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Bedford County lifted outdoor burning ban December 11th

Staff Reports

Outdoor burning became legal on Dec. 12, 2023.

fire pits/campfires.

After a thorough review of the weather forecast in the coming days and per the recommendation of the Bedford County Department of Fire & Rescue, Bedford County officials have decided to end the outdoor burning ban on Dec. 11, 2023, at 11:59 p.m.

The outdoor burning ban was issued on Nov. 8, 2023 due to extremely dry conditions.

The lifted burn ban includes the Town of Bedford. For more information, visit bedfordcountyva.gov/burnban.

Now that the burn ban has been lifted, it is legal to burn brush, leaves, etc. outside, as well as to maintain fires outdoors such as



Ella Crizer, age 6 and Tobias Crizer, age 8, pose with Santa during the Toys for Tots event at Napoli Cowboy. Credit: SME Staff

Visitor Spending tops \$71 Million in Bedford

Steve McClintic, Jr. Editor

Visitor spending in Bedford reached \$71.4 million in 2022, a 7% increase over 2021. Local tourism-supported jobs totaled 526 while local tourism-related tax receipts totaled \$2.7 million, also an increase over 2022. This figure is based on visitor spending from trips taken 50 miles or more away from home.

All data is from Tourism Economics, a company that specializes in the travel sector. More than 300 companies, associations, and destinations work with Tourism Economics every year as a research partner, including the Virginia Tourism Corporation.

The leading tourism sectors in Virginia are recreation and food & beverage, which have exceeded 2019 levels by 10%. Transportation, specifically air travel, has had a slower rebound but was the fastest growing tourism sector in 2022, aiding the Commonwealth's regions that are more dependent on air travel. With the additional marketing dollars that came through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, Virginia and its localities continued to see growth in visitor spending.

Direct visitor spending in Bedford in 2022, by leading tourism sectors, included \$26.4 million in lodging, \$19.6 million in food and beverage, \$8.2 million in recreation, and \$5.5 million in retail.

According to Bedford County Tourism Director Nicole Johnson, the Welcome Center receives visitors from all over the country, as well as many international travelers. "Group bus travel is coming back. We love having groups visit us and expect that will be even more rewarding for the local economy once the new hotel is built and we can accommodate groups overnight," said Johnson. "Sporting events have also increased in Bedford, with running, cycling, and disc golf events. These are attracting a national audience."

"Tourism is an instant revenue generator and drives economic growth," said Robert Hiss, Bedford County Administrator. "Travel destinations require consistent engagement and investment, and we appreciate the Destination Bedford team working consistently to communicate key messages to attract new and repeat visitors."

Bedford tourism has experienced a very strong past few years in terms of visitor numbers and tax revenues. According to Johnson, their marketing will continue to promote all that Bedford has to offer, with a focus on the outdoor adventure aspect. There are many outdoor assets to promote in Bedford, including Smith Mountain Lake, the Blue Ridge Parkway, Peaks of Otter, and numerous others.

Current advertising includes a mix of television, radio, print, digital display ads, social, e-mail, and billboards. This advertising is reaching audiences all over the country, while mostly targeting those within a four-to-five-hour drive. Bedford brochures are in every Virginia Welcome Center and rest area on I-81, I-77, and I-64, and at hundreds of businesses throughout the region. Bedford is a sought-after destination and is ideally located within a day's drive of most locations in the Mid-Atlantic.

"Due to our extensive advertising designed to drive people to DestinationBedfordVA.com, website visits, requests for information, and social media engagement has increased," Johnson added. "The most viewed pages on our website so far this year include outdoor adventure, historic sites, Bottled in Bedford (Craft Beverage Trail), the event calendar, accommodations, and dining."

The tourism department manages four Facebook accounts – Destination Bedford, Bedford Area Welcome Center, Bottled in Bedford, and Festival of Trees Bedford VA, along with Instagram, X, and YouTube. All of these outlets are for the purpose of staying connected with the local community and promoting Bedford to potential visitors.

To learn more about all there is to do in Bedford, visit desinationbedfordva.com.

Annual Toys for Tots event at Napoli Cowboy shows generosity of people

Steve McClintic, Jr. Editor

During the 6th annual Toys for Tots drive held at Napoli Cowboy on Dec. 5th, guests were lined out the door and into the parking lot to bring in toys for children of all ages. Restaurant owners Susan and Ray Wilson provided dinner free of charge to attendees for what Susan Wilson called an event that shows that "...people are so generous." It's a trend that's commonplace in the small communities of Bedford and Franklin Counties, and it was no better displayed on a very special evening – one with children in mind.

