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# SMITH MOUNTAIN EAGLE



SMITH MOUNTAIN LAKE, VIRGINIA ■ WEDNESDAY, JUNE 21, 2023

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## Motorcyclists struck by SUV in Franklin County; male, 31, killed

Staff Reports

A motorcyclist was killed after being struck by an SUV in Franklin County on June 12, according to the Virginia State Police. The crash occurred at 7:49 p.m. on Six Mile Post Road, just west of Pepper Road in Franklin County.

A 2001 Chevrolet Suburban was traveling west on Six Mile Post Road when the vehicle lost control, ran off the right side of

the roadway, overcorrected, crossing the center line. The SUV struck two motorcycles: a 2009 Yamaha and a 2001 Kawasaki, which were traveling east.

The Chevrolet was driven by Ronald Wayne Patterson, Jr., 27, of Hurt, Va. Patterson fled the scene on foot after the crash and was taken into custody a short time later.

The 2009 Yamaha was driven by James Benjamin Trail, 31,

of Ferrum. Trail was wearing his helmet and died at the scene.

The 2001 Kawasaki was driven by 19-year-old Brandon James Carson, of Ferrum. Carson was wearing his helmet. He was transported to the hospital for injuries received in the crash.

Patterson was charged with Felony Hit and Run.

The crash remains under investigation.

## 'Military Veterans/First Responders Field of Honor' reflects where care for veterans is going to the good



200 flags were erected by the American Legion Post #62 along Scruggs Road on Flag Day, June 14th to honor military veterans and first responders. Credit: Sandra Aranequi

Steve McClintic, Jr.  
News Editor

On Flag Day, June 14th, along Scruggs Road in Moneta, 200 American flags were erected by the American Legion post #62. The field upon which the flags stood, which was donated for the cause, was named the "Military Veterans and First Responders Field of Honor." It's one of the many efforts that Post #62 – also known as 'The Lake Legion' – does to support its simple, yet powerful two-word mission: "Help Veterans."

The American Legion was chartered by Congress in 1919 as a patriotic veterans organization. Focusing on service to veterans, service members and communities, the Legion evolved from a group of war-weary veterans of World War I into one of the most influential nonprofit groups in the United States. Today, membership stands at nearly two million at more than 13,000 posts worldwide. The posts are organized into 55 departments: one each for the 50 states, along with the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, France, Mexico and the Philippines.

Post #62 is relatively new, having been established in July 2021. The post was established in part by Brian Keaton, Sr. a

veteran and vice commander of the post. Keaton, Sr. was wounded during a tour of duty in Iraq. He spent more than three years at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, DC.

In 2011, while still in the Army, Keaton, Sr. and his family were able to acquire a rental house in Franklin County with the help of John and Marie DeLong of Moneta. Keaton, Sr. has family ties to the community; his brother, Troy Keaton, helped establish Eastlake Community Church in Moneta.

In establishing Post #62, one of Keaton, Sr.'s and others' goals who serve on the post's board, including Christopher Bechtler, a veteran who operates Crazy Horse Marina, is to help reshape the perception of what American Legion posts have unfortunately largely stood for: a place for partying. While the posts do allow veterans the opportunity to have fun and enjoy the comradery of one another, Keaton, Sr. said there is much more to it than that. It's about helping veterans show what they are capable of doing beyond the line of duty.

"We want our veterans to know they are a force in the community," said Keaton, Sr. "When a lot of soldiers return from combat, they are accustomed to serving their

role in the military. In the military, you are taught to stay in your lane. When you leave the military and return to society, there are 40 different lanes. It's a difficult mindset to get out of. We help veterans realize they have as much to offer outside of the military as in it."

Keaton, Sr.'s point made was reinforced by the gravity of a sobering fact. "We just concluded a 20-year war," said Keaton, Sr. "For the next 40 years, veterans, their families, their children – they are going to be impacted by the effects of the war. Our aim is to continue building a great service department that aids in addressing these issues and helps give veterans the services they have earned and allows them to find their purpose in life. We want to motivate, past and present; we want to motivate the youngins' who are our future."

Post #62 is geared toward helping veterans get the benefits they deserve, to help their children obtain scholarships, to overcome the obstacles that can stand in the way of veterans when they return home and feel isolated and defeated with nowhere to turn. That includes making calls to congresspersons, senators and delegates to find the help that needs to be a priority.

-- see 'Field of Honor' - page 3

## SMLA launches online Harmful Algal Bloom Resource Center

Steve McClintic, Jr.  
News Editor

On June 6, 2023, the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) issued a swimming advisory in certain branches of Smith Mountain Lake due to the presence of Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB). The VDH advises that swimming on the Blackwater arm of Smith Mountain Lake could expose people and pets to a potentially harmful algal bloom.

In an effort to centralize updates on important and relevant information related to the HAB situation at Smith Mountain Lake, the Smith Mountain Lake Association has established an online HAB Resource Center. The online resource center, available at [smlassociation.org/HAB](http://smlassociation.org/HAB), contains links to the VDH and Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) websites, Q&As, local news reports and suggested actions that residents may consider taking to help address concerns pertaining to the current algal bloom situation, as well as to reduce future occurrences. The online resource center is kept up to date with new information received from VDH, DEQ and the SML Water Quality Program.

To report a harmful algal bloom-related illness, contact the HAB hotline at 888.238.6154.

## SML Invitational draws record participation



Zitel team member Chelsea Gray won the 'Longest Drive' contest for the ladies during the Smith Mountain Lake Invitational. Credit: Heather Snyder

Steve McClintic, Jr.  
News Editor

The 27th Annual Smith Mountain Lake Golf Invitational Presented by Gilbert Law PC, was held on Friday, June 16th at The Waterfront Country Club. The event, which is organized by the Smith Mountain Lake Regional Chamber of Commerce, drew record participation with 92 golfers participating in one of the chamber's signature events.

Winners of the golf tournament's categories included:

**First Place Men:** Duane Davis, Garrison Brown, Jeff Larget and Robert Hoyt.

**Second Place Men:** Ben Rakes, Trent Russel, Jay Prillaman and Landon Prillaman

**First Place Ladies:** Deb Beran, Peggy Balla, Diana Clements and Jen Chaconas

For the longest drive contest for ladies, Chelsea Gray was the winner. For men, it was Robert Hoyt. Closest-to-the-pin winner for ladies was Peggy Balla, and for the men, Robert Hoyt.

Smith Mountain Lake Regional Chamber of Commerce will hold its SML Fall Classice Golf Tournament at Mariners Landing Country Club on October 13, 2023. For more information, including sponsorship opportunities, contact Erin Stanley at via email at [estanley@visitsmithmountainlake.com](mailto:estanley@visitsmithmountainlake.com) or at 540.721.1203.

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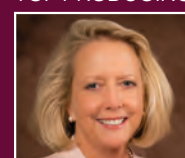
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# 'Field of Honor' - from page 1



Bob Mullens dressed as Uncle Sam while supporting the Military Veterans and First Responders Field of Honor. *Contributed*

It's just as important as thanking a soldier for his or her service. It's action, and no one knows that better than those who have served our country.

Keaton, Sr. said another goal of Post #62 is to establish a CBOC, or a satellite medical office of the VA at Smith Mountain Lake, which includes a primary care provider and a mental health provider. "We have many older veterans living in our community who have to make the long drive to Salem. Some have cataracts and other physical impairments that make the drive difficult. They deserve to have access to care locally. Our goal is to bring that care to them."

One remarkable point that Keaton, Sr. made was in his description of the military. "We are the military. We are not political. We are not religious, but we are spiritual," said Keaton, Sr. "The military has to stay above all of that. It is a freedom that we enjoy as Americans to have the right to choose what we believe in, what we stand for. The military protects that freedom. It is one thing we cannot have if we are not willing to give to others."

Keaton Sr.'s words reinforce one of the meanings behind a national symbol for the US – the bald eagle. While most birds are known to navigate through a storm, to seek shelter from it, the bald eagle is an exception. It flies above the weather, not in it.

The Military Veterans and First Responders Field of Honor stood from Wednesday, June 14 through Sunday, June 18 on ground that was donated for the cause. It was a tribute to honor past and current veterans and first responders, which

includes police forces, firefighters and emergency medical professionals. It was a symbol of unity, of action, of support. It was a celebration of those who risk their lives every day for the benefit of others, without compromise or complaint. It is something that Americans should never forget, but instead remember and appreciate more so than ever when speaking the words – 'Thank you for your service', to those who do so, and much more.

The American Legion Post #62 currently has more than 120 members.

Membership cost \$45 and is exclusive to those who have or are currently serving in the armed forces. For more information, send an email to [cdr@americanlegionpost62va.org](mailto:cdr@americanlegionpost62va.org) to the attention of Christopher Bechtler.

