

The Charlotte Gazette

DEVOTED TO THE BEST INTERESTS OF CHARLOTTE COUNTY - FIRST, LAST AND ALWAYS

50 cents

Vol. 150 - Number 14

Wednesday, December 14, 2022

Drakes Branch, Virginia

Why is my tax bill so high?

By Crystal Vandegrift and Brian Carlton
The Charlotte Gazette

Just about every county in the Commonwealth has been struggling with the burden of higher personal property taxes for its citizens.

Charlotte County is no different.

However, county officials became aware of the expected increase in rates and took action.

For FY 2022, we reacted first and could offer a reduced rate but still have a lower rate than in FY 21," said Commissioner of the Revenue Naisha P. Carter. "Other localities weren't able to do that until this year for them, the calendar year 2022."

While citizens from other counties were seeing higher personal property bills in 2021, Charlotte citizens who own used vehicles saw some tax relief when they opened their

personal property tax bills.

In October 2012, following a public hearing, the Charlotte County Board of Supervisors (BOS) unanimously voted to approve a temporary lower personal property tax rate.

The new temporary personal property tax rate was set at \$2.60 per \$100 of the assessed value of the personal property, which is \$1.35 per \$100 of the assessed value less than the previous

year at \$3.95 per \$100 of assessed value.

The decreased tax rate was effective for the Fiscal Year 2022, which began on July 1, 2021, and extended to June 30, 2022.

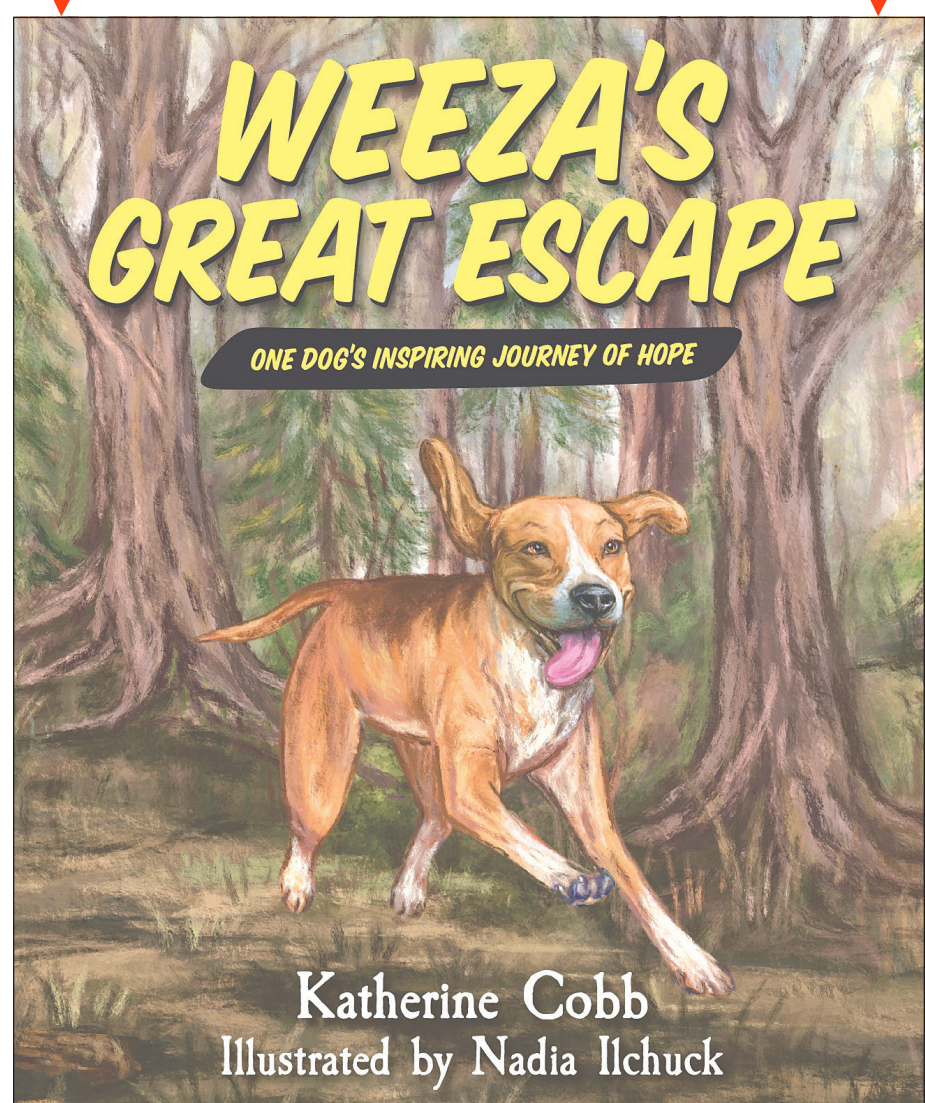
"When the FY2023 budget was adopted, the Board established the rate at \$3.25, which was still nearly 18% below the rate of \$3.95," said County Administrator Dan Witt. "The Board realized the value of used vehicles was ap-

