

Warren/Frederick County Report

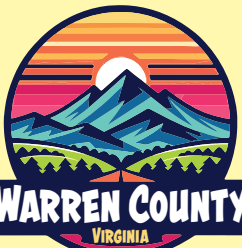
Volume XIX, Issue 26 • Early January, 2025

**Recipe: Deep-Fried
Pork Wontons**

BACK COVER:



New Website!



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INDICTMENTS

weather forecast

Friday, December 27, 2024: Patchy fog before 10am. Otherwise, partly sunny, with a high near 44. Calm wind becoming southeast around 5 mph in the afternoon.

Friday Night: Rain, mainly after 1am. Patchy fog after 1am. Low around 37. Light southeast wind. Chance of precipitation is 90%. New precipitation amounts between a tenth and quarter of an inch possible.

Saturday: Rain, mainly before 1pm. Patchy fog before 1pm. High near 58. Calm wind becoming south around 5 mph. Chance of precipitation is 80%. New precipitation amounts between a tenth and quarter of an inch possible.

Saturday Night: Rain likely, mainly after 1am. Patchy fog after 1am. Otherwise, cloudy, with a low around 49. Light south wind. Chance of precipitation is 70%.

Sunday: Rain. High near 62. Chance of precipitation is 80%.

Sunday Night: Rain likely, mainly before 1am. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 45. Chance of precipitation is 70%.

Monday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 57.

Monday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 36.

Tuesday: A chance of rain after 1pm. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 53. Chance of precipitation is 50%.

Tuesday Night: A chance of rain. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 40. Chance of precipitation is 50%.

New Year's Day: Mostly sunny, with a high near 50.

Wednesday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 30.

Thursday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 41.



Ask Stewart

Hey Stewart,

Do you have any New Year resolutions for 2025?

– Laurette

Yes Laurette, Happy New Year! First, I'm going to improve my physical fitness by walking the Royal Shenandoah Greenway Trail around Front Royal. You can find a map of the trail at the visitor's center or in one of the kiosks around town. The roughly 5 mile trail has much to see, including the Happy

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Warren/Frederick County Report

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Creek arboretum replete with a variety of labeled trees and shrubs that the Tree Stewards maintain. The Arboretum is located just off Commerce Street in Front Royal between Main St. and Prospect St.

Second, I'm going sign up to take the Tree Stewards "All About Trees" class in September. I am always looking to learn more about our trees. You can find the class details at the Front Royal/Warren County Tree Stewards website below.

Third, I'm going to attend the Front Royal/Warren County Arbor Day celebration in April. It will be TREE-mendous event!

And finally, as I do every year,

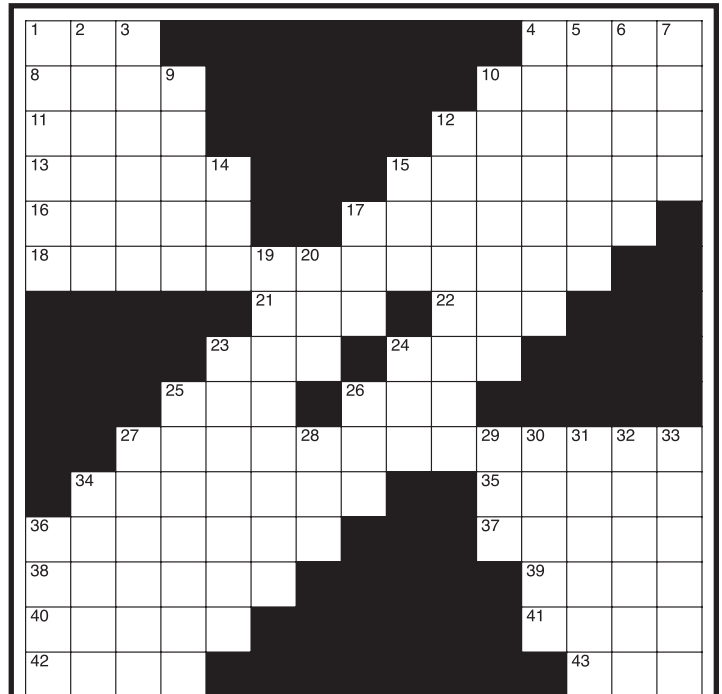
I will plant a tree. This year's tree will be a white oak. No other plant genus supports more species of moths and butterflies than Quercus. The mighty White Oak - Quercus Alba - supports over 520 species!

Best wishes to you for a Happy and Healthy 2025!

Your Pal in the Trees,

– Stewart

The Front Royal/Warren County Tree Steward program began in 1997 with volunteers dedicated to improving the health of trees by providing educational programs, tree planting and care demonstrations, and tree maintenance throughout the community. The group now consists of over 30 active members with



CLUES ACROSS

1. Americans' "uncle"
4. Chair
8. Ancient kingdom
10. Egyptian city
11. Alaskan glacier
12. One from Somalia
13. Ancient alphabets
15. Relating to vocabulary
16. Small mongrels
17. Natural settings
18. Weekend entertainments
21. Line from which light seemingly streams
22. Your own private code
23. Swiss river
24. Satisfaction
25. A person's brother or sister
26. Folk singer DiFranco
27. The Blonde Bombshell
34. Kids' school project
35. Bluish greens
36. Classifying
37. Cube-shaped
38. Choo-choos
39. Indian religious god of dissolution
40. French department
41. Leak into gradually
42. Foundation
43. Midway between south and southeast

CLUES DOWN

1. Counterbalancing debt
2. In slow tempo
3. Glamorous city
4. Japanese lute
5. Makes law
6. Informative book
7. Animal's body part
9. American playwright
10. Blood poisoning
12. Angels
14. Sino-Soviet block (abbr.)
15. Written account
17. Unwelcome pest
19. Saddle horses
20. Type of gibbon
23. Delta is one
24. NE Massachusetts cape
25. Soup cracker
26. Yes vote
27. Muddy ground
28. Physics apparatus (abbr.)
29. Type of drug
30. German city
31. Animal disease
32. Martini ingredients
33. Get away
34. Spanish municipality
36. Thrust a knife into

– <https://wfcreport.com>

several interns working toward becoming certified tree stewards from our annual "All About Trees Class." Each month Stewart will answer a question from our readers. Please forward it to "Stewart" in care of: frwctreestewards@comcast.net and we may publish it in a future issue. Please visit our website at: www.treesfrontroyal.org



Crew Praised after 'Some Kind of Miracle'

The stubborn bucket truck just wouldn't cooperate.

Only a day earlier, a Lewis Tree Service crew had easily maneuvered the vehicle into position along a rural road in the Watts Passage area of Albemarle County, where they trimmed trees along Rappahannock Electric Cooperative's (REC) power lines.

But less than 24 hours later, on Dec. 13, the guys just couldn't get the massive vehicle safely into the same position.

And, oh, did they try! Once, twice — even a third time — they attempted unsuccessfully to park the truck exactly where they had done so the previous day without issue. So, they decided to reposition the vehicle in a different spot.

Along with the crew's quick action, compassion and care, that might have saved a woman's life.

"I don't know if it was God," said Crew Leader Dagoberto Jacome. "But there was some kind of miracle in that moment."

After moving the vehicle, the crew quickly spotted an elderly woman lying in the brush several feet off the road. She couldn't speak, wore no shoes and was unable to walk.

She had no coat and was shivering in the mid-December cold.