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**VDOT Virginia Department of Transportation**

## Route 460 (Lynchburg-Salem Turnpike) and Route 668 (Blackwater Road) Intersection Improvement Bedford County Design Public Hearing

**Thursday, June 29, 2023, 5 – 7 p.m.**  
*Inclement Weather Date: Tuesday, July 11, 2023, 5 - 7 p.m.*  
New London Academy  
1133 Academy Lane  
Forest, VA 24551

**Find out** about a project to improve safety and traffic flow by converting the intersection at Route 460 (Lynchburg-Salem Turnpike) and Route 668 (Blackwater Road) to a restricted crossing U-turn (RCUT). An RCUT is an innovative intersection that would eliminate left turns from northbound Route 668 onto westbound Route 460. Motorists who currently turn left onto Route 460 would make right turns and proceed to make a U-turn. To the east of the intersection, the existing crossover would be relocated approximately 500 feet further east and the existing turn lane extended to help accommodate U-turns.

The hearing will be held in an "open-house" format and VDOT representatives will be present to answer questions.

**Review** the project information and the National Environmental Policy Act document in the form of a Programmatic Categorical Exclusion at the public hearing or after the public hearing at VDOT's Salem District Office located at 731 Harrison Ave, Salem VA, 540-387-5353, 800-367-7623, TTY/TDD 711. Please call ahead to ensure the availability of appropriate personnel to answer your questions.

Property impact information, relocation assistance policies and tentative construction schedules are available for your review at the above address and will be available at the public hearing.

**Give your written or oral comments** at the meeting or submit them by **July 9, 2023**, to Eli Mannon, Project Manager, 731 Harrison Avenue, Salem, VA 24153. You may also email your comments to [eli.mannon@vdot.virginia.gov](mailto:eli.mannon@vdot.virginia.gov). Please reference "Route 460 at Blackwater Road Public Comment" in the subject heading.

VDOT ensures nondiscrimination and equal employment in all programs and activities in accordance with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need more information in regards to your civil rights on this project or need special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, contact Eli Mannon at the phone numbers listed above.

UPC: 119460  
State Project: 0460-009-883, P101 Federal Project: NHPP-5118(316)  
From: 0.323 miles west of Route 668  
To: 0.579 miles east of Route 668  
Length: 0.347 mile

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## 22-year-old man killed in vehicle crash in Pittsylvania County

Virginia State Police is investigating a two-vehicle crash, which resulted in a fatality. The crash occurred Tuesday, July 25, 2023, on Moorefield Bridge Road, two miles west of Mount Cross Road in Pittsylvania County.

A 2005 Chevrolet Tahoe was traveling south on Moorefield

Bridge Road, when the vehicle ran off the right side of the roadway, overcorrected, crossed the centerline, and struck a 2002 Mack truck.

The driver of the Chevrolet, Tyler Anthony Scott Gunnell, 22, of Axton, Va, was wearing his seatbelt and was injured in the

crash. Gunnell was transported by Emergency Medical Services to SOVAH Health in Danville, where he later died.

The driver of the Mack, Jimmy L. Noble, 57, of NC, was wearing his seatbelt and was not injured.

The crash remains under investigation.



Dallas Neel is a conservation officer at Smith Mountain Lake and former US Marine. Photo credit: Smith Mountain Eagle

## Former Marine, now conservation officer at Smith Mountain Lake, has heart and soul for the good

Steve McClintic, Jr.  
News Editor

Dallas Keith Neel has seen and experienced a lot in his life. He spent 30 years of his life in the United States Marine Corps. He retired from the US Marines as Sergeant Major, a position selected by the Commandant of the Marine Corps to serve as a senior enlisted advisor to Commanding Officers and as the preeminent and highest ranking enlisted Marine with a protocol equivalency of a three-star general officer. He was an accomplished wrestler in high school and in college at Virginia Military Institute (VMI) in Lexington. He served on active duty in places around the US and the world. He currently serves as a Conservation Police Officer with the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources.

Yes, Neel has seen and experienced a lot in his life, for sure. He's held a lot of positions and served a lot of roles. They're relevant, but they don't define him completely.

The one that does is the role he's most proud of today. It comes with the most important title of all. Neel is a father. He's a Dad. He embraces it with as much gusto and dedication as everything else he has accomplished in life. He does so with passion and commitment. He does so in the same essence as what true, selfless service is meant to reflect – without a need for celebration or recognition.

When you sum it all up: Neel is a good man. He doesn't need to tell you himself. He doesn't need to be told. It simply shows.

A local of sorts, Neel graduated from Glenvar High School in Roanoke County in 1988 with only a 2.7 GPA. He struggled with engineering calculus at VMI while trying to be a road scholar. He took a year off to attend Virginia Western Community College to get on track, and he joined the Reserves of the United States Marine Corps.

see 'Dallas Neel' - page 3

## 'Pack the Bus' School Supply Drive in Bedford set for August 4th

Steve McClintic, Jr.  
News Editor

Bedford County Public Schools, in collaboration with Bedford County Department of Social Services and Bedford Walmart are gathering school supplies for students in need for the upcoming school year during a "Pack the Bus" event being held on Friday, August 4, 2023 at Bedford Walmart from noon – 6 p.m.

Community members and partners are invited to participate in collecting school supply donations, as well. Students being prepared for the start of a school year enhances the school experience, which is a primary focus of BCPS and without our community and partners this would not be possible.

A list of school supplies in need includes: glue sticks, glue, 3-subject notebooks, 5-subject notebooks, notebook paper, graph paper, markers, colored pencils, earbuds, tissues, scissors, paper towels, pencil pouches, playdough, 1-inch binders, 2-inch binders, 3-inch binders, gallon bags, sandwich bags, composition notebooks, highlighters, index cards (3x5), Expo markers, vinyl folders, baby wipes, 3x3 Post-It notes, Clorox wipes and 2-pocket folders (with and without prongs).

There are many different ways that an organization can support BCPS and students. A donation box can be placed at your organization or company, a monetary donation call them for assistance at 540.586.1045.



Jane Winters, the executive director of LCM, stands in a bare food pantry at LCM. The organization is requesting help with donations. Contributed

## Lake Christian Ministries puts out call for donations for struggling families

Steve McClintic, Jr.  
News Editor

Lake Christian Ministries (LCM), a regional non-profit that provides food, clothing, household items, crisis financial aid, job assistance and other community services, is in the same boat as a lot of organizations like it these days: it's struggling to keep up with the demand. The need for food and other basic necessities in life is increasing as fast as the rate of inflation. Inflation is at the core of problems for a lot of people and businesses. It's hitting LCM particularly hard, and it's having an effect on those they serve.

"The prolonged issues with inflation have left our food pantry shelves bare," said Jane Winters, Executive Director and CEO of LCM. "Traditionally, we have received overages from grocery stores like Kroger and Food Lion, but they have needed to reduce ordering because of the challenges of higher prices. It leaves stores with less inventory, and less to give."

Winters said that people on the bottom rung of the economic ladder are facing the greatest challenges. LCM has seen a 40 percent uptick in requests for food donations to provide for themselves and their families. The problem is there is far more demand than supply.

On the government assistance side, "...people during the pre-pandemic days were receiving \$150 a month in SNAP benefits," said Winters. "Today, it's more like \$25-\$30

a month." Anyone who has shopped for food these days knows that \$150 doesn't go far at all. It's difficult to survive on. It's simple math to recognize that \$25-\$30 goes far less. It helps, but people are still struggling.

Winters said that donations of clothing, furniture and other items are at a five-year historic low. "We don't have the amount of donations like we once did," said Winters. "We used to provide a lot of food and bread products with other programs in Rocky Mount, such as Food 4 Kids, and for backpack programs, but we're not getting enough to share."

Keeping enough food on the pantry shelves to address the local food insecurity is an immediate concern. "We are well over budget in funds for crisis aid to prevent homelessness and keep utilities on in homes with children and elderly medically assisted adults," noted Winters. "We need help, so we can continue to help others."

Now is the time for everyone to reach out and help. Those who wish to contribute may make food and other item donations at LCM located at 13157 South Old Moneta Road, in Moneta. Financial donations may also be sent to LCM's mailing address, PO Box 695, Moneta, VA 24121-0695. To make a donation online, visit lakechristianministries.org and scroll down to the right hand of the page and click "Donate".

For more information, visit lakechristianministries.org/.

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# 'Dallas Neel' - continued from page 1

Upon graduating bootcamp at Paris Island SC, our country was involved in a war with Iraq. It was 1990. Kuwait had just been invaded. The Gulf War was in full effect. Neel went to Camp Lejeune, NC, and completed his training as a combat engineer. His company received orders for Desert Storm/Desert Shield and was sent to Norway for Operation Battle Griffin. Neel had the opportunity to visit several countries and work with a variety of people throughout his military career. Some he noted were during a combat tour in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom. He was able to see a country vote for the first time, albeit while under fire. He assisted in preparing the Mozambique Army to defend themselves, a cornerstone building project with the Macedonians and in joint operation with the Canadians, working with the Dutch Marines, while being selected to be a part of an Engineer Reconnaissance Team for two years.

