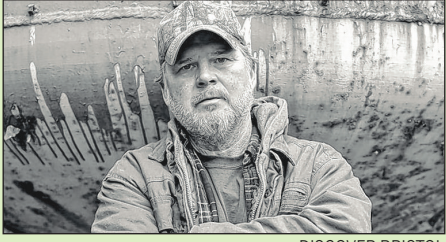


Bush's Baked Beans opens revamped museum at its Tennessee visitor center

— Page A5



### 6 THINGS TO KNOW THIS WEEK



DISCOVER BRISTOL

#### CHRIS KNIGHT WILL PERFORM AT THE CAMEO THEATER ON AUG. 27

American singer-songwriter Chris Knight will perform songs from his ninth album "Almost Daylight" and some of his other music at The Cameo Theater on Saturday, Aug. 27, from 8-10 p.m. Knight has made country/country rock music for 20 years and has built many generations of fans.

#### GIRLS INC. GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY WILL TAKE PLACE AUG. 24

Girls Inc. is holding a groundbreaking ceremony on Wednesday, Aug. 24, at 885 Clinton Ave., Bristol, Virginia, to celebrate the start of construction for the new Girls Inc. Multi-use Gym and Community Center.



BELIEVE IN BRISTOL

#### LYNYRD SKYNYRD TRIBUTE TO TAKE PLACE AT THE DOWNTOWN CENTER

If you love listening to Lynyrd Skynyrd, you should check out the Sounds of Summer: Skynfolks Lynyrd Skynyrd Tribute at the Downtown Center in Bristol on Thursday, Aug. 25, from 7-9 p.m. to listen to some good music.

#### TRIPRIDE WILL BE HELD IN DOWNTOWN BRISTOL ON AUG. 27

This year's TriPride parade will be held in downtown Bristol on Saturday, Aug. 27, at 11 a.m., followed by a festival at around noon at Cumberland Square Park. Organizers say this year's event will mark the first pride event in history to be held in two states at once. There will be food trucks, live entertainment, vendors and exhibits.



SIDETRACKS

#### FADE TO BLACK: A TRIBUTE TO METALLICA AT SIDETRACKS ON AUG. 26

Looking for a change of pace in the form of heavy metal music? A night out listening to Metallica music might be what you need. On Friday, Aug. 26, SideTracks on State Street in downtown Bristol will feature Fade to Black: A Tribute to Metallica.

#### WINDSOR AVENUE BLUEGRASS TO PERFORM AT THE DOWNTOWN CENTER

Are you in the mood for bluegrass music and a good time? Take your friends and family to the Downtown Center in Bristol on Tuesday, Aug. 30, from 7-9 p.m. to listen to Sounds of Summer: Windsor Avenue Bluegrass.

# Catalytic converter thefts on rise

By TESSA WORLEY  
tworley@bristolnow.news

Catalytic converter theft is on the rise locally and nationally because of the high resale value of the parts. This rising trend is affecting individuals, businesses and the recycling chain of precious metals.

Bristol Now spent the last several weeks examining data and talking with experts to uncover how this trend is affecting the region.

#### WHAT ARE CATALYTIC CONVERTERS?

A catalytic converter is part of a car's exhaust system and helps regulate the car's harmful emissions.