Without hesitation, Jacome and his crew carried the woman to their work truck, gently buckled her into the back seat and blasted the heat to warm the woman until they could get additional assistance.

That extra help first came in the form of REC member Christy Grimes, who was driving her Honda HRV to the UPS store to mail some Christmas presents when the Lewis Tree crew waved her down.

Grimes called for help and knocked on the doors of neighbors, one of whom recognized the woman as a nearby resident. Grimes then worked with the Lewis Tree crew to safely return the woman to her home. (The elderly woman's grown children were contacted and quickly returned from their homes in New York to care for her.)

"I do think there's no coinci-

dence that the woman was found by someone with that bucket truck," Grimes said. "They were in the right place at the right time. It just shows that good things do happen."

Of the Lewis Tree crew, she said: "They just seemed so caring and loving and really did the right thing. I do think that crew likely saved her life."

Their efforts did not startle Cindy Musick, Senior Director of Vegetation Management Services at the Cooperative.

"What it says to me is they embody REC, and they are really an extension of who we are," Musick said. "They work on our system year-round in all kinds of weather, and I'm not surprised by any means. It just was a situation where they knew exactly what to do to rise to the occasion."

As for Crew Leader Jacome, he has little doubt what led them to that brush.

In recent years, he has returned home to Honduras each December. This year, he opted to stay in Virginia, another fateful occurrence that made him available to

lead the rescue efforts.

"There is not another answer," he said, pausing to reflect.

"That was God giving us the opportunity to save her life and be good human beings."

REC provides electric service to 180,000 connections in parts of 22 Virginia counties. With its general office in Fredericksburg, Va., the Cooperative operates and maintains more than 18,000 miles of power lines through its service area, which ranges from the Blue Ridge Mountains to the tidal waters of the Chesapeake Bay. For more information about REC, please visit www.myrec.coop. Follow REC on Facebook, X, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube.



PolicyMakers Series Pre-Legislative Briefing Hosted at The George Washington Hotel

The Top of Virginia Regional Chamber (TVRC) hosted its PolicyMakers Series Pre-Legislative

Briefing this past Tuesday at The George Washington Hotel. Presented by United Bank, the event brought together local business leaders, policymakers, and community members for a vital discussion on the key legislative issues anticipated in the upcoming session.

The briefing featured a panel discussion with Senator Timmy French, Delegate Bill Wiley, and Delegate Delores Oates, who shared insights on the policies and priorities set to impact the region's businesses and citizens. Attendees had the opportunity to engage with lawmakers in a Q&A session, fostering meaningful dialogue on topics critical to the community's growth and development.

"The PolicyMakers Series is a cornerstone of our commitment to connecting the business community with government leaders," said Cynthia Schneider, CEO of TVRC. "Events like this ensure our members stay informed and empowered to advocate for policies that drive our region forward."

TVRC extends its gratitude to presenting sponsor United Bank

See BRIEFS, 4

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BRIEFS, from 3

for their support in making this event a success, as well as to all the attendees and speakers who contributed to today's engaging discussions.

For more information about upcoming events or to learn more about TVRC, visit www.regionalchamber.biz or contact Kaleigh Fincham at kfincham@regionalchamber.biz



Publix Super Markets coming to Stephens City, Va

We are pleased to announce that Publix Super Markets has execut-

ed a lease on a new store location in Stephens City, VA.

Publix at Sherando Green Southwest corner of Fairfax Pike and Warrior Dr.

Stephens City, VA The 50,325 square ft. store will employ approximately 150 associates. An opening timeframe has not yet been determined.

"We are excited to continue our growth across Virginia with this

new location in Stephens City," said media relations manager Jared Glover. "We look forward to our new customers experiencing the Publix difference soon."

2024 November Indictments October Term

Timothy Wayne Jones
The Warren County Va. Circuit Court Grand Jury charges Timothy

Wayne Jones, 45, of the 100 block of Fogle St., Front Royal, VA 22630, with two counts. **COUNT ONE:** In the County of Warren Timothy Wayne Jones did unlawfully and feloniously, knowingly and intentionally possess a controlled substance listed in Schedule I or Schedule II of the Drug Control Act. **COUNT TWO:** did unlawfully and feloniously, knowingly and intentionally possess a controlled substance, to-wit: Fentanyl listed in Schedule I or Schedule II of the Drug Control Act. Date of the offenses was on or about February 17, 2024.

Anastasiya Seleznev

On or about July 7, 2024, in the County of Warren, Anastasiya Seleznev, 19, of the 3800 block of Duckling Walk, Glen Allen, VA 23060, did unlawfully and feloniously, knowingly and intentionally possess a controlled substance listed in Schedule I or Schedule II of the Drug Control Act.

John Wesley Sheetz

On or about March 18, 2024, in the County of Warren, John Wesley Sheetz, 43, address unknown,

did unlawfully and feloniously as a person convicted of a Tier III offense or murder, knowingly fail to register, reregister, or verify registration information, or knowingly provide false information to the Sex Offender and Crimes Against Minors Registry, having previously committed such an offense.

Shelby Jean Collins

On or about July 30, 2024, in the County of Warren, Shelby Jean Collins, 68, of the 100 block of Main St., Edinburg, VA 22824, did unlawfully and feloniously, knowingly and intentionally possess a controlled substance listed in Schedule I of the Drug Control Act.

Trayvon Michael Freeman

The Warren County Va. Circuit Court Grand Jury charges Trayvon Michael Freeman, 31, address unknown, with three counts. **COUNT ONE:** In the County of Warren Trayvon Michael Freeman did unlawfully and feloniously commit an assault or an assault and battery against Cpl. T. Smith, knowing or having reason to know that such person was a law en-

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- 7 ounces minced pork
- 2 spring onions
- 1 green chili, deseeded
- 1 tablespoon grated ginger
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 2 tablespoon fish sauce
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- 32 square wonton wrappers
- Vegetable oil, for frying

To serve:

Mixed leaf salad; cabbage, lettuce and coriander
Sweet and sour sauce

1. Mix together the ingredients for the filling, stirring in one direction only.
 2. Place double layers of wonton wrappers in front of you in a diamond shape. Place a little of the filling on the bottom half of the dough. Fold the bottom corner of dough over the filling and roll it once. Take the outside corners and bring them together, sealing with a little water. Stand the wontons on their flat bases and gently separate the two top flaps. Repeat with the remaining wrappers and filling.
 3. Heat about 4 inches oil in a deep pan until gently bubbling, then fry the wontons in batches for 3 to 4 minutes or until golden brown and cooked through. Drain on paper towels then serve on beds of the mixed leaves with the sweet and sour sauce alongside.
- Tip: This recipe may also be steamed or boiled.

The Chinese New Year is a unique celebration with a global footprint. While many of the more awe-inspiring celebrations may occur within China, that doesn't mean there aren't ways to commemorate this unique event elsewhere. Celebrations can even take place at home, where individuals can whip up homemade Chinese fare to lend their festivities a more authentic feel. This Chinese New Year, those who want to bring this unique event into their homes can try the following recipe for "Deep-Fried Pork Wontons" courtesy of *Lines+Angles*.

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forcement officer engaged in the performance of his public duties. COUNT TWO: did unlawfully and feloniously commit an assault or an assault and battery against Officer O. Meadows, knowing or having reason to know that such person was a law enforcement officer engaged in the performance of her public duties. COUNT THREE: did unlawfully and feloniously carry about his person concealed from common observation, a spring stick, having been previously convicted of a like offense. Dates of the offenses were on or about July 14, and July 15, 2024.