One challenge follows another in the military. Sometimes a lot of training gets completed and never put to use for a particular mission at hand. That training sometimes is used in other missions or venues one never anticipated, but make no mistake about it, it is not training that goes to the wayside. That's the essence of the military in many ways. It's not always about where you have been. It's about where you are going to. It's about how you put what you know and learn to the best use. It's about adapting what you know to prepare for the road ahead. It's about leaving an impression on others that serves the purpose of a greater good. It's about teaching. Learning. Overcoming. Resetting. Refocusing. It's a mission-focused mindset, in the military, and translates into life. It works, if you stay the course.

Neel's time in the Corps involved living in unbelievably harsh conditions – conditions few have ever experienced. “With temperatures reaching 50 below zero in Norway, constant movement was a necessity,” said Neel. “There is very little rest. We would sleep in snow holes covered with tents and just about get comfortable and warm enough to fall asleep – then we would get called to duty at a moment's notice.”

In civilian life, it can kind of be compared to finally winding down enough after a long day's work, finally falling asleep in a warm, comfortable bed, then all of a sudden, the alarm goes off. “In Iraq, we would conduct operations in 137 degree heat – but it was a dry heat – whatever that means,” said Neel. One thing he said he loved about the Corps is that when he thought it couldn't get worse, the Corps would prove me wrong.

The differences are many between the military and mainstream society, though. There's no snooze button in the military. There's movement and action. There's a job to be done. And it gets done.

When hearing stories like these, one might wonder why anyone would come back into civilian life and take the path toward law enforcement like Neel has done. The answer is simple: when you're a protector, the job never ends. You can be trained to protect, like Neel and others in the military are. You can be broken down to your core and built back up into a warrior. But you've got to have heart, man. That's when the true test begins. Neel has both – the training that combines with a heart and mind of a warrior. That's the combination needed to serve as a true protector.

Since 1998 Neel has been a conservation officer in Bedford County. He doesn't face the obstacles he did in the military. That's not what is meant to be. He's seen bad. He knows most people ar-

en't the worst of the worst. He knows people make mistakes. He knows they can change, if they want to. He's faced circumstances as a conservation officer that would make most people cringe. Neel doesn't. He stands up and he forges ahead without hesitation. He gives consideration, operates with reason and he always keeps his heart in his mind. Because none of us truly know what another is going through in life during a moment of despair, whether it's on land, in the waters of Smith Mountain Lake, in homes, on farms and on highways and byways. Neel keeps his heart in mind and his sense about him, especially when it comes to children. He keeps his own children in mind throughout the day and night – no matter the distance of presence that separates him from them. He works hard, long hours. He is like a lot of fathers who have and continue to sacrifice time with his children and family to provide for them. He loves his job – you can tell he loves what he does – but what shines is who is does it for. He does it for people – he serves others in all he does – directly and indirectly – and he does so with his own children in mind. He is a quintessential leader. He is an example to follow. That's part military. But that's all human – being a human, the way God intended us to be.

These days, Neel is not working the long hours he once was. He's no longer in the military. He's not working seven days a week. He has three children that he tries to spend as much time as he can with. “Someone once told me that when your child is five years old, you can count about 650 weekends that you have left with them as a child,” said Neel. “That's a sobering fact. It puts life into perspective. It's something we lose sight of, and I have done the same. But I have never forgotten it. I never will.”

Neel recognizes the importance of money. It makes life easier. But it comes with a cost when it is put to the forefront. “I used to think that making more money made the greatest impact on life, but not anymore,” said Neel. “The greatest impact is realized when you spend more time with family.”

One of the remarkable programs Neel participates in involves fundraising to provide hunting and fishing licenses to children for a lifetime. Last year, nearly 25 lifetime hunting and fishing licenses were given to children through the program. He also participates in youth events that draw children in and teaches them more about public safety. He partners with others to teach children how to fish, how to hunt, how to enjoy learning the basic skills of survivorship in a way that encourages them to want to learn more. To enjoy



Conservation Officer Dallas Neel patrols Smith Mountain Lake. Credit: Smith Mountain Eagle

living life, while learning and experiencing it. It's not about living life like you're dying. It's about living life for the pure joy of it.

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Job well done, Officer Neel. You know what it means to pass it on for the good.

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## Ridge View Bank holds 'Fill-the-Bus' event for local teachers

Steve McClintic, Jr.  
News Editor

Ridge View Bank recently hosted a "fill-the-bus" school supply collection event for Franklin County and Salem City teachers. The event, held on July 31st, resulted in the collection of an overflow of supplies to support teachers for the start of the new school year. "We are very thankful for the communities we serve, especially for our teachers," said Carrie McConnell, president of Ridge View Bank. "Thank you to all who participated in our "fill-the-bus"

event, and special thanks to the City of Salem and Franklin County for your help."

Salem and Franklin County provided the school buses to generate awareness and excitement for the events. "It's one of the first times I've seen a fill-the-bus event focused solely on teachers," said Curtis Hicks, Superintendent of Salem City Schools. "We want to thank Ridge View Bank for their support for our community and our teachers."

Ridge View Bank's Salem and Smith Mountain Lake locations

collected supplies such as Expo markers, pens, wipes, card stock and more.

"Thank you to everyone who came out to donate supplies for Franklin County teachers," said Dr. Kevin Siers, Superintendent of Franklin County Schools. "This collection will support our teachers in starting out the year positively."

Ridge View Bank also made donations. "We're committed to continuing to serve the communities in which we operate," said McConnell.

## K-9 Sasha with Franklin County Sheriff's Office dies unexpectedly

Staff Reports

The Franklin County Sheriff's Office has announced the sudden loss of a member of its K-9 unit.

"It's with immense sadness that we announce the sudden loss of K-9 Sasha," said Sergeant Megan Huston with the Office of the Sheriff in Franklin County, through a released statement.

On August 9, 2023, K-9 Sasha passed away from an unexpected medical condition while being boarded at a local veterinarian's office.

K-9 Sasha, a five-year-old female German Shepherd, began serving Franklin County in 2018 after being donated by Erich Grasso with Grasso Dog Training and Shepherds in Shelton, CT. The connection was made through a grant with K-9's United in Jacksonville, FL.

K-9 Sasha came from a strong line of working dogs. Her father served as a patrol dog with the New York Police Department (NYPD), and her sister served as a bomb detection dog with the NBA.

K-9 Sasha specialized in narcotics detection and tracking. Throughout her years of service with the Office of the Sheriff in Franklin County, K-9 Sasha assisted with numerous arrests and the recovery of thousands of dollars worth of narcotics seized in the community. She successfully tracked and located many critically missing persons, as well as fleeing criminals.

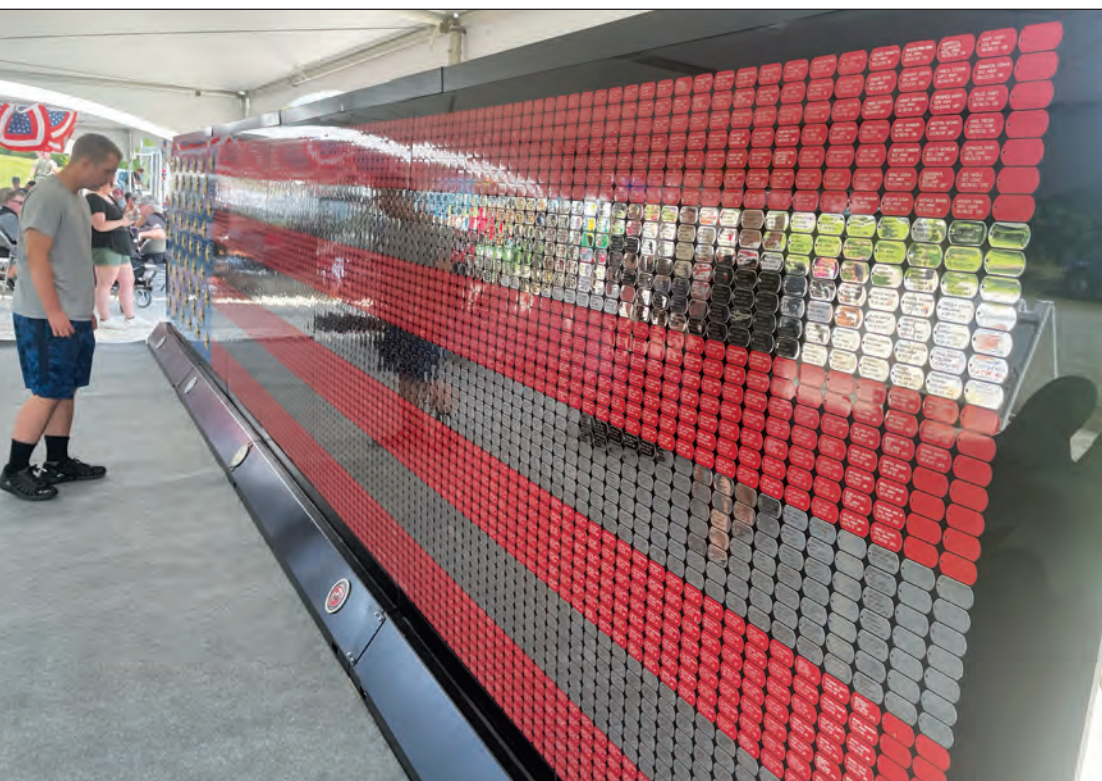
K-9 Sasha may have been smaller than other working dogs, but she was mighty in her impact.

