got to allow me to grow, so don't give me no restriction."



JIMMY LAROUÉ/SUFFOLK NEWS-HERALD  
Rennee's Restaurant and Lounge co-owners Jeffrey and Rennee Townsend want to offer live entertainment at their restaurant until 2 a.m. on weekends.

**Long-term solution needed**  
Commissioner Johnnie Edwards said there needs to be a long-term solution to the entertainment issue at downtown restaurants and the hours in which they are allowed.

"To try to solve this problem individually, I think, is not the

approach," Edwards said. "We need to have a serious conversation as a city to decide if we want a downtown, or we do not want a downtown, and where that downtown is."

Currently, live entertainment

See RESTAURANTS, 6

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# Suffolk NEWS-HERALD



Meet the Class of 2022 in a keepsake edition.

INSIDE TODAY

PUBLISHED WEDNESDAY AND SUNDAY • SUFFOLK EDITION

JUNE 1, 2022

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## Stepson charged with murder

FROM STAFF REPORTS  
SUFFOLK NEWS-HERALD

Police arrested a 19-year-old Suffolk man in the Memorial Day shooting death of his stepfather.

Kaevon Dionte Stowes faces felony charges of murder-second degree and

use or display of firearm in commission of felony.

Police, in a Tuesday news release, identified the victim as Timothy Gene Harper, 57, of Suffolk.

Dispatchers were notified of a shooting at 4:11 p.m. Monday in the 400 block of Hunter Street in the Pleasant

Hill area south of downtown.

Anyone with information about the shooting is asked to contact Suffolk Police or Suffolk Crime Line. To submit online, go to [www.p3tips.com](http://www.p3tips.com), visit the Suffolk Police Department website ([www.suffolkva.us/spd](http://www.suffolkva.us/spd)) and look for the Suffolk Crime Line link, or



Stowes

go to the Suffolk Police Department Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/suffolkpolicedepartment](http://www.facebook.com/suffolkpolicedepartment).

You can also call

See MURDER, 7



JEN JAQUA/SUFFOLK NEWS-HERALD

Above, Ron Brinkley visits the final resting place of his wife, Ann, a Army veteran. At right, Sofia Davila renders honors during the presentation of the flag.

## Gathering together to remember

BY JEN JAQUA  
STAFF WRITER

Ron Brinkley sat on a bench in the shade, reminiscing of the cherub that struck him the day he met his wife, Ann. As he spoke of the time they spent together in the Army his voice occasionally caught in emo-

tion. In moments of silence he stared out over the field of flags, the final resting place for Ann.

Brinkley shared his admiration for the appearance and the dedication of the staff at Albert G. Horton Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery. He had made the trip from Newport

News on Monday morning joining many other veterans, families, and community members to attend the annual Memorial Day ceremony.

After the colors were posted by the Coast Guard's Color Guard and the Invocation

See REMEMBER, 9



## Man arrested for threats against school

FROM STAFF REPORTS  
SUFFOLK NEWS-HERALD



Sears

At about 1 p.m. Saturday, the Suffolk Police Department was notified of a threatening post on a social media platform, police said in a news release. Detectives investigated the post and charged Cameron Sears with threats of death or injury to persons on

See THREAT, 7

## Gala raises funds for new non-profits

BY RACHEL AUSTIN  
STAFF WRITER

Suffolk came together last week to support two women-led nonprofits in Suffolk.

The Arise Gala was held Thursday at the Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts to raise support for and celebrate the launch of Hope Center Suffolk and Cornerstone Ballet. The charities plan to serve the youth and

See GALA, 7

## Housing authority board seeks better cameras for communities

BY JIMMY LARQUE  
STAFF WRITER

The Suffolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority is looking to upgrade surveillance cameras on its public housing properties.

Executive Director Tracey Snipes said a new Flock camera has been installed at Hoffer Apartments, the site of a pair of recent shootings. The camera was paid for by the Suffolk Police Department.

The housing authority has

surveillance cameras on all of its properties, but the newer cameras would allow the Suffolk Police Department to have instant access to them.

"The cameras that we have are not set up like Flock cameras," said Board of Commissioners Chairman Quinton Franklin at its May 24 meeting. "With the Flock cameras, they zoom right into the license plate. It's like you're going through the tun-

See CAMERAS, 7

## NSA student gifts parents with valedictorian honor

BY JIMMY LARQUE  
STAFF WRITER

Emily Dumarán spent a lot of time and effort keeping up with her studies before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, and her efforts resulted in her being named valedictorian for Nansemond-Suffolk Academy's class of 2022, which graduated Friday.

Dumarán, 18, who attended NSA for 13 years from kindergarten through her senior year, will attend the University of Virginia with the intention of majoring in political philos-

See VALEDICTORIAN, 12



JIMMY LARQUE/SUFFOLK NEWS-HERALD

Emily Dumarán is the valedictorian for Nansemond-Suffolk Academy's class of 2022.

