

CULPEPER STAR EXPONENT

Virginia Spirits
250th Celebration
Trio Pack
includes Culpeper
moonshine

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The anticipation is over. Sheetz opening today on James Madison Highway

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Thursday, April 9, 2026

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Residents, county say no to Valley Link

ALLISON BROPHY CHAMPION
Culpeper Star-Exponent

Residents and local government officials sent a clear message Tuesday regarding the proposed Valley Link 765-kilovolt transmission line project — not in Culpeper County.

At its meeting Tuesday morning, the board adopted a resolution formally opposing the 115-mile transmission line project by Dominion

Power, which starts in Campbell County, outside Lynchburg and ends at the tip of southeastern Culpeper County. The massive towers and proposed substation would be built near Richardsville.

Residents filled the boardroom to speak against it during the public forum at the evening meeting and protested outside before the morning meeting. They carried signs reading “Take a stand before Valley Link seizes our land” and wore

yellow t-shirts reading “No Valley Link.” Stevensburg District Supervisor Dewayne Payne wore one.

He asked that the resolution be amended to include opposition to the proposed substation and not just the high-voltage lines. Payne spoke out when another board member suggested they delay adoption of the resolution to allow more time to study the issue.

“I disagree. We need to move forward with this resolution. The

people of Richardsville don’t have 60 days,” the supervisor said to applause. “I’m being proactive — the people asked for it, that’s why I added the substation [to the resolution].”

Mandy Martin, a seventh-generation Richardsville resident, is among those leading the grassroots effort, mentioning all the families who have lived and worked along

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THE BRIGHT SIDE

PAWS FOR PURPLE HEARTS



PETER CIHELKA PHOTOS, THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Dan Salo and his service dog Orion get in some play time at Paws for Purple Hearts in Ruther Glen on Thursday.

PILAR DAVIS
The Free Lance-Star

Stress and decreased mobility give way to moments measured in belly rubs, calm support and the scurrying of happy dogs when veterans are paired with a pup from PAWS for Purple Hearts Virginia.

The uncertain futures some veterans face when years of service impact their emotional and physical well-being can be a humbling experience. Anxiety may cause the veteran to retreat into a shell of security in their homes. Injuries and physical wear from years of active duty can stifle once active people from completing even basic tasks.

PAWS for Purple Hearts Virginia helps military veterans find renewed mobility and confidence by pairing them with a furry, four-legged friend. The program trains



Veteran Kenneth Holman coaxes his service dog, Hicks, into a game of fetch at Paws for Purple Hearts in Ruther Glen on Thursday.

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Fires break out again in mulch piles

Culpeper volunteers on duty Easter Day at Green Tops Tree Service

ALLISON BROPHY CHAMPION
Culpeper Star-Exponent

Crews from multiple agencies spent hours on Easter Sunday battling a large fire in multiple piles of mulch at a Green Corner’s business, the second such fire at the same location in less than a month.

Law enforcement was the first to arrive early on April 5 at Green Tops Tree Service on Poor Farm Road at James Madison Highway, about a mile from Eastern View High School. Culpeper County and Brandy Station volunteer fire departments were dispatched for smoke in the area.

While responding, dispatch reported a large fire with high winds causing the fire to spread rapidly, according to a release from Co. 1 Chief Junior Perryman.

Property owner: new equipment slated

The business owner did not immediately respond to a phone call on Tuesday seeking additional information.

Property owner Amanda Grant said they rent out the land on the lower end of the site to the mulch business and that they were out of town when the fire started.

“It seems that the dry weather has contributed to the start of the fires as the mulch and brush piles spontaneously combusted, is what we were told,” she said in a message to the Star-Exponent on Tuesday. “Please extend our sincere gratitude for all who contributed in helping manage and contain the fires.”

Grant added, “We hope with the new equipment brought in, there will be better maintenance as to prevent any future fires from happening.”

Dense smoke, dry conditions

Perryman was the first to arrive on the scene at 5:19 a.m., reporting dense smoke conditions, with several large mulch piles on fire, a very large pile of unprocessed wood, blocks of wood and tree trunks and limbs burning.

The fire escaped the property and spread to an adjacent property, burning multiple 40-foot-tall Leyland Cypress and hardwood trees, he said.

“We are of the mindset it was spontaneous combustion due to the warm temperatures, dry conditions, and strong winds,” Perryman said on Tuesday.

The yard manager could immediately be reached for comment on Tuesday.

Due to the size and depth of the piles,

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Dead skunk in Orange County tests positive for rabies PAGE A2

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