"The unexpected loss of K-9 Sasha hurts this Office of the Sheriff family," the statement said. "Please keep her handlers, Deputy Patterson and Deputy Alejandro, as well as her human mama, Audrey, and her human sisters, Teagan and Dani, in your thoughts and prayers as they navigate through this difficult time."

A memorial service will be scheduled for a later date. The Office of the Sheriff in Franklin County stated it will keep the public informed on the date so that all may give K-9 Sasha a proper thank you and good-bye.



Credit: Office of the Sheriff Franklin County



The VAU Fallen Heroes Memorial marks the lives of over 7,000 men and women who have lost their lives during the wars on terrorism. Credit: Smith Mountain Eagle

## Military Appreciation Day honors lives lost in global wars against terrorism

Steve McClintic, Jr.  
News Editor

On Saturday, August 12th, nearly 4000 people came out to Crazy Horse Marina to be a part of Military Appreciation Day held to honor veterans, active duty service members, military families and supporters, and to raise money in support of the veterans causes. The event brought in more than \$20,000.

At the center of the event stood the VAU Fallen Heroes Memorial stood – a 28' 6' wall that symbolizes the American flag and includes dog tags with the names of more than 7000 men and women who have fallen in the Global War of Terrorism.

The idea for the Global War on Terrorism memorial wall came from James Howard, who is from Lynchburg but now lives in Richmond. Howard, a veteran, said he wanted to do something that made an impact. "It's about restoring patriotism, especially to the meaning behind our American flag," said Howard.

Plans for Military Appreciation Day at Crazy Horse Marina began in February 2023 with Chris Bechtler, Brian Keaton and other members of the American Legion Post #62 at Smith Mountain Lake, and it grew from there. Both Bechtler and Keaton are veterans of the global wars on terrorism. Bringing the traveling wall to the event was part of their mission. That was the beginning, and it grew from there.

The August 12th event included demonstrations and static displays by members of law enforcement, including the Virginia State Police and local sheriff's offices, as well as first responders including the Scruggs Volunteer Fire and Rescue. The Roanoke VET Center had its mobile unit on-site with staff like Juanita Cook and Eldridge Haynesworth offering assistance to veterans to help them access services available to them. Cook, an outreach specialist with the Roanoke VET Center, said she and others with the VET Center help clarify some of the more complicated aspects of the services available to veterans.

More than \$10,000 in in-kind donations made by the local community helped make it one that offered something for everyone – from children to adults – all in the name of supporting veterans past and present. Water slides, a mechanical bull, dunking tank, demonstrations by local businesses, food trucks, live musical performances – even a demonstration of the US Army's official PT test – were put on display. A flyover by the US Army took the crowds attention to the air, while a parade of veterans riding into the event on motorcycles gave way to thunderous applause – and a shared appreciation for what an event like Military Appreciation Day means to so many.

see 'Military Appreciation Day' - page 3

## Franklin County couple charged with embezzling funds from youth baseball organization

Staff Reports

The Franklin County Office of the Sheriff has reported that on Wednesday, August 10, 2023, a husband and wife were arrested on indictments for embezzling funds from a local youth baseball organization.

Brandon Powell, 42, and Ashley Powell, 36, were each charged with one felony count of embezzlement over \$1,000. The couple was released on recognizance bonds.

According to Sergeant Megan Huston, Franklin County Public Information Officer, Mr. Powell had previously served as the President of Franklin County Baseball, Inc. from February 2022 until Spring 2023.

Huston said their investigation into Powell started in May of this year due to concerns that were brought forth by

other members of the organization.

No additional information is available at this time.



Brandon Powell and Ashley Powell Credit: Office of the Sheriff Franklin County

## Bedford County launches its 2023 communication survey to citizens

Staff Reports

In an effort to communicate with citizens more effectively, the Bedford County Public Information Office has launched its 2023 Bedford County Communication Survey.

The 11-question online survey covers topics such as how citizens currently seek information about Bedford County government operations and which social media platforms they prefer.

The survey focuses on Bedford County government operations and associated departments; it is not connected to Bedford County Public Schools.

The direct link to the survey is [surveymonkey.com/r/bedcocommunication](https://surveymonkey.com/r/bedcocommunication). There is also a link to the survey on the homepage of the Bedford County website located at [bedfordcountyva.gov](https://bedfordcountyva.gov).

By request, individuals can obtain a printed copy of the survey by calling the Public Information Office at 540.586.7601, extension 1490.

The survey will be open to the public until August 31, 2023.



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# 'Military Appreciation Day' - from page 1

Steve Gardiner, a veteran from Wirtz and a member of the American Legion Post #60 in Lynchburg, summed up what the event meant to him in a few words. "It means a lot," said Gardiner. "It brings back memories; it's a reason for celebration. I enjoyed the group that came in on motorcycles. It was powerful."

For others, like Mary Calpin and Dennis Calpin, of Moneta, the event was an opportunity to show support for veterans, both close in heart to them, and those they don't know. "Mary Calpin and her son, Dennis, attended in the absence of her husband and Dennis' father, a veteran, who was not feeling well and couldn't attend. "We came for him, and for all veterans."

Keith and Sandy Moser, from Moneta, came to the event as both supporters and contributors. Keith, a veteran, has been an intricate part of helping rebuild the American Legion Post #62 – the Lake Legion Post – to where it stands today. He and Sandy are donating their time and resources to help build an office for Post #62 to serve as a resource center of sorts for veterans to come to and learn more about the services and resources available to them as veterans. "It's a good event," said Moser. "It's part of what we are doing to help veterans, to celebrate them and offer ways designed to assist them and their families in moving forward in life."



Steve Gardiner, a veteran from Wirtz, attended Military Appreciation Day. Credit: Smith Mountain Eagle

evolves into a mission driven by many and never ends until the job is done. The Global War of Terrorism has come at a cost – many lives – and it continues. The Wall reflects this message with empty dog tags that have no name as of yet. It symbolizes that the War of Terrorism will never end, and as such, neither will the fight to end it. It is one of reasons why many veterans respond when thanked for their service by simply saying, "...just make sure it is worth it." Event like Military Appreciation Day are a time to celebrate what veterans have done and continue to do for our country and many others around the world. It is something to remember. It is something never to be forgotten.



Several activities donated by area businesses were available for attendees during Military Appreciation Day. Credit: Smith Mountain Eagle

While the VAU Fallen Heroes Memorial stood at Crazy Horse Marina, members of Post #62 stood watch every minute while it was under its purview. A wall, symbolizing an American Flag, 28'x6'. In front of the wall, on a round pedestal, are two boots with a helmet hoisted above, and made from wood. In front of the pedestal is a plaque with the words, "John 15:13".

Events like Military Appreciation Day held at Crazy Horse Marina are about uniting people together in the name of patriotism, in unity, in kindness, in support. It begins with an idea,



A Color Guard carries the American Flags during Military Appreciation Day held on August 12, 2023. credited



Juanita Cook (left) and Eldridge Haynesworth (right) with the VET Center during Military Appreciation Day. Credit: Smith Mountain Eagle



Lt. Colonel Price (left) and Sgt. Major Bartels (right) at Military Appreciation Day held on Saturday, August 12, 2023. Credit: Smith Mountain Eagle

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## 24-year-old man killed in vehicle crash in Franklin County

Virginia State Police is investigating a single-vehicle crash, which resulted in a fatality. The crash occurred August 27, 2023 at 10 p.m. on Goose Dam Road, one quarter mile south of Sontag Road in Franklin County.

A 1995 Ford Explorer was traveling on Goose Dam Road when the vehicle ran off the left side of the roadway and struck a fence.

The driver of the vehicle was identified as Sklyer Rorrer,

24, of Collinsville. Rorrer was not wearing his seatbelt and died at the scene. The passengers in the vehicle were treated and released with minor injuries.

The crash remains under investigation.



Keith Moser, an Army veteran, and his wife, Sandy outside their home at Smith Mountain Lake. Credit: Smith Mountain Eagle

## Veterans Post: sacrifice not about loss for local Army Veteran; it's about what is gained by giving

Steve McClintic, Jr.  
News Editor

Sacrifice. Dictionaries define this word in multiple ways. To suffer without. To give up. To renounce. To lose. The biblical interpretation is different. It means to give whatever is required of our time, our earthly possessions, and our energies to further His work.