The Clean Air Act of 1970 required all cars made after 1975

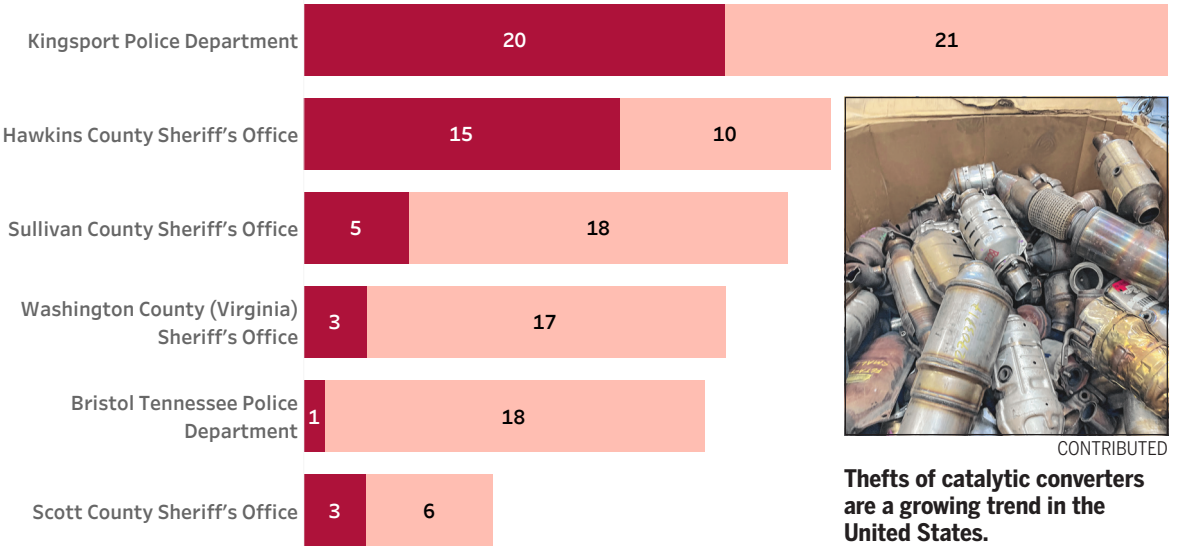
See THEFTS, Page A2

## CATALYTIC CONVERTER THEFTS

DATA COMPILED BY TESSA WORLEY/BRISTOL NOW  
GRAPHIC BY CHELSEA GILLENWATER/BRISTOL NOW

2022 (January-July) | 2021

Note: The Bristol Virginia Police Department had no current reports of converter theft.



CONTRIBUTED

Thefts of catalytic converters are a growing trend in the United States.

Signatures is a series highlighting the unique dishes, desserts and drinks of local restaurants.



# Signatures



TOM NETHERLAND/FOR BRISTOL NOW

Corner Dog House owner Matthew Pugh said they even sell and mail hot dogs on occasion to people well beyond Bristol.

By TOM NETHERLAND  
FOR BRISTOL NOW

BRISTOL, Va. — The subject of politics does not corner the market on fervid debates.

Try hot dogs. By all means, try one. Most Americans share a variety of views relative to the quite versatile hot dog. Some love them. Others loathe them. Then there's all sorts of disagreement as to which company or restaurant prepares the tastiest hot dog.

Consider the Corner Dog House. Open Monday through Saturday on Mary Street in Bristol, Virginia, the walk-up restaurant became a Bristol culinary staple decades ago. It sells hamburgers and French fries, milkshakes and such. But, as the name indicates, the Corner Dog House specializes in hot dogs.

"Long-term success of the Corner Dog House was built a long time ago," said owner Matthew Pugh.

The restaurant opened in October 1961. Pugh bought it in 2008.

"This place is running on 60 years," said Pugh, 42, of

Bristol, Tennessee. "I'm a business owner. I'm not a chef. You find something that works, you

don't mess around with that."

Two hot dogs in particular stand out. The favorite is the least expensive one, the eatery's

See CORNER, Page A3

# Corner Dog House makes hot dogs stars of menu



TOM NETHERLAND/FOR BRISTOL NOW

Olivia Brandon, manager of Bristol's Corner Dog House, offers the eatery's signature dishes, the Corner Dog to the left and the Dixie Dog to the right. INSET: Both dogs are made with flavorful chili, mustard and onions.

### INSIDE

Best Bets ..... A5  
Bridge ..... B5  
Crossword ..... B5  
Horoscope ..... B5  
Jumble ..... B5  
Music ..... A8

Pets ..... B8  
Region ..... A4  
Sports ..... B1-B2  
Sudoku ..... B5  
Tastes ..... B4

### WEATHER

High Low  
**90 66**  
Mostly sunny



### Sports

Former Tennessee High students and current ETSU players are working toward making the field this season. **B1**



### Music

Kitty Wells' solo single made a splash for female country artists in 1952 with a riff on 'honky-tonk angels.' **A8**



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# MOMENT with a MANAGER

## Amanda Helton, Southwest Virginia Workforce Development Board

By MARINA WATERS  
mwaters@bristolnow.news

**Name:** Amanda Helton  
**Age:** 35  
**Education:** Bachelor of Business Administration, King University; Associate of Applied Science in accounting, Virginia Highlands Community College



**Helton**  
**Title:** Communications manager  
**Company:** Southwest Virginia Workforce Development Board (SWVA WDB)

**What do you do?** I manage the SWVA WDB's marketing functions. I love helping spread the word about how we can help folks get back to work, and I relish the opportunity to brag on our astounding participants when they succeed!

