

Lancer teams win big over Liberty, B1



Temple Christian secures road victory, B3



Coverage of Lady Lancer basketball, indoor track, SPORTS

AMHERST NEW ERA~PROGRESS

Amherst County's only hometown newspaper | THURSDAY, JANUARY 13, 2022 | NewEraProgress.com | Amherst, Va.

AMHERST COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

School division leader is retiring

Superintendent Arnold leaving effective July 1 after four years in post

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Arnold

Amherst County Public Schools Superintendent Rob Arnold announced on Jan. 7 his intention to

retire effective July 1 after four years at the helm of the school division.

Arnold, who began in the post in July 2018, has been an educator for three decades and previously served as a teacher assistant principal, principal and assistant superin-

tendent in Campbell County Public Schools.

A Radford native and University of Virginia graduate, Arnold began his career as a seventh-grade science teacher in Campbell County and was chosen out of roughly a dozen candidates for the Amherst superintendent post. He also was a past coach in football, basketball and baseball in Campbell County.

"This decision was not made

lightly, but is one that I feel is necessary for me and my family," Arnold wrote in a letter sent Jan. 7 to the Amherst school community and posted on Facebook.

He wrote he will do everything he can to help the new superintendent make a smooth transition. He thanked administrators, teachers and staff and said "my success has always been based on your success." He also thanked

the Amherst community for giving him the opportunity to make a positive impact on the children in the county.

"Many parents and community members have given personal time and energy to make an enormous impact on the improvement of this school division," Arnold wrote. "I encourage this community to stay

Please see **ARNOLD**, Page A6



LEE LUTHER JR. PHOTOS, FOR THE NEW ERA-PROGRESS

Mary Hurst, co-organizer of the Four Seasons Farmers Market, checks a customer's list on Jan. 6.

All fresh, all the time

Four Seasons Farm Market an online and in-person outlet

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Piles of snow lined streets and parking lots in downtown Amherst with the possibility for more wintry precipitation after nightfall the afternoon of Jan. 6 as Four Seasons Farm Market opened for the first time in 2022.

The online farmers market, which has an in-person farm table available for pickup on Thursdays, lives up to its name in the height of winter when most farmers markets have closed up shop.

Mary Hurst, a co-organizer,



Brown eggs came in different shades. Mary Hurst, co-organizer of Four Seasons Farm Market, said eggs are among the most popular items, especially during the holidays when people are baking more.

said there has been a great demand among Amherst residents for an online market. Four Seasons Farm Market

started operating the first week of September and sets up each

Please see **FARM**, Page A2



Four Seasons Farm Market is set up behind Ritchie's Barber Shop for pickup on Thursday afternoons.

COVID-19 cases still on the rise in Amherst

Schools had higher positive numbers than expected off break

FROM STAFF REPORTS

The latest surge of COVID-19 continued to show growth in cases in Amherst County just more than a week into the new year.

As of Jan. 10 Amherst County had 5,330 cases and 63 deaths related to the virus, according to the Virginia Department of Health. The county had 5,008 cases on Jan. 3.

In Amherst County Public Schools, which were opened two days last week because of weather, the division had 57 positive cases with additional students and staff waiting on test results, according to William Wells, assistant superintendent.

"We anticipated an increase in positives but the numbers are a little higher than we were hoping for," coming off Christmas break, Wells said. "The spread of the Omicron variant and the continuation of the Delta variant have led to the increases."

The Central Virginia Health District, which includes Amherst, has seen a 350% increase in positive cases since Dec. 20 as of Jan. 7, according to VDH.

Julian Walker, vice president of communications for the Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association, on Jan. 7 said the state eclipsed the previous record for daily hospitalizations. The statewide COVID-19 hospitalization count of 3,239 on Jan. 7 was a single-day record since the pandemic began, eclipsing the previous one-day peak of 3,201 hospitalizations on Jan. 13, 2021.

COVID-19 hospitalizations are up 194% across the state in the past month in the fifth surge of the pandemic, Walker said.

