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**RIVALRY FOOTBALL:** Kettle Run outscores Liberty 49-42; volleyball, field hockey coverage. **SPORTS, PAGES 17-20**

October 5, 2022

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VIRGINIA PRESS ASSOCIATION: BEST SMALL NEWSPAPER IN VIRGINIA 2017-2021

## Data centers' secrecy often keeps residents in the dark

### Details on proposed Amazon center in Warrenton still missing

By Peter Cary

PIEDMONT JOURNALISM FOUNDATION

On Sept. 6, at the end of a long Prince William County Board of Supervisors' meeting, Jeanine Lawson, R-Brentsville, took the mic. First, she thanked constituents for their help with various things. Then she lit into Amazon.

Even though Lawson has supported other data center projects during her time in office, she used her "supervisor's time" to express displeasure, even "disgust," at how the mammoth data center company had dealt with residents of Great Oak subdivision near Manassas,

when they complained about the noise coming from an Amazon complex next door.

Amazon Web Services had refused to answer basic questions posed to the company, she said. "Everything that the community is asking regarding these problems with noise, AWS is, their canned response is always, 'It's proprietary.' It's proprietary to the point where, like, they won't even tell you what they had for lunch."

Dale Browne, president of Great Oak's homeowners' association, said Amazon has been more cooperative since Lawson's diatribe and is working on a new solution to try to fix the noise problem. But he said the company had been "very obtuse" and "a master of whitewashing" in the past.

See **DATA CENTERS**, page 4



Attorney John Foote has been representing Amazon Web Services in negotiations with the Town of Warrenton.

## New CEO at Fauquier Health lays out roadmap for improvement

### Warrenton hospital scored a 'D' in last 2 Leapfrog safety scores

By Colleen LaMay

FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF WRITER

The new CEO at Fauquier Health is ready to roll up her sleeves and get to work improving the Warrenton hospital, which has received two "D" letter grades in a row from The Leapfrog Group, a national nonprofit organization that releases hospital-safety grades twice a year for more than 3,000 hospitals nationwide.

See **ROADMAP**, page 2



FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF PHOTO/COY FERRELL

### So close

As rains from Hurricane Ian moved in Friday night, Andrew Ryman (12) and the scrappy Liberty High football team came close to an upset victory at rival Kettle Run. Instead, Trey Western (10) and the undefeated Cougars held the Eagles off to preserve their perfect season. See page 17.



Rep. Jennifer Wexton



Hung Cao

PHOTOS BY JOHN CALHOUN

## Wexton, Cao clash on abortion, Va. policies for transgender students in first debate

Both candidates express caution on data centers proposed near Manassas battlefields

By Jill Palermo

TIMES STAFF WRITER

Rep. Jennifer Wexton and her Republican challenger, retired Navy Capt. Hung Cao, clashed on

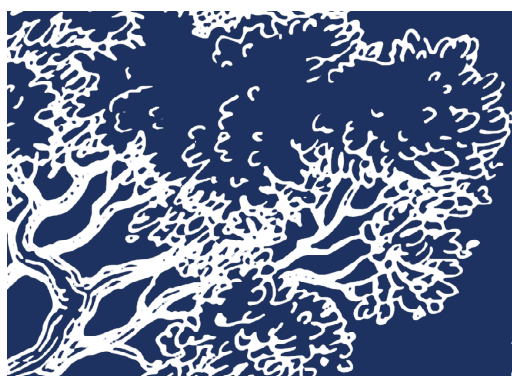
abortion rights, gun violence, Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin's proposed new policies for transgender students and what to do about rising college and health care costs during their first live debate Sunday at the Dar al Noor mosque in Manassas.

See **DEBATE**, page 22

2 men convicted, sentenced in Trip Bopp's murder.

See page 6






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# New CEO at Fauquier Hospital lays out roadmap for improvement

ROADMAP, from page 1

Fauquier Hospital has had a long history of being a “shining star” and can get there again, said Rebecca Segal, who took over as CEO in early September, a year after Chad Melton resigned to take a position at a nonprofit hospital in Seattle, Washington. Segal is a Virginia native with family — including siblings — who live in the region.



Fauquier Hospital CEO  
Rebecca Segal

Fauquier Health received the low Leapfrog scores in spring 2022 and fall 2021. New ratings will be available to the public in mid-November. Fauquier Hospital was the only facility among 19 in the region to receive a “D” in the most recent grading period, according to the Leapfrog website. None earned an “F.”

Nearby hospitals, including UVA Haymarket Medical Center, UVA Prince William Medical Center, Novant Health UVA Health System Culpeper Medical Center and Warren Memorial Hospital in Front Royal all received “A” grades on the most recent hospital safety report.

“There is a lot of opportunity for growth here,” Segal said of her decision to accept the CEO job. “I don’t know what was going on two years ago” when the data was collected, she said. “I mean, you see the two bad scores in a row, and you go, ‘Well, wait a minute; it used to be an A or B’ so, what’s going on?” she said.

“I have no idea, but what I can say is my goal is to make an A.” Fauquier Hospital has not had an “A” rating since the spring of 2020.

The hospital has a lot going for it, Segal said. “We’ve got a really good team here that I’ve met so far,” she said. “I think we’ve got what we need

## About Leapfrog Hospital grades

Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grades, formerly known as Hospital Safety Scores, are assigned to nearly 3,000 general acute-care hospitals across the nation twice annually. The Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade uses more than 30 national performance measures from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, the Leapfrog Hospital Survey and information from other supplemental data sources.