preciating and not depreciating and therefore did not set that rate back to the FY2021 level."

HOW DOES MY TAX BILL WORK?

A city or county doesn't set the value of your vehicle. That's what drives the bill you get. They have to use the values from a recognized pricing guide. Prince Edward County, for example, uses

(See BILL, Page 2)



A look at the cover to Weeza's Great Adventure.

Cobb merges fiction with life

By Sarah McCormick
The Charlotte Gazette

The first time Katherine Cobb's writing showed up in Charlotte County, it was 2009. One of her short stories was published in "The Anthology of Appalachian Writers," produced each year by Shepherd University. Since then, the former newspaper editorial writer, who now calls Keysville home, has written six books of her own. Two of those made Amazon's bestseller's list, with another cracking their Top 100 listing. Now, as she releases

her first children's book, Cobb looks back over how things got started.

Cobb is no newbie when it comes to passion for the written word. Writing bubbled up inside of her from a young age, and in junior high school, she decided it was time to

put pen to paper and write short stories. Over the years, her writing popped up in family newsletters or personal projects, until she answered a help wanted ad for a paper in Martinsburg, West Virginia.

"I answered the local newspaper's ad to become one of their community columnists and was selected," Cobb said. "For one precious year, I wrote an editorial column once a month. Nothing had ever felt so comfortable, or enjoyable, or right. After that, I became a regular feature writer and freelance contributor, and later, a regular columnist."

Her column, "It Is What It Is" won first place for Best Lifestyle Column by the West Virginia Press Association in her first year. That

(See COBB, Page 2)



Katherine Cobb

Lunenburg man faces murder charges

By Crystal Vandegrift
The Charlotte Gazette

A Lunenburg man was in court last week facing first-degree murder charges in the slaying of Marjureka White-Jennings.

According to court documents, a jury trial began in Lunenburg County Court on Monday, Dec. 5, in the case against Thomas Mantez who was charged with the December 2019 murder of his girlfriend.

Authorities found White-Jennings lying in blood on the floor with multiple stab wounds the night



Thomas Mantez III

(See MURDER, Page 2)

Take precautions as temperatures drop

Ready or not, winter is on its way to Virginia. With colder temperatures settling in, the weeks leading up to winter are a prime time to prepare your home for damaging snow and ice storms.

Locally, rain and a wintry mix comes into the picture on Wednesday afternoon and through the day Thursday.

Most of Central Virginia (Charlotte, Lynchburg, Charlottesville, Farmville, and Richmond) will receive mostly cold rain. This means temperatures are near 35F while it's raining.

You could hear/see occasional sleet and roads could be slick.

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure when it comes to getting your home ready for winter," said Scott DeNoon, senior farm product and underwriting manager for Virginia Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Co.

"Throughout the year, it's important to inspect your home regularly, and perform any repairs wherever they're needed," he continued. "Take the time to maintain and winterize

(See TEMPERATURES, Page 2)

Mask lawsuit ends in Virginia

By Brian Carlton
The Charlotte Gazette

When Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin took office, he signed Executive Order 2. The bill stripped school districts like Charlotte County of the ability to require community masking as a way to prevent a COVID-19 outbreak. Basically, schools could no longer require students to wear masks. That will be changing, as the result of a court case.

On Monday, Dec. 12, a settlement was reached in the case of Christopher Seaman vs. The Commonwealth of Virginia. Almost immediately after Youngkin signed Executive Order 2, multiple par-

ents filed a lawsuit, arguing that requiring masks is a right covered by federal disability laws. The U.S. District Court for the Western District of Virginia agreed. Rather than appeal, state officials came to a settlement on Monday.