"It's good to be part of what's good and all that comes with it," said Gina Arthur, who, along with her husband, Jarrett, made the trip from Botetourt County to donate a

well as at Napoli at the Lake, said "Local businesses put up the prizes for our raffle. To get a raffle ticket, all you need to do is bring in a toy."

This year's businesses that contributed prizes included Body 4 U, Bojangles, Hot Shots Bar & Grill, Subway (Dennis), John Hermellio, Bagel & I, My Way Bakery, Cancun Restaurant, Cottage Gate, Gifts Ahoy, Mango's Bar & Grill, Mayberry Pizza & Ice Cream, Moosie's Bar & Grill, Benny's Adelinas, Painted Strands, Specialty Beverage and Parkway Brewing, Alease Dudley, Ippy's, Salty Shear, Bull Docks, Harvester Performance Center, PFG, Valley Distribution, Westlake Coffee and Cafe, Bernard's Landing, All Things Irish, Chick-Fil-A (Duffessey), Kupkavery, Magnum Point Marina Restaurant, Wilson Creek Winery, Becky Rowe, Dillon Docks, Duane Davis, Lakescapes, Lyons Team Realtors, Robin's Cellar, Los Amigos, Gills Creek Marina, Davis Heating & Air, and Napoli Cowboy.

Ann Davis and Jo Smith, said, "We're here to support the community and Toys for Tots. Napoli Cowboy brings people together. It's all about giving back to children and the community."

Seth Crizer and his daughters, Ella, age 6, and Tobias, age 8, had their picture taken with Santa Claus in front of the collection of toys in front of the Christmas tree. "We come every year," said Crizer.

Toys for Tots is a fundraiser established by the U.S. Marines. Gy Sgt. Michael Volker, and 1st Sgt Alton Currie, were on hand to pick up toys donated at Napoli Cowboy.

Staff from Napoli Cowboy, businesses and a host of others contributed to the success of Toys for Tots held at Napoli Cowboy, including Kim Keaton, who helped organize this year's event.

The final tally of toys collected is not available as of yet.



Toys for Tots is a fundraiser established by the U.S. Marines. Gy Sgt. Michael Volker, and 1st Sgt Alton Currie, were on hand to pick up toys donated at Napoli Cowboy. Credit: SME Staff

bike made for an older child and an assortment of other toys. "We like to buy toys for bigger kids because they don't get as much."

Melanie Eames, Napoli Cowboy general manager, as

Staunton River girls basketball coach Kim Jones: 'I want us to win, but to always play with heart'

Steve McClintic, Jr. Editor

When Staunton River High School girls basketball coach Kim Jones began coaching basketball, she faced the same challenge many coaches who were former players do. How do you teach young athletes to want the same success you had as a player?

For Coach Jones, coaching at Staunton River brought the added challenge of having played there herself in high school. In 1993, she was part of one of the most successful girls basketball teams in Staunton River history – one that still stands as the only team to win regionals.

When Jones took over as coach at Staunton River in 2002, she was just eight years removed from being a high school player herself, and only four years removed from playing in college. The thrill of victory and the sting of defeat from a player's perspective was relatively fresh in her. There was no question she knew how to win, and lose for that matter, when she was on the court. The real question was whether or not she could do it on the sideline, as a coach.

The answer has to come from within each individual coach. It's right in front of them, literally, but it can take a few years for some to see it. When they do see it, there's still more work to do.

They have to learn to understand what it stands for. They have to believe it. If they do, it's a game changer.

Okay, that's deep. Sort of like a complex offense or defense, it's better to break it down in simpler terms. So, think of it this way. On the court, players have traditionally gone by their last names. Referees have and still do refer to players by the number on their jersey. When you become a coach, things change. For starters, coach goes to front of your name. It's always been that way. It is still that way. The role is different than a player. The difference is how a coach embraces it.

Here's how Coach Jones did, in her own words.

"My high school coaches, Coach Linwood Roberts and Coach Tom Karnes, they had a huge impact me, on our teams," said Jones. "They created a family environment."

So, here's the question again: how do you teach young athletes to see the game the way you did as a player? If you had a good coach, or coaches, you teach them the way you were coached. You take the best of what you learned from those on the sideline and pass it onto your players on the court. Call it the 'great assist'. For Jones, bringing her team together by creating a sense of family was her approach. She builds it from there.

see - 'Coach Kim Jones' - page 7



Staunton River girls basketball coach Kim Jones. Credit: SME Staff

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Sports

'Coach Kim Jones' - continued from page 1

"When I played at Staunton River, we were good," said Jones. "The year before I began coaching here, [2001-2002], the team finished 0-22. I had to earn respect, one game at a time. We had to earn respect as a team, one game at a time. My goal is to play with heart. Even if we're down 20 or 30 points, we go hard no matter what."