## How to use the grade

The Leapfrog Hospital Safety Guide was developed to show the public which hospitals are best at protecting their patients from harm. This tool can help guide health care decisions. The Safety Grade rates hospitals on the very basics of medical care, such as handwashing, entering prescriptions through a computer and the availability of highly trained nurses. Past grades can be accessed to see a hospital’s track record in keeping its patients safe from errors, injuries, accidents and infections.

Taken together, those performance measures produce a single letter grade representing a hospital’s overall performance in keeping patients safe from preventable harm and medical errors. The Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade methodology has been peer reviewed and published in the Journal of Patient Safety.

Source: Leapfrog website

To look up Fauquier Hospital’s full Hospital Safety Grade report, go to [www.hospitalsafetygrade.org](http://www.hospitalsafetygrade.org)

## About Fauquier Health

**What:** Fauquier Health is a part of the private, for-profit LifePoint community health system. The private-equity company Apollo owns LifePoint, which serves rural communities across the nation.

**Address:** Fauquier Hospital is at 500 Hospital Drive in Warrenton

**Facilities:** Fauquier Hospital, a fully accredited, 97-bed hospital; Fauquier Health Rehabilitation & Nursing Center, a 113-bed long-term care and rehabilitation facility; the Villa at Suffield Meadows, an assisted living facility; the Wound Healing Center, and a medically supervised Wellness Center offering cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation programs. Fauquier Health also operates nine physician’s offices, including primary care and specialties.

to really take it to the next level, and we’ve been doing a lot around quality already.”

## Dangerous bedsores

One factor in Fauquier Hospital’s low score in spring 2022 was what Leapfrog characterized as a poor record of preventing bedsores, also known as “pressure injuries.” Bedsores develop when patients lie in one position for too long without being turned. Bedsores can become large and deep, causing pain and infections that can prolong hospital stays and can even lead to death.

“Fauquier Hospital has implemented new protocols to address pressure injuries, which was a contributing factor to our declining grade,” hospital spokeswoman Sarah Cabbage said in an email. “In fact, we have seen a nearly 40% reduction in 2021 YTD versus 2019 in pressure injuries,” she said. “However, due to the lag in reporting, it may take a couple years before our Leapfrog grade reflects that data,” Cabbage said.

Part of that effort includes stepping in early enough to prevent high-risk patients from developing pressure injuries in the first place. That includes lab work, wound consults and nutrition consulting, Cabbage said.

Digitally monitoring patient mobility in the ICU, where all but one of the hospital’s cases of serious pressure sores originated, is also proving very helpful, Cabbage said. Hospital staff place sensors directly on patients’ chests. Those sensors automatically measure patients’ position, orientation and activity and wirelessly transmit the data to clinical staff.

The system alerts staff when patients need to be turned and confirms when adequate pressure reduction is achieved with each turn. The sensor

also registers when patients move on their own and automatically adjusts their turning schedules.

## ‘Harmful events’

The hospital scored better than average for six common surgical complications: dangerous object left in a patient’s body, surgical wounds splitting open, blood leakage, kidney injury, serious breathing problems and accidental cuts and tears.

However, the hospital scored below hospitals nationwide for “harmful events” following patients’ surgeries or procedures. “These potentially avoidable safety events represent opportunities for improving patient care,” Leapfrog says. “Staff should document when errors happen, discuss how the error occurred and develop a plan to prevent future errors.”

After only a few weeks on the job, Segal has not yet had time to delve into all the ways Fauquier Hospital can improve. However, she said, many of the problems are “low-hanging fruit” that can be fixed relatively easily with better communication and documentation, she said.

The hospital ranked below average in three of the six areas related to “Doctors, Nurses & Hospital Staff.” Those three areas were communication with doctors, communication with nurses and the time staff takes to respond when patients who are in pain or can’t get to the bathroom call for help.

See ROADMAP, page 8

## The Segal file

**Who:** Rebecca Segal, CEO of Fauquier Health

**Education:** Bachelor’s degree in business administration from University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg; master’s degree in health administration from Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond.

**Job Experience:** CEO at Rutherford Regional Health System, a Duke LifePoint facility in Rutherfordton, North Carolina, from 2017 to 2022. She has worked in the health care industry since 2001.

**Noteworthy:** In 2017, Segal was named one of Becker’s Hospital Review’s “Rising stars: 60 health care leaders under 40.”



## October’s Student Art was OUTSTANDING!

This month features Brumfield Elementary & Fauquier High School students.

October’s Featured Artist is 2nd grader  
**Julia Lang**

Other submissions include:

**Erik Anikis** - 12th Grade (Photography)

**Sahar Noori** - 10th Grade (Tempera Batik)

**Maya Weck** - 12th Grade (Reverse Value Charcoal)

Look for more student art on [www.Fauquier.com](http://www.Fauquier.com) coming soon.



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## New CEO at Fauquier Hospital lays out roadmap for improvement

ROADMAP, from page 2

### Reducing infections

Another piece of “low-hanging fruit” is the hospital’s history of urinary tract infections among patients who require a Foley catheter, a flexible tube inserted into the urethra to empty the bladder and collect urine in a drainage bag. Patients with internal catheters are at risk of developing urinary tract infections that can lead to other complications, increase recovery time and even lead to death, Leapfrog says.