Darius Terrance Turner

The Warren County Va. Circuit Court Grand Jury charges Darius Terrance Turner, age and address unknown, with two counts. COUNT ONE: In the County of Warren Darius Terrance Turner did unlawfully and feloniously, knowingly and intentionally possess a controlled substance listed in Schedule I or Schedule II of the Drug Control Act. COUNT TWO: did unlawfully and feloniously and falsely identify himself to a law-enforcement officer with the intent

to deceive the law-enforcement officer as to his real identity after having been lawfully detained and after being requested to identify himself by a law-enforcement officer. Date of the offenses was on or about May 21, 2024.

Kristen Amelia Powell

The Warren County Va. Circuit Court Grand Jury charges Kristen Amelia Powell, 33, of the 400 block of Criser Rd., Front Royal, VA 22630, with two counts. COUNT ONE: In the County of Warren, Kristen Amelia Powell did unlawfully assault and batter R.W., a juvenile. COUNT TWO: did unlawfully commit an act of disorderly conduct, with the intent to cause public inconvenience, annoyance, or alarm, or recklessly create a risk thereof in that while in a public place, she engaged in conduct having a direct tendency to cause acts of violence by the person or persons at whom such conduct was directed. Date of the offenses was on or about March 10, 2024.

Philip Patrick Russell, Sr.

The Warren County Va. Circuit Court Grand Jury charges Philip

Patrick Russell, Sr., age and address unknown, with two counts. COUNT ONE: In the County of Warren Patrick Russell, Sr., did unlawfully and feloniously manufacture, sell, give, distribute or possess with the intent to manufacture, sell, give, or distribute, a controlled substance classified in Schedule I or II of the Drug Control Act. COUNT TWO: did unlawfully and knowingly or intentionally possess a controlled substance listed in Schedule III of the Drug Control Act. Date of the offenses was on or about July 15, 2020.

A Grand Jury Indictment is only a charge and not evidence of guilt.

The defendants are entitled to a fair trial with the burden on the government to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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Fatal Single-Vehicle Crash in Page County

Virginia State Police is investi-

See BRIEFS, 6



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Upcoming events with Dan McDermott

Fri. Dec. 27, 2024 (7-11pm)
Karaoke at Woodstock American Legion Post 199 - 411 S Muhlenberg St. Woodstock, VA 22664*

Sat. Dec 28, 2024 (6-10pm)
1970s! Music Bingo & Karaoke Disco Dance Party at Shenandoah Valley Axe Throwing Company - OPEN TO THE PUBLIC: 20 South St. Front Royal, VA

Tue. Dec. 31, 2024 (8pm-1am)
New Year's Eve Karaoke at Edinburg VFW - **Special Event OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:** 100 Veterans Way, Edinburg

Sat. Jan 4, 2025 (6-10pm)
Music Bingo & Karaoke at Shenandoah Valley Axe Throwing Company **OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:** 20 South St. Front Royal

Wed. Jan 8, 2025 (6-9pm)
Music Bingo & Karaoke at Box Office Brewery **OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:** 177 E King St, Strasburg, VA 22657

Fri, Jan 10, 2025 (7-10pm)
Music Bingo, Karaoke and Wine at James Charles Winery **OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:** 4063 Middle Rd, Winchester, VA 22602

Sat. Jan 11, 2025 (7:00-10:30pm)
Karaoke/Music Bingo at Woodstock, Va. Moose*

Sat. Jan 18, 2025 (6-10pm)
Music Bingo & Karaoke at Shenandoah Valley Axe Throwing Company **OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:** 20 South St. Front Royal, VA 22630

Fri. Jan 24, 2025 (7:30-11:30pm)
Music Bingo & Karaoke at New Market, Va. Eagles*

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BRIEFS, from 5

gating a fatal single-vehicle crash that occurred Friday (Dec. 20, 2024) at 3:30 a.m. on Ida Road in Page County.

A 2003 Ford Mustang was heading westbound on Ida Road, just west of the intersection with Mills Lane, when it was unable to avoid a deer in the roadway. After striking the deer, the Mustang went off of the right side of the road and down an embankment. It then crossed a stream and struck another embankment, causing the Mustang to overturn twice.

The driver of the vehicle, Adam C. Fox, 22, of Stanley, Va., was

ejected and died at the scene. Fox was not wearing a seatbelt.

The crash remains under investigation.

Virginia State Police Continue To Investigate Drone Tips

During the month of December, the Virginia Fusion Center (VFC), located within the Homeland Security Division of the Virginia State Police, has received more than 150 tips regarding drone activity in the Commonwealth. All of the tips are being investigated and shared with key stakeholders. This comes as there have been reports of drones flying in other areas of the country,

including in New Jersey.

Law enforcement is encouraging citizens to contact the Virginia Fusion Center at vfc@vfc.vsp.virginia.gov, if they see drones acting suspiciously.

“We encourage anyone that witnesses a drone flying over critical infrastructure, such as energy installations, or military sites, to contact the Virginia Fusion Center,” said Virginia State Police Special Agent D. Robinson. “This will enable us to work with our partners to determine exactly what is occurring, and how to move forward.”

Drones are required to remain in sight of either the operator or a visual observer and have a maximum allowable altitude of 400 feet unless waived by federal regulators. Operators are required to have a remote pilot certificate for recreational use or a license from the FAA for commercial use. You can learn more about the rules and regulations at Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) | Federal Aviation Administration.

It is against the law to shoot at a drone. Airspace is governed by the Federal Government. State Law does prohibit flying drones within 50 feet of a residence, unless the person is authorized by the federal government to operate and is doing so lawfully and consistent with federal regulations.

The Virginia Fusion Center Shield Program has released additional information on drones available at All Sectors Bulletin - UAV Assessment. All information bulletins distributed by the VFC Shield are public and are intended to be shared. The public is encouraged to sign up for this free outreach program by visiting <https://fusion.vsp.virginia.gov/shield>

Fatal crash on I-95 in Stafford County

Virginia State Police is investigating a two-vehicle fatal crash in Stafford County. The crash occurred Saturday (Nov. 16), at 4:04 a.m. on southbound Interstate 95 at the 146-mile marker.

A 2018 Volvo XC90 was traveling in the wrong direction on I95 when it collided head-on with a southbound 2014 Chevrolet Cruze. The impact caused the Volvo to overturn.

The driver of the Volvo, Jibril N. Ibn Jeter, 48, of Fort Washington, Md., suffered serious injuries and was transported to Inova Fairfax Hospital for treatment. He was wearing a seatbelt.

The driver of the Chevrolet, Patrick C. Ledoux, 25, of Manassas, Va., died at the scene. He was wearing a seatbelt.

A passenger in the Chevrolet, a 28-year-old male from Manassas, Va., suffered serious injuries and was transported to Inova Fairfax Hospital for treatment. He was wearing a seatbelt.

Ibn Jeter has been charged with involuntary manslaughter; driving under the influence but continues to receive treatment at the hospital. Once he is released from the hospital he will be transported to the Rappahannock Regional Jail, where he will be held without bond. Additional charges are pending.

Three additional vehicles crashed while attempting to avoid a collision with the Volvo. One of those drivers was transported to Mary Washington Hospital for treatment of minor injuries.