Gov. Ralph Northam on Jan. 10 issued an emergency order giving Virginia's health care system more flexibility to serve more patients in the state's hospitals.

"We also continue to urge unvaccinated Virginians to get vaccinated and boosted as a way to reduce their risk of infection and/or serious illness that leads

Please see **COVID**, Page A2

Reflecting on Jan. 6 insurrection 1-year anniversary

Reaction still fresh on feelings of political divide in the US and hopes for finding common ground

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The week before Gov.-elect Glenn Youngkin claimed victory for the Republican Party in the Nov. 2 election, a large crowd gathered in the parking lot of Vito's Restaurant in Amherst to

cheer the businessman in his first bid for public office and hear him discuss policy and goals.

However, a few who attended the event held signs opposing Youngkin and had a different topic on their minds, saying amongst themselves "January 6" as he spoke of his vision for

Virginia. The two words, perhaps more than any other, capture the deep divide in America on full display during the attack on the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

On the one-year anniversary, the event continued to bring out differing views and reflections among Central Virginians, Re-

publicans and Democrats alike.

Vance Wilkins, chair of the Amherst County Republican Committee, said he doesn't view the event as a true coup attempt and referred to it as "a mob that got loose."

Please see **ANNIVERSARY**, Page A2

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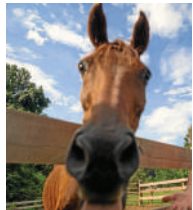
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Youngkin, Afton nonprofit celebrate Spirit of Virginia award, **A2**



Grant helps Amherst schools offer incentives to new hires, **B2**

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Madison Heights mixed-use development approved

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A rezoning of 170 acres as part of high-density mixed-use residential and commercial development on U.S. 29 Business in Madison Heights has received the Amherst County Board of Supervisors' approval.

The Madison Heights Town Centre project envisions apart-

ments, townhomes, patio homes, single-family homes and commercial uses along with open space, walking trails and parks on 13 acres located just north of the Seminole Plaza shopping center. The board in June approved a rezoning for roughly 10 acres as part of the project; the latest rezoning was approved July 19.

The majority of the land is set to go from General Commercial

(B-2) district and Industrial (M-1) district to Mixed Use/Traditional Neighborhood Development (MU/TND) district. Jeremy Bryant, Amherst County's director of community development, said all of the open space would be placed into a property owners association except for a 13-acre park the developer, Sam Patel, plans to donate to the county.

Bryant said the house lots gen-

erally measure a half acre. The property is an urban development area, a term for land where the county envisions future growth, Bryant said.

"...Through time the county has designated only one urban development area within the county and it's this area," Bryant said.

A central park is a main feature of the neighborhood that is planned to include up to 75,000

square feet of commercial spaces, about 400 apartment units, up to 250 townhomes and patio homes

Please see **DEVELOPMENT**, Page A3

WATCH: For video of the Madison Heights Town Centre rezoning public hearing point your smartphone at the QR code, then tap the link. **NEWSVU**



SUPPORTING A VISION

PROVIDED PHOTO COURTESY OF SWEET BRIAR COLLEGE

Sweet Briar College students work in the vineyard on campus.

Sweet Briar exceeds alumnae donor expectations for fiscal year 2022

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Sweet Briar College had a successful fundraising year.

Through gifts — including unrestricted gifts of more than \$7 mil-

lion from alumnae and friends as well as restricted funds for scholarships, capital, endowment and other needs — the private women's college in Amherst County raised \$25.6 million in fiscal year 2022.

That's an increase of nearly \$5 mil-

lion over one year ago.

"Sweet Briar is a unique institution — a category of one, really," Sweet Briar College President Meredith Woo said in a news release. "It

Please see **VISION**, Page A6

WATCH: For video of some of the Sweet Briar College facilities, point your smartphone at the QR code, then tap the link. **NEWSVU**

Amherst County comprehensive plan receives an update

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The Amherst County 2007-2027 Comprehensive Plan, a guide for future development and growth, recently received its latest update after an extensive review and input process.