Keith Moser, of Moneta, learned this lesson early in life. He grew up like many people do, without a true sense of direction. Moser's decision to enter the US Army shortly after high school didn't give him all the answers he was in search of. But a purpose? Yes. A foundation – a navigational beacon, if you will, that has helped lead him on other paths in his life.

"In the military, there are all of these opportunities," said Moser. "It gave me discipline. It helped me build upon my faithfulness, the way I was brought up."

Moser spent three years in the Army – active duty – as a cargo specialist. It was mind-opening," said Moser. "As strange as it sounds, it was an 'out-of-control' zone – childhood. The military gave me the opportunity to see different angles of life. In the Army, you can be as successful as you want. They will let you fail. They will let you learn. It was actually a reprieve from life as I knew it. It helped put me on the right path."

Path. Now this is a word that sure has a lot of meaning behind it. It is best defined by the person who is standing in front of his or hers. For Moser, the word 'path' brings to mind a well-known poem – "The Road Less Traveled", by Robert Frost. This poem is widely considered one of the most controversial pieces of prose in American poetry. Why? Because it presents a choice of direction. Not just one choice, but one choice that follows another. It

touches people at the heart of their own deepest, internal conflicts – confronting them with the decision to choose a path based on what they've long been taught, and what they have learned on their own. The first controversy comes in the form of struggle – of all kinds – in the courage to walk alone; to trust that faith will help lead you. The second is knowing how far to go alone with your own faith and believing in yourself. The third – and this is so important – is the choice of who to ask to walk with you in life, for better and for worse.

Enter Sandy Moser. She's Keith's better half. He's hers. Together, they make each other whole, and then some. This is a lesson in heart math, in life, ladies and gentlemen, and it's worth giving your full attention. "In marriage, it's not just about giving your spouse half-effort, or meeting one another halfway," said Sandy Moser. "It's about giving one another 110%, and then some. Two, to the second power.

Here's the math lesson: in irrational math, the square root of two is undetermined. The decimal expansion is infinite. It is non-terminating. There is no end. But when two become one – there is a shift. The square root of one remains one. It is positive, mathematically speaking.

So far, this is a lot to digest. A lot of information. A lot of different paths. A lot left up to interpretation. Uncertainty. Question marks. Complication. But not if you spend time with the Mosers. Not if you listen to them and watch them interact with one another. What you see is true love for one another, for their family, for their community, for the gift of life that has been given to them, and the gifts they give in return.

please see - 'Veterans Post: Sacrifice' - page 3

## Fall ideal time for buffer landscaping to protect lake and water quality

Steve McClintic, Jr.  
News Editor

According to some experts, man-made lakes have a shelf-life that can be termed at approximately 100 years. But like any assessment of this nature, many factors can play a role in helping to extend the health and vitality of a lake, and it can be done with the contributions of others.

One such option includes buffer landscaping – vegetation planted near the lakeshore to trap sediments and to filter nutrients and pollutants. Buffer landscaping also serves to prevent erosion and stabilize sloped areas of the shoreline. There's also a beauty to it: lake home and landowners realize a beautiful lakefront while being lake friendly and environmentally sound.



Buffer landscaping offer beauty and purpose at homes at Smith Mountain Lake. Credit: Contributed

John Rupnick, Chairperson of the SMLA Buffer Landscaping Committee, said that SMLA members who are Master Gardeners have developed a protocol for the establishment of buffer gardens using native vegetation to filter contaminants and fertilizers flowing to the lake. The SMLA also provides a Buffer Landscape 'How to Guide', as well as an extensive plant list that can help with planning. The plant list is comprehensive with native, as well as cultivars that thrive in our area, and is approved by AEP for use below the 800-foot contour in the current Shoreline Management Plan.

SMLA also offers a free assessment to lake home and landowners, which includes having a representative come to the property and provide suggestions for buffer landscaping options specific to a property.

For more information about buffer landscaping, visit [smlassociation.org/buffer-landscaping/](http://smlassociation.org/buffer-landscaping/).

## Proud Patriots of SML September 5th meeting to include local school board candidates

The Proud Patriots of SML's monthly meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 5th at 10:30 a.m. at 1100 Celebration Ave, Suite 101 in Moneta. This month's guest speakers will be the candidates for Franklin and Bedford County School Boards.

The Proud Patriots of SML's headquarters will open on September 1, 2023, at 95 Westlake Road in Moneta. The location is across from Kroger and next door to the Faber CPA office. The hours of operation will be Wednesday, Thursday, Friday from 10 a.m. - 6 p.m., and on Saturday from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

For more information, visit [proudpatriotsofsml.org](http://proudpatriotsofsml.org).

## Fundraiser for injured 'Moonshiners' show cast member Josh Owens brings out community in Rocky Mount

Steve McClintic, Jr.  
News Editor

On Friday, August 25, Rocky Mount Smokehouse was the place to be to support a cause in the name of one of person who hasn't forgotten where he came from, nor the humble, gracious feeling that comes from being supported by a community that has wholeheartedly embraced him as one of their own.

Josh Owens, who is from Polk County, NC, sustained life-threatening injuries on March 4, 2023, during a motorcycle race at Daytona International Speedway. Owens is one of the cast members of the popular Discovery Channel television series, 'Moonshiners', based on and filmed in part in and around the Franklin County community. The accident, and subsequent costly medical bills had a devastating financial impact on Owens, who is continuing to recover.

"I broke my neck, back, and both legs," said Owens, who spent nearly 10 days in a coma remains in wheelchair. He said that he has made and continues to make significant progress in his recovery.

Funds raised during the fundraiser held at Rocky Mount Smokehouse are going to assist Owens.

Merchandise sold during the event included shirts, hats, photos, and other items. Owens, and fellow Moonshiners' cast member Steven Ray Tickle, who is affectionally known as, "Tickle", took time to sign autographs and snap photos with attendees who came out to support Owens.

The Jerry Wimmer Trio band also performed during the event, with a special guest performance by local favorite, Annalyse.

Buddy Hancock, owner of Rocky Mount Smokehouse, offered his restaurant as the venue to hold the event. Originally, the event was scheduled to be held on the farm of local businessperson, Charlie Mitchell, but as interest grew, the decision was made to move it to a larger venue to accommodate the large crowd on hand. Hancock and Mitchell worked swiftly to bring it Rocky Mount Smokehouse, which is formally known as Buddy's BBQ.

The event also included a celebration of Owens' birthday, complete with a cake and an exuberant rendition of "Happy Birthday"

sang by the supportive crowd.

"I'm just an ol' county boy who happens to be on TV," said Owens. "I'm blessed by God to be given a second chance at life, and the opportunity to leave a better legacy. The support is humbling and so appreciated."



Josh Owens (right) with Steven Ray Tickle from 'Moonshiners'. Credit: Smith Mountain Eagle

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# 'Veterans Post: Sacrifice' - from page 1

In the military, Keith learned the value of the power of one. It's the heart and soul of it. All for one, and one for all. Teamwork at its finest. Sandy Moser is in medicine. She holds a doctorate as a nurse practitioner. She recently stepped away from full-time practice to focus her care on one – her and Keith's three-year-old granddaughter. Sacrifice? Yes. The right kind of sacrifice. Sacrifice that doesn't hurt anyone, but rather helps everyone. They fought together to literally give their grandchild a second chance at life – to give their granddaughter the chance to one day walk her own path in life – a better life – her best life. That's giving, the way family is meant to give to one another.

Make no mistake about it – Keith is right in front and behind of his family. Following his path in the military, he went to school at Old Dominion University, where he received his undergraduate degree in electrical engineering – and where he met his future wife, Sandy. They came from similar backgrounds – Keith is from Chatham and Sandy is from Danville. They knew one another, but in college, they got to know one another closer, more deeply. They started as friends. "We would have long talks about life," said Sandy. "It was nice, having someone to talk to and get to know better. He became my best friend, and I fell in love with him." Keith won't argue that point. He knows who he has in Sandy. "She's beautiful, and I am fortunate to call her my wife, my life-long friend," said Keith. "She even helped me with my books when I needed help." Reflecting on this puts a smile of both of their faces.

Following college, Keith went to work as a government contractor – leaning on his experience in the military. Later, he transitioned into private business. Meanwhile, Sandy continued to work as a nurse practitioner. She worked in family practice and internal medicine. They built a life together, had two children, a daughter and a son. They supported one another in their pursuit to become better, to do better, together.

Earlier in life, Keith's job kept him on the road. "I was traveling all the time," said Keith. "When my daughter was 10 and my son was five, Sandy supported my decision to go back to school so I could learn more about business – being in business. I needed to, for my family. I needed to spend more time with our children."

Keith pursued his master's degree at the University of Virginia. In 2012, Keith and Sandy made the decision to relocate from Chesapeake to Smith Mountain Lake. Keith went first – alone – to establish their roots. Sandy remained in Chesapeake with their children. When Sandy and their kids made the move, both she and Keith said the sacrifice of being apart was trying, but it was worth it. "Absence makes the heart grow fonder," said Sandy. It was hard learning to live with one another again, but that was our driving force. We had worked hard to achieve what we had. We knew – and still know – our blessings."

