

Coverage, local reaction of historic indictment of former President Donald Trump,

A2



Lancer athletes take flight in Lynchburg,

B1



AMHERST NEW ERA-PROGRESS

Amherst County's only hometown newspaper | THURSDAY, APRIL 6, 2023 | NewEraProgress.com | Amherst, Va.

Sweet Briar College announces \$1.9M raised in 10 days

RODNEY ROBINSON JR.
rrobinson@newsadvance.com
(434) 385-5554

Sweet Briar College recently announced it raised \$1.9 million in just 10 days during its annual March Days of Giving, with alumnae and friends contributing 1,452 gifts.

"I am profoundly grateful to everyone who contributed to Sweet Briar during the March Days of Giving," President Meredith Woo said in a news release. "This outpouring of generosity demonstrates the love that the College's family and friends feel for this institution, and the pride they take in supporting Sweet Briar's mission to educate women leaders."

The 10-day giving campaign kicked off March 1, with the campus community gathering in the Quad to plant a new Sweet Briar rose bush.

On that evening, with the help of alumnae and friends, Sweet Briar raised \$505,074 in less than 24 hours, which exceeded its initial goal of \$500,000, the college said in a release.

The annual giving initiative began in 2016, following a previous administration's failed attempt to close the private women's college in Amherst County.

Mary Pope Hutson, senior vice president for alumnae relations and development, said the March Days of Giving were created as a way to rally the school's alumnae around the cause of supporting Sweet Briar and its mission, as well as "rededicated ourselves to the perpetuity of the college and the importance of women's education in today's society."

In total, the college has about 12,600 alumnae, according to Hutson.

"Sweet Briar alumnae just continue to rally to the cause of women's education and Sweet Briar in perpetuity, making sure that we can continue to persist in our mission to educate young women," Hutson said.

Please see **COLLEGE**, Page A6



PAIGE DINGLER PHOTOS, NEW ERA-PROGRESS

Teachers and students work through an activity during Future Opportunities Night at Madison Heights Elementary School on Tuesday, Mar. 28, 2023.

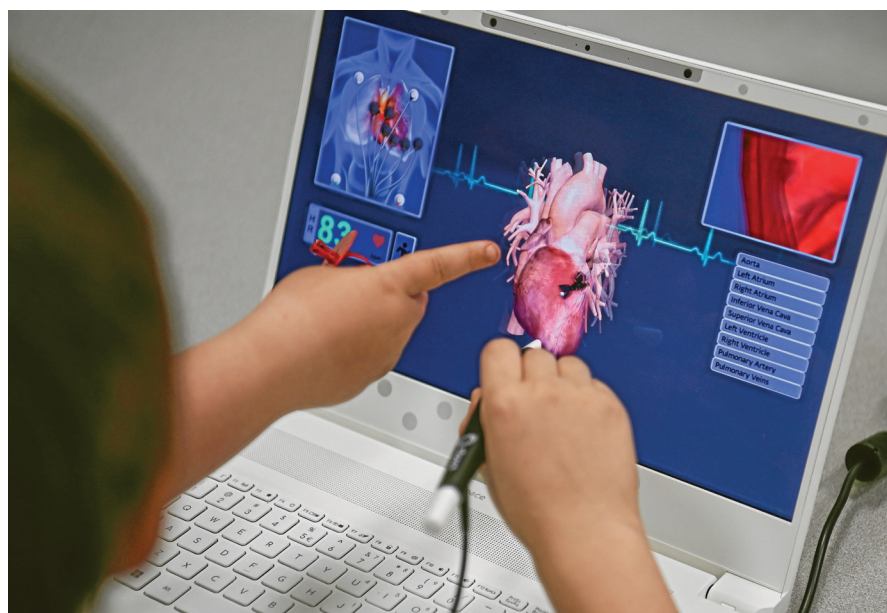
Future Opportunity Night events showcase career pathways for Amherst fifth-graders, families

JUSTIN FAULCONER
jfaulconer@newsadvance.com
(434) 385-5551

For fifth graders in Amherst County, when it comes to career opportunities, the future is now.

In a first for Amherst County Public Schools, the division recently hosted "Future Opportunities Night" events at all six elementary schools, concluding at Madison Heights Elementary School on March 28. The evening gatherings allowed students and families to explore academic and career opportunities, which school officials call "pathways."

Please see **OPPORTUNITIES**, Page A6



Students look at a heart simulator during Future Opportunities Night at Madison Heights Elementary School on Tuesday, Mar. 28, 2023.

WATCH: For video of the Future Opportunities Night event at Madison Heights Elementary School point your smartphone at the QR code, then tap the link. [NEWSVU](#)

Ex-Va. governors McDonnell, Allen optimistic of GOP's outlook in state elections

JUSTIN FAULCONER
jfaulconer@newsadvance.com
(434) 385-5551

Two former Virginia governors, Bob McDonnell and George Allen, during a joint appearance March 29 in Amherst County touted what they described as successes of Gov. Glenn Youngkin's administration and are optimistic of gaining full Republican control

of the Virginia General Assembly in the Nov. 7 election.