**Name some of your key successes:** I can't take full credit, but a recent success has been marketing our Summer Work Experience (WEX) program, where we place 16- to 24-year-olds in job opportunities where they can learn the ins and outs of work. One of the most significant barriers to employment for young adults is their lack of work experience. Through this program, they can work in a position they may not have been able to otherwise. This program also helps businesses as the WDB pays the worker's wage, so there's no cost for the labor, but they get the full benefit of an extra set of hands! We had the biggest monthly increase of enrollments we've ever had after advertising the WEX program, thanks to the marketing efforts and our fantastic youth case managers, who are my "boots on the ground," helping to distribute flyers and talking up the program in their communities.

**Who were your mentors?** My grandfather worked for Columbus McKinnon in Damascus, Virginia, for nearly 40 years. He was already at work by the time I woke up in the mornings, but he always picked me up after school. Each afternoon on our way home, he would impart some tidbit of advice or knowledge, mostly about how important it was to stay true to your word, be honest, never stop learning and work hard. He worked as a machinist, so he always smelled like mechanic's

grease after his shift, a scent that now brings back fond memories of our rides home. He had to drop out of school after completing third grade to help on the family farm, but he was one of the most intelligent people I've ever known. I often wonder what he could have achieved had he been afforded the opportunity to finish his education. Because of his guidance, I became the person I am today.

**Can you name a turning point in your career?** I began my career at the SWVA WDB as an administrative manager. When thinking of how we could better inform board members of our day-to-day work, I approached our executive director with the idea of starting a newsletter. She allowed me to take the project on, and we quickly discovered I had a knack for it. Then I started dabbling in graphic design. The more I did in the marketing field, the more I wanted to learn. Through lots of personal study and talking to marketing professionals, I developed the know-how I needed to effectively market the SWVA WDB's programs and initiatives. Three years later, we have a successful e-newsletter that goes out to our board members, partners and community members, as well as a growing social media presence. I'm always looking for new ways to engage our community.

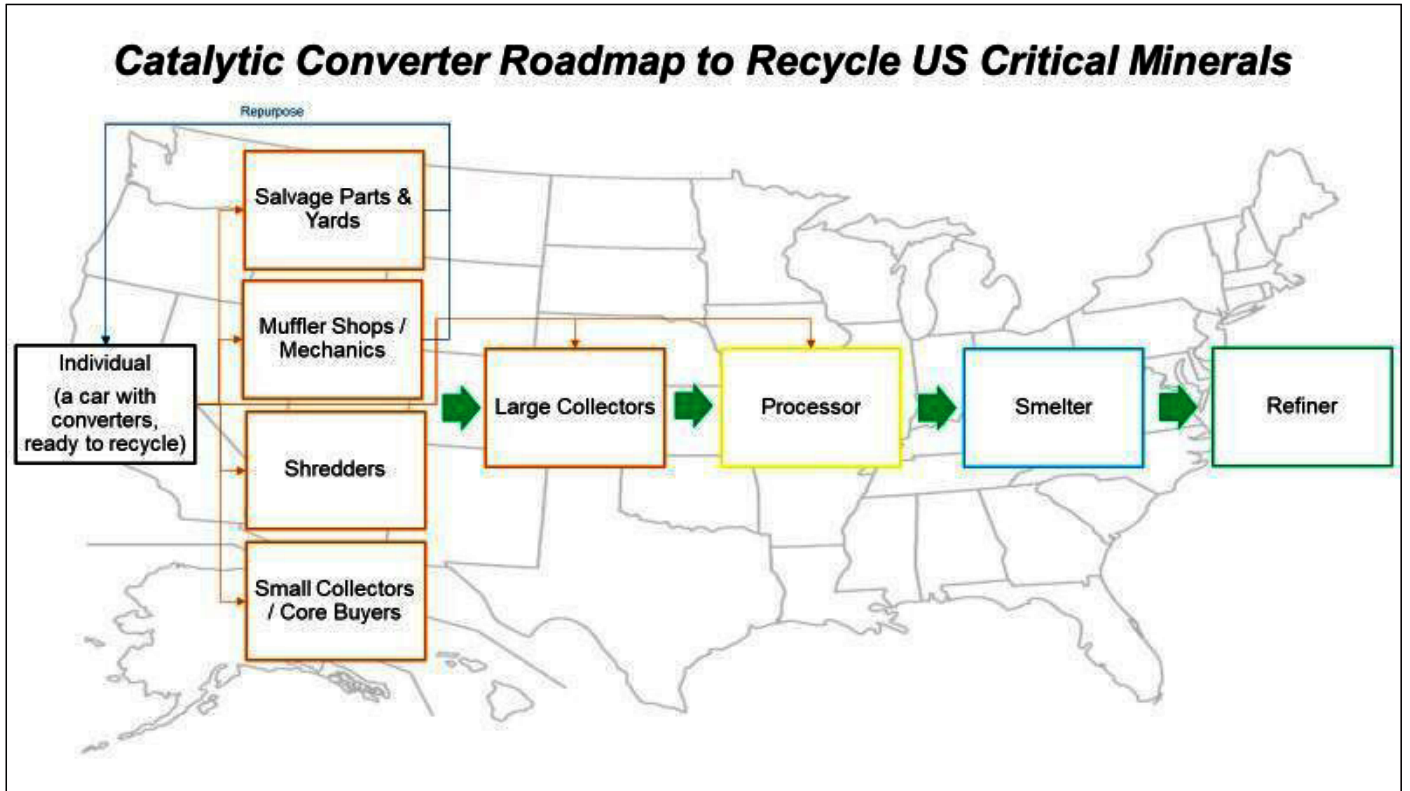
**Who are your family members?** Dave is my husband of nine years, and Queenie is our 4-year-old terrier mix.