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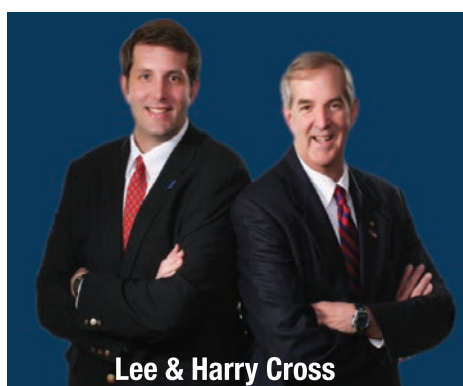
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My fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.  
John F. Kennedy

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PUBLISHED WEDNESDAY AND SUNDAY • SUFFOLK EDITION

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## Downtown projects get go-ahead

BY JIMMY LAROUÉ  
STAFF WRITER

Over the next 18 to 24 months, city officials expect a new festival event park and library to transform downtown.

And though a library to replace the out-of-date Morgan Memorial Library across from City Hall has long been in the works, the festival event park to go in next to it is happening, at least in some part, thanks to a

tornado that tore through the central part of the city two years ago. With City Council's approval of a conditional use permit to establish a park/open space on the property at 219 W. Washington St. and 101 S. Saratoga St. along

with the rezoning of property on Lee Street from residential medium density to central business district zoning — both coming on 7-0 votes at its Aug. 3 meeting — plans can proceed on the two projects.

Gerry Jones, director of capital projects, said he expects the new park, with its feature entrance at the corner of South Saratoga and West Washington streets, to be

See DOWNTOWN, 5



JEN JAQUA, JIMMY LAROUÉ, LINDSAY RICHARDSON/  
SUFFOLK NEWS-HERALD  
Clockwise from top left, members of the Suffolk Police Department strike a pose. Dennis Harden, 10 jumps for a catch, Michael Crump, 9 tries to catch the toppling blocks as Messiah Crump, 6, watches. Deadra Odom and McGruff pause for a photo.

## Chesapeake Amazon facility opens

BY JIMMY LAROUÉ  
STAFF WRITER

They were both announced at the same time by then-Gov. Ralph Northam on the eve of the COVID-19 pandemic more than two years ago — an Amazon robotics fulfillment center in Suffolk's Northgate Commerce Park and another, smaller cross-dock fulfillment center about two miles away, but in Chesapeake.

But it is the Chesapeake fulfillment center, in the shadow of Suffolk's, that opened first, with Amazon announcing Thursday that the 640,000-square-foot processing center launched last week.

Suffolk's facility, meanwhile, which has appeared on the verge of opening for several months, is expected to do so sometime in September, two-and-a-half years after officials made the announcement, according to company spokeswoman Emily Hawkins, though she did not provide an exact date. Chesapeake's facility, according to the company in its announcement, will create 1,000 full- and part-time jobs. "As Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, my job is to get the most out of every dollar of revenue to

See AMAZON, 9

## Community turns out for NNO

BY JIMMY LAROUÉ  
STAFF WRITER

A running joke among city officials is that Suffolk Sheriff E.C. Harris is in

charge of weather for the city's yearly National Night Out events.

This year, at least, he delivered. It was hot, but the rain

stayed away for Tuesday's festivities as thousands flocked to not only enjoy the activities, but also, officials hope, to build relationships with law enforcement,

first responders and others on the front lines of taking a bite out of crime.

Suffolk Commonwealth's

See NNO, 9

## Port 460 opponents deliver an earful to council, developers

BY JIMMY LAROUÉ  
STAFF WRITER

If members of City Council and the developers of the Port 460 Logistics Center didn't know how people who live in the area surrounding the proposed project feel, they certainly do now.

Opponents have been inundating council members and project officials with emails and phone calls, and dozens availed themselves of the opportunity to speak directly to them at the Aug.

3 council meeting and the public meeting the following day with the developers at the Hilton Garden Inn-Suffolk Riverfront.

If a rezoning of 540 acres along U.S. Routes 460 and 58, Pitchkettle Road, Kings Fork Road and Murphys Mill Road from general commercial and agricultural to heavy industrial zoning is approved, the project would encompass 4.7 million square feet for an industrial

See PROJECT, 12

## Retired Suffolk officer completes cross-country bike ride

BY JAMES W. ROBINSON  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Joel Howard is celebrating after a huge cross-country accomplishment.

On Aug. 2, Howard completed the TransAmerica bike route from Virginia to Oregon that he started on April 28.

In an Aug. 4 interview, Howard spoke about the adventure, the hardships, and the advice to those who dream of taking the challenge.

Originally born in Texas, he lived his first 12 years there before moving to Florida.

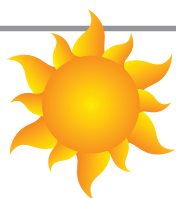


SUBMITTED PHOTO

Joel Howard paused at Nehalem Bay during cross-county bike ride.

See JOURNEY, 3

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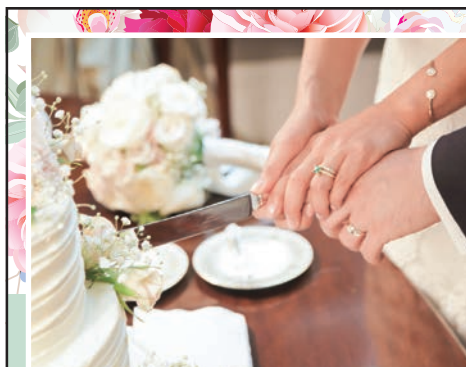
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When ambition ends, happiness begins.  
Thomas Merton

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