“If you don’t have a catheter, you can’t get an infection,” Segal said. “So, one of the things that we’re starting is to go over every morning is how many Foley catheters do we have in (patients)?” The idea is to get the catheters out of patients as quickly as possible to reduce the chances of infection, she said. Sometimes, other types of catheters can be used, which could also reduce the risk of infection, she said.

“I think we’re on the right track,” Segal said. “I think that there’s obviously a lot more that we want to do because I want this to be the best hospital, but I feel like the teams want to make things better and, hopefully, I can help them get there,” she said.

Some of the data the Leapfrog grades are based on are a year old, and some are as old as four years. But Segal acknowledged that two poor

grades in a row do not inspire confidence in the Warrenton hospital.

### Communication is key to recovery

Fauquier Hospital scored below its counterparts nationwide in three of six measures for preventing errors in hospitals. The below-average scores were:

**Doctors order medicine through a computer.** Hospitals can use Computerized Physician Order Entry systems to order medications for patients instead of writing out prescriptions by hand. Computerized systems let doctors know if they try to order a medicine that could cause harm, such as an adult dose of medicine for a child. Safer hospitals use CPOE systems and test them to ensure they work right, Leapfrog says.

**Communication about discharge.** This is a measure of how well patients believe hospital staff communicate with them about steps they need to take to recover when they leave the hospital. Safer hospitals that score well on this measure take time with every patient to clarify the responsibilities of everyone involved in patients’ recovery, Leapfrog says.

**Communication about medicines.** This measures how well patients believe hospital staff explain the purpose and side effects of new medicines. Misunderstandings can lead to serious problems, according to Leapfrog. Hospitals that score well on this measure take time to speak with every patient to ensure they understand the purpose of new medicines, as well as side effects.

Fauquier Hospital scored above

average on ensuring that healthcare workers washed their hands before touching patients, an important way to prevent the spread of infections.

### Competition with urban hospitals

Sometimes, small rural hospitals have a tough time competing with the reputations and specialty care of their urban counterparts. That is true in Warrenton, Segal said. “People tend to think bigger is better,” she said.

While the Fauquier hospital has no plans to offer open-heart procedures or neurosurgery, it nevertheless has a lot to offer, she said. “We do want to compete with those other hospitals in the things that we do well,” Segal said. That includes obstetrics services, as well as general and orthopedic surgery, said Segal, who hopes to attract more general surgeons to the hospital, as well as expand its obstetrics services.

### Staffing

Staffing issues make providing quality care more challenging, and Fauquier Hospital is in the same boat as other hospitals nationwide. All are short of nurses and other healthcare staff and are doing what they can to lure more. Fauquier Hospital recently held a graduation ceremony for 10 new nurses who completed their training at Fauquier Hospital. All of them will work at Fauquier Hospital. Segal hopes that all nurses who train at the Fauquier hospital will stay there.

During Segal’s time at Rutherford Regional Health System, the hospital made strides in physician recruit-

ment, expanding access to primary and specialty care in the region and in employee engagement and patient safety, according to a hospital news release about Segal.

### Emergency room wait times

Leapfrog’s safety grades did not specifically address emergency room wait times, but they are a common source of grumbling at many hospitals. Some post wait times on their websites so patients have an idea of how long they must wait to see a doctor, nurse practitioner or physician assistant after they get to the ER. Prince William Medical Center and Haymarket Medical Center both provide estimated wait times on their websites. Fauquier Hospital does not currently post ER wait times on its website.

“I haven’t cracked that nut yet, but we already talked to our ER provider group,” Segal said. “We’re going to figure that out if there’s triggers we can pull to reduce the wait times.”

“Wait times are a big deal for people, and it feels like it reflects quality,” Segal said. “If you’re waiting for three hours in the ER, are you likely to come back? No. So, we’ve got to fix that because I want you to want to come back,” she said.

Overall, Segal expects remarkable things from Fauquier Hospital. “I think it’s important that we feel really proud of where we work, that our physicians feel proud of where they’re sending their patients, and that our community wants to use the facility, and we can get there.”

Reach Colleen LaMay at [clamay@fauquier.com](mailto:clamay@fauquier.com)



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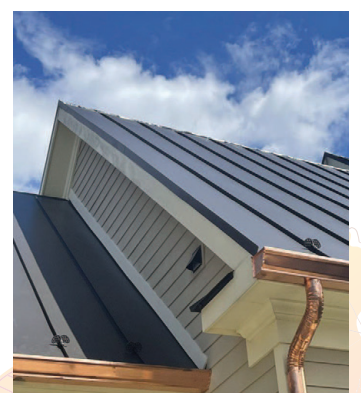
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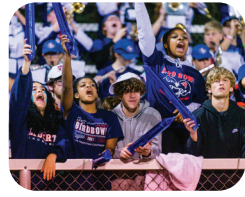
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## Election results

As of press time Tuesday night, this was the status of competitive races on the ballot in Fauquier County. All results are unofficial.

**10th Cong. District:** **Jennifer Wexton (D)** led Republican Hung Cao by 13,628 votes district-wide.

**Warrenton mayor:** **Carter Nevill** led Renard Carlos by 18 votes.

**Scott District school board:** **Clay Campbell** defeated Josh Erdossy.

**Remington mayor:** **Bill Polk** led Devada Allison by four votes.

**Remington town council:** **Van Loving, Stan Heaney Sr., Richard Heflin, Susan Tiffany, Veronica Meadows and Morgan Butler Lewis** led the race for six town council seats.

See page 4 for more coverage.