During Jones first year as coach at Staunton River in 2002-2003, her team finished 6-18. Know what six wins does for a team that won zero games the year before?

"We started to believe in ourselves," said Jones.

In 2003-2004, Coach Jones and the Lady Golden Eagles kept believing. Their record improved to 10-12. Double digit wins.

In 2004-2005, a 6-16 record. A setback, sure. You can count on it. It's all part of character building. The lesson to learn is to not let a win or loss count affect how you believe in yourself, in your teammates, and your coaches.

In 2005-2006, the Lady Golden Eagles' record was 10-13.

This is one of those times when you stop and reflect on the significance of a moment in history. It's important. Look at Coach Jones' first four seasons. Six wins. Ten wins. Six wins. Ten wins. You don't need to be a statistician to see the trend, or to speculate on the outcome of what you think the following season would produce. Good. Things like that don't derail coaches her players when they all believe in themselves, and one another.

Coach Jones' 2006-2007 season did signal a trend – a new one. It was a pivotal moment. A sign of good things to come. Before it started, it was just a row of columns on paper listing home and away teams, dates and empty win-loss columns. What was known by Coach Jones, her assistants, and her players was what they had built over the four previous seasons. A sense of family created with intangibles like respect, resilience and passion wrapped around a lot of heart. It clicked.

With a nod to the words shouted to start the Olympics, "Let the games began..." And so they did, one at a time. 2006 – 2007: 17-9. 2007 – 2008: 21-6. 2008 – 2009: 21-5. 2009 – 2010: 20-3. (In 2009-2010, the Lady Golden Eagles were undefeated in district play and only had one loss in the regular season). 2010 – 2011: 15-8. 2011 – 2012: 16-10.

Here's a short recap of the record books that's worth celebrating.

In Coach Jones' first four seasons, her teams went 32-59. The following six: all winning seasons, going 110-41.

Yeah, that's a trend. Another way to describe it is a streak. Better yet, a winning streak. A six season winning streak. Make no mistake about it, the intangibles were the game changer. The key point to remember is that all ten seasons mattered. Every game, every season, everyone. All for one, and one for all. When you build that mentality, the rest, well... it just clicks.

"I'm a defensive-minded coach," said Coach Jones. "We play scrappy, defensive ball, start to finish, even when we are down by a bunch of points. We switch up on defense. I get my players to believe in defense. You have to play defense to play for me."

Coach Jones knows that in sports, all streaks eventually come to an end. It would be nice to keep the streak of winning seasons going. That's not always realistic, especially in high school sports. From 2012-2013 through 2015-2016, Coach Jones' teams had seasons much like her first four. In 2016-2017 and 2017-2018, she coached the junior varsity boys' teams. For 2018-2019, she returned to the Lady Golden Eagles' varsity bench.

2018-2019 was a rebuilding season, going 4-17. Coach Jones had the tools. She knew how to teach the intangibles. There was a track record to show for it. All she needed to do was help her players believe they could do what her past teams had done. This time, it wasn't about her past teams as a player. The measuring stick was her teams as a coach. Big difference. Game changer difference.

In 2019-2020, Coach Jones' team went 16-9. The 2020-2021 season was cancelled due to COVID. No one needs any data to verify what the pandemic did to sports and academics. To say it was an interruption is an understatement. You might even call it the 'great game delay in life'. For some, it was more difficult than others to shake off the rust and bounce back. For those who saw it as a pause rather than a delay, well, a pause is different. When you un-pause, you pick right back up where you left off. When you're good, you continue like it never happened. But when you are great, you come out and show how adversity made you better.

In sports and life, there's no better way to do that than to make a statement – as a team on and off the court. During

the 2021-2022 season, that's exactly what Coach Jones and the Lady Golden Eagles did.

Ladies and gentleman, even if you know the rest of the story, the following summary is worth the read.