Fear. There's something about fear – especially the fear of failure – that has an effect on some people. Some stand up to it, face it head on, endure it, overcome it. Refer back to the dictionary definitions of sacrifice – to suffer without, to give up, to renounce, to lose. Short-term pain for long-term gain. It helps to have something to work toward for – it's best when it's who, not what. It's more genuine. It's more heartfelt. For Keith,

his motivation was Sandy, and their family, who stood with him even when they were apart. "I want to continually impress her," said Keith. "I want to keep what I have, with my wife and my family."

The transition of learning to live with one another again wasn't difficult. Not by Keith's and Sandy's definition. They had learned from it, grown from it. They also reaped the benefits of their hard work – together. Keith eventually took the chance of going into business for himself. He and Sandy established Moser Electric. They are a staple in the Smith Mountain Lake community. Keith continues to give back – he's built a barn alongside Booker T. Washington Highway in Moneta that's multipurpose. It serves as a place for recreation. It also serves as an office for American Legion Post #62 in which Keith and Sandy are intricately involved to support the cause for helping veterans. That's the two-word mission of Lake Legion Post #62 – "help veterans." The number matters – two – that is, for good reason. It adds up.

A two word mission. Two people – Keith and Sandy. Many others, like the team of local veterans who've commanded Lake Legion Post #62 to where they stand today.

People like Jeff Prowse and his wife, Debbie. Brian Keaton, and his wife, Kim. Christopher Bechtler, and his wife, Pat. Keith Moser, and his wife, Sandy. And many others behind the scenes, and right on the front lines – standing up for one another. For good causes. For good people. For a community that not one of these individuals are originally from, but who have become a part of just as if they were. Together, two-by-two. Side-by-side. With a big body of water in the middle, and a ship full of courage, strength, determination and resolve that can weather any storm. Including sacrifice. Sacrifice for the good, for everyone. Now that's powerful. That's passion. That's a path to follow that's not misguided. It's a path that doesn't need defined. Not when you see where Keith and Sandy have come from, and where they continue to forge ahead. When you see the good that has come from it, and will continue to pave for



The Mosers' multipurpose facility that serves as an office for Lake Legion Post #62. Credit: Smith Mountain Eagle

others, the season nor the circumstances are the only focus. In the end, this is a love story about loving what you do. It's about loving who you do it for and with. It's about having love for those before you, for those with you, and for those who may not even know it will touch them one day. Keith and Sandy – Sandy and Keith – no matter how you look at it, it works. That's the lesson to learn from every single day.

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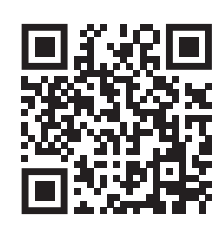
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## Wirtz man, 22, dead after two-vehicle crash in Franklin County

Staff Reports

The Virginia State Police is investigating a two-vehicle crash, which resulted in a fatality. The crash occurred June 26, 2023 at 6:20 a.m. on Old Franklin Turnpike, east of Novelty Road in Franklin County.

A 1998 Chevrolet Suburban was traveling east on Old Frank-

lin Turnpike when the vehicle crossed the center-line and struck a 2021 Hyundai Sonata, which was traveling west on Old Franklin Turnpike.

Ashley N. Hodges, 38, of Union Hall, drove the Chevrolet. Hodges was not wearing her seatbelt at the time of the crash and was flown by helicopter to Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital for life-threatening injuries sustained in the crash.

The driver of the Hyundai was identified as Kyle J. Simino, 22, of Wirtz. Simino was not wearing his seatbelt at the time of the crash and died at the scene. Charges are currently pending.

The Virginia State Police Crash Reconstruction Team assisted with the crash. The crash remains under investigation.



Chris and Pat Bechtler, veterans who have been married for 37 years, are a fixture at Smith Mountain Lake managing Crazy Horse Marina. Credit: Sandra Aranegui

## Veterans Post: husband and wife veterans continue their service to community at Crazy Horse Marina

Steve McClintic, Jr.  
News Editor

What will I do when I am no longer in the military? It's a common question veterans find themselves asking. Many already have goals and plans. For some, those plans align with their experience gained serving their country. Others take an entirely different path. For Chris and Pat Bechtler, both veterans who operate Crazy Horse Marina in Moneta, it's a little bit of both, and then some. And they make it work every day, as a team at work and at home.

The story of how the Bechtlers found their way to Smith Mountain Lake and ultimately to Crazy Horse Marina is one that was partly planned and partly played by ear. They have been married for 37 years. Chris served 23 years in the Coast Guard and Navy. Pat served four in the Air Force as an operating room technician. Along the way, they had four children – Donny, 43, who followed in his father's footsteps serving 25 years in the Coast Guard; Kelli, who served four years in the Army; Jeffery, 36; and Keith, 34, an Army combat veteran.

Having a spouse in active duty – as

Chris was for many years into his and Pat's marriage – has its disadvantage, and its advantages. Pat reflected on the positives in sharing how the two handled it. "Chris would be gone for six or more months at a time," said Pat. "Raising our children without him being around daily was a challenge, but we made it work. He helped instill discipline and good character in our children. I did the same. We didn't skip a beat when he was gone."

Pat noted that when Chris would return from his deployment, it was an adjustment period in the beginning. A man wants to be the 'man of the house.' Pat understood this, but she also reminded him to not forget what she had to be while he was gone: the role model representing both mom and dad. It was a system that worked. It didn't take long for Chris to get right back into the swing of things.

With three of their children growing up and entering the service, the point can be argued that accepting and valuing discipline was never an issue. Nonetheless, raising four children still takes effort. It takes teamwork – the entire family working together – especially when it comes to having a child who is handicapped. That

was the case with Jeffery, Chris' and Pat's third child. A mother's selfless love, care and compassion is not only beneficial in these moments; it's a necessity. Her instincts took over, and her leadership skills shined.

"My plan wasn't to continue working in medicine as an OR Tech after leaving the military," said Pat. "But there's no doubt that my skills in healthcare have come in useful in our lives." Pat isn't just talking about her skills for helping raise her son. She's also served as caregiver for Chris, who battled and beat non-Hodgkin Lymphoma a few years ago.

Having worked at Bethesda Medical Center while in the Air Force, Pat knew that a university medical center was the right direction to go. So did Chris. While choosing an oncologist at the University of Virginia Medical Center, Chris had a stipulation. "I asked that my doctor be a woman who had recently graduated from medical school and completed residency," said Chris. "I knew she would understand how to care. I knew she would be up on the latest advancements in treatment."

-- see 'Crazy Horse Marina' - page 3

## SMLA to hold HAB discussion forum July 6th

Staff Reports

For the past 37 years, the Smith Mountain Lake Association (SMLA) has employed an all-volunteer team of 50 plus lake residents to regularly collect water samples and measure water clarity at 84 sites on Smith Mountain Lake (SML). These water samples are analyzed for chlorophyll and phosphorous

content by scientists at the Ferrum College Water Quality Lab, who also perform bacteria sampling, algae sampling, and depth profiling at various sites around the lake.

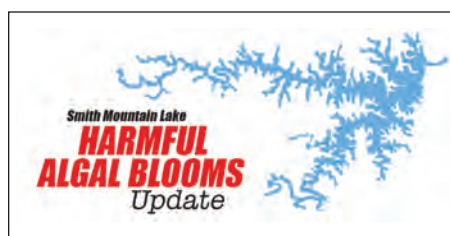
Key results of the most recent week of sampling highlight elevated levels of bacteria (specifically e. coli), chlorophyll and decreased water clarity in certain areas of the lake.

It should be noted that while SMLA and Ferrum College collect water samples on a regular basis every summer, this team does not collect water samples for Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) analysis. The current HAB Swimming Advisory, in place since June 6th for the Blackwater arm of SML, is managed by the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

SMLA is closely working with partners at Ferrum College, VDH and DEQ to unravel the complex interaction of factors that are contributing to the current excessive cyanobacteria (aka blue-green algae) growth in SML.

SMLA has invited representatives from VDH, DEQ, Ferrum College and County Ag Extension programs to speak with the lake community about the health of SML during a public town hall-style meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to bring together subject matter experts from statewide agencies to share information on the current HAB situation with the goal being to further educate the residents on this topic, address their questions, and share solutions that can protect the health of SML.

The meeting will be held on Thursday, July 6, 2023 from 5:30 – 7 p.m. at Trinity Ecumenical Parish, located at 40 Lakemount Drive, Moneta. Space is limited, and SMLA representatives are requesting attendees to register at [smlassociation.org/hab](http://smlassociation.org/hab).



Credit: Smith Mountain Eagle



Contributed

## LewisGale Medical Center achieves Level II Trauma care designation

Steve McClintic, Jr.  
News Editor

LewisGale Medical Center has announced that the Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Health (VDH) State Health Commissioner has designated the Salem hospital as a Level II Trauma Center. The designation recognizes the hospital's commitment to providing optimal care for sudden, life-threatening injuries.