## Registered voters

56,127 — Fauquier County  
11,770 — Scott District  
7,628 — Warrenton  
402 — Remington  
218 — The Plains

# Campbell wins school board race



Scott District school board candidate Clay Campbell had garnered more than 66% of the vote at press time, beating Josh Erdossy, who earned 32.5% of the vote.

10th District, competitive local races not called as of press time Tuesday

By Colleen LaMay and Coy Ferrell

FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF WRITERS

Challenger Renard Carlos was neck and neck with incumbent Mayor Carter Nevill on Tuesday evening in the hard-fought race for mayor of Warrenton. As of 10 p.m., Nevill had 2,050 votes, 18 more than Carlos' 2,032.

All votes cast Tuesday were counted, as were four of five absentee precincts, but no final results were available by press time. More than one-third of the votes cast in Fauquier County were absentee. How many absentee ballots were cast in the Warrenton mayoral race was uncertain.

The proposed Amazon data center was the most contentious issue in the race. Carlos appeared to lean against allowing Amazon to build

See ELECTION, page 4

# Fauquier Hospital faces bigger Medicare penalty than any other Virginia hospital

By Colleen LaMay  
FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF WRITER

Fauquier Hospital will lose 2.85% of the money it would otherwise get for treating Medicare patients because too many patients with common conditions were readmitted to a hospital within 30 days of being discharged from Fauquier. Fauquier Hospital's penalty is eight times higher than the state's average and close to the maximum federal penalty of 3%.

See PENALTY, page 8



Because of a high readmission rate, Fauquier Hospital will lose close to 3% of Medicare reimbursements.

# Candidates outspend predecessors in races for Warrenton mayor and Fauquier school board

By Colleen LaMay  
FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF WRITER

In the contentious race for the mayor of Warrenton, incumbent Mayor Carter Nevill and his challenger, Council Member Renard Carlos (at large), each raised more than twice as much money as mayoral candidates raised during the most recent mayoral race, in 2018.

In the race for the Fauquier County School Board, candidate Clay Campbell raised more

See SPENDING, page 6

Planners to hold data center public hearing Nov. 15. See page 3.



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# Fauquier Hospital faces bigger Medicare penalty than any other Virginia hospital

**PENALTY**, from page 1

“Relatively high readmission rates may indicate that patients are being discharged too quickly or not getting the medical care they need when they get home,” said Tricia Neuman, a senior vice president at KFF, previously known as the Kaiser Family Foundation, a national nonprofit that focuses on health issues and policies.

Fauquier Hospital’s penalty was by far the largest in the state. The average penalty for Virginia hospitals was 0.37%. Nationwide, the average was 0.43%, the lowest since 2014. The federal government eased up on hospitals this year, tossing out all hospitals’ data for the first half of 2020, when COVID created chaos at many hospitals nationwide, according to Kaiser Health News, a nonprofit news service dedicated to health-care policies.

The latest round of reduced payments for hospitalized patients on Medicare went into effect Oct. 1 and will end in September 2023. It will cost hospitals nationwide \$320 million over those 12 months, according to KHN.

The penalty does not mean Fauquier Hospital will raise rates for other patients, Fauquier Hospital Chief Nursing Officer Christine A. Hart Kress said in response to emailed questions from the *Fauquier Times*. “It is important for the community to know that while this penalty will impact Fauquier Health’s Medicare reimbursement from the federal government, it will not directly impact patient healthcare costs,” Kress said.

To calculate the penalties, the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services evaluates three years of hospital admissions data. If the analysis shows a hospital readmitted too many patients, the most it can lose is 3% of the amount of money it gets paid for treating Medicare patients. Most hospitals do not face the maximum penalty.

Fauquier Hospital was unhappy with the CMS data. “We are disap-



Fauquier Hospital Chief Nursing Officer Christine A. Hart Kress

pointed by this penalty because we do not believe these results reflect the work that is happening today at our hospital,” Kress said in an email.

“Nor does the data (July 2018 to December 2019 and July 2020 to June 2021) take into account the recent improvement and progress we have made to reduce readmissions and improve clinical documentation,” she said.

Fauquier Hospital’s record going back to 2016 is spotty. In 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2022 the hospital was penalized the maximum of 3%, a record unmatched by any other hospital in Virginia. The lowest penalty at Fauquier Hospital over the past eight years was 0.97 in 2019.

CMS evaluated patients who were readmitted to hospitals within 30 days of discharge for heart failure, heart attacks, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, coronary artery bypass grafts and knee and hip replacements. CMS usually includes readmissions for pneumonia in its calculations but left it out this time around because it is a complication of COVID.

Specialty hospitals, including psychiatric and veterans’ facilities, are exempt from the CMS penalties.

Kress noted in her email about the Fauquier Hospital’s penalty that Medicare uses a complex mathematical formula based on procedure type, the quality of medical documentation on patients and other factors.

“For example, Fauquier Health had zero penalties for readmissions

## About the Hospital Readmissions Reduction Program

The Hospital Readmissions Reduction Program encourages hospitals to improve communication and care coordination to better engage patients and caregivers in discharge plans and, in turn, reduce avoidable readmissions. The program supports the national goal of improving health care for Americans by linking Medicare reimbursements to the quality of hospital care.

SOURCE: CMS.GOV

## About Fauquier Health

**What:** Fauquier Health is a part of the private, for-profit LifePoint community health system. The private-equity company Apollo owns LifePoint, which serves rural communities across the nation.