The numbers stand for themselves: 25-2 record. Undeclared regular season. Region 3D runner-up. A trip earned to the state Final Four. There's no doubt that talent plays a significant role in that type of success. But keep in mind, these are still kids playing basketball. They need a leader to keep the tone. A leader who has hindsight as a successful player, but much more as a coach. A person who knows how important her role as a coach is. Who has proven there's a huge difference in being a coach than saying she's a coach. There are many ways that Coach Jones knows how to build a team. One is to build players who go onto a court with a basketball and believe they are going to put it in the basket more times than their opponent. But that's not all. In Coach Jones' system, what she stresses is every time a basket is made on the other end, the opponent earned it. Remember her words: "We play scrappy ball, start to finish. We switch up on defense. I get my players to believe in defense. You have to play defense to play for me."

Now that's called making a statement.

Moments like these in a story are a perfect time to reflect on the words of great leaders. Fittingly, these words come from a former basketball coach who happened to play a little ball too. "The most we can hope for is to create the best possible conditions for success, then let go of the outcome." Who said that? Phil Jackson. A 10-time NBA World Champion, as a coach. He also won two titles as a player. Use your imagination as to when in his career he came to the conclusion made in his statement. My guess is a little of both. Just an opinion.

Last season, the Lady Golden Eagles finished 5-20. Have the conditions changed? Maybe a little. This year, James Childress has stepped in as a new assistant coach. He brings experience as a former player at Staunton River's rival, William Byrd, and a player in college too, and he brings some coaching experience. There's also Bailey Divers, who returns as an assistant. Divers played high school basketball at Northside. She gave Staunton River fits as a player.

see more on 'Coach Kim Jones' - page 10



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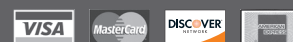


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'Coach Kim Jones' - continued from page 7

These days, Childress and Divers are working to become good fits as assistants in Head Coach Jones' system. "Bailey loves Coach Jones," said Mrs. Grubb, Divers' mom, during the December 5th game against Liberty High School played in Moneta. Mr. and Mrs. Grubb were in attendance to watch the game and support their daughter and the entire Lady Golden Eagles' team led by Coach Jones.

The 2023-2024 season is Coach Jones 18th year with the Lady Golden Eagles. Technically, it's 19 – the COVID year cancelled the season, but it didn't put a pause on her being a coach. So far this year, the team is 2-3 on the early season (as of December 7th). Coach Jones has a mix of ages starting with two seniors – Jenna Lynn Roach and Sawyer Tolley – leading the way. "Jenna, a guard, isn't a big scorer, but she has a strong court presence... she's hard-nosed on defense and brings great leadership to our team," said Coach Jones. "Sawyer plays in the post and steps out on the wing when she needs to. She also brings great leadership to our team." The rest of the team is top-heavy with juniors including Holly Amos, Kaylee Bowers, Ayla Farr, Abigail Sloan and Addison Ferguson. Leah Wong is the lone sophomore, while Ailynn Macauley and Hannah Mitchell round out the team as freshman.

The conditions for success this season are present. Sure, there's a learning curve for new assistant coach Childress, and for the younger players. That's expected in high school sports. It's expected in school. After all, it's a place centered in the learning experience. Basketball is part of it. It's just a game, but it carries the same philosophy that applies in the classroom: you get what you give to it.

Like most high school coaches, Coach Jones holds dual roles. A long-time math teacher, she recently shifted gears and now teaches physical education. That sounds like a good fit. A natural one.

It's long been believed that the greatest coaches remain teachers at heart. They have respect for the role of teaching not only because they do it as a profession, but also because they have the perspective of what it was like to be a student, and oftentimes, as a student-athletes. Many teachers will say they chose to become a teacher because a teacher had an influence on their life. It sparked a desire to follow in their footsteps, to slowly ascend from student to teacher and to ultimately stand on the shoulders of those before them and become an influencer who knows how to pass it on.

For 20+ years, Coach Jones has made her life's work teaching students. The lessons she teaches in the classroom and on the court complement one another. They serve a collective purpose of giving young minds the skills they can be used in high school, repeated in college, and refined in work and in life. It's not about coaching players to become professional athletes in their lives. Sure, every now and then, that unique talent comes along. Even then, the conditions shouldn't change. The consistency of reinforcing the fundamentals of what works on the court, in the classroom and in life, are what matters. It's represented by the meaning of the one letter missing from the grading scale – E. We know it stands for "effort". It's determined by how well an influential teacher and/or coach shows young minds how to put effort into

action. Sometimes, you have to push hard. You let them make mistakes and give them a chance to learn from them. You celebrate growth, emphasize strengths, and hope that students and/or athletes and even coaches and teachers, all find out what they are capable of when they give their best effort, individually and as a team. You can then let go of the outcome, as Jackson notes.