It's unknown where the Volvo entered I95 traveling in the wrong direction.

All southbound travel lanes were

closed for approximately 5 hours for the investigation and cleanup. VDOT assisted with the roadway closure and detour.

The crash remains under investigation.



Letter from Samuels Public Library Board of Trustees and Staff

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Hearing last week on different aspects of the issue, attempting to make your voices heard. You sat for hours, you watched from home, you shared the news. Now you are offering encouragement to the staff through cards, cookies, donations and hugs during yet another challenging time in our history.

As we move forward, we will try to work constructively with county leadership while continuing to advocate for the best interests of the library. Though we are still processing the full implications of the recent decision, we will seek clarification on the responsibilities and direction of the newly established board. There are still many unanswered questions.

Meanwhile, we will continue providing essential resources, programs, and services for all residents, equally. Your unwavering dedication and belief in the value of our library have strengthened our resolve and reaffirmed our commitment to serving this community.

Donations, with messages of support, are coming in from all corners of Warren County, surrounding counties and even from across the country – 13 states and counting, and Canada. All donations to Samuels Public Library, restricted and unrestricted, stay with Samuels Public Library and will be used to provide services according to our mission and to act on your behalf.

Thank you once again for your continued support, trust, and patience. We will keep you informed as we navigate the path ahead—together.

—With unwavering gratitude and hope, Samuels Public Library Board of Trustees and Staff

2024 VLA Library of the Year

About Samuels Public Library: Originally founded in 1799 and renamed Samuels Public Library in 1952, it became the second library in the state to receive a charter and has served the citizens of Front Royal and Warren County for more than two centuries. In the past fiscal year, the library has added 2,204 new cardholders and

held 542 in-person and virtual programs hosting 19,194 attendees. Attracting more than 127,000 visitors annually, the library logged 401,859 total checkouts last year. For more information on Samuels Public Library, go to: www.samuelibrary.net.



Racing Returns to the Shenandoah River in the Canoe Capital of Virginia

The Warren Heritage Society and Adventure Enablers are excited to announce the return of canoe races to the Shenandoah River in the Canoe Capital of Virginia. It has been years since an event such as this took place in the Front Royal-Warren County, and on Saturday March 29, 2025, paddlers will hit the water once again at the Canoe Capital Paddle Palooza. The races will be held in the South Fork section adjacent to Eastham Park, providing a great place for racing and spectators to cheer on their friends and family.

The early season races kickoff what is hoping to be a great year for paddling, fishing, and floating on the Shenandoah River which is a major destination for visitors. Though if you do not plan to race, there is still a great reason to come down to the park and encourage others to finish strong. There will be an area for music, activities, food and drinks for a festival atmosphere that is family and community focused.

“Padding the Shenandoah has been part of Warren County’s identity for many years,” said Joe Petty, Executive Director of Warren Heritage Society. “We are excited to partner with Adventure Enablers to bring competitive and fun paddling to the County while also providing a great venue for others to enjoy watching from the shoreline.”

Whether you are extremely competitive or just enjoy being on the water, the event program will

feature both endurance and sprint opportunities for canoes and kayaks, with multiple categories for competitors to participate in.

“We have been hosting outdoor events in and around Front Royal for the past 14 years and have always envisioned a dedicated paddle event in the area,” said Mark Harris, owner and race director of Adventure Enablers. “The river is such an integral part of the community and spirit of the area, so it only made sense to organize an event like the Canoe Capital Paddle Palooza. Partnering with Joe and the team at the Warren Heritage Society creates a great connection to the community, and we

hope that the event will become a highlight for many years to come.”

For more information on sponsorship opportunities, race registration, or logistics, please contact

Joe Petty at jpetty@warrenheritagesociety.org and Mark Harris at mark@adventureenablers.com.

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See BRIEFS, 8

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BRIEFS, from 7

<https://runsignup.com/Race/VA/FrontRoyal/CanoeCapitalPaddlePaloosa>



Laurel Ridge tops in the number of high schoolers earning a degree or credential

When it comes to the number of young people earning a college credential before picking up their high school diploma, Laurel Ridge leads the 23 community colleges that make up the Virginia Community College System.

Of the 3,737 seniors graduating from high schools in the Laurel Ridge service region in 2024, 268 – around 7 percent – earned at least one credential from Laurel Ridge prior to graduation, including 120 earning an associate degree. Heather Burton, the college's interim dean of Early College and High School Partnerships, said, that, statewide, the percentage is

less than 1 percent.

Another credential students can earn is a uniform certificate in general studies, meaning they have earned 31 credits, the equivalent of their first year of college. The college awarded 220 uniform certificates in general studies. An additional 83 career studies certificates were also earned by high school students in 2024.

Students earn college credits by taking the courses on campus, online or at their home high school with a teacher credentialed in providing college-level instruction.

"Earning the credential makes them incredibly competitive," Burton said. "It's a lot of work. Some of these students are doing sports, they're involved in clubs, they work, they're taking all these classes. The students who do this are driven. Bravo to everyone at the college and our local school partnerships for helping this be a successful year for those students."

Burton, who works with more than 3,000 students, including homeschooled ones, said students who earn an associate degree while still in high school and then go on to a four-year university differ from non-dual enrollment Laurel Ridge students who transfer to a university. The dual-enrollment

students transfer in as freshmen, but some will have sophomore or junior academic status when they arrive, said Burton.

This year, the college has begun doing orientation sessions so students can feel welcome and understand the expectations Laurel Ridge has for them, as well as the resources it can offer them. The orientations are via Zoom and vary depending on if the student will be taking dual-enrollment classes at their high school, on one of the college's campuses, or online.

"We also have a parent orientation," said Burton. "It's really to provide them with the resources to help their child navigate college. We want parents to feel like they can help their child and to let them know we're a partner with them in this transition."

Burton herself was a dual-enrollment student when she attended Strasburg High School. She enjoyed her classes so much, she continued at Laurel Ridge after her high school graduation, earning her associate degree in science.

By taking dual-enrollment classes at their high school, students and their families get an even greater cost savings over students taking non-dual-enrollment classes through Laurel Ridge, which, in

turn, is already a tremendous cost savings over a four-year university.

"Those credentialed teachers in the high school leading dual-enrollment classes are amazing," Burton said. "Sometimes they don't get the level of thank you and respect they really deserve."

Many of the students who earn a credential while still in high school attend one of the two governor's schools affiliated with Laurel Ridge – Massanutten Regional Governor's School in Shenandoah County and Mountain Vista Gov-

ernor's School (MVGS), which is on both the Fauquier and Middle-town campuses.

Angel Alvarado was one such student. He graduated in 2023 with his associate degree. Alvarado, who attended the MVGS on the Fauquier Campus, is now a cadet at the U.S. Air Force Academy.

"I thought it was wonderful," he said of his dual-enrollment classes. "The teachers were amazing, very supportive, and with the small classes, they were able to help you so much more with one-on-one

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teaching time. The classes were a lot more challenging than regular high school classes. That's kind of what I needed, and set me up better for what I would be looking at when attending a four-year college."

Every high school in the region has a Laurel Ridge career coach.

"They are phenomenal," Burton

said of the career coaches. "They help students with career exploration. They help students with college exploration. A lot of students have no idea what they want to do, but after they meet with the career coach, they have ideas. Career coaches give students some exposure to different careers out there and universities that they've never

heard of."

