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# Hamlett praised for her work

BY NATE PENTECOST

LUNENBURG

**W**hen we first asked Anne Hamlett to talk to us for this year's Progress, she declined. She just didn't think "any of it" was worth attention, because she didn't do anything "out of the ordinary." Anne said she just loves her community and wants to contribute. But it's that mindset and the effort put forth as a result, that makes Anne so beloved in Lunenburg.

The 82-year-old Lunenburg County native has been a fixture in many aspects of her community for decades, helping out where she can. Earlier this year, she won the Citizen of the Year Award in Lunenburg, with nomination letters praising her effort. One paid tribute to "lifelong dedication to her community, her unwavering commitment to service, and her deep-rooted love for Lunenburg County."

A retired history and government teacher, the former educator was a charter faculty member at Central High when the school opened in 1966. Anne has also been an active member of the Lunenburg Historical Society where she has been vice president since 1999 when the organization was founded. If there is a church in the community, she can tell you about its history or find someone else who can. Need to know something about Lunenburg's history, why it was called "The Old Free State" in the buildup to the Civil War or where the Lunenburg name comes from? She can help with that.

## A HOME AND ITS HISTORY

Anne's roots to the area are multi-generational. Her home is located on her family's farm, a portion of which was established in the 1850s.



The longtime clerk at Victoria Christian Church, Anne Hamlett also operates a prayer ministry through Facebook.



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Anne, pictured here top left, gathers with others to judge the VFW's annual Voice of Democracy contest.



Bernice Thompson, left, helps surprise Anne Hamlett with her Citizen of the Year award.

After college at Longwood University, and one year spent teaching in Richmond at Thomas Jefferson, she returned to Lunenburg in 1966 to marry Ryland Hamlett, her high school sweetheart, with whom she

raised a family.

She has written extensively for and about the Lunenburg community over the years. Her work includes the first edition of 'Victoria — Then and Now,' written when

the town of Victoria celebrated its 75th anniversary in 1984. She wrote the centennial edition of 'Victoria - Then and Now' in 2009 with a chapter from Steve Israel and public assistance. Anne also created the comprehensive 'Driving Tour of Lunenburg County,' which is a large fold-out map that visitors to the area can use. She even wrote weekly articles under the name, "Lunenburg Legacy," for *The Kenbridge-Victoria Dispatch*.

"I love Lunenburg, its people and the history they have made here," Anne said.

The stories about Anne go beyond history, they also point to her work with Victoria Christian Church, where she turned the weekly prayer list in the church

bulletin into a modern-day type of prayer phone tree on Facebook. A woman may ask for prayers for her mother who suffered cuts after a hard fall. A daughter asks for prayer for her elderly mother with a fever of 101 degrees, or the community asks for prayer for the family of a man who died in an automobile accident. Those requests all come to a Facebook group that grew from an email to a caring community of more than 1,800 members.

As she has done for many years Anne continues to play the organ at her church. She enjoys spending time with her family and friends and beyond all that she's just glad to help as needed, and sees nothing out of the ordinary about that.

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# Woodson called ‘father of Black history’

BY BRIAN CARLTON

BUCKINGHAM

Carter Woodson had paid his dues. He was a card-carrying member of the American Historical Association, and yet he was banned from attending their conferences. The New Canton native, who was then serving as Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences at Howard University, had been calling for the Association to recognize the accomplishments and impact that African Americans had on the nation throughout history, but those requests fell on deaf ears. He wrote, in papers now preserved by the Library of Congress, that African American contributions had been “overlooked, ignored, and even suppressed by the writers of history textbooks and the teachers who use them.” Unable to get others to pay attention, Woodson decided to do something about it himself.

In order for African American history to be studied, there first had to be a location for that to take place. Woodson gathered funding from a number of people, eventually creating the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in 1915. In writings at the time, he described the project’s mission as the “scientific study of the neglected aspects of Negro life and history.” This part was critical, Woodson felt. If African

American achievements were not recorded or preserved, then an entire people ran the risk “of becoming a negligible factor in the thought of the world.”

Since those early times, he’s been called ‘the father of Black history’ and is the second African American to earn a doctorate from Harvard University. Woodson may not be the most recognized name, but there’s no denying his achievements or the role he played in establishing what would later become Black History Month.

Why? In 1926, he organized the first Negro History Week, now celebrated each February as Black History Month, to encourage the study of African American history.

## THE EARLY YEARS OF CARTER WOODSON

The founder of what would become Black History Month got his own life started in Buckingham County. Carter Woodson was born on Dec. 19, 1875 in New Canton, to James Henry and Eliza Riddle Woodson, both former slaves. James Woodson, a carpenter and farmer, was also known for helping Union soldiers during the Civil War. His son Carter occasionally attended primary school in Buckingham County, when not needed on the



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

A look at the young Carter Woodson in 1915, when he founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History.

farm.

When he turned 17, Carter left New Canton for Huntington, West Virginia with his older brother Robert Henry. The two boys went with the intent of attending Douglass High School, a secondary school set up for African Americans. But first, they had to earn money for living expenses. The two spent three years working in the coal mines on the New River, during which time Carter taught himself the basics of English and math.

According to the Library of Congress papers, at the age of 20, Carter entered Douglass High in 1895. The curriculum was supposed to take four years to finish. He earned his degree in 1897.

Very quickly after that, his career took off. For the three years after earning his degree, Carter worked as a teacher in Winona, West Virginia. In 1900, he was picked to become the next principal at his alma mater, Douglass High. For the next three

years, he juggled work as a principal and classes of his own, driving the two hours between Huntington to Berea, Kentucky, where he was enrolled at Berea College.

In 1903, he earned a bachelor’s degree in Literature from Berea and he changed jobs. Carter became a school supervisor for the next three years in the Philippines before returning to the classroom in 1907. Carter attended the Sorbonne University in Paris and eventually Harvard University where he earned his doctorate in history.

Woodson continued his love of history and learning by holding educational and administrative positions in the Philippines, West Virginia State College and Howard University where he was dean of the School of Liberal Arts. These experiences would lead Woodson to discover the need for an emphasis on Black history.

## BUILDING THE STORY OF BLACK HISTORY

And now we come back to the beginning of our story. Carter, now the dean of a respected university, noticed how teachers and textbooks ignored Black contributions, the places where African American residents played a key role in America’s story.

While he wanted to work as a Black historian, preserving Black history, Carter found no organization willing to work with him to make that happen.

And so, the Buckingham County native created his own outlets to help push his mission forward. Carter went around and got support from several philanthropic foundations, then he launched the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in 1915 in Chicago. Writing about his new project, Carter described the mission as the scientific study of the “neglected aspects of

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Negro life and history.”

But he wasn’t done. In 1916, he launched the scholarly Journal of Negro History, which is published to this day under the name Journal of African American History. Over more than 100 years, it has never failed to publish an issue. Despite going through two World Wars, the Great Depression, the Great Recession and multiple wars through the decades, you’ll always find the next issue of the Journal out on time.

Now from 1916 to 1925, Carter worked to grow and develop both projects, gaining recognition for his journal and the association. His letters show Carter was clear about the goal of building a “collection of sociological and historical data on the Negro, the study of peoples of African blood, the publishing of books in the field, and the promotion of harmony between the races by acquainting the one with the other.”