**Where:** Fauquier Hospital is at 500 Hospital Drive in Warrenton.

**Beds:** 97

## How other hospitals in the region fared

- UVA Health Haymarket Medical Center: 0.29%
- UVA Culpeper Medical Center: 1.47%
- UVA Prince William Medical Center: 0.24%
- INOVA Fairfax Hospital: No penalty
- University of Virginia Medical Center (Charlottesville): 0.09%

SOURCE: KHN ANALYSIS OF HOSPITAL DATA FROM THE CENTERS FOR MEDICARE & MEDICAID SERVICES

related to heart attacks or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, but did have readmissions related to joint replacement, which carries a greater penalty percentage,” Kress wrote.

Fauquier Health is taking steps to reduce readmissions and to improve clinical documentation — a record of all the services provided to patients, Kress said. In her email, she noted the following efforts to reduce readmission for patients at highest risk:

- Monitoring patients weekly for 30 days to be sure they have completed appropriate follow-up visits with their primary care physician or surgeon.
- Partnering with home-health providers that have dedicated programs to treat chronic heart failure and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. The purpose of the partnerships is to optimize patients’ abilities to care for themselves over the long term.
- Confirming that home-health visits occur regularly, as ordered by

the provider, and that the visits meet patients’ needs.

- Educating patients before discharge about chronic diseases in collaboration with nurses, pharmacists, respiratory therapists, case managers, social workers and dietitians.

These steps are working well for Fauquier patients, Kress wrote. “In fact, our most recent data (July 2021 to August 2022) reveals a 13% reduction in unexpected/unplanned readmissions for heart failure and a 24% reduction in unexpected/unplanned readmissions for hip and knee replacement,” Kress wrote.

“While our current data reflects these improvements, next year’s rankings may continue to re-use some of the data which was used in this year’s evaluation,” according to Kress. “We will continue monitoring our progress and exploring new ways to improve our overall healthcare delivery and our patients’ experiences.”

Reach Colleen LaMay at [clamay@fauquier.com](mailto:clamay@fauquier.com)

## Doc Snyder: The ‘acorn doctor’ enabled family trees to grow

**SNYDER**, from page 6

Snyder’s daughter Katie believes the presence of the girls brought a moment of humanity and brightness during a time of war. She also suspects the girls reminded him of his young family waiting for him.

For Snyder, the memories of his time in service, as well as many others, are fading, the result of the early onset of dementia. Details drift from his memory like leaves falling from a tree.

Following the war, Snyder returned home where he had a successful career as an orthopedic surgeon, and in the 1980s, he bought a large Angus farm in the country for his family that he transformed into an outdoor adventure camp, Verdun Adventure Bound in Rixeyville.

During his years on the farm, Snyder planted hundreds of trees. His daughters recall the chore of planting saplings throughout their childhood. His daughters call him the “acorn doctor” because of all the lives he touched along the way and how they have thrived.

Doc Snyder is a Hero’s Bridge veteran. The nonprofit organization is dedicated to serving elderly veterans, age 65 and older by bringing veterans a better quality of life through age-specific and innovative programs. These services are available to heroes wherever they call home, at no expense to them or their families. Hero’s Bridge may be reached at 540-341-5378; the organization’s website is at [www.herosbridge.org](http://www.herosbridge.org).



COURTESY PHOTO

Doc Snyder keeps this photo on his bedroom windowsill, of a pair of girls he helped when he was a doctor during the Vietnam War.



## Dozens speak against Amazon data center at planning commission public hearing

### Public hearing continues at Nov. 22 meeting



**"I am puzzled by the apparent rush to move this forward despite multiple requests for more and better information."**

BERNARDINE CLARK

By Peter Cary

PIEDMONT JOURNALISM FOUNDATION

About 60 town and county residents spoke Tuesday, Nov. 15, at a Town of Warrenton Planning Commission public hearing on whether Amazon Web Services should be granted a permit to put a data center at Blackwell Road and U.S. 29. Fifty-eight speakers were opposed, one talked about faulty government processes, and one person was in favor — a Rixeyville developer who owns properties in town that he hopes to sell to data-center operators.

Residents had been standing in the rain outside town hall before 6 p.m., waiting for the doors to open for the 7 p.m. meeting. Although Planning Commissioner James Lawrence asked the crowd to refrain from applauding the speakers so they could keep the meeting moving along, there were frequent outbursts of applause or cheers from the standing-room-only crowd in the main room. The same could be heard from an overflow room down the hall.

See HEARING, page 4

## Fauquier Hospital faces \$15 million lawsuit over death of school superintendent's son

Two gastrointestinal practices, one doctor also named as defendants

By Colleen LaMay

FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF WRITER

Fauquier County Superintendent of Schools David Jeck filed a civil lawsuit Nov. 15 against Fauquier Hospital and three other defendants. He is seeking \$15 million for the "untimely, painful, and preventable" death of his 28-year-old son seven days after he was taken to Fauquier Hospital's emergency department.

David Collins Jeck, or "Lil" Dave, as his family called him in his obituary, woke up around midnight Nov. 29, 2021, with a bout of severe vomiting, after which he passed out on the bathroom floor, according to the lawsuit. There was some blood in the vomit, and Jeck was taken by ambulance to the hospital.

