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Grayson County graduation rate nearly 100%

In the Twin Counties, GCHS has the highest percentage of students graduating on time

By **ETHAN CAMPBELL**
Staff

A recent report issued by the Virginia Department of Education shows that 99.2% of Grayson County High School students graduated on time in 2021.

The county is ahead of other school systems in the region. For example, Carroll County High School had an on-time graduation rate of 93% and Galax High School's rate was 87.3%. The state average is 93%.

Superintendent of Public Instruction James Lane announced earlier this month that more than nine out of 10 students who entered the ninth grade during the 2017-2018 school year earned a diploma and graduated from high school within four years.

Of the 97,155 students in the class of 2021, 93% earned a Board of Education-approved diploma, compared with 92.3% of the 2020 cohort.

The dropout rate for the class of 2021 was 4.3%, compared with 5.1% for the previous

See **GRADUATE**, page A3

McAuliffe's lead over Youngkin narrows

Democrats Herring and Ayala hold small leads over Republicans

By **STAFF**

Former Democratic Gov. Terry McAuliffe leads Republican Glenn Youngkin, 49%-45% in Virginia's contest for governor, according to a survey of likely voters released last week by the Wason Center for Civic Leadership at Christopher Newport University.

McAuliffe's lead has slipped 5 points since the Wason Center poll in August, narrowing to within the survey's margin of error (+/-4.2%).

With early and absentee voting underway in the Nov. 2 general election, Democrats also hold small but shrinking leads for lieutenant governor and attorney general, as independent voters have moved significantly toward the Republican candidates since the Aug. 26 survey.

The poll also found that Republican voters are more enthusiastic about voting than Democrats, with 61% of Republican likely voters indicating they are very enthusiastic, compared to 55% of Democrats.

For lieutenant governor, Democratic Del. Hala Ayala leads former Republican Del. Win-some Sears, 48%-44%, with 8% undecided.

See **POLL**, page A3



Guild completes market and stage for town park



Photos from the Town of Independence

TOP: Volunteers with the Timber Framers Guild fit the final pieces of the Independence Farmers Market building into place.

Brian Funk

ABOVE: A workers hammers a wooden dowel into place.

Reflections on the impact of what the Timber Framers Guild brought to Independence

By **SCOTT JACKSON-RICKETTS**
Correspondent

Editor's note: Scott Jackson-Ricketts submitted this firsthand account of the work done by the Timber Framers Guild volunteers who came to town over the past two weeks to construct the Independence Farmers' Market structure and a stage at the new Independence Town Park.

There was not a lot of drum-rolling leading up to this milestone event, and many were caught off guard, as demonstrated by the growing spectator crowd from Oct. 1-10 in downtown Independence.

At the intersection of highways 21 and 58, approximately 60 Timber Framers Guild volunteers gathered at our Town Park to build perhaps the most amazing structure to ever grace Grayson County. This is a cautious declaration, one that will invite criticism, so let's concentrate on "amazing" while I explain what that means.

See **GUILD**, page A2

Young hired as Grayson's agriculture economic development director



By **STAFF**

INDEPENDENCE — Lyndsie Young is Grayson County's new agriculture economic development director.

The new position was created under the recommendation of the county's Agriculture Advisory Committee, created by County Administrator Bill Shepley.

Agriculture has been a focus of the county as the number-one economic driver for growth in the area.

This new position will foster and encourage growth in local agricultural opportunities, according to Grayson LandCare Director Michelle Pridgen.

Young became interested in agriculture through her love of horses. She started riding at age 11, and became active in the horse

show circuit for many years. She has a bachelor's degree in animal and poultry science, with a minor in agricultural and applied economics from Virginia Tech. She met her husband, Darin Young, while completing her master's degree at Virginia Tech in agriculture extension and education.

Young taught high school agriculture in Cabarrus County, N.C. She was also an Extension 4-H agent and later, county extension director in Davie County, N.C.

