

The Free Lance-Star

Golf event honors AJ

SlyeStrong outing marks 10 years of memories, scholarships, support. **SPORTS, PAGE B1**



The snore!

Practical solutions for quieter sleep. **HEALTH, PAGE C1**



Sunday, June 7, 2026

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Fredericksburg.com

VIRGINIA WATERWAYS



ALLYSE PULLIAM PHOTOS, RICHMOND TIMES-DISPATCH

Shiva Torabian joins the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and the Department of Wildlife Resources to plant mussels, a variety called alewife floaters, in a stretch of the South Anna River in Hanover County on Thursday. The mussels remove nitrogen from the bay, enrich the river, provide food for wildlife and keep the water clear.

Volunteers plant river future

As shad return to South Anna, group tucks rare mussels into the riverbed

DAVE RESS
Richmond Times-Dispatch

It's a bit like planting some nitrogen-fixing snap beans in your garden.

Except when planting alewife floater mussels, the soil you poke your finger into is about 18 to 24 inches below the water's surface. In this case, the South Anna River in western Hanover County.

Volunteers planted these mussels on Thursday, approximately 9 miles upstream from where the Ashland Mill Dam used to block the river. That's because the long-struggling alewife fish — the mussels' namesake and preferred host — are back, along with blueback herring, American shad, hickory shad and striped bass.



David Frazer holds a handful of mussels, some with trackers, to be planted by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and the Department of Wildlife Resources in a stretch of the South Anna River. The freshwater breed — alewife floaters — depend on fish to reproduce.

Please see **MUSSELS**, Page A6

BUS CRASH

Rogue operator issues revive

Records: Warning signs existed before Stafford incident that killed five

SCOTT SHENK
The Free Lance-Star

In 2011, a fatal bus crash on Interstate 95 in Caroline County was among a rash of deadly commercial bus crashes, leading to a federal crackdown on a rogue sector of the industry.

Following those deadly bus crashes, lawmakers granted the federal government greater oversight of the commercial trucking and bus industries. In the next two years, 2012 and 2013, dozens of operators, many of them so-called curbside or "Chinatown" bus companies, were shuttered.

In turn, those rogue bus companies, including the Sky Express company that operated the bus involved in the Caroline crash that killed four passengers, seemed to fade away. Bigger, stable bus companies took over the curbside, discount bus service.

But 15 years after the Sky Express crash, rogue bus operators appear to still be in business.

Around 2:30 a.m. on Friday, May 29, a bus operated by North Carolina-based E&P Travel plowed into traffic slowing for a paving work zone on I-95 in Stafford. Five people in other vehicles died in the crash, including a family of four heading to a relative's wedding.

E&P shows hallmarks of the rogue discount curbside bus operators that federal authorities vowed to eliminate in 2011.

Please see **CRASH**, Page A6

Gun sales spike as new laws loom

Background checks doubled from last year to 75,376

ANNA BRYSON
Richmond Times-Dispatch

The countdown to Virginia's new assault weapons ban is playing out at gun counters across the commonwealth.

Customers are snapping up AR-15s, gun manufacturers are

rushing shipments to Virginia retailers and store owners say firearms are flying off shelves ahead of a July 1 deadline that will dramatically restrict what guns can be legally sold in the state.

Recent FBI data suggests Virginia gun stores are seeing a huge surge in demand. In May, Virginia recorded 75,376 background checks — more than double the total from the same month last year. While

background checks are not a direct measure of gun sales, they're widely used as an industry indicator.

"They're buying the living daylight out of ARs," said Karen Ballengee, owner of Southern Police Equipment (formerly Southern Gun World) in Chesterfield County. "They're buying guns as fast as they can get their hands on them."

Please see **GUNS**, Page A4



ALLYSE PULLIAM, RICHMOND TIMES-DISPATCH

Southern Police Equipment owner and president Karen Ballengee and manager Jeff Connolly are seen in their Chesterfield County store on May 28.

VIEW: Love funnies? Subscribers can find more comics, puzzles and columns at go.fredericksburg.com/comics. **NEWSVU**

Weather
A heavy thunderstorm
High: 94 Low: 66
Forecast: B6

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