See LAWSUIT, page 6



## KETTLE RUN FOOTBALL IMPROVES TO 12-0

Kettle Run offensive lineman Ronny Astudillo hugs athletic trainer Reylin Morgan in the giddy moments after Friday's 38-14 win over Millbrook advanced the Cougars to this Saturday's Class 4 Region C championship game. **MORE COVERAGE and PHOTOS, PAGES 27, 28, 32**

FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF PHOTO/COY FERRELL

## Community rallies around family displaced by Nov. 15 Bealeton townhome fire

Mom, newborn, 2 boys and their dog escaped

By Robin Earl

FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF WRITER

Sara Sweeney had just retrieved her two elementary school-aged boys off the school bus near their Bealeton townhome on Tuesday,

Nov. 15. They were all upstairs; the boys were watching television, and she was feeding her two-week-old baby when Sweeney smelled smoke and started downstairs to investigate. That's when she "saw smoke pouring in from the garage."

See FIRE, page 3



The Page-Sweeney family: Lucas Page, Nicholas Page with baby Charlie, Sara Sweeney and Nicholas Page.

**SPORTS:** Kettle Run football advances to region final, Maddie Martin feature. **PAGES 27, 28, 32**



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# Fauquier Hospital earns third ‘D’ grade in a row for patient safety

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Fauquier Hospital’s new report card cited problems similar to those Leapfrog noted in the hospital’s spring 2022 and fall 2021 report cards, when

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See **HOSPITAL GRADE**, page 8

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LAWSUIT, from page 1

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At the heart of the lawsuit are allegations that Fauquier Hospital, along with the physician practices, failed to have protocols in place to ensure a gastrointestinal specialist was available to see patients in a timely manner when the hospital’s emergency department asked them to come.

The lawsuit was filed in Fauquier County Circuit Court, seeking \$10 million for wrongful death by medical negligence and an additional \$5 million under the Survival Act, which allows the elder Jeck, as administrator of his son’s estate, to sue for his son’s personal injuries. Jeck seeks \$5 million for his son’s pain, suffering, mental and emotional anguish “and other injuries and damages before his untimely, painful and preventable death, which was caused by the defendants’ negligent conduct.”

The elder Jeck declined to comment Friday. “It’s still way too difficult to think about,” he said. “I am not going to comment on anything.”

He referred calls to attorney Jacqueline T. Colclough of Regan Zambri Long, a Washington, D.C., law firm whose specialties include personal injury and medical malpractice. She did not respond to the *Fauquier Times*’ request for comment.

The other three defendants in the lawsuit are Advanced Digestive Care LLC, Gastroenterology Associates and Dr. Tinatin K. O’Connell, who is with Gastroenterology Associates. The physician practices, along with the hospital, allegedly failed to provide adequate call coverage.

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Physicians typically agree to respond to calls from the emergency department within a set timeframe, either in person or by phone.

Gastroenterology Associates declined to comment. Advanced Digestive Care, O’Connell, and Fauquier Hospital were unavailable by

## The lawsuit

### Count 1: Wrongful death – Medical Negligence

“As a direct and proximate result of the negligent acts and/or omissions of Defendants and all agents, servants, and/or employees of Defendants who rendered medical care to Mr. Jeck, including, without limitation, Defendant Dr. O’Connell ... the surviving statutory beneficiaries of Mr. Jeck, including Plaintiff, have incurred medical expenses, funeral expenses, loss of services, protection, care and assistance expected to be performed by Mr. Jeck, and any and all other damages recoverable under the Virginia Wrongful Death Act.”

— **Suit seeks judgment of \$10 million, plus interest, costs assessed against the defendants “and all other relief this Court deems appropriate”**

### Count 2: Survival Act – Medical Negligence

The elder Jeck, as the personal representative of his son’s estate, can seek damages for the personal injuries the younger Jeck suffered. “Mr. Jeck experienced severe pain and suffering, mental and emotional anguish, and other injuries and damages before his untimely, painful, and preventable death, which was caused by Defendants’ negligent conduct.”

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press time Monday. No court dates have been set.

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The lawsuit alleges that Jeck may not have died if the gastroenterologist who was supposed to be on-call at Fauquier Hospital that day hadn’t taken hours to respond to the hospital’s repeated requests for help.

The physician who first saw Jeck in the Fauquier Hospital emergency department said the patient was a “healthy-appearing male in no distress” but the doctor asked for a consult from a GI specialist because of the bloody vomiting and loss of consciousness Jeck suffered at home, the suit says. The exact time the ED doctor made that request is not clear in the lawsuit, but the nursing staff noted at 6:39 a.m. that they were “awaiting (the GI) consultant.” The doctor they were waiting for was O’Connell, according to the lawsuit.

At some point over the next few

hours, the doctor who took over Jeck’s case in the emergency department saw changes in his patient’s bloodwork that might signal new bleeding in his stomach. In addition, Jeck’s heart rate was abnormally high, the suit said.

The doctor began to worry that blood products might need to be administered to Jeck to counteract blood loss and that the patient might need an endoscopy, the lawsuit says. Endoscopy is a procedure that would allow doctors to see into Jeck’s digestive system via a tiny camera.