But something was lacking. He felt Black history needed some

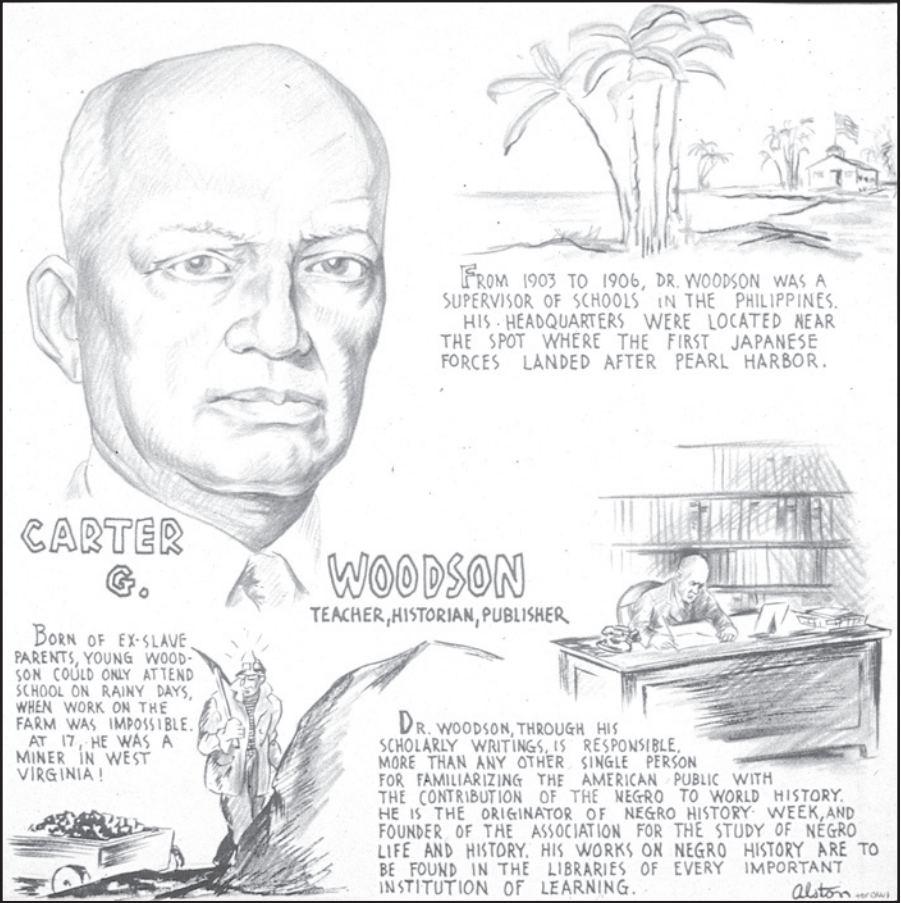
attention, something to draw focus on it. And so, he started looking at options.

In 1926, Woodson found a way to draw attention. He started Negro History Week during the second week of February as it aligned with Abraham Lincoln and Fredrick Douglas’ birthdays.

### LEAVING A LEGACY

Carter Woodson died on April 3, 1950, in Washington, D.C. However, he left behind over 30 books and the organizations he founded, including the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, Associated Publishers Inc. and the Negro History Bulletin. It was these works along with the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s that led to the expansion of his Negro History Week to Black History Month.

At right, The Library of Congress preserves an early editorial cartoon, celebrating the achievements of the New Canton native.



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# PSR looks to diversify funding plan

BY ESSIE SOMMA

One thing Justine Young kept hearing was how seniors in this region had a lack of transportation options to get them to and from doctor appointments. In meeting after meeting with both community members and organizations, the director of Piedmont Senior Resources (PSR) was told this was a critical need. And so, four years ago, Young and PSR launched the non-emergency medical transportation program.

Now the group is starting a new business, one they believe might eventually pay for medical transport and some other programs.

Finding alternative ways of funding programs, rather than relying on federal or state grants, is something Young has been focused on. And now she has a way of making that



Weekly Friendship Cafes, held in the seven counties served by PSR, include a nutritious lunch, games, crafts and a time for socializing. It also involves a senior dance.

happen.

"In today's climate, one of the things I've been worried about for a while is sustainability of an agency such as ours that historically depended on federal and state money," Young told the Buckingham County supervisors on Monday, Feb. 10. "To that end, I've been working towards private grants, private sources of funding, ways we could make money."

In November, Piedmont Senior Resources took a step toward that goal by signing a contract with Ground Game Health. The way this

contract works is that PSR does health assessments for insurance companies across the United States. They started just doing local ones, then they went statewide and now they're doing national calls.

"So what this means is that the insurance companies pay us to call and do the health assessments on their clients and then link them to the services they need," Young told the Buckingham board. "If they're in our area, we provide those services many times, things such as meals on wheels or an aide in the home or non-emergency medical

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transportation. But if it's out of state or out of our region, we're connecting them to other organizations that do that work."

**BRANCHING AWAY FROM STATE, FEDERAL DOLLARS**

As mentioned earlier, the goal is an ambitious one. Young hopes that if PSR continues to do these assessments, they will be able to generate enough income to pay the bills for medical transportation. And that's not cheap, especially as the operation keeps growing.

"That program has been growing so rapidly that it is almost impossible for us to keep up with the growth," Young said of the medical transport project. "Because of the growth, we are constantly seeking new grants and funding to keep that program running."

And it's not just medical transport. There's a number of projects PSR has come up with that could benefit from this funding. One of those involves the Meals on Wheels team. When they go into a person's home, the Meals team notices things. Let's say they deliver a meal and notice a woman's porch steps aren't safe enough for her to use. Through the PSR chore program, a group of volunteers can drop by and fix the steps.

These are programs the nonprofit agency offers throughout the seven counties it covers. That includes Amelia, Buckingham, Charlotte, Cumberland, Lunenburg, Nottoway and Prince Edward.

**A SMALL NONPROFIT WITH HUGE IMPACT**

There are more numbers that highlight PSR's impact in a given year. They helped 3,435 total people in 2024, serving 1,945 home delivered meals and giving more than 500 Christmas boxes during Operation: Christmas Child.

Coming up, the group has another way that residents can get support. They plan on running a Remote Area Medical Event this coming March. That brings dental and medical travel clinics to underserved areas in the region, accepting patients at no cost on a first-come, first-served basis. So far, Piedmont Senior Resources has raised \$33,000 of the \$36,000 needed to host the event.

That's a lot of projects, one-time events and other activities that PSR is in charge of. So how can people help make that happen? There's a number of different ways. PSR hosts several fundraisers each year, collecting between ten and twenty thousand dollars per event. These donations go almost entirely toward funding their services, with a small portion covering their incredibly low administrative costs of 7-10%.

Pet walks and pet food drives fund veterinary care, pet supplies, and pet food for seniors and their furry friends. PSR writes grants for what these walks and food drives don't cover, understanding that for many seniors, their pets are their best friends and only companions.

To learn more about volunteering, donating, or requesting services for yourself or a senior you know, visit [psraaa.org](http://psraaa.org) or call 434-767-2529.



Piedmont Senior Resources helps seniors in the community with transportation to and from medical appointments.

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# Red Hill opens a door into history

KRISTI SELLERS

It's not a sprawling mansion like Thomas Jefferson's Monticello. It doesn't cover thousands of acres like James Madison's Montpelier. And yet, the somewhat modest house in the heart of Southside Virginia is just as important as the other two. Red Hill stands as a testament to the life and legacy of one of America's greatest patriots, Patrick Henry. Known primarily for his impassioned speech declaring "Give me liberty, or give me death!" Henry played a crucial role in the American Revolution and the founding of our great nation.

His final home and burial site, Red Hill, is now preserved as a National Memorial, offering visitors a unique glimpse into the life of the

Virginia statesman. With its rich history, beautifully maintained grounds, and educational programs, Red Hill continues to inspire and educate generations about the principles of liberty and self-governance.

Patrick Henry purchased Red Hill in 1794, seeking a quiet retreat where he could spend his final years in peace with his family. At this scenic estate overlooking the Staunton River, he enjoyed the solitude of rural Virginia while continuing to correspond with key figures in American politics. Though he had retired from public life, Henry remained an influential voice in political discourse, advocating for individual liberties and states' rights.

Today, Red Hill is maintained by



BRIAN CARLTON

A look at the Red Hill property.

the Patrick Henry Memorial Foundation, which has worked tirelessly to preserve the estate's historical integrity. The site includes several restored and reconstructed buildings, such as Henry's law office, his home, and various outbuildings that showcase life in 18th-century Virginia.

The property also houses the Patrick Henry Museum, which contains an extensive collection of artifacts, including personal belongings, documents, and period furnishings. The museum provides a deeper understanding of Henry's role in shaping American democracy and his steadfast commitment to individual freedoms.

And now visitors can observe as that history continues to get uncovered. In 2023, Red Hill staff launched an archaeological program, starting the first dig on the property. They started in an area where a 1930s servant's house and an earlier kitchen once stood.

"By excavating this site, we were hoping to find out more about those buildings, the people who lived and worked there, and what Red Hill was like in the first half of the 20th century."

## TAKING A TOUR OF THE PROPERTY

The centerpiece of Red Hill is the modest, reconstructed home where Henry spent his last years. Unlike the grand plantations associated with many of his contemporaries, Red Hill reflects Henry's preference for a simple lifestyle. The law office, another key structure, was where he continued his legal work. Visitors can explore these buildings, gaining insight into the daily life of one of the nation's most influential Founding Fathers.



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ry,” said Lucia Butler. She works as Red Hill’s staff archaeologist.

There are more pieces on display than just what’s been found at the dig sites. Members of the Henry family through the years have donated a number of items.