Warren County High School graduate Joseph Martin's career coach, Brigitte Grimm, inspired him to join the Corps of Cadets at Virginia Tech. He is studying civil engineering, which is normally a five-year program. However, Martin earned 36 hours of college credits through dual enrollment.

"I'm very, very fortunate and happy that I got the dual-enrolled credits," he said. "Ordinarily, I would have had to do five years to complete my degree. Since I had those credits, I'm on a four-year track."

His dual-enrollment classes were rigorous, which Martin now appreciates.

"The classes were challenging, especially when it came to my biology class," he explained. "That class was really something. At the time, I thought it was really hard. Now I see it as a regular college class. It really prepared me for college."

Learn more about dual enrollment at laurelridge.edu/de



Fusion power plant coming to Virginia

By Morgan Sweeney
The Center Square

The world's largest private fusion company has announced that it has chosen Chesterfield, Virginia, as the site of the world's first grid-

See BRIEFS, 10


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kids' corner

Math Blocks

Fill in the missing blocks with numbers between 0-20.
The numbers in each row add up to the totals on the right.
The numbers in each column add up to the totals on the bottom.

20		1	25
	10	8	21
7	18		37
30	32	21	

Solution

7	18	12
3	10	8
20	4	1

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

JANUARY

3

1870: Construction begins on the Brooklyn Bridge in New York.

1911: A magnitude 7.7 earthquake destroys the city of Almaty in Russian Turkestan.

1956: A fire damages the top portion of the Eiffel Tower.

Health FACT!

True or false: Clutter and a lack of organization is linked to negative emotions like tension and stress.

Answer: True

Get Scrambled

Unscramble the words to determine the phrase.

ELANC HET GGRAEA

Answer: Clean the garage

NEW WORD

SORT


arrange systematically in groups

How they say that in...

English: Organize
Spanish: Organizar
Italian: Organizzare
French: Organiser
German: Organisieren

Did You Know?

Being organized boosts energy, maintains focus and may promote creativity. Organization also can reduce stress.



Get the PICTURE?



Can you guess what the bigger picture is?

Answer: Closet

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BRIEFS, from 9

scale commercial fusion power plant, which will also be its first power plant.

Founded in Massachusetts as a result of decades of research at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Commonwealth Fusion Systems is at the forefront of efforts to “build a full-fledged fusion energy industry” that aims to help meet the energy demands of

the future without relying on fossil fuels.

“ARC, the world’s first grid-scale fusion power plant, will mark the start of the fusion age,” according to the company. “To the grid, it’ll look just like the 2,000 natural gas plants already built in the U.S. — except that ARC won’t release any carbon dioxide or other greenhouse gases.”

Fusion is the same energy that powers the sun and other stars.

Nuclear power, which currently provides almost 20% of the country’s electricity generation and will play a big role in America’s transition away from fossil fuels, relies on nuclear fission, or the splitting of atomic nuclei, to produce energy.

Fusion occurs when two atomic nuclei are combined, producing significantly more energy without some dangers associated with nuclear fission plants.

“Unlike nuclear fission plants, fusion energy has no chance of runaway chain reactions or meltdowns, and there’s no long-lived or high-level nuclear waste,” according to Commonwealth Fusion Systems.

The company has already created the world’s “strongest high-temperature superconducting magnet,” integral to the develop-

ment of commercial fusion energy. It is working on a smaller-scale test version of ARC called SPARC. SPARC will be the world’s first “commercially relevant fusion energy machine” to produce net energy, or “more energy from fusion than it needs to power the process.”

SPARC is expected to produce net power in 2027, and ARC “is expected to deliver power to the grid



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WORD SCRAMBLE

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Answer: Check

GUESS WHO?

I am an actress born in England on January 3, 1996. I began my career as a singer, posting song covers to YouTube. My siblings also are talented and are in the business, with my brother starring in the series “Game of Thrones.” In 2021, I made my Marvel debut in “Black Widow.”

Answer: Florence Pugh

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1	3							4
	2						9	5
5								
	1		4	6	8			9
					3			
	4	2		5		7		
		9			6			
		5			1		3	8
			8		4			



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Daisy is a 3 year old petite lab mix who is extremely loving and loyal to her people. She is looking for a home where she can be the only pet. An adult home only would be best for Miss Daisy. She loves to play, cuddle and give kisses.



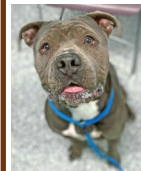
Roxy-Dane is an 8-year-old Great Dane mix with a gentle soul. Initially shy around new people, she warms up with patience and would thrive in a calm, cat-free home. Roxy-Dane prefers the company of laid-back dogs and enjoys peaceful coexistence. She walks well on a leash and is spayed, microchipped, and up-to-date on vaccinations.

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Choco is a 2 yr old male American Staffordshire Terrier who is extremely sweet and friendly. Unfortunately he ended up at the shelter with his friend Ginger, after their beloved owner passed away. Choco misses his dad

very much and would love to find a family to love him just as much as his dad did. He is good with other dogs, seems very interested in kitties and would do great with kids but may knock down small ones as he is a beef cake.



Little Khloe is 7-9 year old Dachshund mix who is full of love to give. She is looking for a home where she can be the only dog but is okay with cat friends who leave

her be. She would prefer older kids as she is old lady who doesn't want to be pulled and tugged on by children. She is great on leash and is quite a mellow girl.

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in the early 2030s.”

Local and state leaders have expressed excitement about what the announcement means for Virginia and, potentially, the world.

“I am thrilled to see a powerful step in fusion development undertaken in my beloved Virginia,” said Rep. Don Beyer, D-Va., founder of the bipartisan Fusion Energy Caucus. “Bringing clean, safe fusion

energy to the grid is a longstanding dream that could dramatically boost standards of living in America and around the world.”

“The future of clean energy is being built right here in Virginia. Commonwealth Fusion Systems’ decision to invest in Chesterfield County is a game-changer – not just for our economy, but for the world’s energy future,” said Speaker of the House of Delegates Don Scott, D-Portsmouth.

The company conducted a global search before landing on Chesterfield. If all goes as planned, ARC will generate about 400 megawatts of electricity, “enough energy to power large industrial sites or about 150,000 homes.”



Natural gas projects accelerate as Virginia’s energy needs soar

By Charlie Paullin
Virginia Mercury

Virginia’s booming data center industry is driving unprecedented energy demands, straining the state’s natural gas infrastructure and prompting calls for new pipelines. A Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) report warns that expanding pipeline capacity may be necessary to meet

the surge, bringing with it additional logistical and environmental challenges.

Some efforts to expand pipeline capacity are already underway. In October, Williams Companies filed an application with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for its Southeast Supply Enhancement Project (SSEP), which would add about 55 miles of pipeline — mostly in Southwest Virginia — to the existing 10,000-mile Transco Pipeline stretching from Texas to New York.

This follows the company’s approval last year for its Commonwealth Energy Connector Project in Southside, designed to link in Greensville County with the Columbia Gas Virginia Reliability Project. That initiative, now under construction, will deliver natural gas to the Hampton Roads region, addressing growing energy needs in that part of the state.

The Southgate extension project, an effort to extend the Mountain Valley Pipeline from Pittsylvania

County into North Carolina, began consultations with the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality this year for permit reviews.