**What management books would you recommend?** I'm a huge fan of Brené Brown and highly recommend any of her books. "Dare to Lead" is one of my favorites.

**Do you read any national business publications?** I'm a Certified Workforce Development Professional, so I'm always reading the monthly newsletters from the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals. I also enjoy reading newsletters from Marketing Brew and Nonprofit Quarterly.

**One piece of advice you would give an up-and-coming manager?** Don't be afraid to try something new; it may lead you to a new career.

Moment With a Manager focuses on a company owner or top manager. If you have an idea for an article, email Susan Cameron at scameron@bristolnow.news.



## THEFTS

From Page A1

to be equipped with a catalytic converter. This requirement is regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency.

A catalytic converter can regulate emissions because of three precious metals that are added during production of the converters: platinum, palladium and rhodium.

The United States Geological Survey included all three of these metals on its 2022 list of critical minerals, defined by the Energy Act of 2020 as "a non-fuel mineral or mineral material essential to the economic or national security of the U.S. and which has a supply chain vulnerable to disruption."

### WHY ARE CONVERTERS STOLEN?

Catalytic converters are stolen for their high resale value due to the usage of precious metals. The three metals used in catalytic converters are highly valuable and sell for large amounts of money.

According to Rxmechanic.com, the average scrap price for a catalytic converter is between \$300 and \$1,500.

### HOW COMMON IS CATALYTIC CONVERTER THEFT?

Catalytic converter theft is not uncommon, and national data confirms the rising trend.

Converter theft is not just a national issue. It is also a concern for some areas in this region.

For example, in the city of Kingsport, from Jan. 1, 2021, to July 26, 2021, the Kingsport Police Department recorded eight converter thefts. In the same time period for 2022, Kingsport police recorded 20 thefts. This is a 150% increase in reports across the same length of time.

Jeff Harr, who has owned Jeff's Pipe and Muffler in Kingsport for 23 years, said three to four people per week, or 20 to 25 people per month, come to his shop because their catalytic converter was stolen.

According to Harr, replacing a catalytic converter can be a costly expense. While the cost of the car part has changed, it can range from \$800 to \$2,000, depending on the type of converter.

Harr said many people steal catalytic converters because it is "quick money."

"Catalytic converters are usually a part that doesn't go bad," Harr said. "It is something you probably never would have had to replace if someone hadn't stolen it. So to have that happen and be out \$1,000- \$1,500 is heart-wrenching."

### HOW DO CATALYTIC CONVERTER THEFTS IMPACT THE VICTIMS?

Many people with stolen converters do not have the money to get them replaced.

Laura Bowling, 38, of Rogersville, said her catalytic converter was stolen earlier this year while her 2003 Dodge Caravan was parked at her sister's house.

Bowling said she can't drive without the converter because the car is too loud and would cost \$200 to \$300 to fix.

Since the converter was stolen, Bowling only has one usable car available for her family.

"If I had a converter on my van, I could drive it and give my current car to my teenager," Bowling said.

Converter thefts not only impact individuals. Some people also steal from businesses, like auto mechanics.