The doctor also kept trying to reach O’Connell. “In the hours that followed, Defendant Dr. O’Connell did not come to the bedside to examine Mr. Jeck despite many attempts to contact her,” the lawsuit says. Hospital staff, including the emergency medicine doctor assigned to Jeck, tried many ways of reaching out to

See **LAWSUIT**, page 13



**EVENTS**, from page 12

**What:** English-as-a-second-language class presented by Piedmont Regional Adult and Career Education programs  
**When:** 6 to 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 30  
**Where:** Warrenton Central Library, 11 Winchester St., Warrenton  
**Cost:** Free  
**Info:** 540-718-8243

**Thursday, Dec. 1**

**ESL class**

**What:** English-as-a-second-language class presented by Piedmont Regional Adult and Career Education programs  
**When:** 6 to 9 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 1  
**Where:** Bealeton Branch Library, 10877 Willow Drive North, Bealeton  
**Cost:** Free  
**Info:** 540-718-8243

**Art**

**What:** Art Cart  
**When:** All day Thursday, Dec. 1  
**Where:** Bealeton Branch Library, 10877 Willow Drive, Bealeton  
**Cost:** Free; no registration required  
**Info:** Preschool and elementary school aged children express creativity using library's art supplies

**HOLIDAY EVENTS**, from page 11

**Farmers market**

**What:** Marshall Holiday Farmers Market  
**When:** 9 a.m. to noon Saturday, Dec. 3  
**Where:** H&H Auto Garage (parking lot), 8382 W. Main St., Marshall  
**Vendors:** marshallvirginia.com/farmers-market/

**Open house**

**What:** Holiday Open House  
**When:** 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 13  
**Where:** Afro-American Historical Association of Fauquier, 4243 Loudoun Ave., The Plains  
**Info:** Tour the museum, browse the library collection

**Concert**

**What:** Blue Ridge Singers presents Music for Advent and Christmas  
**When:** 4 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 11  
**Where:** Trinity Episcopal Church, 9108 John S. Mosby Highway, Upperville

**Parade**

**What:** Christmas parade at FHRNC  
**When:** 2 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 8  
**Where:** Fauquier Health Rehabilitation

and Nursing Center, 360 Hospital Drive, Warrenton  
**Info:** Contact Kelly Ashby-Godwin, 540-270-8080

**Concert**

**What:** Holiday concert with the Fauquier Community Band  
**When:** 7 p.m. Monday, Dec. 12  
**Where:** Fauquier High School, 705 Waterloo Road, Warrenton  
**Cost:** Free  
**Info:** Dessert reception; audience sing-along; raffle

**Gumdrop Square**

**What:** Gumdrop Square  
**When:** 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturdays, Dec. 3, 10 and 17 and 1 to 4 p.m. Sundays, Dec. 4, 11 and 18  
**Where:** John Barton Payne Building, 2 Courthouse Square  
**Cost:** Free community event  
**Info:** Meet Santa and Mrs. Claus; bring a camera

**Farmers market**

**What:** Archwood Green Barns Holiday Market  
**When:** 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 4  
**Where:** Archwood Green Barns, 4557

Old Tavern Road, The Plains  
**Info:** Holiday shopping; vendors; crafters; and more; 540-253-5289

**History**

**What:** 10th VA Infantry Valley Guards, A Holiday Encampment  
**When:** 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 10  
**Where:** Sky Meadows State Park, 11012 Edmonds Lane, Delaplane  
**Cost:** \$10 car parking fee  
**Info:** Experience an encampment during the holidays

**Concert**

**What:** Christmas dinner and concert featuring The Crestmen  
**When:** 6 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 17 (doors open 5:30 p.m., concert at 7 p.m.)  
**Where:** Remington Lions Club, 11326 James Madison Highway, Bealeton  
**Cost:** \$30 adult, \$10 children under 12, advance sales only  
**Contact:** Curtis Sorenson, 540-522-1891 or Allan Marlett, 540-522-3074  
**Info:** Presented by the Warrenton and Remington Lions Club; door prizes and raffle; menu: fried chicken, mashed potatoes, fixings

**Fauquier Hospital faces \$15 million lawsuit over death of school superintendent's son**

**LAWSUIT**, from page 6

O'Connell, the suit says. Those included multiple overhead pages to the GI service and calls to the GI service's office. In addition, the GI service's office staff and the emergency medicine doctor sent text messages to O'Connell's personal cell phone.

The ED doctor also called O'Connell's personal cell phone, which went unanswered and then redirected to the GI hospitalist number, which also went unanswered. The ED doctor also called the hospital's nursing supervisor and the GI outpatient procedure nursing unit.

By 12:45 p.m., O'Connell still had not arrived, and Jeck took a turn for the worse. He was pale, agitated, sweating heavily and had abnormally low blood pressure. He began to vomit bright red blood, according to the lawsuit.

At about 1 p.m., the emergency department doctor got O'Connell on the phone "while Defendant Dr. O'Connell remained off-campus, apparently at another hospital." The ED doctor told her about Jeck's worsening symptoms and the need to administer blood products because Jeck was vomiting fresh blood. The ED doctor and O'Connell agreed Jeck needed an emergency endoscopy. The emergency room doctor prepared for O'Connell to arrive and perform the procedure.

At about 1:40 p.m., O'Connell arrived at Fauquier Hospital, where she noted that Jeck was awake and alert, the lawsuit says. She noted the possible causes of the bloody vomit, including a bleeding ulcer. She ordered an emergency endoscopy at the bedside, according to the suit.

At 2 p.m., O'Connell performed the endoscopy, more than nine hours

after Jeck arrived in the emergency department, the suit says. She ultimately was unable to find the source of Jeck's bleeding "due to persistent pooling of blood."