In October, Balico, the Herndon-based developer previously associated with the canceled Atlantic Coast Pipeline, proposed a massive data center campus with 84 buildings and an on-site natural gas plant for power. However, strong community opposition forced the company to scale back its plans.

Mike Atchie, director of community and project outreach for Williams Companies, emphasized the importance of the SSEP, which seeks to expand natural gas infrastructure across Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama.

“It ensures that infrastructure exists to support the rapid economic and population growth in the southeast,” Atchie said, adding that it also meets the region’s growing demand for stable and

reliable energy to heat homes and power essential services.”

The recent pipeline developments have drawn sharp criticism from environmental groups, who warn about the potential impact on waterways the projects may need to cross and the continued reliance on carbon-emitting fossil fuels. Scientists link these emissions to worsening climate change, including more frequent and intense storms.

“Basically, we’re looking at two co-located projects,” said Jessica Sims, a field coordinator for Appalachian Voices. “You have two projects, co-located in Pennsylvania County, approximately [that] could be built at the same time.”

The Southeast Supply Enhancement Project

Williams Company plans to add about 55 miles of pipeline in Virginia and North Carolina through a series of loops — parallel pipes designed to increase carrying capacity along existing lines.

In Virginia, the Eden Loop would include about 30.8 miles of 42 inch-diameter pipeline running from Pittsylvania County into Rockingham County, NC. The loop

See BRIEFS, 12

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BRIEFS, from 11

also includes two 33,000-horsepower electric-powered compressor stations, in addition to others in North Carolina.

Williams has requested approval for the project by February 2026, with an in-service date set for Nov. 1, 2027. Among the gas recipients

are the City of Danville and Southwest Virginia Gas, which would take 1,500 and 5,000 dekatherms, respectively.

“Without new capacity, there is a risk of repeating past shortages and power outages,” Archie said. “The expansion taps into established pipeline corridors to

minimize environmental and land-owner impacts and will be built and maintained using Williams’ industry-leading safety standards, including 24/7 monitoring and rigorous maintenance.”

Southgate extension

The SSEP pipeline is planned to follow a similar route to the 31-mile Southgate Extension project, which Mountain Valley Pipeline announced last year it would be reviving.

Since then, the company has engaged with federal and state regulatory agencies, including the

Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), to discuss the permits required for the project’s revised scope, spokesperson Shawn Day said.

But Sims of Appalachian Voices raised concerns during a State Water Control Board meeting last month about Virginia code provi-

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sions that allow the DEQ to waive the requirement for a Section 401 permit under the federal Clean Water Act if the pipeline is below 36 inches.

The revised plans reduced the Southgate pipeline from 75 to 31 miles, eliminating the need for a controversial compressor station, but increased the pipeline diameter from 24 and 16 inches to 30 inches, still under the threshold allowing the DEQ to waive the need for a water permit.

“The cumulative impacts from two major construction projects is one reason to give South gain more scrutiny than last time,” Sims told the board, pointing to its proximity to the SSEP project.

When asked by the Mercury if the DEQ would waive any permits

for the Southgate Extension project, DEQ spokesman John Giese said the agency has not received formal plans. “Southgate/Equitrans has informed [the] DEQ of their intent to move forward on a project and has discussed their general layout and timing of design,” Giese said. “However, no formal plans or permit application(s) have been submitted to [the] DEQ for review.”

The project is aiming to be operational by 2028, “to provide PSNC Energy and Duke Energy with an affordable, reliable and resilient natural gas supply to meet residen-

tial and business demand and generate electricity,” MVP Southgate spokesman Day said, adding the project “will secure all necessary permits and authorizations.”

Balico's data center

The JLARC report highlighted natural gas as the most viable option for onsite power generation, a necessity for many large-scale projects in Southwest Virginia.

“Of the current technologies available, only natural gas appears viable for on-site generation, and it can be deployed only close to pipe-

line infrastructure that has sufficient capacity to serve generation needs,” the report stated.

In Pittsylvania County, Balico initially proposed a 2,300-acre data center campus with a 3,500-megawatt natural gas plant, but withdrew the plan after significant community pushback. In November, the company submitted a scaled down application for a project requiring “more than 760 acres” and rezoning land for “private electric power generation,” with a letter of intent from Mountain Valley Pipeline owner, EQT, “for the supply of a sufficient volume of natural gas to fuel the power plant proposed for the campus.”

The proposal is expected to be reviewed next year. Nearby, the town of Hurt passed a resolution supporting the project, agreeing to provide 2 million gallons of water per day through the construction of a new water plant. Community opposition to the original proposal had largely centered on the water demands of the project.

Mandatory vehicle inspections simply don't improve highway safety in any “statistically significant” way, Research Fellow Joshua Devamithran argues in an article for the Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy.

Virginia is one of just 15 states – down from 31 in 1975 – still requiring its residents to get one. The inspections are meant to prevent component failure, but component failure is only responsible for at most 2% of crashes, Devamithran wrote, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

“It seems the benefits of mandatory inspection programs for roadway safety are indiscernible in the data, at least in part because the programs aim to mitigate an agent of vehicle crashes that in reality, is at cause in only a tiny proportion crashes,” Devamithran wrote. “Then, there is little to no evidence that the inspections eliminate or significantly lower equipment failure related accidents.”

In Virginia, most vehicles require an annual \$20 inspection. Residents cannot update their license or registration without a current inspection, and they risk a ticket and a \$30 fine if they drive with an expired one.

Democratic Gov. Ralph Northam attempted to abolish mandatory annual vehicle inspections for Virginians in 2020 and, while legislators did consider a compromise bill that would have shifted inspections to once every two years, the proposal

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- FLATTOP
- FRONT OF HOUSE
- HAPPY HOUR
- LINE
- ORDER
- PARTY
- POINT OF SALE
- REGULAR
- RESERVATION
- RUN
- RUSH
- SEATING
- TICKET



Analyst claims car inspections don't improve highway safety

By Morgan Sweeney
 The Center Square

There's an annual occurrence for car owners in the commonwealth that should be included in Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin's regulation-busting agenda for his last year in office, according to a Virginia think tank.

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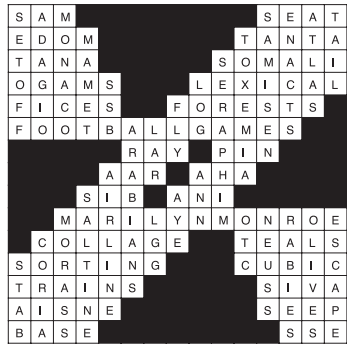
BRIEFS, from 13

failed and the law remained unchanged.

Youngkin has established an Office of Regulatory Management and earlier attempted to rid Virginia of its annual car tax, but Devamithran urges him to do as Northam did and champion the inspection's elimina-

tion, as well.

"The principle is simple: In the absence of clear evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of a regulation in meeting its stated goal, that regulation should be eliminated," Devamithran wrote.



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7	1	3	4	6	8	2	5	9
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8	4	2	1	5	9	7	6	3
4	8	9	5	3	6	1	2	7
2	6	5	7	9	1	4	3	8
3	7	1	8	2	4	5	9	6



Social Security benefits boosted for millions in bill headed to Biden's desk

By Jennifer Shutt
Virginia Mercury

The U.S. Senate approved a broadly bipartisan bill early Saturday that would increase Social Security benefits for millions of Americans with pensions by ending two of the program's policies in place for decades — the windfall elimination provision and government pension offset.