One of those is a leather-bound cookbook containing the personal recipes of Elvira McClelland Henry, Patrick Henry’s daughter-in-law. She lived with her husband, John, Patrick Henry’s youngest son, at Red Hill after their marriage in 1826 until her death. Elvira compiled and used the cookbook during these years at Red Hill.

More than 235 recipes, handwritten by Elvira, appear in this book, ranging from desserts to bread to puddings and pickles. And the Red Hill staff are working to preserve it as well. Each page is being cleaned, rips and tears are being mended using archival paper and glue, new hinges and reinforced bindings will reattach the pages to the cover, and the leather covers will be cleaned.

### LOOKING BEYOND HISTORY

Beyond its historical significance, Red Hill offers breathtaking landscapes that showcase Virginia’s natural beauty. The property encompasses over 1,000 acres of rolling hills, forests, and scenic views. Walking trails wind through the grounds, allowing visitors to appreciate the serenity that Henry loved. The Staunton River, which borders the estate, provides a picturesque backdrop.

Patrick Henry’s contributions to American history extend far beyond his famous speech. As a five-time governor of Virginia, a vocal opponent of centralized government power, and a champion of individ-

ual rights, Henry’s ideas helped shape the founding principles of the United States. His advocacy for the Bill of Rights ensured that essential freedoms, such as freedom of speech and religion, were enshrined in the Constitution.

Visiting Red Hill allows individuals to connect with Henry’s legacy. Walking the same paths he once took, standing before his final resting place, and exploring his home offer a connection to the past. His unwavering dedication to liberty continues to resonate today, reminding

Americans of the sacrifices made to secure their freedoms.

Group visits by local schools are a favorite of Red Hill staff.

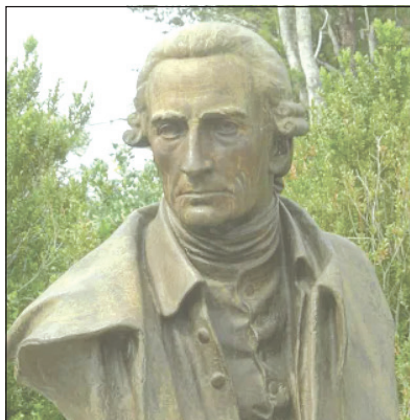
“Red Hill’s cornerstone program is our ever-growing Living History Days,” Caitlin Olsen said. She works as Red Hill’s Director of Education & Donor Systems. “We see around 2,000 schoolchildren annually for these field trips.”

Olsen said students are immersed in Colonial life by helping the blacksmith make a nail, spin, and weave to help make fabric, take a tour with Patrick Henry and hear him play the fiddle.

### YOU CAN TAKE PART

But you can do more than just visit the site. There’s plenty of chances to volunteer as well.

“Red Hill has many volunteer opportunities ranging from archaeology to collections to Living History,” Olsen said. “No prior training is necessary and the application is available on our website. (Also), volunteers can call us at 434-376-2044. We welcome everyone to visit Red Hill and see this special place first-hand!”



BRIAN CARLTON

A bust of Patrick Henry, on display at the Red Hill property.



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# St. Luke's represents a history of faith

BY NATE PENTECOST

LUNENBURG

In 2021, St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Kenbridge was near ruins. The siding was coming off the exterior of the building, floors were heavily damaged by termites and water, and utilities were outdated or unusable. There were just two members left in the historic African American church - Charlie and Gloria Allen.

That year the Episcopal Dioceses of Southern Virginia made the decision to discontinue services at the church that once served as a classroom for African American students during racial segregation.

Fearing she would never again

see the church she spent so many years attending, Gloria Allen applied for a state historical marker for the site, which was dedicated in August 2023.

An Episcopalian himself, with a longstanding relationship to the Allen's, Lunenburg County Historical Society President Steve Israel reached out to the Diocese. The navy veteran and former builder with family roots in Kenbridge volunteered his expertise if the Diocese would cover the cost of the restoration.

With the support of the Episcopal Dioceses of Southern Virginia Israel



began renovations last May. By November, the building was ready for its designation as the first African American Shrine in the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia.

It's the latest bit of history for a building that's near 100 years old, one that's seen a lot through the decades. Even when there were no services being held, it was still a familiar sight in the community, as the old Gothic-style church on North Broad Street in Kenbridge.

## WHAT IS AN EPISCOPAL SHRINE?

An episcopal shrine is a sacred

place within the diocese that holds both significant spiritual and historical importance. The local bishop or archbishop is the one to designate these places and they can serve as places of "pilgrimage," where people are invited to travel to and see. And St. Luke's does have a story to tell. Built in 1926, the church once had a lively congregation, according to members of the Lunenburg County Historical Society. However, as senior members passed away, children who grew up attending worship there chose to move, to leave for better jobs in other communities. As

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a result, St. Luke's closed for a few years.

"The building fell into disrepair, but in 2023, devoted former members raised funds for, and placed, a historic marker in front of the church," Israel said. "The Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia, the Right Reverend Susan B. Haynes, conducted the dedication of the marker. Old and young came to participate, children raised in Kenbridge, some now residing far away, attended the ceremony and brought their small children back to see the church where father or mother worshiped as a child."

But first, the church would need some work done. The Diocese provided funding for repairs and renovations. The Lunenburg County Historical Society also chipped in, along with other local donors. The results of that hard work were shown back in November as it became a shrine, as a former house of worship that no longer has a congregation, however is still meaningful to the community. And on Nov. 9, with Bishop Haynes and other officers, both from the Diocese and local churches in attendance, there was a service of Morning Prayer with Communion on the site as part

of a re-dedication.

Although the church doesn't have a congregation, as its officially a shrine, that doesn't mean events can't take place there. Take, for example, an Episcopal service for the Feast of St. Luke, which is held every year in October. That could still take place at the Kenbridge church. The shrine also has a purpose beyond holding events.

The Historical Society is in the process of working to locate its library there. Turning Point Healing Transitions plans to hold exercise sessions there for senior citizens, events to help build balance and flexibility, as well as help fight arthritis. Residents have also suggested holding everything from lectures to small group meetings, musical performances and sing-alongs at the shrine.

"Preservation of this African American historic church means everything to our community in Kenbridge and Lunenburg County," Israel said. "The Historical Society is charged to preserve the history of Lunenburg County and saving this church and repurposing the building as a library and center for community outreach is at the core of our mission and our duty as citizens."



Pictured here, from left, are Canon Foster, Bishop Haynes, Charlie and Gloria Allen, with their son Dr. Xuri Maurice Allen, who traveled home from the Virgin Islands for the dedication.



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# ‘It’s something I love to do’

BY BRIAN CARLTON

Louis Gould III loves to teach. It could be at his job as a U.S. history teacher at Prince Edward County Middle School. It might be as a coach for the school’s football and boys basketball teams. Or maybe it’s at one of the nonprofits he’s set up and manages. Regardless of where, Gould approaches the situation as the same: treat people with respect and let them know he cares.

“It’s like my natural habitat. It’s something I love to do,” Gould said.

And that teaching has an impact. On the basketball court, Prince Edward Middle School’s boys team went undefeated in the regular season, even with the fact a majority of the group had never played middle school basketball before. On the football field, the middle school boys went 8-1, winning the most games in recent history and winning homecoming for the first time in more than three years. And then there’s the actual classroom, where a majority of Gould’s students pass the state’s Standards of Learning tests on a regular basis. He was also named as Prince Edward Middle School’s Teacher of the Year for the 2024-25 school

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Coch Louis Gould III high fives some of the players on the Prince Edward Middle School Basketball team he coaches.



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year. Gould said that you can know the curriculum backwards, you can have the best gameplan or players with the most talent, but none of that matters if you can't connect.

"You have to be able to connect with your students," Gould said. "You can know your curriculum upside down but a kid will never listen to you unless you have a connection. I'm just real, I'm just me. I treat them like humans. I treat them with respect and make sure I show them that I care."

### 'I WALKED THROUGH THESE HALLS'

No one can accuse Gould of not having an impact regardless of where or what he's teaching. When you consider the number of jobs he does, often for free, the groups he works with and his overall outreach, there's an argument he might be one of the busiest people in Farmville. He doesn't do it for applause. And he doesn't do it for awards, even though Gould does get recognized. He earned *The Farmville Herald's* Readers Choice "BEST OF THE BEST Award" in 2021, *The Farmville Herald's* "Best K-12 Teacher" and the Farmville Rotary Club's Middle School Teacher of the Year Award in 2023. Last year, the local chapter of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority named him their 2024 Citizen of the Year. But he doesn't do it for the recognition.