LewisGale Medical Center began its pursuit of Level II trauma status in spring 2022 in response to the area's need for enhanced levels of comprehensive emergency service. As a designated Level II Trauma Center, the prompt, comprehensive critical care provided by the hospital not only benefits local residents, but also outlying areas as it now serves as a back-up care center for rural and community hospitals.

The announcement follows VDH's recent reverification of its sister facility, LewisGale Hospital Montgomery, in Blacksburg, Va., as a Level III Trauma Center after a rigorous on-site survey with zero de-

ficiencies. The facility has maintained this accreditation for 31 years.

"Recovery is greatly increased when a severely injured patient receives care at a designated trauma center within the first hour of injury," said Jaromir Kohout, MD, trauma medical director at LewisGale Medical Center. "Achieving this Level II Trauma Center status is another example of how we are always striving to serve the residents of Southwest Virginia."

The hospital's trauma program is staffed 24-hours a day by board-certified trauma surgeons, neurosurgeons, orthopedic surgeons, critical care physicians, and trauma trained nurses.

"Earning these designations is a reflection of the tremendous dedication that our physicians, nurses, and healthcare staff have shown as we developed the trauma program," said Alan Fabian, LewisGale Medical Center chief executive officer. "Their efforts are already resulting in more lives being saved, and we are proud to provide our community with quality trauma care."

## New 'Move Over' law to protect law enforcement officers in effect

Staff Reports

On July 1, 2023, Virginia's expanded Move Over law took effect. According to Morgan Dean, spokesperson with AAA Mid-Atlantic, the new law builds upon existing legislature. Currently, the law requires drivers to slow down and move over for emergency vehicles with red, blue or amber lights.

But the expansion now requires drivers to also move over for stationary vehicles with hazard lights, warning signs or flares.

Dean said the agency believes the new law can save lives while people are pulled over for maintenance or medical issues.



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# 'Crazy Horse Marina' - continued from page 1

I knew she would be hungry to prove herself." Pat agreed and supported Chris' line of thinking. Teamwork. Making it work.

Having the right medical team behind Chris helped him overcome cancer. Having a wife supporting and helping navigate was the difference. He had the discipline, the patience, the fight in him that would not let him give up. So did she. They both do.

Chris retired from the Coast Guard in 2005. Pat's place as leader of the family unit was secured. Chris' future was unclear. He dreamed of one day living at a lake in the mountains. But that was still a dream. Searching for jobs following a career in the military has its ups and downs. Chris learned that quickly. "In every position I'd seek out, I was told that I was either overqualified or undereducated," said Chris.

Then one day while living in Maryland, Chris opened a "penny saver" newspaper and spotted a small ad asking for dock staff. Initially, he was told he was overqualified. He persisted, and he secured the job. Rising through the ranks at a marina wasn't difficult for Chris. After all, he had a career of experience in the Coast Guard and Navy. But when the marina sold to another company, he was left with a choice of where to transition. This time, his mother-in-law came in with an idea. She had heard of a marina manager job opening in North Carolina not far from where she lived. Chris didn't hesitate. The family packed up their home and moved to NC - before Chris had even interviewed for the job. He was certain though. It was a lake in the mountains. It was a dream he knew one day that he would chase. Pat sup-

ported him. The move was made. Chris got the job. And the rest, as they say, is history.

A lake in NC was a start, but it wasn't the end. Chris also recalled having pa-

not only manage the marina together, as well as hold many community events. Chris also serves on the Water Safety Council at Smith Mountain Lake, helping to organize programs on the lake



Chris and Pat Bechtler have lived at Smith Mountain Lake and managed Crazy Horse Marina for 11 years.. Credit: Sandra Aranegui

trolled Smith Mountain Lake with the Coast Guard in the 1990s. It was a place that never left his radar. When he was promoted to director of marine operations at Crazy Horse Marina, he took the opportunity. He's been here for 11 years now.

A lot of changes have taken place during his time at the helm - a lot of changes for the good. "We've come full circle, in life, that is," said Chris and Pat. "We're both back to serving people, serving others. It's what we know best. It's what we do best."

At Crazy Horse Marina, Chris and Pat

designed to promote water and boating safety. He has also served on the navigation committee, advising on where to place navigational markers at the lake. It's a full-time, life devoting effort. They do it as a team. They do for their community of people who have become part of their family, and with whom Chris and Pat have become a part of theirs."

It's not always easy, especially working together as a husband and wife. Pat doesn't sugarcoat that either. "I quit at least once a season," she said, laughing. "But we work it out. We always have. We always will."

# Hardy jewelers announce name change effective July 1st

Staff Reports

In 1953, a jewelry store opened up in Rocky Mount, Virginia. Then called Kingoff's Jewelers, the store took off under the guidance of young manager Rudy Haywood. After 10 years as Kingoff's Jewelers, Rudy took over the business and renamed it Haywood's Jewelers, soon hiring Harold Ingram to help out with the store. Business boomed. Even so, the Haywood's staff could never have envisioned the success his store would see over the next seventy years—or the twists and turns the road to growth would take.

One of those twists came in 1998, when Harold Ingram rose from his staff position to purchase the business himself as Mr. Haywood retired. As owner, he certainly appreciated the strong work ethic and passion of his part-time employee, Joanna (Jo) Gruver. Little did the two know, a lucrative business partnership was just around the corner. After Gruver graduated from college, Joanna and Harold came up with a novel idea: the two could open a new store, which she could run. Ingram had faith in his young employee, and the two formed a 50/50 partnership, breaking ground on a location in the Westlake Towne Center at Smith Mountain Lake.

Now, as Gruver takes over full ownership of the Hardy location, the store will be changing its name to Jo & Co. Jewelers—after Joanna and her amazing team, of course. "We're thrilled to be entering this next chapter of our business," says Gruver. The name change, she adds, makes clear the separation of Jo & Co. from the original Haywood's Jewelers in Rocky Mount. "We'll always treasure that relationship with Haywood's Jewelers, and our history as connected stores," clarifies Gruver, "But it felt like the right time to establish ourselves independently."

The name change took effect on July 1st. The new website, joandcojewelers.com, went live on June 29th. However, Gruver wants to reassure customers that apart from becoming a stand-alone store and taking on a new name, the local jeweler they've come to know, love, and trust won't be changing. "We have deep roots in this area, and we've built great relationships with our clients and our community. Maintaining those is, and always will be, our top priority," Gruver says. "We're staying in the same building. And when you visit, you'll still see the same smiling faces, receive the same outstanding service, and shop the same incredible collection of jewelry."



Credit: Toby Robertson

# Nearly 100 years of families gather at local family reunion

Toby Robertson

Smith Mountain Eagle contributor

On Saturday June 24th, the descendants of the late John Ed Ellis and Sallie Hale Ellis of Hardy held a family reunion at Appalachia Hills in Callaway.

The oldest in attendance was Marie Ellis Blackwelder, 96, and husband Jim Blackwelder, 94. Marie is the daughter of the late John Hubert and Annie Belle Morgan Ellis. Gerald Cooper is husband of the late Vangie Lee Ellis Cooper and Lorraine Ellis Meador, 87, while Marie is the daughter of the late Thomas and Bessie Bobbitt Ellis.

# Unidentified body discovered in Hardy area of the Roanoke River

Staff Reports

At approximately 5 p.m. on Tuesday, June 27, 2023, the Franklin County E911 Center received a call about a deceased body located in the Hardy area of the Roanoke River. Units from various agencies responded to the scene.

An unidentified victim was located in the water and has been transported to the Medical Examiner's Office in Roanoke. Information is limited at this time pending results from the autopsy. This remains an ongoing investigation.

The Franklin County Sheriff's Office would like to thank the Virginia Conservation Police, Smith Mountain Lake Marine Fire and Rescue, Franklin County Public Safety Fire and EMS units, as well as Bedford County Fire and EMS units for the organized response and assistance.

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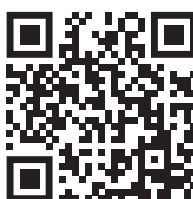
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## Bower Center for the Arts announces fundraising event for August

The Bower Center for the Arts, based in Bedford, will hold its annual fundraising event designed for adults to enjoy an evening out while supporting the Bower Center's mission and programs. Entitled, "The Art of Pairing – Tacos & Tequila", and presented by Loper Financial, the event will be held on Saturday, August 19 from 7 - 10 p.m. in the historic Bower Center for the Arts, located

at 305 N. Bridge Street in Bedford.

The event includes an interactive evening offering tacos by Suzy Q Catering with tequila pairings, live music by Music Road Co, salsa dancing with Lynchburg Salsa, art making experiences, a silent auction and more, all while being immersed in one of Bower Center's largest and most diverse exhibits, the 3rd Bi-

ennial Fiber Arts National Juried Exhibition. As a 21+ event. The evening will feature a guided tequila tasting with additional food and drinks. Bower Center for the Arts is currently accepting donations for the silent auction. For more information, call 540.586.4235.