McDonnell, 68, and Allen, 71, were keynote speakers in a meeting of the Patriot Society, an organization with a mission of recognizing and rewarding individuals who are making significant contributions to the success of the Republican Party in Amherst County. During the Patriot Society

members-only meeting that was open to the media, McDonnell praised the performance of Youngkin, who in January 2022 retook the governor's seat in the GOP's favor for the first time since McDonnell left office in January 2014.

"Glenn Youngkin is a man of remarkable integrity, a deep man of faith, a very decisive person," McDonnell said. "Like George and

I try to be, he's a happy warrior."

Youngkin knows what he believes and is optimistic in solving problems without compromising, McDonnell said.

"With his vast business experience, you can see on everything from economic development, job creation, taxes, spending, education reform — I mean he is deeply,

you can see on everything from economic development, job creation, taxes, spending, education reform — I mean he is deeply,

Please see **ELECTIONS**, Page A3

WATCH: For video of former governors Bob McDonnell and George Allen sharing remarks at the Amherst meeting, point your smartphone at the QR code, then tap the link. [NEWSVU](#)

Online

Looking for more Amherst County news, sports, wedding engagements and more? Check us out online at:



2 sections, 12 pages

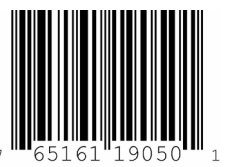
CALENDAR B5 OBITUARIES A5
CLASSIFIEDS B6 OPINION A4
COMMUNITY B4 SPORTS B1-B2
CROSSWORD B4

Contact us at

Amherst New Era-Progress
101 Wyndale Drive
Lynchburg, VA 24501
Phone: (434) 385-5440
Email: editor@neweraprogress.com

Classifieds

Get the latest on places to rent, employment, auto sales and other announcements.
Page B6



\$3.00 • Volume 141, Issue 14 • A Lee Enterprises Newspaper • Copyright 2023

Follow us online: [facebook.com/](#)



www.brmedical.org | 434-263-4000

Primary & Preventative Health Care
Accepting New Patients
We take most major insurance plans.
Call and make an appointment today
Nelson / Amherst / Appomattox





PAIGE DINGLER PHOTOS, NEW ERA-PROGRESS

Craig Maddox, back, teaches 7-year-old Tamron Hipps how to use a welding simulator during Future Opportunities Night at Madison Heights Elementary School on Tuesday, Mar. 28, 2023. Maddox is Amherst County Public Schools' career and technical education (CTE) supervisor. CTE is a focus of Future Opportunities Night events recently held in all of Amherst County's elementary schools.

Opportunities

From A1

in engaging in activities such as robot coding, virtual welding simulators and drones.

Superintendent William Wells said "Future Opportunities Night" is designed to give fifth-graders and parents a firsthand look at courses that will be available to the students at the middle and high school level with an emphasis on career and technical education (CTE). The Central Virginia Governor's School for Science & Technology, the CTE and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) academies, and early college courses are areas for elementary students and their parents to begin preparing for and to know what to expect, he said.

"The main goal is so parents and students have an understanding of what is available," Wells said. "So they can start making those plans for their high school career and life after that."

Assistant Superintendent Dana Norman said she's observed parents enjoying tinkering with the technology tools and robotics as much as their children.

"I would say probably 95% of our fifth-graders have actually attended across all our schools," Norman said.

The hands-on learning activities also coordinate core subjects into activities they may want to explore, Norman said, pointing to math correlating to welding as an example. Wells said getting students directly engaged in the exercises at an early age is important.

"They need to see it," Wells said as children and families toured different stations in the Madison Heights Elementary School cafeteria March 28. "They need that baseline of information as they get ready for middle school and know what career paths they can be on. It gives them basic ideas now and, as they experiment through middle school, they'll know what career path they may want to look into."

Wells said the events have been well-received in the schools' communities. Construction is expected to begin this summer on a major renovation and expansion to Amherst County High School that will bring more space for CTE courses in coming years the fifth-graders will benefit from,



Six-year-old Chloe Hayes, right, uses a coding robot with McKenzie Givens during Future Opportunities Night at Madison Heights Elementary School on Tuesday, Mar. 28, 2023.



Students and parents use different simulators and activities during Future Opportunities Night at Madison Heights Elementary School on Tuesday, Mar. 28, 2023.

Wells said.

Expanded areas for welding, nursing and horticulture offerings are part of the planned high school project. "We're getting more opportunities for students," Wells said.

Wanda Smith, the division's supervisor of math, science, gifted and elected programs, said a driving factor in the events to help make parents more aware of the various pathways to benefit conversations about students' futures.

"Career education is taught in all levels, K through 12, throughout the school year," Smith said. "This is kind of a jumpstart on that career planning, to get them to start thinking about 'what are the things I like? What am I interested in? What type of courses and should I be taking?'"

Cyber security, the culinary arts and nursing are among some of those opportunities and the goal is to get them prepared well before high school, Smith said.

"A lot of our kids are able to leave high school and go straight into the workforce," Smith said. "Why not start giving them the

information now so they dream bigger and they can think outside the box further than what they've been experiencing so far."

The stations and activities shows what awaits them in upcoming years, according to Smith.