A graduate of Prince Edward County High, Gould said he thinks back to his own student experience while teaching.

"I think about, if I was a student right now, what kind of student would I be?" Gould said. "Students

need people to trust. I try to keep my door open, so students know that my office is a safe space. I went to Prince Edward. I walked through those halls and it's kinda deja vu. Now I'm there standing up and teaching kids. It's a fun feeling. It's satisfying."

### WORKING HARD

While he tries to establish a safe space for students, Gould also has some rules. Students know his expectations before they enter his class in many

cases, as they've experienced it on a football field or basketball court.

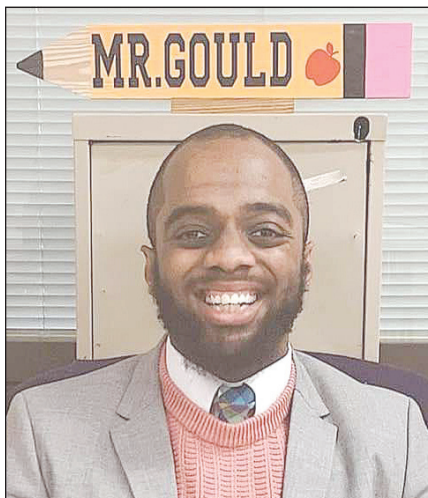
This isn't a case where students can skip class and still play ball. In order to perform on the court, you have to perform in the classroom. And that's exactly what's happened for the players at Prince Edward Middle School. To be a part of the team, they had to not just earn it in practice, but they had to show up and do the work in class.

"All of them, they knew they couldn't play with bad grades, that's not how we do," Gould said. "We had kids scrambling, working to get those grades up. They definitely showed they wanted to be part of the program, by the effort they put in."

The team didn't lose a single player to bad grades. For most, Gould said, they just accepted it as another part of practice. In order to be a good player, they had to be good students.

And as Gould expects his students to give 100%, so does he. Of course, it helps that he enjoys his work.

"I wake up every day and I'm ready to go into the classroom," Gould said. "It's something I love to do."



Louis Gould III

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# Habitat continues to make progress

BY KRISTI SELLERS

**H**elp is coming, one house at a time. Piedmont Habitat for Humanity continues to clear up a bit of confusion, while helping Prince Edward County and the surrounding region.

First off, let's talk about that confusion. There is still an idea among some people in the county that Habitat is closing. According to Habitat's Executive Director Sam Rabon, that stems from a decision made last fall, when the operation closed its Habitat ReStore in Farmville. But that didn't change Habitat's mission or anything else about the non-profit. Rabon said the numbers just didn't add up to keep the Farmville ReStore going. But just because one change took place, that doesn't mean everything went away.

In fact, over the last few months, Habitat has continued to grow and develop, building houses and making plans for further progress on its latest project. Back in February 2022, Habitat was given a grant by the Commonwealth Regional Council, with the goal of building 10 new homes with four in Farmville, two in Nottoway County and five in Charlotte County. And thanks to some additional help, the number of houses being built is going up.

"Thanks to grants and the generosity of local individuals, churches, businesses, and foundations, we have been able to increase the capacity of the amount we can build," Rabon said. "We are nearing the end of a phase that will include 15 new



Volunteers help build one of the newest Habitat houses.

homes when completed."

The four wrapped up in Farmville at the end of 2023. Three more were finished in Nottoway, in the Town of Crewe, in the summer of 2024. The fall of 2024 saw the completion of a new home in Nelson County as well. Work is continuing now in Charlotte County, moving forward with those five new builds.

## HOW DOES IT WORK?

A typical build for a home from the ground up can take four to six months to complete. That's where Cardinal Homes comes in. The Charlotte County based company is building modular homes for the nonprofit as part of this project, prefabricated buildings that come in sections. Even though they come prebuilt, the quality is the same as a normal Habitat build.

The homes get built in their controlled environment before being delivered to the site for final setting on the foundation. From there, Habitat staff, volunteers, and sub-contractors took over all the finished work. This new construction technique allows for a tremendous increase in building capacity, with

the ultimate goal of serving more families.

And that's a key for Habitat's work over the past two decades, as it operates with a simple vision. Everyone deserves a safe and comfortable place to live. Their mission is clear and impactful: to build homes, communities, and hope. Unlike traditional housing markets, Habitat for Humanity homes are sold at no-profit prices, with families paying an affordable mortgage based on their income.

Piedmont Habitat for Humanity is committed to more than just constructing physical structures. The organization believes that homes are the foundation for thriving families and communities. In turn, they focus on providing safe, decent, and affordable housing that enables families to build brighter futures. Through the Habitat model, families are not simply given a home; they are active participants in the construction process, working alongside volunteers and staff to build their own homes.

## A HANDS-ON APPROACH

This hands-on approach has

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multiple benefits. It gives future homeowners a sense of ownership and accomplishment, both in terms of the physical structure and the life skills gained through the process. In addition, it fosters a sense of community, as families and volunteers form strong connections while working together toward a common goal.

The process of becoming a Habitat homeowner is structured and designed to ensure that families are set up for success. The first step involves a detailed application process and prospective homeowners must meet certain eligibility criteria, including income requirements, creditworthiness, and a willingness to partner with Habitat for Humanity. The applicant must have a genuine need for affordable housing, as well as the ability to repay an interest-free mortgage.

Once a family is approved, they embark on a journey that includes "sweat equity." This means that the family members must contribute a set number of hours of volunteer work—both on their own home and on the homes of others. This not only teaches valuable skills but also reinforces the community-oriented aspect of Habitat's work. Through sweat equity, families are empowered, and they gain a sense of pride in their new homes.

Then the construction of the home itself is a collaborative effort involving skilled tradespeople and a dedicated volunteer workforce. Habitat relies on the generosity of local volunteers, many of whom return season after season, to help with tasks ranging from framing to finishing. Volunteers provide the muscle and support that keep the project moving forward while also creating an environment of shared purpose and connection.



A family gets the keys to their new Habitat home in Farmville.

## LOOKING AHEAD

As Piedmont Habitat for Humanity looks to the future, it continues to expand its efforts to provide affordable housing to those in need. The organization is constantly exploring new ways to address the challenges of affordable housing, including leveraging innovative building techniques, advocating for policy changes, and expanding its network of volunteers and donors.

Rabon has been with Piedmont Habitat for Humanity for over 10 years. During his tenure, he has worn many hats, including fundraising, community outreach, and marketing. He has been in the Executive Director role for the past year, with the interim label being lifted in the fall.

"We could not do this work without so many generous supporters who give of their finances and their time," Rabon said. "Donations to support the mission are always needed. This can be one-time, monthly, stocks, donor-advised funds, cryptocurrency, basically almost any way someone might want to give."

He also points out that money isn't the only way that someone can help. In-kind donations are also welcome and if people have some old vehicles, they can contribute those as well. And of course, there are plenty of ways people can volunteer at a specific build site.

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# An encourager in and out of the classroom

BY KRISTI SELLERS

## CUMBERLAND

For this edition of Progress, we're spotlighting people, places and events that immediately make people think of this area. And when it comes to Cumberland County Public Schools, there's few better to carry that torch than Emily Overstreet. A perfect example comes from this past April, when the Virginia Superintendent of Public Instruction Lisa Coons visited Cumberland.

"How many of you really like Mrs. Overstreet?" Coons asked the kids at Cumberland Elementary, who were all gathered for a presentation. She asked about their art teacher and how much students enjoyed taking her class.

Hands shot up all over the room in response to the question.

"Isn't she amazing?" Coons asked, to which the students gave a resounding "Yes!"

And while Coons was there to read to students, that wasn't the only thing on her mind. She was also at Cumberland Elementary to honor the 2024 Region 8 Teacher of the Year, Emily Overstreet. Chosen by her peers at the school first as their own Teacher of the Year and then as the district's overall nominee, Overstreet now finds herself representing all of Region 8 in the state. You can find work done by her

students in museums around our region, in photo galleries at Longwood University and in displays shown in our magazines. Overstreet helps her kids, from pre-kindergarten through fourth grade, develop their own sense of creativity, getting them to think and work outside of the box.

"I have always known that I wanted to share my passion for the arts with others, and I believe education offers the perfect platform to inspire the next generation," Overstreet said. "The guidance and encouragement of my supportive parents, my grandmother, and the outstanding leaders at Cumberland have been instrumental in shaping my journey as an educator."