For the past six years, she worked in the private sector for Bartlett Milling Company as a feed sales representative.

County Administrator William Shepley said Grayson formed an Agriculture Advisory Committee, consisting of citizens in farming

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We are always on the lookout for interesting news stories. If you have a story to share, please email:

editor@independencedeclaration.com

GUILD

From page A1

Without a doubt, there exists here a historical tradition of barn-raising, wherein neighbors devote time and energy to help one another build their barn/silo/cabin/bridge. I have participated in such wonderful events throughout my life, and when watching the movie “Witness” years ago, that one scene choked me up. It is the best of us, and not a stranger to our communities.

There is a marked difference, though, on what just happened to us. The people who showed up to build us this masterpiece were from distant realms. Many had never heard of Grayson County, let alone Independence, Va. Some traveled 3 or 4 hours; others 20 or more. While that sinks in, let’s talk about who these folks are.

From their website (tf-guild.org): “Founded in 1985, the Timber Framers Guild is a non-profit educational membership association dedicated to the craft of timber framing. We serve as a center of timber frame information and design for professionals, aficionados and the general public. The guild conducts national and regional conferences, sponsors community building workshops, coordinates regional gatherings, offers professional development and education, and publishes a member magazine and a quarterly journal.”

I am reaching into the lower spectrum of my mind, where emotions and memories mingle. It connects me to 1978, when I helped build a timber frame saw mill in New Hampshire. We didn’t have all the same tools in that day, such as the chain mortiser, and there was more muscle required, but not much more. This is still serious work both mental and physical. And it always requires coordinated team effort. I have studied bees and ants, sometimes referred to as super-organisms. This reminds me of that.

So, exactly who showed up? Some were team educators, seasoned engineers, heavy equipment operators of many stripes, owners of their own timber framing businesses. Much of the eager labor was supplied by younger men and women, Black and White and in-between, working under the utter joy of another reunion and the chance to share their skills, to gift another community with the love they bring to their craft.

The work begins

On Oct. 1, the work began. It was a beautiful fall day as the volunteers broke into training teams. For a few hours, it was quiet on site, as the teachers instructed each team to the specificities of their tasks. Under tents devoted to rafters, posts, braces and the band stand respectively, they studied plan details, took note of measurement layout and eventually chose the tools each member of the team would handle.

Then front-end loaders began to move the white oak beams and posts within easy reach as the noise and enthusiasm commenced. It resembled a humming hive, highly amplified. My small job was to provide coffee, water and snacks to the busy bees, which had me centrally positioned and appreciated. The gratitude was equally shared as I chanced to meet and talk with many of the workers throughout the days I was there. Some became familiar, all were generous with their collective high spirits and personal stories.

When asked why they were contributing to this project, all mentioned the fun of working together,



Workers assemble the structures at Independence Town Park.



Photos from the Town of Independence



Guided by a guild member, a crane moves a beam into place.

Brian Funk



Cooper Adams (left, with father Matthew Adams) signs a wooden dowel, which workers later hammered into place. There are many hidden items inside the structure, including a 2021 quarter.

Brian Funk



Glenn Hiatt was one of the local folks who volunteered to help out the Timber Framers Guild.

Town of Independence

Undaunted by rain

seeing one another again. Many spoke of their intellectual curiosity that drove them to learn more about the craft itself. One man said he wanted to build a timber frame tree fort for his son. Another had distant plans to build his family a barn.

I had the opportunity to visit the different stations, trying not to get in the way, but paying close attention to the process. We had on our hands a homespun factory, but without a single robot in sight. When one beam or post was completed, and depending on the weight, many were moved by hand on small two-wheel carts, and similarly replaced. The heavier ones required the forklift. From my vantage point, it appeared to progress seamlessly, but I am sure there were tense moments and a few mistakes made. This crowd, though, would not be daunted.