"These are things that students actually use at the high school to help build up their technical skills and make them career-ready," Smith said.

The Amherst Express Career Awareness bus also is a vehicle — literally — for the division in acclimating students with future opportunities after high school. Wells said the bus often goes to schools for visits so students can experience hands-on learning and expand their knowledge base while touring it.

Madison Heights Elementary School Principal Jeremy Hutchinson said he was thrilled with the turnout. He said the event is beneficial in fifth-graders seeing opportunities available as they get older and "how they need to work hard now so it pays off in the future."

CVCC continues efforts to add skilled workers during labor shortages

RODNEY ROBINSON JR.
rrobinson@newsadvance.com
(434) 385-5554

There's a growing need for skilled workers in manufacturing and technology fields across the United States, and Central Virginia Community College in Lynchburg has taken notice.

With the help of grants and local business alliances, the college is working to address these shortages to get students working.

Manufacturing accounts for 13.7% of the Lynchburg-area workforce, with 11,377 people employed in that sector as of the second quarter of 2022. It's the second largest employment sector in the area behind health care, according to Virginia Career Works, a group that helps individuals find jobs in Central Virginia.

"Having people trained correctly for these new jobs, this new environment, is key to America keeping up, much less Virginia," said Marcella Gale, mechatronics faculty member and program head at the college.

Mechatronics refers to the blend of mechanical, electric, electronic and computer engineering disciplines used in automated manufacturing, smart technologies and other advanced industries.

"We're on the cusp of needing a boost in productivity in order to keep our standard of living and keep our economy going," Gale said. "So that's what we're trying to do here, is to supply the skilled technical workforce needed for this new environment."

Danny Murphy, a mechatronics professor, said the technology industry is "starving for qualified help and that affects all of us."

"It's the food that we eat. It's the products that we buy and they don't have enough qualified people to run the machines or keep the machines running," Murphy said.

The college recently hosted Zach Oxendine, an engineering technical program manager at Microsoft, who visited to share his experience with students.

He discussed the possibilities of getting a two-year degree and becoming an engineer, and the importance of companies working with community colleges — something Murphy and Gale echoed.

Jason Ferguson, CVCC's associate vice president of professional and career studies at the college, said each program within the college has advisory committees made up of different business representatives and subject matter experts, and they meet at least annually.

"We're definitely engaged with the local businesses and see

a lot of support," Ferguson said.

CVCC received a three-year National Science Foundation (NSF) grant last year, which allowed them to purchase three FANUC automated manufacturing robots, add new adjunct professors and courses.

The college held a kickoff meeting in September. Between 40 and 50 people met to discuss the causes of labor shortages in the manufacturing industry and the different things CVCC is trying to do to help alleviate it.

Since that time and the implementation of the new grant, four new adjunct professors were brought on board with possibly two more arriving in the future.

CVCC, with the help of the new grant, also added and revamped three new career pathways: nuclear technician general track, mechatronics academic pathway, and computer and electronic technology computer networking.

Murphy said classes taught within those pathways, such as programmable logic controller programming and robotics, are a direct result of the NSF grants received.

Gale said the college plans to apply for more grant funding.

Separate from the grant, the college has dual enrollment opportunities for high school students, which includes the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Academy and CTE (Career and Technical Education) Academy where students can earn college credits to get started in technology or manufacturing fields.

CVCC President John Capps said the CTE Academy began last year with the support of a \$400,000 state grant, and it receives support from business partners such as the nuclear-services firm Framatome, the HVAC firm Southern Air, and Centra Health.

Capps said that since the academy's inception, enrollment in the CTE curriculum has increased 52%.

The STEM Academy started in 2015 and has graduated 196 students with 451 credentials. Students in the STEM Academy completed 11,760 internship hours at 26 local companies and 67% of those students are now working full time in STEM careers in Central Virginia, according to Capps.

"Employers have come to us and we've gone to employers. Higher education has been superimposed on workforce development ... We're really accomplishing both goals at the same time. We're educating students at the same time that we're preparing them for employment," Capps said.



NEW ERA-PROGRESS FILE

In this July 30, 2020 file photo, banners hang in the quad at Central Virginia Community College in Lynchburg.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SWEET BRIAR COLLEGE

The Guion Science Center on the campus of Sweet Briar College.



RODNEY ROBINSON JR., NEW ERA-PROGRESS

In this July file photo, Sweet Briar College's Student Commons Courtyard is shown.

College

From A1

Hutson said this is the eighth consecutive year of raising more than \$1.9 million during those days and since 2016, the college has raised over \$15.8 million total during March giving events.

Among alumnae, Sweet Briar saw a 7% increase in participation rates during the March Days of Giving and it strives to reach 30%, according to a release. Hutson said the college is "well on their way" to making

participation goals and it's "thrilling to see this rally of our alumnae."

Hutson said the money raised during the annual days of giving have helped with scholarships, faculty development, the academic programs and the stewardship of the campus.

"It really has been an incredible spectacle to watch each year of our alumni rededicating themselves to the college, and they have rallied to the cause of women's education. So our alumnae, we believe, are now a movement that is unstoppable," Hutson said.