### ART IGNITES THE IMAGINATION

Going back to that April 2024 event, Coons and the rest of the state delegation who showed up at Cumberland Elementary highlighted how important teachers like Overstreet are. They make students think and express themselves in creative ways. It's not just about remembering a number or a word on a test. This helps them work on ways of engaging with the world, skills that will be important in the years to come. And for Overstreet, as Coons pointed out, she also makes students want to come to class.



"Your team and your fellow educators nominated you because of the way you bring art into the classroom, the way you inspire children and the way you really make them want to be here," Coons said.

That's no surprise to Cumberland parents or anyone who visited the Longwood Center for the Visual Arts (LCVA), where work from Overstreet's students was on display in 2023. Overstreet has said she encourages students to be creative not just in art, but to use that mindset in all of their classes, to think outside of the box and explore new ideas.

"Art has the power to just ignite the imagination," Overstreet said. "We need that in math, we need that in reading, we need that creativity. Without it, you can't elevate math, science or reading. By having it all together, it elevates the learning experience. And that's what we want for our children."

Herself a 2006 graduate of Longwood University, Overstreet holds bachelor's degrees in graphic design and art education.

"I have been an educator at Cumberland County Public Schools for 16 years, beginning my career as an elementary art teacher immediately after earning my degree from Longwood University," Overstreet said. "My passion for education and commitment to fostering creativity have kept me dedicated to CUCPS ever since. I am currently pursuing my M.S. in Educational Leadership at Longwood University to further enhance my ability to support students and the school community".

### FOCUSING ON HER WORK

Overstreet said she incorporates a variety of techniques into her art classes.

"I am committed to introducing my students to a wide range of artistic mediums, placing a paintbrush in their hands as early as three years old," she added. "From painting, collage, and clay to papiermâché, photography, and 3D printing, I encourage creativity through diverse artistic experiences."

Beyond the classroom, Over-

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street has led numerous community art projects. Notably, she spearheaded a school-wide collaborative installation titled “Let Your Imagination Take Flight,” showcased at the LCVA from October 2023 to January 2024. This project involved all Cumberland Elementary students and highlighted the fusion of art and literacy.

Overstreet continues to work with the Longwood Center for the Visual Arts.

“The Longwood Center for the Visual Arts is a valuable asset to our community, displaying the work of talented students across Virginia. I had the privilege of working with Emily Grabiec (Director of Education & Outreach)

as her intern when I was an education student, and I learned so much from that experience at the LCVA,” Overstreet said. “I continue to collaborate with the LCVA today, ensuring our students have opportunities to engage with the arts beyond the classroom. Each year, they participate in the Youth Art Month Exhibition, and they are currently preparing a front window display for summer 2025.”

Her work goes beyond teaching elementary students. In fact, she also works with some slightly older classes, you might say, mentoring new teachers and leading professional development workshops. She serves as the Chair of Cumberland County Public Schools’ Art Department and is an active member of the school’s leadership team. Her efforts have been recognized with several honors, including the Longwood Rotunda Outstanding Young Alumni Award in 2022 and the Cumberland County Public Schools



Teacher of the Year award for the 2023-2024 school year.

Overstreet’s influence is further amplified through her social media presence, notably her channel “Mrs. O’s Art Studio,” where she shares tutorials and showcases student artwork, fostering a broader appreciation for the arts within the community.

### ‘I STRIVE TO BE ENTHUSIASTIC’

Overstreet just wants to be an encourager, to provide a smile to uplift both staff and students as needed.

“I feel incredibly fortunate to go to work every day, doing what I love and sharing that passion with my students,” Overstreet said. “Every day, I strive to be enthusiastic and excited. I believe that if you are excited about what you’re teaching, your students will be excited about learning. My goal at the end of each day is to inspire creativity, curiosity, and a lifelong appreciation for the arts in every child I teach.”



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# Christian School grows through the years

BY ABBY DOWDY

**W**hat started as a small, faith-driven vision in 2002 has blossomed into a thriving educational institution that serves families across Central Virginia. Central Virginia Christian School (CVCS) opened its doors in 2004 with just eight kindergarteners, a handful of teachers, and a deep-rooted mission: to provide a Christ-centered education that shapes students into strong, com-

## BUCKINGHAM

passionate leaders. Today, the nonprofit is home to over 200 students stretching over six counties and is preparing for its next big chapter – expanding into high school education.

### A VISION REALIZED OR LAYING THE FOUNDATION: THE EARLY YEARS

Cherie Brickhill, who is now entering her 21st year as Head of School, has been involved with CVCS since the very beginning. She remembers her first two years volunteering with the non-profit and its founders' desire to create a school that wasn't just about academics, but about instilling values of excellence, respect, and teamwork through a biblical lens.

CVCS incorporated as a nonprofit educational institution in 2002 with Buckingham County chosen as a neutral location to serve families from surrounding areas. The school officially opened in 2004 with just one kindergarten class, adding a new grade level each year as demand grew. By 2012, CVCS had reached eighth grade, completing its earliest vision for an elementary and middle school program. Two years later, a Pre-K program was introduced where they offered a certified



preschool education for four year-olds.

Accredited by the ACSI, the Association of Christian Schools International, and recognized by the Virginia Council for Private Education, CVCS has worked hard to maintain excellence in its educational approach. From the beginning, the

school's mission was to provide students with a Christ-centered academic path. The focus was on instilling strong moral values and a heart for service.

### GROWTH, CHANGE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

Over the years, CVCS has become a pillar in the community. Its growth from a single

kindergarten class to an institution serving hundreds of students speaks to the parental demand for quality Christian education. But beyond enrollment numbers, what truly sets CVCS apart is its strong emphasis on service and outreach.

"Success for us isn't just about the grades or test scores – it's about students growing in their faith and using their gifts to serve others," Brickhill explained. Alumni have gone on to become active contributors to their communities, reflecting the school's mission in their careers and personal lives. Graduates from the school have entered fields such as law enforcement, secondary education, medicine, ministry, journalism, and skilled trades; this stands as a poignant testimony to the school's commitment to nurturing well-rounded individuals.

CVCS students are actively engaged in service projects that benefit both their local communities and communities seemingly out-of-reach. Whether




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through food drives, volunteer work at local shelters, mission trips, or large-scale projects like hurricane disaster relief efforts, students learn that success is measured by their impact on the world around them. This way, students have been able to see their service changing the world, both big and small. The school also organizes annual events such as the Veteran's Color Run, "Walk for Life" fundraisers, and a Christmas drive-through event that drew 10,000 attendees during its first year. These initiatives exemplify the school's dedication to fostering a spirit of generosity and compassion in its students.

As the world changes, so do the challenges facing educators. Brickhill noted that adapting to cultural shifts, such as the rise of cell phones and social media, has been an important part of CVCS' journey. Through it all, the school has remained committed to fostering an environment where students are not just well-educated, but also well-grounded in their faith.

### A NEW CHAPTER: EXPANDING INTO HIGH SCHOOL

The most exciting development for CVCS is its long-awaited expansion into high school education. For years, parents and students alike have voiced their desire to continue their Christ-centered education beyond eighth grade. That vision is now becoming a reality.

In 2025, CVCS will launch its high school program starting with ninth and tenth grade at a temporary off-site location while construction begins on a dedicated high school building on the main campus. The school plans to add 11th grade in 2026 and 12th grade in 2027, culminating in its first graduating high school class in 2028.

The high school curriculum will offer both standard and advanced diplomas. One of its most distinctive features will be community-based internships, allowing students to gain hands-on experience in both professional and vocational fields. The school will also operate on an A/B

schedule, giving students a taste of college-style learning while allowing for deeper engagement in their studies.

Beyond academics, the high school will feature an extracurricular program, like sports, performing arts, student government, and a variety of clubs driven by student interests. Brickhill emphasized that "CVCS leaders have always been determined to provide a well-rounded experience that prepares students for future success."

### FUNDRAISING AND SUPPORT

None of this would be possible without the unwavering support of the CVCS community. The school recently raised \$500,000 through grassroots efforts – proof that when people believe in a cause and mission, they come together to make it happen.

But there's still work to be done. The school is actively seeking additional funding to bring the high school expansion to completion. Every donation goes directly to this mission, and as a nonprofit, all contributions are tax-deductible.

### A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR CVCS

With nearly two decades of history behind it and an exciting future ahead, Central Virginia Christian School continues to stand as witness to faith, education, and serving communities.