## Veterans Post: Retired US Marine brings structure, teaching moments and joy to Mitchell's Point Marina



Prowse displays an inscribed brick that will become a permanent part of the Huddleston Memorial Courts Circle of Honor at Mitchell's Point. For more information and/or to donate, visit [bricksrus.com/donorsite/huddlestonvmc](https://bricksrus.com/donorsite/huddlestonvmc). Photo credit: Sandra Aranequi

Steve McClintic, Jr.  
News Editor

Jeff Prowse served nearly 25 years in the United States Marines. If it could be done, Prowse has done it, on land and in the air. When he retired, another life called his name. He landed at a marina in Huddleston – Mitchell's Point Marina and RV Park of Smith Mountain Lake – and the rest, as they say, is history. But it's a history Prowse is proud of and has learned from. He continues to learn from it, and he continues to pass it on in many positive ways.

What Prowse learned in the military may not apply to all aspects of civilian life, but he has certainly made the best of taking what he knows best and spreading it around for the benefit of others. That characteristic is leadership. Prowse has proven it works, that it is adaptable to every situation.

How Prowse ended up at Smith Mountain Lake is an interesting story of its own. While flying in V-22 aircraft for the military, Prowse said he flew over Smith Mountain Lake. He felt like one day it would be a place he would call home. He began his next mission in life by renting boats at the marina. He was good at it, and word travelled fast. Eventually, he established a boat rental business through a loan from Tom Buck, a retired Navy veteran who owned Mitchell's Point. It grew from there. When the opportunity came about to purchase Mitchell's Point Marina, Prowse embraced the opportunity, with his wife Debbie by his side. "People who thank those who have served in the military for their service may mean it, but to me, it's about continuing to give long after being in the service," said Prowse. "I believe that comes in the form of teaching others, helping others, whether I'm active in the service or not."

Prowse has turned Mitchell's Point into one of the most desirable marinas and RV parks at Smith Mountain Lake. It's clean, well-managed, offers a full-service restaurant with weekly live music performances, and much, more more. He's also been intricate in helping form the American Legion Post #62 at Smith Mountain Lake, and he continues to serve veterans in his role with the Post, alongside other fellow veterans who also dedicated their efforts to developing a Post that truly serves the needs of veterans.

"It starts and ends with people," said Prowse. "It starts with giving people a reason to believe they can make a difference, a positive difference."

As a leader, Prowse encourages people to be involved. He brings in staff who may not have a goal in life to work at a marina the rest of theirs, but he makes sure they feel like they are contributing and learning along the way. From college students who return each summer to work their respective jobs – either in the marina, in the campground or in the restaurant, one thing

is for certain: they learn how to do their jobs and do them well. They learn how to follow, and in turn lead, by the example they have been taught. Sometimes, it's the little things. Sometimes, it's little things that turn into bigger things. But make no mistake about it, it's always an effort that is rooted in the cause of helping people, by making people's lives better for the moment, and making memories that last for far longer.



Prowse discusses plans for a pick-up game at the Huddleston Memorial Courts with two campers. Photo credit: Sandra Aranequi

For example, when visiting the marina at Mitchell's Point, a pontoon boat decorated with "Patriot Cruiser" decals sits in the dock. This boat is reserved for any veteran to use, free of charge. Even the fuel is donated. The idea for offering the boat to veterans came out of a friend who was wounded in service and wanted to enjoy boating. Prowse moved forward with his plan to design a boat that is handicapped accessible, for veterans. He reached out to the community, which embraced the idea. A decade later, the "Patriot Cruiser" boat has become a staple. It's another example of how Prowse continues to serve his mission of helping others.

It doesn't end there. This year, Prowse opened the Huddleston Veterans Memorial Courts at Mitchell's Point. The facility was built to honor the service of Veterans, and to provide a first class recreational facility for the Huddleston community. It recognizes the selflessness and courage of Veterans, while at the same time doing a part in preparing the youth of today

please see 'Veterans Post' - page 3

## VDH considers Harmful Algal Blooms levels acceptable

Steve McClintic, Jr.  
News Editor

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) has released the results of all five lake samples taken on July 13, reveal that the samples now reflect acceptable levels of cyanobacteria. One site (Blackwater River B22) had detectable levels of microcystin, but that concentration was well below the advisory threshold. At the other four sites, all toxins were below detectable levels.

In order to lift advisories issued for the Blackwater River arm of Smith Mountain Lake, two consecutive samples with results at acceptable levels collected a minimum of 10 days apart, are necessary. These results are the first set of samples toward lifting the Upper Blackwater River HAB Advisory.

For the Upper Blackwater River, sites originally placed under advisory were shoreline sites. It is customary once a HAB advisory has been established, to replace shoreline sites with representative mid-channel sites. This approach is consistent with how VDH and partners have historically managed response in Lake Anna for the last several years. Lake Anna is ~13,000 acres whereas Smith Mountain Lake is ~30,000 acres in size.

Taking mid-channel follow-up samples once a HAB is established in a waterbody, is a reasonable as well as practical method for determining whether or not the general public use is impacted by a HAB event. The public should continue to avoid water with surface scum (which may accumulate near shorelines) and that appears discolored, water that smells, and water that has dead or dying animals such as fish.

There is one update for the Roanoke River where a site was sampled on July 6th – but there is no advisory on the Roanoke River. This location did not appear to have a visible HAB, but a water chemistry value was slightly elevated at the time of the Department of Environmental Quality's site visit. Cyanobacteria were detected, but were well below advisory thresholds. Toxins were all below detectable limits at this site.

For updated information, visit [vdh.virginia.gov/water-borne-hazards-control/algal-bloom-surveillance-map](https://vdh.virginia.gov/water-borne-hazards-control/algal-bloom-surveillance-map)

## Rocky Mount sets stage for its 150th anniversary celebration

Steve McClintic, Jr.  
News Editor

The Town of Rocky Mount is excited to bring music to Historic Downtown Rocky Mount on Saturday, September 30 in celebration of the Town's anniversary. The event, titled 150Fest, will bring local musicians to multiple stages across downtown.

Rocky Mount Cultural and Economic Development Director, Daniel Pinard, is excited to see the community celebrate this milestone. "Rocky Mount is such a vibrant community that is overflowing with local talent," says Pinard. "It is very fitting to celebrate the 150th anniversary with music."

Rocky Mount's musical talent will be the highlight of the event with a diverse lineup that spans different genres.

Franklin Street in downtown Rocky Mount will be closed to vehicular traffic during the event, leaving plenty of space for vendors, activities, and music. A "Kids Zone" will provide family friendly games and activities.

150Fest will take place Saturday, September 30 from 3:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m. in downtown Rocky Mount. The event is free to the public.

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**'Veterans Post'** - continued from page 1



Prowse with a resident campers at Mitchell's Point Marina. Photo credit: Sandra Aranegui

tu pick-up games for visitors to his campgrounds to learn how and participate in hockey, sans the ice, of course. It's popular addition to Mitchell's Point. It's a popular venue for more than just campers, but for the community, near and far.

Those who have a Veteran who is close to their heart can donate by sponsoring an inscribed brick that will be a permanent part of the Huddleston Memorial Courts Circle of Honor located at the facility. For more information, visit bricksrus.com/donorsite/huddlestonvmc.

Still, there's more. Stored in a large building on the property is something most people may not be aware exists. It's Liberty University crew team's Boathouse. The team practices at Mitchell's Point under the direction of Prowse's, wife Debbie, who is the team's coach. Early in the morning, the team can be found on the lake practicing and putting the effort into becoming the best they can. It's paid off; the team won a national title in crew in 2019.

Things change from year to year at Mitchell's Point, just the same as they do everywhere. Some staff return, others move on in their lives. The one constant in life may be change, but when you come to

for the challenges of tomorrow through sport and healthy competition.

"Our community has a safe, well organized venue for full court basketball, street/roller hockey and pickleball," said Prowse. "There are both youth and adult leagues, as well as summer camps and lessons at the courts. We see this as an investment in the future of our Nation. When our kids participate in team sports, they learn the values of dedication, cooperation, self-control and a myriad of other positive lessons."

Hockey is a love of Prowse. He offers camps and impromptu

Mitchell's Point, the one constant that remains the same is a clear commitment to service, from the top down. It carries on in those who have moved on, it is reflected in the lives of people who still remain, and it will touch lives of those who may not know it yet but will. Because that's the kind of place Mitchell's Point Marina is. It's the kind of place that reflect the right kind of leadership and passion for making a positive difference in lives without the expectation of it being returned to Prowse, but to make a difference by paying it forward. That's leadership.

That's constant change, for the good.

For more information about Mitchell's Point, visit mitchellspoint.com.

Visit us online at [smithmountaineagle.com](http://smithmountaineagle.com)

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