As part of the deal, letters went out to all of the districts where children represented in the case attend school. Those letters say if a parent asks, the district has to require both children and teachers to wear masks, in order to stay in compliance with federal disability laws. The same goes for Charlotte County and all other districts. If a parent

(See LAWSUIT, Page 2)

Introducing some second-grade authors
Page 10

Advertising and news deadline:
Friday at noon



HELPING THE COMMUNITY ONE TIRE AT A TIME

6340 GEORGE WASHINGTON HWY., KEYSVILLE, VA 23947 • 434-736-8712
HOURS: MONDAY-FRIDAY 9AM-5PM • SATURDAY 9AM-12PM • STRIKEFORCETIRE.COM

Eureka Elementary School hires Security Officer

Charlotte County Public Schools has experienced an excellent partnership with the Charlotte County Sheriff's Office for decades through the School Resource Officer Program, which was designed to place deputies in schools to enhance safety, educate students about matters such as the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse and to serve as additional positive role models for students. Pictured is Eureka Elementary School (EES) Security Officer Johnny Bailey, pictured with EES students.



Mt. Zion to give out food boxes this Saturday

Food boxes will be distributed this Saturday at Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Red House. The event will take place from 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., for those in the Phenix and surrounding Red House community who are residents of Charlotte County.

You can receive USDA food monthly at only one site in Virginia each month. Residents who do come are asked to bring a large cardboard box and identification. If you have questions, call Bernice Pannell at (434) 248-6465 after 5 p.m. and before 8 p.m.

Also, COVID-19 safety guidelines will be followed. Directions will be given as you enter the parking lot. You must stay in your vehicle and the box will be put in your trunk.

COBB: Local author launches her first children's book

FROM PAGE ONE

led back to Virginia and this region, as Cobb became a regular writer for a number of magazines and newspapers.

SHIFTING TO FICTION

But after a while, she started going back to the short stories she used to write. One of them ended up in the 2009 Anthology of Appalachian Writers, as we mentioned earlier. But it was after that she decided to try her hand at writing full-fledged books. Her first book, *Falling*, was picked up by a publishing company and became a bestseller on Amazon.

"I've always been a realist," Cobb said. "Everything I write contains a spark of a real-life experience. Even when I was a columnist, I wrote slice-of-life pieces. Life contains the basis of all themes."

When it comes to setting timelines for a project, Cobb doesn't.

"I don't give myself any time frame. My first novel required at least three rewrites," she said. "The second book I wrote took about 3-4 months to finish, so it went a lot quicker. It's the editing that takes a long time."

To date, Cobb has various published works — that includes two novels, four non-fiction books, and her newest work, *Weeza's Great Escape* — a children's picture book based on the true story of one courageous dog with a lot of heart. Additionally, she has written and published one novella to date.

A DOG NAMED WEEZA

After moving to

Keysville 4 years ago, Cobb and her husband noticed random dogs appearing around and on their property every year during hunting season. After asking around and finding some answers, it was revealed that many hunting dogs who didn't perform as desired would be abandoned in the wilderness, left to fend for themselves. Some weren't so lucky and would meet the fate of death by the hands of those who were supposed to protect them.

In the cold, winter month of January 3 years ago, an abandoned or possibly escaped hunting dog who looked emaciated and abused appeared on the Cobb's property. The dog was very anxious and afraid. Eventually, Weeza, as Cobb's husband named her, began to form trust with the couple. It wasn't long before the couple convinced Weeza to take treats and to come and sleep on their covered porch.

"She clearly is not a good hunter!" laughed Cobb, detailing how whenever Weeza would see a deer, she would run. "It was easy to see where she may have come from. She was clearly abused by her owner and possibly

other dogs."

When Cobb started talking about Weeza's story on social media in 2020, many people began to react with emotions of love and happiness, and really resonated with this tale of the underdog.

One man who saw Weeza's story stated his son was battling cancer and they very much looked forward to checking in to see updates about Weeza every day. Others really appreciated the story as it was during a time of quarantine at home for many, and Weeza provided a sense of normalcy and happiness to so many who simply felt alone.

As her first children's book, Cobb tested the waters by starting it as a Kickstarter project. After selling several hundred copies that way, she officially published Weeza's *Great Adventure*, as somewhat of a self-publishing adventure for herself.