For families seeking an education that blends academic excellence with Christian values, CVCS is more than just a school – it's a community where children are nurtured, challenged, and inspired to make a difference. As the school embarks on its new chapter, its mission remains steadfast: to equip students with the knowledge, faith, and character they need to serve God and their communities in years to come. "To define success for us," Brickhill explained, "is that our students have a relationship with Jesus Christ, that they are not me-centered, but that they leave here with their eyes first on glorifying God and secondly on serving and loving others."

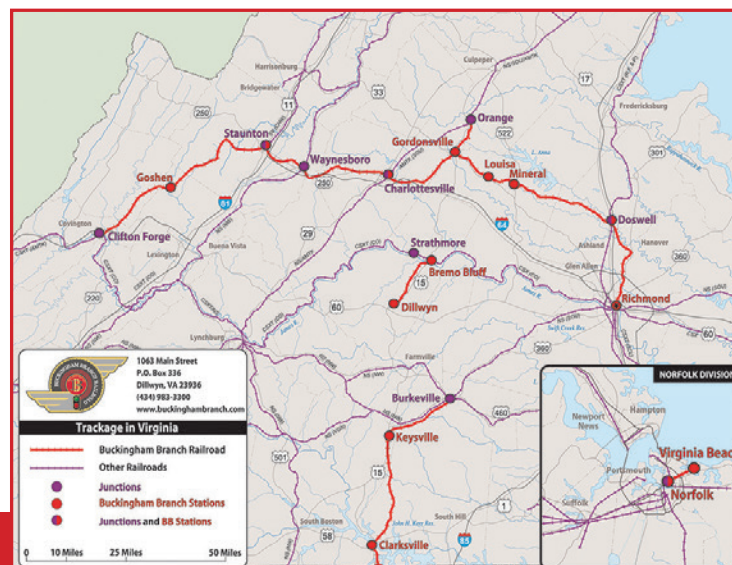


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# Putting his hometown on the map

BY NATE PENTECOST

**W**hen you think of Charlotte County, there's a new name that comes to mind after this past year. That would be Charlotte Court House native Creigh Riepe, who showed up on TV screens all over the nation this past year as part of the reality singing competition *The Voice*.

Growing up in Charlotte County, Riepe said his parents helped develop both his faith and his love for music.

Riepe's passion for music began with playing piano in elementary school and soon after he discovered his talent for singing, bringing him to perform at school, in church and local venues around Charlotte County. Creigh delved deeper into his interest, making music at home, playing in bands and teaching himself audio production and engineering.

Creigh moved to the Music City itself to attend college, enrolling at Belmont University in Nashville to study audio engineering. He led two bands at school, and after graduating remained in the home of country music to join the band Chasin' Crazy. The ensemble opened for county stars like Tim McGraw, Thomas Rhett, and Hunter Hayes before dissolving in 2017.

Riepe opened his own recording studio in Nashville and in keeping with his beginnings, leads the production team at his church. He shares his life with his wife and middle school sweetheart Sarah and their two daughters, along with the family dog and a dozen chickens.

## THE VOICE AND TIMES AFTER

After a whirlwind run on *The Voice*, Riepe has returned to his family, career, and adopted home



in the Music City with a bevy of new life experiences and inspiration for the future.

"I feel like I met a lot of new fans through the process and it's definitely given me a bigger platform for what I already do," Riepe recently shared. "It gives you a stage on a national scale to reach an audience you wouldn't otherwise reach."

On Oct. 9 last year during Season 26 of the *Voice*, the Virginian turned heads across America and the chairs of *Voice* coaches Reba McEntire and Gwen Stefani with his rendition of Benson Boone's "Beautiful Things." Riepe chose to join Team Reba, and a few weeks later he performed in the hit show's Battle round with Lauren-Michael Sellers, belting out "You Will Be Found" from *Dear Evan Hansen*.

Riepe wasn't selected by Reba to advance to the next round, but

## CHARLOTTE

upon reflection he said he is pleased with his showing and the opportunities his appearance has provided him to share his music and his message.

"Going into it I was just going to give the performance I could. I obviously have no control over what the coaches are going to do, or say, or think, and whether or not they choose me is totally up to them," Riepe said. "Once I saw the performance I was very happy with how I did. I put it all out there and I felt like my performance was strong. That's the way I would want to leave any competition — going out on a high note and leaving people wanting more."

## BACK IN THE STUDIO

Back in Nashville with his wife and two young daughters, Riepe is once again running the recording studio he owns and leading the production team at his church.

Since appearing on the hit NBC show, the singer-songwriter said he has continued to receive an outpouring of support from across the country — especially from his hometown of Charlotte Court House and the surrounding areas.

"I would say the majority of my messages are from people I haven't heard from in a long time who are big supporters from back in the day," Riepe said. "It's amazing, the hometown support I've got out of this, more so than anywhere else. It's very, very cool."

Riepe said he recently returned home to Virginia for a wedding and a woman at the airport stopped him to ask if he's going to continue sharing his music.

"People have asked if I'm working on an album or an EP, but I'm writing a lot more and my goal for the year is to write a new song each month," Riepe said. "I'm going to be creating new content and writing new music and consistently sharing what I'm doing so they can see what I'm creating."

"It's a pretty obvious fact that the state of the world has been pretty chaotic the last few years. I absolutely recognize that I've been blessed with a gift to be able to create and sing. If I'm able to share a light in the world amidst all the chaos, I'm absolutely going to."



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DAILY SPECIALS



# Allen spent 34 years in the White House

BY ESSIE SOMMA

**BUCKINGHAM**

**E**ugene Allen talked golf with President Ford and flew on Air Force One with Richard Nixon. He served Lyndon B. Johnson milk and scotch to help him sleep and laughed with Rosalynn Carter.

After JFK's assassination, Jackie Kennedy gave him one of her husband's ties. In 34 years, Allen didn't miss a day of work. He served decades in the White House, seeing history unfold firsthand. And when the president needed him, he was there. In a *Washington Post* interview before his death in 2010, Allen said that "it never snowed too deep or rained too hard for you not to go

to work every day. It didn't matter what you had planned or what came up in your family. For the president, you changed your appointments."

And one of the most interesting parts of this story is that it started in Buckingham County.

## A BUCKINGHAM COUNTY STORY

They all called him Gene. Born July 14, 1919, in Buckingham County, Eugene Charles Allen was raised by his uncle and aunt, Charlie and Susie Brown, in Albemarle County. Gene grew up helping his family in the fields of Shirland Farm before learning to tend to the house.

After finishing 11th grade, Gene



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Gene Allen is seen here with President and Nancy Reagan, who he worked for as part of his decades-long career.

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was offered a job as a waiter for Homestead Resort. During the summers, he made friends with staff members and excelled in his position, small steps leading to a long career in service. Through his connections at Shirland Farm, Gene was offered a temporary job in Washington until the season picked back up at Homestead. The job was to care for the young son of Dr. Sharon Butts.

Gene's new role came with challenges. He couldn't always go with the family on errands or to places like the park, due to segregation. Adversity and discrimination would be recurring themes in Eugene Allen's career, ebbing and flowing alongside his close personal relationships with the powerful individuals he served.

A JACK OF ALL TRADES

Soon after leaving Washington, Gene was approached by a friend from Kenwood Country Club in Bethesda, Maryland, about an opening for Golf Clubhouse Manager. Taking on the role meant becoming a jack of all trades, tending bar, cleaning equipment, caddying, and maintaining the locker room. Over the next decade, Gene's professionalism and attention to detail would flourish, as would his passion for golf.

At a birthday party in 1942, Gene's friend Gary Coldtrain introduced him to the love of his life, Helene Lee. In an interview, Lee remembers having to track down

Gene after he left the party, too shy to ask for her number. The two married within a year and gave birth to their only son, Charles, in 1946.

With their little family complete, Gene and Helene purchased a home in northwest Washington D.C. The previous owners broke the neighborhood's agreement banning all sales to people of color when they accepted the couple's offer. Gene and Helene remained in this home for the rest of their lives.

In 1951, Gene was interviewed for an open Pantryman position at the White House by Maitre D' Alonso Fields. Fields kicked off Gene's multi-decade tenure by hiring the Buckingham County native, giving him a starting annual salary of \$2,400.

ALLEN GOES TO HOLLYWOOD

Over the course of his 34-year career, Gene rose through the ranks from Pantryman to Maitre d'hotel. With his immaculate professionalism and caring demeanor, he served eight presidents and witnessed turning points in history. His presence went unnoticed by the public until a 2008 article in the Washington Post properly introduced the country to this incredible man and gave Columbia Pictures the inspiration for The Butler.