The legislation, which would cost more than \$195 billion over 10 years, now goes to President Joe Biden for his signature. While he hasn't released a public endorsement of the bill, extensive support in the House and Senate could signal he's likely to support the measure becoming law.

The Senate vote was 76-20 and the House vote in November was 327-75.

Maine Republican Sen. Susan Collins said during floor debate Wednesday that a fix for the two provisions has been decades in the making, noting she held the first hearing on the issue

in the upper chamber in 2003.

Collins later partnered with the late California Democratic Sen. Dianne Feinstein to introduce the first version of the bill in 2005, before working with former Maryland Democratic Sen. Barbara Mikulski in 2007 on another version.

"Social Security is the foundation of retirement income for most Americans, yet many teachers, firefighters, police officers and other public servants often see their earned Social Security benefits unfairly reduced by two provisions," Collins said.

The windfall elimination provision, she said, "affects public servants who receive a pension from a job not covered by Social Security, but who also worked long enough in another job to qualify for Social Security benefits."

The government pension offset affects people who worked in jobs that weren't eligible for Social Security, but were eligible for a spousal benefit. That pension offset, Collins said, can reduce a spouse's Social Security benefit by two-thirds of the non-covered pension, leading to 70% of those affected by the GPO to lose the entire Social Security benefit.

"This issue is extraordinarily important in my state of Maine because the state's pension system does not include a Social Security component," Collins said. "And among those most affected are Maine school teachers."

Collins called the WEP and the GPO "an unfair, inequitable penalty."

Hit to trust fund

North Carolina Republican Sen.

Thom Tillis said the bill's title made it sound like "motherhood and apple pie," but argued it wasn't the right approach to address the problem.

He expressed concern the bill would reduce the Social Security trust fund by an additional \$200 billion during the next decade, moving up the insolvency date by six months.

"This chamber needs courage and needs to say what needs to be said — we are about to pass an unfunded \$200 billion spending package for a trust fund that is likely to go insolvent over the next nine to ten years and we're going to pretend like somebody else has to fix it," Tillis said. "Well, when you're a U.S. senator and you have your election certificate, that falls on us."

Tillis said he agreed with Collins and others who support the bill that the WEP and the GPO must be fixed, but said that should be part of a larger conversation about addressing Social Security's upcoming insolvency.

"We do not disagree with what we ultimately need to do," Tillis said. "This is a disagreement in how to get here and how to have something that assesses the downstream risk. So it is with some trepidation that I come to the floor and criticize the good work of Sen. Collins. But I do it because there is so much riding on us getting this right and having the courage to fix Social Security over the next few years."

Ohio Democratic Sen. Sherrod Brown said during floor debate Wednesday that people who paid into Social Security for the required amount of time should receive their full benefits.

"Social Security we know is a bed-

Colonel James Wood II Chapter Honors Veterans with Wreaths Across America Ceremonies



Musket squad prepares to fire at North Fork Baptist Church in Pucellville. Courtesy of Chip Daniel.

The Colonel James Wood II Chapter of the Virginia Society Sons of the American Revolution participated in three Wreaths Across America ceremonies. On Saturday, Dec. 21, 2024, they were at Ketocin Church Cemetery with the Ketocin Daughters of the American Revolution, Boy Scouts and American Legion to place over 76 wreaths on graves of American veterans. The group then went to North Fork Baptist Church and placed wreaths on 41 veteran graves. A three round musket salute was fired to honor the service of all the veterans buried in the cemeteries. On Sunday 15 December, despite rain and cold conditions, the Chapter joined the Boy Scouts Troop 4G in placing 49 wreaths on veterans graves at Prospect Hill Cemetery, Front Royal. After each ceremony, Taps is played and honors rendered in the memory of those who served to ensure we have a free and independent country. Each December, the mission is to remember, honor and teach through wreath layings at cemeteries throughout the United States and abroad. The wreaths are

made of fresh evergreens and are used as a symbol of honor and a living tribute to honor veterans. When a wreath is placed, the service member's name is said out loud and then honors are rendered to commemorate the veterans service. Wreaths Across America is a program that began in 1992 when the Worcester Wreath Company of Harrington, Maine had extra wreaths near the end of the holiday season. This led to the wreaths being placed on veterans graves at Arlington National Cemetery. It has grown so that in 2022, more than 2.7 million wreaths were placed on headstones of veterans at 3,702 locations. It is annually held on the second or third Saturday in December. Participating for the Sons of the American Revolution in Pucellville were Sean Carrigan, Paul Christensen, Dale Corey, Chip Daniel, Brett Osborn, Allan Phillips, Will Reynolds, Eric Robinson and Marc Robinson. Participating at Prospect Hill in Front Royal were Sean Carrigan, Paul Christensen, Dale Corey, Chip Daniel, Lewis Moten, Allan Phillips and Will Reynolds.

Warren Coalition Announces 2024 Video Contest Winners



FROM LEFT: Warren Coalition Community Liaison Gabriel Lee (left) and Executive Director Christa Shifflett (right) present the "Exercise" category prize of \$125 to Landon Marut; Warren County Middle School principal Chris Johnson (left) and Warren Coalition Community Liaison Gabriel Lee (right) present the proud and exuberant Jerry (center left) and Kenny Buhl (center right) with their prizes. The brothers won for their videos about eating healthy and getting enough sleep, respectively; Warren Coalition Community Outreach Coordinator Celeste Brooks (on left) presents Caleb Rodman with a \$125 Amazon gift card award for his video about drinking enough water.

Just before spring break, the Warren Coalition presented first-place prizes to four students for their submissions in the annual Health Video Contest. Jerry Buhl and Kenny Buhl, brothers who are both students at Warren County Middle School, won in the categories of Eating Healthy and Getting Enough Sleep, respectively. Caleb Rodman, a local home-school student, was honored for his submission about Drinking Enough Water. Landon Marut of Front Royal Christian Academy took the top prize in the Exercise category. Each of the students received \$125 in Am-

azon gift cards.

The contest was open to all middle school students, ages 11-14, in Warren County. Students could elect to submit a video about getting regular exercise, getting enough sleep, drinking water, or maintaining healthy eating habits. The contest was held as part of the Warren Coalition's WA-HOO (Working to Achieve Healthy Outcomes and Opportunities) program, which is funded by the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth. Their videos will be used as healthy living ads throughout Warren County in the late spring/early summer.

Warren Coalition is a nonprofit agency established in 1994 to help fill the gaps in health care and substance abuse awareness to the community. The Coalition began under the guidance of Warren Memorial Hospital as an outreach project, but it has since grown and was incorporated in 2001. The office is currently located in the Warren County Community Center. Their mission is to make Warren County a safe, healthy, and drug free community through many programs and in collaboration with 15+ member agencies.

rock of our middle class — it's retirement security that Americans pay into and earn over a lifetime," Brown said. "You pay in for 40 quarters, you pay in essentially for 10 years. You've earned it. It should be there when you retire."

Brown said it "makes no sense" that workers in certain public service jobs, like teachers, police officers and firefighters, cannot draw their full benefits.

"They protect our communities, they teach our kids, they pay into Social Security just like everyone else," Brown said.

How do these provisions work?

The pension offset reduces a "spousal or widow(er)'s benefits of most people who also receive pensions based on federal, state, or local government employment not covered by Social Security," according to a report from the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service.