FUTURE WORKS IN THE PIPELINE

Currently, Cobb has two projects in process. The first is entitled *The Marriage Project*, a social-based experiment detailing the difficult things nobody ever tells couples before they get

married. The *Marriage Project* will contain recorded answers to questions posed to various married couples which detail the raw reality and difficulties found in marriage. Cobb would love for anyone interested in being a part of the project to visit her website, KatherineCobb.com, where they can request the questions to provide answers to weave into the book.

The second work in Cobb's current lineup is *Little Wife Lies* — a book about a romance on fire that winds up going terribly wrong. Additionally, Cobb has plotted out her next novel, which is set to be a feel-good second chance romance. The release date will be sometime within the first quarter of the year.

When asked if Cobb

has a favorite work, the writer found it difficult to respond with a singular favorite.

"I think every book is special for its own reason. I'm called to do what I do. There's a reason why I put it into the world. I didn't make it easy on myself. I've gone all over the place with my genres. My through line really is about our shared humanity. I think that brings us closer together. I think people are

fascinating. More than the story, the characters matter."

Cobb had practical advice for new writers who desire to publish a book of their own. "They always tell you to start somewhere. It's a big, complicated world out there. You can self-publish. You can do it quickly. You can do it badly. Understand your own expectations. If you really want to write, just get started somewhere."

THANK YOU

We greatly appreciate all the acts of kindness, expressions of sympathy and prayers of comfort during the loss of our loved one.

The Family of Frances Stitt

TRI-COUNTY FORD



1348 Four Locust Hwy. Keysville, Virginia

(434) 736-8444 Toll Free 1-800-333-7456



2020 Ranger Supercab STX
All power equipment, Alloy wheels, Nice local one owner truck!
#49737T
\$30,995



2020 Ford F-150 XLT
23K Miles, Audio Controls on Steering Wheel, Bluetooth, Good MPG, Keyless Entry, Traction Control
#65850P
\$41,995



2019 Nissan Frontier SV
35K Miles, Audio Controls on Steering Wheel, Bluetooth, Keyless Entry, Traction Control, Rear Spoiler
#94643P
\$29,995



2012 Ram 1500 Laramie Longhorn
Heated Leather Seats, Running Boards, Spray-In Bed Liner, Tow Package, New Tires, Local Trade
#9104T
\$16,988



2012 Ford F-150 XL
Traction Control, Chrome, ABS, CD, Airbag
#3802P
\$13,995



2021 Ford Explorer XLT
13K Miles, Audio Controls on Steering Wheel, Bluetooth, Automatic Climate Control, Good MPG Climate Control
#14337P
\$39,995



2018 Ford Edge SEL
37K Miles, Heated Leather Seats, Heated Steering Wheel, Sync, Satellite Radio, Dual Temp Controls, Reverse Sensors.
#6041P
\$26,995



2018 Subaru Outback
41K Miles, Push-Button Start, Steering Wheel Mounted Controls, Automatic Climate Control, Satellite Radio
#5986T
\$30,995



2017 Chevrolet Traverse LT
Local Trade, Back Up Camera, Reverse Sensors, Heated Front Seats, Tow Hitch, Bluetooth Radio
#3116T
\$16,995



2014 Jeep Wrangler Sport
96K Miles, Audio Controls on Steering Wheel, Power Equipment, Chrome, Hard-Top, Local Trade
#18453T
\$19,995



2017 ESCAPE SE
50K Miles, Local Trade, 4x4, Back Up Camera, Satellite Radio, Bluetooth Radio.
#68053P
\$18,995



2013 Hyundai SANTA FE
Local Trade, Heated Front Seats, Bluetooth Radio, Satellite Radio, Steering Wheel Mounted Controls
#8731T
\$12,995

*Prices exclude tax, title, tag and \$199.00 processing fee. Sale Good thru 12/24/22

For More Inventory, Go To Tricountyfordonline.com

TRI-COUNTY
KEYSVILLE, VA



Ask for Mark Harding, Wayne Seamster or Ethan Miller

Remember Honor Teach



WREATHS across AMERICA

Honoring Veterans at Trinity Memorial Gardens with placing wreaths on over 500 Veteran Graves!

Join Us for the Wreath Laying Ceremony

Saturday, December 17, 2022

Trinity Memorial Gardens

22482 Prince Edward Hwy, Rice, VA 23966

12 noon - Please come early

Bring a lawn chair for your comfort!

Sponsored By Judith Randolph - Longwood Chapter NSDAR

JOIN US IN PAYING TRIBUTE TO OUR VETERANS