

PHILLY & REGION B1
GOV. SHAPIRO CUTS THE RIBBON AT OPENING OF CALDER GARDENS

PHILLY & REGION B3
SCHOOLS 'INUNDATED' WITH TEACHERS LACKING FULL CERTIFICATION



BUSINESS & MONEY A7
TRUMP ADMINISTRATION SAYS U.S. HAS 'FRAMEWORK' FOR TIKTOK DEAL

The Philadelphia Inquirer

ALWAYS ASKING. ALWAYS PHILLY.



Crystal Hall returns to the house where her mother, Patricia, was killed in a home invasion in 2023. Jessica Griffin / Staff Photographer

Valley Forge Military Academy to shutter in May

Rising costs and declining enrollment make its future “no longer viable,” the board of trustees said.

By Max Marin, William Bender, and Ryan W. Briggs
Staff Writers

The nearly century-old Valley Forge Military Academy is set to close for good in May, following years of declining enrollment, numerous abuse scandals, and allegations of financial mismanagement.

In a statement posted online Monday, the board of trustees said the academy’s future “is no longer viable” due to rising tuition costs and soaring liability premiums.

“Together, these factors made the Academy’s future unsustainable,” the trustees wrote.

The announced closure sparked outrage from parents and alumni who have vocally questioned leadership at the academy, a once-elite boys boarding school for grades seven through 12. Founded in 1928 in Wayne, VFMA’s notable alumni include Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf, retired Lt. Gen. and former National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster, current Maryland Gov. Wes Moore, and author J.D. Salinger.

Trustees made clear that the Valley Forge Military College will continue operating a two-year associate’s program on the Main Line campus. School leaders split the academy and college into two separate financial entities last year.

The Inquirer in recent weeks repeatedly attempted to reach VFMA leaders to discuss the school’s financial position and received no response. A request for an interview on Monday went unreturned.

The closure follows decades of allegations of brutal hazing and sexual abuse, which has led to a

→ SEE VFMA ON A9

His scheme to force out renters terrorized tenants, led to two deaths

The house’s disrepair led to a financial dispute with the landlord, who went on to damage wiring and windows. Then came the shootings.

By Ellie Rushing
Staff Writer

Stephen Wilkins wanted his tenants out.

Crystal Hall, her younger siblings, and her mother had been renting Wilkins’ East German-town home for about three years, when, in early 2023, they began to fall behind on rent. They paid Wilkins what they could of the \$950-a-month cost, Hall said, but the shortfall was adding up.

Meanwhile, she said, the two-bedroom house was falling apart. The kitchen sink and bathroom tub



Crystal Hall said that she tried to persuade her mother to leave the home but that her mother was afraid her landlord would throw away her belongings.

wouldn’t drain. The railings on the stairs were broken. The living room ceiling was cracked and peeling, she said.

As spring turned to summer, she

said, tension between the Halls and their landlord began to build. Wilkins said he was owed more than \$2,000, but the Halls said they wouldn’t pay anything more until

repairs were made.

And so, Hall said, Wilkins began to terrorize her family.

He shut off their electricity, ripped out their electric meter and circuit breakers, threw a brick through a window, and even went as far as to remove all of the doors and windows from the home, she said.

And then Wilkins sent a man to the house with a gun. And he killed her mother.

Police found Patricia Hall’s body, shot multiple times and collapsed behind her living room couch, on the morning of Sept. 16, 2023. And in an alleyway just around the corner, officers found the body of Felipe Askew — the gunman who prosecutors say Wilkins sent to the home to scare the Hall family into leaving.

Assistant District Attorney Cydney Pope said she believes that Patricia Hall, frightened by Wilkins’ escalating antics, was sleeping on the couch with her gun that night

→ SEE LANDLORD ON A10

SUSPECT IN SHOOTING OF KIRK APPEARED TO CONFESS ON DISCORD

‘It was me at UVU ... im sorry for all of this,’ read a message from an account that is said to belong to Tyler Robinson.

By Hannah Knowles, Shawn Boburg, and Aaron Schaffer
Washington Post

The 22-year-old suspect in Charlie Kirk’s killing appears to have confessed to friends in an online chat shortly before turning himself in to law enforcement, according to two people familiar with the chat and screenshots obtained by the Washington Post.

“Hey guys, I have bad news for you all,” said a message from an account belonging to the suspect, Tyler Robinson, on the online platform Discord. “It was me at UVU yesterday. im sorry for all of this.”

The message was sent Thursday

night, about two hours before officials said Robinson was taken into custody.

A member of the group chat shared an image of the conversation with the Post and confirmed that it came from Robinson’s account. The person spoke on the condition of anonymity to protect their privacy and out of fear of harassment.

Discord provided a copy of the message with the confession to authorities, according to a person familiar with the company’s interaction with law enforcement. The person spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly discuss details of the investigation.

The message was sent from Robinson’s account to a small private group of online friends, the person said. Discord is working closely with the FBI and local authorities, providing information about Robinson’s online activities on the platform, the person added.

→ SEE KIRK ON A5

Long-term unemployment reaches worrisome post-pandemic high

By Abha Bhattarai
Washington Post

More Americans are facing stretches of unemployment of six months or more, a worrisome sign for the U.S. economy.

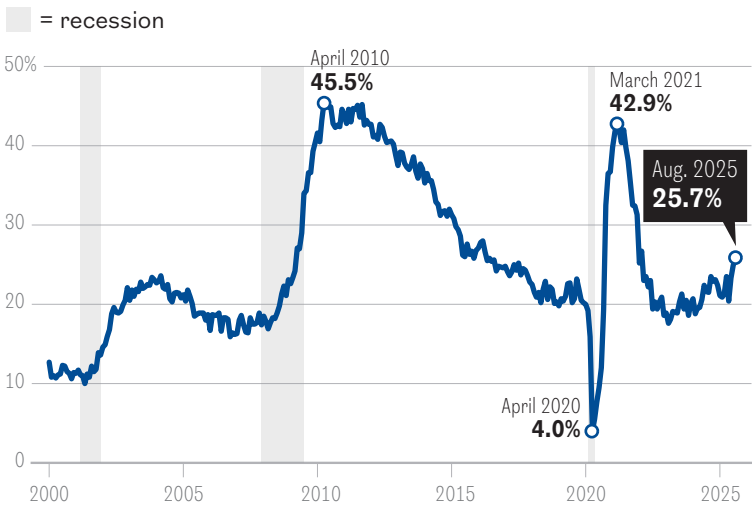
More than 1 in 4 workers without jobs have been unemployed for at least half a year, new data shows. That number is a post-pandemic high and a level typically only seen during periods of economic turmoil.

In all, more than 1.9 million Americans had been unemployed “long term” in August, meaning they have been out of work for 27 weeks or more, a critical cliff when it comes to finding a job. That’s nearly double the 1 million people who were in a similar position in early 2023.

→ SEE JOBS ON A9

Long-Term Unemployment Rate

The percentage of jobless workers who are unemployed for 27 weeks or more.



Source: Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis

John Duchneskie / Staff Artist

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