By the middle of the week, clouds rolled in and the rain began. Intermittent at first, but by week’s end, all in all at least 5 inches fell, creating an urgency for more gravel and concern about the eventual arrival of the crane needed for lifting the bents onto the poured pillars. Most of the young workers were camping on the edge of town, and wading up wet. I heard only one person complain, the rest remained in high spirits, wearing rain gear and slogging through the mud without missing a beat.

Farmers feeding framers

An important aspect to the volunteer worker’s experience must now be entered into the narrative. The other group behind the scenes provided five-star food, three meals a day – 1,800 meals total – cooked and served at the GATE Center, just a block from the work site. This was orchestrated by the Independence Farmers’ Market team, a gargantuan job, keeping those folks busy from 4:30 a.m. until 10 p.m. or later – 10 days in a row. Without a doubt, spirits were elevated by this amazing food. Even most of the snacks were prepared in-house. Fresh coffee, an apparently essential ingredient, was available all day long.

The crane was moved into place on Friday, in the rain, and a few bents (the cross-section pieces of the structure) were positioned. It rained all night, but on Saturday morning, the bees were buzzing again. One of the two big tents had been taken down for the rest of the bents to be assembled and the crane to reach them. That meant that most of the workers were wet or wetter. Yet, they stayed on course.

Saturday was the big day, with the weather slowly clearing. At p.m. a festive party was held on site, with a beer truck and once again, amazing food. The collective mood was infectious while significant others and the wider community joined in, meeting in a wider embrace.

I have chosen to not provide names, simply because someone’s would be left out, but the list is long. Ahead of this project, one can just imagine the planning, the effort to finance, the coordination between various governmental and non-governmental operators. Carolina Timberworks – a corporate member of the Timber Framers Guild, located in Jefferson, N.C., just down the road – was a pivotal player, as was the Independence Farmers’ Market and the Town of Independence. Individuals of many stripes came together to make this



Workers prepare the wooden cross-sections of the structure, called bents, which will be lifted by a crane and set in place.

Brian Funk

happen, and they all know who they are.

What it means

I close this story with reflections on the fundamental gift this means to us, who live here, and those who pass through our town.

It is not about the farmers’ market alone, not by a long shot. It is not even about a building that the town now has for any number of events and gatherings. I think of musical moments, family reunions, weddings, traditional season themes, craft fairs and so on. No, I am thinking

about something more important and as long-lasting as the artifact itself.

It is the gift of love – love from strangers – an intense energy that descended upon us lucky folks for 10 days. To have been there, soaking up that love (and rain) was one of the most amazing and beautiful experiences of my life. People have more than the essential capacity to share, to put aside our differences and find a common goal, to embrace

the utter joy of being alive with purpose. This is who we can be, the better us.

On Friday, I talked to an emotional friend, who was watching from the street, across the fence. I shared his emotion, and we spent a few minutes discussing our observations over the course of the week. He saw it, he felt it, he knew it: “This is the way the whole world should be,” he said.

That is what becomes amazing.

Household Hazardous Waste Collection And Personal Document Shredding

Carroll-Grayson-Galax Solid Waste Authority will be hosting a Household Hazardous Waste Collection and Personal Document Shredding on

October 30, 2021

Event hours are 8:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Location: Carroll-Grayson-Galax Regional Landfill 225 Landfill Rd. Hillsville, VA

Acceptable Items

Paint, polishes & varnishes
Paint related materials
Turpentine
Aerosol cans
Adhesives
Motor oil
Antifreeze
Fuel additives
Household Cleaners
Herbicides/Insecticides
NEW ITEMS to bring for Recycling
Hearing Aids, Eye Glasses,
Metal Recycling

Gasoline • Batteries
Mercury • Pesticides
Transmission fluid
Pool chemicals
Fluorescent Light Bulbs
Automotive Batteries
Small Batteries

Items that will NOT be accepted:
Commercial Industrial Waste
Radioactive Material
55 gallon drums of material
Explosives • Bullets

General Information:

This location is for Carroll County, Grayson County and City of Galax residents only. Please label unmarked containers if contents are known.

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