The board of supervisors on July 19 approved the most recent version of the plan, a blueprint for critical land use decisions and a resource available for the private sector in decision-making and investment. The update provides an overview of obstacles and opportunities for future land use, transportation and goals that help unite the mission, vision and values of the county.

Modifications were made to the county's future land use map and the updated plan includes the blueprint for the envisioned redevelopment of the Central Virginia Training Center property in Madison Heights. The state-owned CVTC site of more than 300 acres in close proximity to downtown Lynchburg closed as a longtime facility for people with medical needs and disabilities in the spring of 2020.

Michael Bryant, chair of the Amherst County Planning Commission, said the new state budget that took effect this month and its inclusion of \$25 million to settle outstanding bonds on the property is a major positive for the county in hopes of attracting developers to the site.

"I think that's going to be a huge push for us," Bryant said. "It's going to open that land and this fall could be really interesting to see what happens with

Please see **UPDATE**, Page A2

Amherst Fire Department fighting a new hazard — inflation

Purchase of new tanker truck goes up 19% to more than \$1 million, county official calls hike 'tough pill to swallow'

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Inflation has driven up the price tag on a new tanker truck for the Amherst Fire Department

by 19%, an addition of just more than \$160,000 that county officials have agreed to cover in a purchase now at more than \$1 million.

The fire truck purchase was

listed at \$871,615 in the county's current budget as part of its capital improvement plan. Sam Bryant, director of public safety, recently told the Amherst County Board of Supervisors at

least three price increases from the vendor have come about.

Bryant said the new truck should last at least 20 years and the overall price tag going to such a high level is new territory for the county.

Supervisor Tom Martin, who

Please see **TRUCK**, Page A2

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SPORTS

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PHOTOS BY LEE LUTHER JR., FOR THE NEW ERA-PROGRESS

Amherst B Team assistant coach Jarred Bryant steps up to the plate to warm up his pitcher during a recent game at E.C. Glass. The B Team is made up of Monelison and Amherst middle school players.

Playing for the B team, bringing their A game



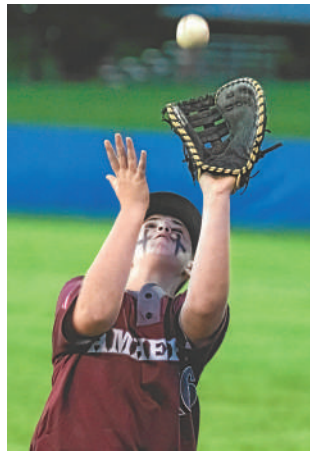
Above: Amherst B Team pitcher Dylan Leftwitch unloads a heater against the Hill City team. Amherst won the late April contest, 5-4.



Right: Amherst B Team left fielder Jack Casey attempts to bare hand a bad hop.



Amherst shortstop Keith Ogden tags out a Lynchburg base runner.



Amherst first baseman Colton Christian gets under a pop fly to make the catch for the out.



Kaiden Routen slaps the tag for the out as a Lynchburg base runner is late arriving to second base.

Sweet Briar earns fourth at IHSA nationals

FROM STAFF REPORTS

In Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, sophomore Emmy Longest recorded Sweet Briar's best-ever individual finish during the Intercollegiate Horse Shows Association national championships,

winning in the open flat division to headline the Vixens' showing at the Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex & Expo Center.

SBC finished fourth with 30 points, two points shy of a pair of teams tie for sec-

ond place and eight points behind team champ Emory & Henry.

Three of Longest's teammates posted third-place finishes in their divisions and disciplines, and SBC picked up three more top-

seven finishes and two honorable mentions during the two-day event May 6 and May 7.

COLLEGE WOMEN'S TENNIS
Washington and Lee 5, Sweet Briar 0: In Lexing-

ton, Washington and Lee rode a pair of 8-1 victories in doubles play to an early lead it never relinquished in a sweep of Sweet Briar (23-4) in the ODAC championship at the W&L Upper Courts.

After another win in doubles play, the Generals added two more victories in straight sets on the Nos. 3 and 4 singles courts to clinch their 19th straight and 31st overall conference title.