The film starred Forest Whitaker as Cecil Gaines, a character loosely based on Gene. While many of the stories in the movie were inspired by actual events, the real stories

from Allen's time in Washington illustrate an air of compassion and respect we don't often get to read about.

Every story written about Gene says he appreciated the people he worked with and for. In an April 9, 2010 interview, Gene's son Charles recalled his father's reaction to Kennedy's assassination. Charles said "that was the first time in my life I had ever seen my father cry."

Eisenhower once asked Gene why Nat "King" Cole's TV show had been canceled, even though they both enjoyed it. Gene told him the show struggled to attract advertisers, who worried Southern white audiences would boycott their products.

Gene struggled during the Vietnam War as he watched President Johnson escalate U.S. involvement in the conflict. He remained quiet, only speaking about his son, who was on the ground fighting, when Johnson asked if Charles was still alive.

A WITNESS TO HISTORY

Gene witnessed radical shifts in the racial landscape of the United States. He served President Eisenhower and Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus as they argued over the Little Rock School desegregation in 1957. And he stood by while Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts.

Gene watched as the Oval Office filled with people of color over the years, beginning with Kennedy's ap-

pointment of African American executive staff members and continuing with Johnson's appointment of Thurgood Marshall, the first Black member of the Supreme Court. Finally, he saw himself represented in positions of power.

When Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. visited the White House, he insisted on meeting the maids and butlers. When King shook Gene's hand, he complimented the cut of his tuxedo, the one he wore to work every day.

Gene retired in 1986, but not before Nancy Reagan could invite him and Helene to a State Dinner honoring Helmut Kohl, the Chancellor of West Germany. That night, Gene drank champagne instead of serving it.

AN INCREDIBLE LIFE

He and Helene had a plan for Election Day 2008: They'd walk down to the precinct and vote for Barack Obama together. However, Gene woke up that Monday. Helene didn't.

George W. Bush and his wife, Laura, sent a condolence letter after Helene's passing. The letter was framed and hung next to Kennedy's tie.

Gene attended Barack Obama's inauguration and was escorted to his VIP seat by a Marine guard. He teared up as he watched Obama get sworn in as the 44th President.

Gene Allen passed away in 2010 at the age of 90 from kidney failure. He is survived by his son Charles, his five grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.



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**SAVINGS**



# State Park begins with a battle

BY DALE MENSİK

**W**hen you think of High Bridge Trail State Park, now you think of races, of hikes onto a number of trails or a walk out to see the bridge that gives the park its name. But the history of High Bridge dates back over a century, to a battle that helped decide the Civil War. Through the help of the Farmville-Prince Edward Historical Society, and the High Bridge staff, we're able to fill in the blanks and give an idea of what happened during that battle.

In the spring of 1865, the Appomattox campaign began. Before we get to Farmville, we need to talk about Petersburg. For nine long months, the city of Petersburg and the surrounding area was besieged by Union forces under the direction of Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant. Petersburg was a key city in the supply of the Confederate capital of Richmond.

While not satisfying the purest definition of a siege, the Union constantly prodded the Confederate defense looking to exploit any weakness to take the city. By denying access



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to Petersburg's rail lines and road network, the Union would effectively cut the city of Richmond off from resupply. They could then march on the city to siege and capture.

The Confederate forces under General Robert E. Lee were exhausted and hungry. From months of warfare, to the traditional effects of a siege: hunger, disease, and desertion, the Confederate forces could not hold Petersburg forever. After a break in the Confederate line during the Third Battle of Petersburg on April 2, the city, while not yet captured, was effectively a lost cause.

Instead of attempts to recapture lost ground, Lee made the decision to abandon both Petersburg and Virginia. The Confederate government, including President Jefferson Davis,

fled west of Richmond for Lynchburg. Lee and his men would also flee west in what would be the final campaign of Lee's military career.

### THE BRIDGE AND THE BATTLE

"Farmville's railroads and supply depots were strategically important. Union forces, led by Generals Philip Sheridan and George Meade, pressed forward, leading to skirmishes along the way," said Matthew Reusch. He works as the Lead Interpretive Ranger at High Bridge Trail State Park. "The rolling fields and woodlands of Farmville became the stage for intense combat, with soldiers on both sides fighting bravely. The town became a critical juncture as buildings turned into makeshift hospitals and residents

found themselves amidst the fighting. The once peaceful town echoed with gunfire and the cries of the wounded."

Located roughly five miles to the east of Farmville, along the Appomattox river, stands High Bridge. This 2,400 ft. converted rail bridge and the no longer present accompanying wagon bridge was contested by both sides of the conflict, each wanting, at different times, to both burn and prevent the burning of the bridge.

While not the only bridge crossing the Appomattox River, it was the largest and most convenient. To both Lee retreating from Union forces and Grant pursuing, speed was a crucial factor. However, for Lee in particular, another prize was wait-

ing for him in Farmville: a resupply including 80,000 rations of food for his starving army.

On April 6, the Union attempted to destroy High Bridge to prevent Confederate forces from crossing in their retreat westward. In response, the Confederates sent cavalry to defend the bridge, engaging Union forces, resulting in the first battle for the bridge.

The Confederacy was successful in defending the bridge, allowing Lee's men to safely cross. Lee wanted to make sure it would be hard to follow, so he gave another order.

"To slow down the Union forces, Lee ordered all bridges around Farmville to be burned, including High Bridge," Reusch said. "Union forces managed to save High Bridge





and attempted to save other crossings. Confederate troops engaged them from the town's outskirts using cannon and rifle fire. During the battle, Confederate soldiers tried to destroy other rail bridges near Farmville."

### UNION SOLDIERS DEFEND THE BRIDGE

The pursuing Union forces intervened, engaging the Confederate rear guard in the second battle for the bridge.

This time, however, it was the Union's victory. With only a few spans burnt off the rail bridge, and the wagon bridge completely intact, the pursuing Union could continue their pursuit, pressuring the Confederates out of Farmville.

Some of the soldiers involved in the battle wrote down what they saw. Union Captain William Ludgate gave his description, in a letter shared by the High Bridge staff.

"After marching for about two miles, we saw the railroad bridge. Because of the steep bank, about

twenty feet high on either side, I couldn't see the enemy and ordered my men to proceed quickly," Ludgate wrote. "Just then, I saw a Union soldier waving his flag frantically, signaling us to return. The signal came too late; the enemy had opened fire from their protected position. Our men were surprised and about to retreat, but I managed to rally them. Some rebels ran down the embankment to capture us but were disappointed; we captured all of them. I ordered my men to the top of the embankment and opened fire. Although surrounded by a much larger force, my men stood their ground with heroic courage, only giving in when our ammunition was gone."

As a result of that Union victory, Lee's men were not able to make full use of the resupply waiting for them in Farmville. The supply trains were sent further west to Appomattox, and Lee's men were once again on the move with only a portion of his men resupplied. A few days later,

Lee surrendered to the Union on April 9 in Appomattox.

### HIGH BRIDGE TRAIL STATE PARK

Today, coming up on 160 years since the battles, the bridge remains the centerpiece of the High Bridge Trail State Park. In 2006, the Norfolk Southern Rail Company donated 31 miles of track to the state of Virginia to found a new state park. Over the course of six years, segments of the trail were opened to the public. On April 6, 2012, the 147th anniversary of the Battle of High Ridge, the bridge itself was opened to the public.

The over 30 mile trail stretches from Pamplin eastward, trailing through Farmville, and curving south eastward to just past Moran. Having been converted from a rail line, the trail kept its original grade. As a result, it is flat, providing a relatively easy path for pedestrians, equestrians, and cyclists.

Along the trail itself hosts historic locations relevant to the Civil War.

Visitors can access High Bridge, Camp Paradise, the remains of a garrison, US and Confederate; tasked with defending the bridge; and Sailor's Creek, a battle fought nearby concurrently with the Battle of High Ridge.

While the trail can certainly be enjoyed alone, the Park offers tours and events related to the history and wildlife surrounding the trail. Visitors can sign up for prescheduled events that can be found on the Virginia DCR website, or can contact park staff to schedule an event.

For avid historians, you can visit historic sites under the guide of an interpretive ranger. Not only to see these historic locations, but to learn from a local expert in real time. In addition to the battles themselves, smaller anecdotes of the Civil War can be visited. For example, the locations where Brigadier General James Deering and General Thomas Smythe, a few of the last Civil War generals to die during the war, were shot and mortally wounded.