The windfall elimination provision changes the formula to reduce Social Security benefits for people "who are also entitled to pension benefits based on earnings from jobs that were not covered by Social Security," the report said.

The pension offset affects about 746,000 Americans while the windfall provision affects 2.1 million.

"The share of Social Security beneficiaries affected by the GPO varies widely by state," the CRS report says. "States with a relatively larger share of GPO-affected beneficiaries are usually those with a larger share of state and local government employees not covered by Social Security or those with more (Civil Service Retirement System) retirees."

The pension offset has a disproportionate impact on Social Security beneficiaries in Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Ohio, Rhode Island, Texas and Utah.

The windfall elimination provision affects a larger percentage of residents in Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Ohio,

Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, Utah, Virginia and Washington, Wyoming.

"Similar to the GPO, the share of Social Security beneficiaries affected by the WEP varies by state," CRS wrote. "Typically, states that have a larger share of state and local government employees not covered by Social Security or more CSRS retirees have a relatively larger share of Social Security beneficiaries affected by the WEP."

Bipartisan House support

The U.S. House voted 327-75 in November to approve the four-page bill, sponsored by Louisiana Republican Rep. Garret Graves and Virginia Democratic Rep. Abigail Spanberger.

Graves said during floor debate that for 40 years, Social Security worked by "treating people differently, discriminating against a certain set of workers."

"These are police officers, teachers, firefighters, and other public servants," Graves said at the time. "I worked side by side with these folks. They are not people who are overpaid. They are not people who are underworked."

Spanberger called the windfall elimination provision and the government pension offset "two misguided provisions that were added to the Social Security Act in 1983 (and) have denied Americans the retirement security they worked for and expected to receive."

"For more than 40 years, public servants have tirelessly implored their representatives in Congress to listen to their stories and to correct this glaring injustice," Spanberger said. "Today, for the first time, Congress will vote on the Social Security Fairness Act, to repeal the WEP and the GPO, and to finally put an end to this theft."

Opposition to bill

Missouri Republican Rep. Jason Smith, chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, said the two provisions affect around 4% of all Social Security beneficiaries, more than 60% of whom are concentrated in 10 states.

The two provisions, he said, "were put in place more than four decades ago to prevent workers with earnings that were exempt from Social Security payroll taxes from getting more generous treatment from Social Security than workers who spent their whole

careers contributing to Social Security."

"Unfortunately, these policies still result in overly generous benefits for some while unfairly penalizing others," Smith said, before arguing the bill wasn't the right way to address the two provisions.

Smith said that getting rid of the two provisions "without a replacement potentially trades unfair treatment for preferential treatment."

He also expressed concern about how pulling more money from the Social Security trust fund would impact solvency.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimated the bill would cost \$195.65 billion during the next 10 years and wrote in a letter to Iowa Republican Sen. Chuck Grassley that it would likely move up the Social Security

insolvency date by six months.

"If H.R. 82 was enacted, the balance of the (Old-Age and Survivors Insurance) trust fund would, CBO projects, be exhausted roughly half a year earlier than it would be under current law," CBO Director Phillip L. Swagel wrote. "The agency estimates that under current law, the balance of the OASI trust fund would be exhausted during fiscal year 2033."

The Social Security trustees report for 2024 says that the program will be able to pay full benefits until 2035. After that, if Congress hasn't brokered a solution, Social Security would be able to pay about 83% of benefits.

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HOROSCOPES

ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20
You are likely to question information you receive this week, Aries. Investigate things further, but remain receptive to what others are saying.

TAURUS – Apr 21/May 21
Taurus, it is time to solidify plans and any grand schemes you may have; otherwise, you may not know which path to take. For now, start outlining your ideas.

GEMINI – May 22/Jun 21
Practice your communication skills, Gemini, as you are likely to need them this week. You may need to resolve a sticky situation and serve as a voice of reason.

CANCER – Jun 22/Jul 22
Cancer, this week you may be looking to clean house, so to say. You are tossing away old beliefs and habits and are ready to embrace something new. It might be an exciting time.

LEO – Jul 23/Aug 23
Leo, everything that you are going through right now is part of a cycle that has a beginning and an end. If you wait it out, you will find that patience pays off.

VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22
Virgo, maintain open lines of communication. Some may offer advice, while others may seek it. Be receptive to the former and do your best to accommodate the latter.

LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23
Do what you can to help others in need, Libra. Offer your services and insight, and be prepared to help in other ways as well.

SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22
Scorpio, you are giving off an energy lately that others might be attracted to. Don't be surprised if your fan club increases in the next few days. Enjoy the attention.

SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21
Communication from a former friend or an old roommate may catch you by surprise this week, Sagittarius. Embrace this opportunity to reconnect.

CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20
Capricorn, you've been waiting patiently to say something and looking for an opportunity to share your input. You might need to interrupt if you feel it is important enough.

AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18
Your mind feels as if it's going in a million different directions, Aquarius. One way to alleviate distractions is to direct your energy to an assortment of small projects.

PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20
Pisces, sometimes it seems like what you are saying is going in one ear and out the other. Don't let your frustration get the best of you. Keep trying to be heard.

FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS

- DECEMBER 29
Jude Law, Actor (52)
- DECEMBER 30
LeBron James, Athlete (40)
- DECEMBER 31
Val Kilmer, Actor (65)
- JANUARY 1
Poppy, Singer (30)
- JANUARY 2
Dax Shepard, Actor (50)
- JANUARY 3
Eli Manning, Athlete (44)
- JANUARY 4
Coco Jones, Actress (27)

– <https://wfreport.com>



Upcoming events with Dan McDermott

Fri. Dec. 27, 2024 (7-11pm) Karaoke at Woodstock American Legion Post 199 - 411 S Muhlenberg St. Woodstock, VA 22664*

Sat. Dec 28, 2024 (6-10pm) 1970s! Music Bingo & Karaoke Disco Dance Party at Shenandoah Valley Axe Throwing Company - OPEN TO THE PUBLIC: 20 South St. Front Royal, VA

Tue. Dec. 31, 2024 (8pm-1am) New Year's Eve Karaoke at Edinburg VFW - **Special Event OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:** 100 Veterans Way, Edinburg

Sat. Jan 4, 2025 (6-10pm) Music Bingo & Karaoke at Shenandoah Valley Axe Throwing Company **OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:** 20 South St. Front Royal

Wed. Jan 8, 2025 (6-9pm) Music Bingo & Karaoke at Box Office Brewery **OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:** 177 E King St, Strasburg, VA 22657

Fri, Jan 10, 2025 (7-10pm) Music Bingo, Karaoke and Wine at James Charles Winery **OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:** 4063 Middle Rd, Winchester, VA 22602

Sat. Jan 11, 2025 (7:00-10:30pm)
Karaoke/Music Bingo at Woodstock, Va. Moose*

Sat. Jan 18, 2025 (6-10pm) Music Bingo & Karaoke at Shenandoah Valley Axe Throwing Company **OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:** 20 South St. Front Royal

Fri. Jan 24, 2025 (7:30-11:30pm)
Music Bingo & Karaoke at New Market, Va. Eagles*

Sat. Feb 1, 2025 (6-10pm)
Music Bingo & Karaoke at Shenandoah Valley Axe Throwing Company **OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:** 20 South St. Front Royal, VA 22630

*Private clubs open to members and properly invited guests

route11dj.com

Limited dates remain. Book your event now: dan@route11dj.com

Happy holidays from my heart to yours!

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