According to the lawsuit, at about 4:10 p.m., a doctor in the Interventional Radiology department performed a procedure called embolization to try to block arteries that could be causing Jeck's bleeding. The doctor noted the procedure was needed because of "acute life-threatening upper gastrointestinal hemorrhage in the setting of hemorrhagic shock" with "copious amounts of blood in the stomach, with rapid bleeding preventing visualization of the source."

For the rest of the night, doctors tried several methods to treat Jeck's spiraling condition, according to the suit. Jeck was admitted to the intensive care unit, sedated and hooked up to a ventilator to breathe for him.

Doctors agreed that Jeck should be transported urgently to another hospital that could provide highly specialized care for trauma and chest surgery. Nevertheless, Jeck remained at Fauquier Hospital for hours because of his fragile condition "and/or reported unavailability of beds," at hospitals equipped to handle higher-acuity patients, the suit said.

By 12:30 p.m. Nov. 30, 2021, O'Connell evaluated Jeck at his bedside, noting, among other details, that although Jeck no longer was bleeding, he had suffered significant organ damage after 24 hours at Fauquier Hospital, the suit said.

At 5:31 p.m., Jeck was taken to Inova Fairfax Hospital in a 17-minute medical flight. In the days that followed, Jeck became even sicker.

Doctors there said he had suffered brain damage, the lawsuit said.

In the early morning hours of Dec. 6, 2021, Jeck's family was told he would not survive. His family

chose comfort measures. Comfort measures generally mean decreasing the intensity of medical treatments.

At 7:15 a.m., Dec. 6, 2021, Jeck was pronounced dead.

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## Fauquier Times

41 Culpeper Street, Warrenton, VA 20186

Questions?  
Please call Nancy Keyser at 540.347.4222  
or email nkeyser@fauquier.com

# Virginia State Ballet changes its name to Warrenton Ballet Center

After opening a Warrenton-based ballet school in August, Ariana Myers found that the community was hungry for more access to the performing arts. As her own relationships with the ballet world and the local area deepen, her original vision and mission for the school are evolving, she said in a press release.

Now, her Virginia State Ballet has changed its name to the Warrenton Ballet Center. "The new name gives us the ability to bring Warrenton to the main stage," said Myers.

Having recently been invited to judge at the Global Dance Open, an international competition that will see dancers participate from over 40 countries, Myers felt the name change was important to building the dance community she envisions for area students. "Being seen on the global stage allows me to create big-

ger opportunities for my students, but it also opens the door to bring international students here to study."

Including the town's name in the dance school's brand makes it easier to find the school, both locally and internationally, Myers said, and the "name will clearly identify this unique, Vaganova method school of ballet from other schools in the commonwealth. It will also drive Warrenton's visibility as a leader in the performing arts world."

Warrenton Ballet Center will continue to operate at 484 Blackwell Road, Warrenton, in Suite 102. The school is designed to provide a comprehensive ballet education for students, ages 4 to 22, to pursue professional dance careers, to attend university dance programs or to learn more about how dance can benefit them.

# Fauquier Hospital earns third 'D' grade in a row for patient safety

**HOSPITAL GRADE**, from page 1

Fauquier Hospital is playing catch-up with other hospitals in the state. Virginia ranks second overall among all states in the Fall 2022 Leapfrog Group Hospital Safety Grade state rankings, according to a news release from the Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association. In the latest rankings, 37 of 71 Virginia general acute-care hospitals evaluated earned "A" grades, according to VHHA.

Four hospitals, including Inova Loudoun Hospital, have received straight A's since 2012, when Leapfrog began its rankings. The other three hospitals with straight A's are owned by Sentara, a non-profit health care organization serving Virginia and northeastern North Carolina.

"Hospitals across Virginia are unique in many ways, including where they are located, the communities and patients they serve and the types of medical care they most commonly provide," Peter Mulkey, Clinch Valley Health CEO and chair of the Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association's board of directors, said in the news release.

"But what each hospital has in common is an unparalleled commitment to giving each patient high-quality care in a safe environment," Mulkey said. "It is an honor to be part of a hospital community that prides itself on achieving exceptional patient care and safety."

Leapfrog considers hand washing, infections in the blood and patient falls among the most important safety measures. Fauquier Hospital scored better than average for careful hand washing and for keeping patients from suffering falls.

However, the hospital scored below

average on infections in the blood. Patients with central lines — tubes inserted into the body to deliver medication and other treatments — are at high risk for developing dangerous infections in their blood. Those infections can delay recovery and even cause death. Fauquier Hospital patients had more central-line infections than expected, given the number of patients with central lines, the size of the hospital and other factors.

In other safety findings, Fauquier Hospital had enough qualified nurses, and it had specially trained doctors to care for patients in the intensive care unit, but the hospital continued to struggle with communication, just as it did in earlier report cards. That included communication between patients and hospital staff about medicines and discharge instructions. The hospital also scored poorly on the measure of how long the staff takes to respond when patients are in pain or can't get to the bathroom.

Segal said Fauquier Hospital's fall report card reflected improvements over the spring 2022 report card. "There are 22 measures used by Leapfrog for scoring and when we compare the Spring data to Fall, Fauquier Health has improved in 7 of them," she wrote.

"As previously shared, since the time period used to calculate this grade, Fauquier Health has implemented a number of initiatives designed to enhance quality, and these are not reflected in the current outcomes," Segal wrote.

"It is our privilege to serve the healthcare needs of our community, and we will continue monitoring our progress and exploring opportunities to ensure all patients have access to high-quality care close to home," Segal wrote.