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# ‘We’re not putting a limit on it’

BY BRIAN CARLTON

When he was four years old, it was pretty much a routine. Adam Brazil would go wake up his parents Mark and Kristen at 5 a.m., so they could watch him use the Little Tykes basketball hoop in his room. That started the Prince Edward resident’s love of the sport, something that brought him to Hampden-Sydney College and then competing in the Division III national championship game. Now in his final year at the school, Adam is both looking back over the last few years and ahead, to what might be a chance to play pro basketball overseas.

Basketball is, after all, what brought Adam to Prince Edward County, seeing a perfect fit at Hampden-Sydney College. It was a small school, a peaceful area and a good fit on the court, with what he saw as the opportunity to help Tigers Head Coach Caleb Kimbrough execute a rebuild. Now, in the wake of playing in his first national championship game, Adam sees himself taking on a new role, that of the veteran leader on and off the court.

“We’ve got a really young team this year, with freshmen playing a lot of minutes and transfers playing a lot too,” Adam said. “One of the biggest challenges for me has been exemplifying the culture each and every day, trying to show the way







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for the new guys. That's through daily acts, like being on time for class each day, taking care of my body, being on time for practice each day, being a great teammate."

### MAKING A CHANGE

It's a big change from when the English major first suited up for the Tigers. When Adam arrived at Hampden-Sydney, nobody was talking about the Tigers or Coach Kimbrough. Adam was one of Kimbrough's first recruits and said it feels great to see all of that hard work, not just months but years worth of effort, pay off.

"When we walked into this program, it didn't have a national ranking and wasn't a program anybody was paying attention to," Adam said. "To gain that respect and work really hard to the point where our name is talked about and our school is respected, it means a whole lot."

The team's transformation started with Adam, who Coach Kimbrough

refers to as the Tigers' "Swiss Army knife." That's because of "his leadership, his ability to help his teammates and be a captain for us, along with his ability to score 20 points on any given night," Kimbrough added.

Having been eliminated in the first round of the ODAC (Old Dominion Athletic Conference) tournament, now the focus turns to the NCAA Tournament, where the Tigers return for the third straight year.

It's also a time for Adam to look beyond college, to think about his future outside of Prince Edward County. That is one thing he's sure of. Basketball is something the English major wants to pursue after he graduates. And most likely, that'll mean saying goodbye to Farmville and the U.S. as a whole, to suit up in Europe.

He got a taste of what that would be like over last summer, when he went to Belgium and the Netherlands, competing with and against some of the top European squads.

"It was a really good experience,"



Adam said. "I took a whole lot from that. It was definitely a wake up call and a rewarding experience. Rewarding because I know I can play over there now. But also a wake up call in that I'm not ready yet."

He's still learning the European style of basketball, which isn't exactly the same. It's like when you have American English and British English. Both are versions of the same language, but it takes time to adapt to speaking each one. The European style of basketball involves different rules, different ways of handling the ball if you're a guard like Adam. That's something he's still learning how to translate.

### 'WE'RE NOT PUTTING A LIMIT ON IT'

One thing Adam said he's learned during his time in Prince Edward County is a life lesson that can be applied both on and off the court. It's one of the things he plans to take from his time in this area. Winning

isn't just about points. Yes, the team that scores the most wins, but there's more to it than that.

"It's all the little things," Adam said. "It's the rebounding, the defense. It's all the things you don't always see."

Mastering each of those skills is just as important on the court as being able to pass the ball or put it through the net. The same is true off the court as well. Life is all about the little things too, as well as what we decide to do with them.

Adam said as this final season, and his time in Prince Edward County, ends, he's also learned something else from his newest teammates. This year's team, which has maintained a spot in the Nation's Top 10, despite going through a rebuild, showed him not to put a ceiling on what he can accomplish.

"We're not putting a limit on it on the court," Adam said. "I'm not doing that either."



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# Bear Creek gets the spotlight

BY KRISTI SELLERS

Everyone uses Bear Creek Lake State Park. This place is home to track teams practicing on trails, Scout troops earning badges and just regular Cumberland residents taking a break from the rest of the world. So when we put together a Progress edition focusing on things that remind you of home, this was naturally a choice for Cumberland County.

**CUMBERLAND**

You have to go back 87 years to cover all of the history of Bear Creek, as it came about just before World War II. During the Great Depression, the U.S. government purchased the land that would become Bear Creek Lake, all 326 acres of it. It was set up through the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act, set up by President Franklin Roosevelt. After several years, federal and state officials started discussing ways of restoring and using all this land that had been purchased. The idea was to turn it into a state park, as a means of putting local people back to work after the

Depression. That meant using local carpenters, farmers and any other workers still looking for a job. Started in 1938, the project continued through 1940, when Bear Creek opened as a forestry wayside with boat rentals and swimming.

In 1962, the full Bear Creek Lake State Park opened to the public. The park is now part of the Virginia State Parks system and offers a variety of recreational activities such as hiking, boating, fishing, picnicking, and camping.

## TAKING A LOOK AROUND BEAR CREEK

Nestled within the heart of Virginia, this state park provides an array of outdoor activities and scenic beauty, making it a haven for nature

lovers, outdoor enthusiasts, and those seeking a quiet escape from the usual “9-5”.

“Activities are centered around our 40-acre lake,” said Kim Wells. She works with the media relations department of Virginia State Parks. “Boating access, boat rentals, swimming, and fishing are all popular. Since gas engines are



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prohibited on our lake, it is a favorite for kayaking and canoeing. The lake hosts an excellent largemouth bass fishery, with many citations being caught every year. Aside from the lake we have a 3d archery range as well as a number of archery programs for beginners. We have 6.5 miles of trails within the park and provide access to the longer Cumberland State Forest Trails.”

For those who prefer to stay on land, Bear Creek Lake State Park offers several hiking trails that wind through forests and open meadows. The park’s trails vary in difficulty, making it accessible for all skill levels.

Wells said the park is a great place for wildlife watching, with opportunities to spot animals like white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, and various species of birds. Be sure to pack your cameras, as photo-ops are around every corner.

In terms of amenities, Wells added that the park has primitive as well as full hook-up campsites, a group camp area, and cabins. You won’t be able to use those campsites this year, however, as they’re closed for utility and bathhouse upgrades. “We also have Bear Creek Hall, which is often rented for family reunions, meetings, and weddings. There is a picnic shelter available for rent in our picnic area. Our beach is popular so plan to arrive early on weekends and holidays to ensure you can enter the park before we reach capacity”, Wells added.

Picnic areas are also available, perfect for a family outing or a



peaceful lunch by the lake. Many of these picnic sites offer scenic views of the water, making it a lovely spot to relax and enjoy the natural surroundings. For something a bit more special, the park’s picnic shelters are available for group gatherings and events.

### A CHANCE TO WATCH EVENTS

Bear Creek Lake State Park offers a variety of seasonal programs and special events throughout the year.

“Our main event is the Lights at the Lake held the first two weekends in December, however we have regular interpretive programs such

as archery, guided nature hikes, canoeing, kayaking, and many more throughout the entire year,” said Bear Creek Park Manager Joey Dayton.

When asked about the most popular aspects of Bear Creek Lake State Park, Dayton said that includes anything centering around Bear Creek Lake, swimming, canoeing, paddle boarding, and fishing. The cabins are the group’s most popular accommodations, they stay booked up for months out, he added.

Curious minds might wonder what a “day in the life of a Park Manager” might look like.

“A typical workday starts at our shop in the morning, coordinating the work tasks for the various departments for the day. Every day is different as we may have to respond to a maintenance emergency, customer requests, weather events, assisting other parks, or law enforcement issues such as missing persons, routine traffic enforcement, warrant service, or even the rare disorderly guest. Some days are spent doing more administra-

tive duties such as budgeting, obtaining quotes from contractors and vendors, supervising contractors, law enforcement related reporting, and staff hiring” explains Dayton.

Bear Creek Lake State Park is a stunning example of Virginia’s natural beauty and offers a wide variety of outdoor activities for visitors of all interests. From its tranquil waters perfect for boating and fishing to its scenic hiking trails, this park provides a beautiful escape for anyone looking to immerse themselves in nature. Whether you’re planning a day trip or a longer stay, Bear Creek Lake State Park is an ideal destination for outdoor lovers, offering a wealth of recreational opportunities in a breathtaking setting.

With its scenic beauty, abundant wildlife, and diverse activities, it remains one of Virginia’s best-kept secrets. Whether you’re an adventurer, a wildlife enthusiast, or someone simply seeking rest and relaxation, Bear Creek Lake State Park is sure to offer an unforgettable experience.







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