Sandy Eric Jackson, 41, manager of Jackson Automotive Sales, said her shop has been stolen from twice. The thieves hit both personal employee vehicles and customer cars.

While the customers have been easygoing about the theft since the issues began, Jackson said some customers have been unwilling to leave their cars at the shop overnight.

Eric Moore, 29, former co-owner of Patriot Auto Repair in Bulls Gap, said his shop has been hit by thieves several times. The thieves stole from personal and customer cars, as well as the shop's U-Haul trucks.

"This kind of theft can hurt a new business that doesn't have great insurance," Moore said. "By someone stealing something, it can be detrimental to a new business."

### HOW DO THIEVES SELL STOLEN CONVERTERS?

Moore said people with stolen converters sell to private dealers that don't check for documentation. Harr said he has heard of people advertising on social media that they are buying catalytic converters.

Converters can also be

sold at a scrap dealer, like Davis Recycling Inc. in Johnson City.

Companies like Davis Recycling are required to follow strict state laws when it comes to selling to individuals. For example, the sale has to be made in person, and the seller has to provide a receipt showing the replacement of the converter and the vehicle's registration.

They also need to provide their signature and thumbprint, have a valid ID and provide the year, make, model and plate number of the car they're driving. Also, state law does not allow payment to be given on the day of sale. Instead, sellers can have a check mailed to their home or wait five days to pick up their payment.

Ben Davis, who has owned Davis Recycling since 1998, said he mostly buys converters from licensed dealers. He said catalytic converter thieves target cars with easy access and valuable converters.

### ARE RECYCLERS AND SCRAP DEALERS PART OF THE PROBLEM OR THE SOLUTION?

Davis Recycling also processes catalytic converters, which means they deconstruct the converters to remove the parts that contain precious metals. They then analyze each converter to determine how much of each metal it contains.

Then, they send it off to a smelter, who helps reclaim the metals and send them back to the factory to be used in another converter.

"Recycling is a greener way to obtain metals over mining," Davis said. "Vehicles need converters because without them nobody can drive. Most stolen stuff is sold to people that don't check licenses. We are an important part of the supply chain, and some of the largest corporations depend on these metals."

Aaron Kolb, chief operating officer for Davis Recycling and treasurer of the Tennessee Scrap Recyclers Association, said there is a misconception that recyclers and scrap dealers are part of the problem.

"As a processor, it's our duty to take action and be part of the solution by removing more bad players," he said, "which helps to limit access to people buying stolen converters."

### ARE THERE LAWS TO REGULATE THE SALE OF CATALYTIC CONVERTERS?

As a member of the TSRA, Kolb has worked with state legislators to pass laws to address catalytic converter theft.

Last year, Tennessee passed the Catalytic Converter Consumer Protection Law, which requires that anyone in possession of a catalytic converter be a registered scrap dealer or show documentation to prove the converter was obtained from a replacement on a vehicle in their name.

Anyone in violation of this law will be charged with a Class A misdemeanor for each converter in their possession. If charged with a Class A misdemeanor, an individual could face up to 11 months and 29 days in jail and a fine of up to \$2,500.

"We have been successful in working with law enforcement to help catch some people and even provide training material to the police," Kolb said. "I have a good relationship with law enforcement; they know they can call when they need help."

### HOW DOES LAW ENFORCEMENT TREAT CATALYTIC CONVERTER THEFT?

Lt. Detective Cliff Evans of the Hawkins County Sheriff's Office said police take catalytic converter theft seriously.

"It's not a petty thing," Evans said. "It's a serious crime."

Evans added that sometimes thieves can cause \$2,000 to \$3,000 in damage to other parts of the car by removing the catalytic converter.

### HOW CAN PEOPLE PROTECT THEMSELVES FROM CATALYTIC CONVERTER THEFT?

Evans said people should park their vehicles in non-secluded, well-lit areas.

Kolb said he is involved in the national conversation about how individuals can protect themselves from converter theft.

Kolb said one idea is to implement an etching protocol that would allow mechanics to put the VIN number on the converter. Another option is to use a converter cage to limit accessibility.

"Etching is an easy, cost-efficient and fast option," Kolb said. "Thieves prefer ease, so if you make it difficult by using a converter cage, they may pass on your vehicle."

### NOTE TO READERS

We want to hear from you. Send us story ideas based on what you see in and around Bristol, and share photos with us of your favorite restaurants, scenic views, activities and people. Send your contributions to scameron@bristolnow.news. Your photos and comments may be used in the next edition of Bristol Now.

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