Coach Jones put her belief in this philosophy into action during the Lady Golden Eagles' game against Liberty on December 5th. With her team on defense – playing hard-nosed defense – one of her players got called for a foul. Coach Jones jumped fast to defend her player, shouting, "That wasn't a foul! That wasn't a foul!" To her player on the court who received the foul call, Coach Jones said, "You did exactly what you were supposed to do! That's all I can ask for."

The final score of that game wasn't the outcome the Lady Golden Eagles' wanted. Coach Jones was ejected in the fourth quarter. Call it being progressively overly passionate. It didn't set well with one of the referees. But if you were in attendance and paying close attention, it felt a little like a scene from the all-time classic movie "Hoosiers" when Coach Norman Dale was ejected from a game, giving assistant coach Shooter a chance to see what he was capable of as the coach in charge.

Now, that's just a movie. The Staunton River-Liberty game wasn't following a script. It was real life, played out in real time, with a storyline of its own. This is how it played out: with Liberty holding a mighty lead most of the game, the fourth quarter provided an unexpected twist. First, Liberty was held to 14 points. Great defense. Staunton River scored 17. The players to step on offense for the Lady Golden Eagles were the two freshmen and sophomore – Macauley scored 12, Macauley had 4 and Wong went 1-for-1 at the foul line. The final score – 58-45 – wasn't what Staunton River wanted. But Staunton River didn't give up, no matter how many points they were down. They still played with ferocious intensity even when their head coach wasn't on the sideline, even when they were down by a bunch of points. The players defended their head coach the way she would expect them to: on the court. If you think the extra effort wasn't in support their missing coach, well, that's a call up to the individual. I see it as one of Coach Jones' cornerstone principles in action: respect for her, even when she wasn't there to see it. The extra effort mattered most. It brings to mind a quote by Coach Dale from Hoosiers, "If you put your effort and concentration into playing to your potential, to be the best that you can be, I don't care what the scoreboard says at the end of the game, in my book we're gonna be winners!" Leadership by example. A byproduct of giving your best effort.

So, there's good reason to follow the 2023-2024 Lady Golden Eagles' basketball team this season. Giving their best effort isn't going to be a question. That condition has been well established. With that, and everything else Coach Jones has made as standards for her team, the possibilities are a plenty. That's the beauty of the unpredictable nature in basketball. In sports in general. You can let the outcome go when your prepared, and when you give your best effort. It's adds up to a lot to be excited about for the Lady Golden Eagles' this season, and for seasons to come.

Great job, Coach Jones.

2023-2024 Lady Golden Eagles Roster

- Jenna Lynn Roach, senior
- Sawyer Tolley, senior
- Holly Amos, junior
- Kaylee Brown, junior
- Ayla Farr, junior
- Addison Ferguson, junior
- Abigail Sloan, junior
- Leah Wong, sophomore
- Ailynn Macauley, freshman
- Hannah Mitchell, freshman

Head Coach: Kim Jones

Assistant Coaches: Bailey Divers, James Childress

2023-2024 Lady Golden Eagles Basketball Schedule

Date	Match-up	Time
11/28	Staunton River vs. Jefferson Forest	7 p.m.
11/29	Staunton River vs Cave Spring	7 p.m.
12/1	Staunton River at Patrick County	7 p.m.
12/5	Staunton River vs. Liberty	7 p.m.
12/6	Staunton River at Jefferson Forest	7 p.m.
12/8	Staunton River at Gretna	7 p.m.
12/11	Staunton River vs. Patrick County	7 p.m.
12/12	Staunton River vs. Gretna	7 p.m.
12/20	Staunton River at TBA (tournament) James River High School (Buchanan)	TBA
12/21	Staunton River at TBA (tournament) James River High School (Buchanan)	TBA
12/22	Staunton River at Lord Botetourt	7 p.m.
1/5	Staunton River at Franklin County	7 p.m.
1/9	Staunton River at Northside	7 p.m.
1/13	Staunton River vs. William Byrd	7 p.m.
1/16	Staunton River at William Fleming	7 p.m.
1/17	Staunton River at Liberty	7 p.m.
1/23	Staunton River at Lord Botetourt	7 p.m.
1/25	Staunton River at Cave Spring	7 p.m.
1/26	Staunton River vs. Franklin County	7 p.m.
1/30	Staunton River vs. Northside	7 p.m.
2/2*	Staunton River at William Byrd	7 p.m.
2/6	Staunton River vs. William Fleming	7 p.m.

*Lady Golden Eagles junior varsity plays at 5:30 p.m. before each varsity game except on February 3rd, when the junior varsity team plays at William Byrd at 3 p.m.