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MATTHEW PERSCHALL PHOTOS, THE NEWS & ADVANCE

People participate in the Autism Prayer Walk at Liberty University in Lynchburg on Thursday.

AUTISM PRAYER WALK HELD AT LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

Under a sunny afternoon sky on Thursday, a group visited four prayer stations stopping to discuss several Bible verses during an Autism Prayer Walk at Liberty University.

The event, hosted by the university's Office of Disability Accommodation Support and the LU Autism Advocates club, closed out Autism Acceptance Month. It gave students, staff and Lynchburg residents a chance to link scripture to the walk's goals: increasing awareness of autism and giving participants a way to increase acceptance of one another through a Christian perspective.



Students draw self-portraits before the Autism Prayer Walk at Liberty University in Lynchburg on Thursday.



Amanda Beach, an Accessibility Services Advisor, reads a Bible verse and discusses how it can apply to life during the Autism Prayer Walk at Liberty University.



Participants take part in group discussion during the Autism Prayer Walk at Liberty University.

LYNCHBURG

Revenue bonds for provider, VES OK'd

Council authorizes issuance of \$390M in financing for Centra, school's improvement projects

MARK HAND
The News & Advance

The Lynchburg City Council, at its regular meeting on Tuesday, approved the city's issuance of up to \$365 million in revenue bonds for Centra Health Inc. and \$25 million in revenue bonds for Virginia Episcopal School.

Both Centra and VES applied to Lynchburg's Economic Development Authority for the revenue bonds. The EDA will serve as the "conduit" for the bonds, with the city assuming no financial responsibility or costs.

Centra plans to use the \$365 million in financing to cover the costs of a new six-story medical facility, replacing and expanding its emergency department at Lynchburg General Hospital, and expanding its labor and delivery units.

The financing also will be used to build a new main entrance to the hospital, develop new surface parking, and construct new medical and surgical units and support space.

VES plans to use the \$25 million in financing to renovate an old dormitory, improve athletic fields, resurface its track and make lighting upgrades. The school opened its doors to students in 1916 on a 160-acre campus in the Boonsboro area of the city.

Conduit financing bonds are tax-exempt debt securities issued by a governmental entity on behalf of private entities. The issuer, such as Lynchburg's EDA, acts as a pass-through, with Centra and VES responsible for repayment. Conduit bonds are typically used for projects that provide public benefits to a municipality or county.

Borrowers such as Centra and VES can access tax-exempt interest rates, reducing borrowing costs and saving these private entities up to 5% of total project costs.

Please see **BONDS**, Page A3

AMHERST COUNTY

Woman will serve 2 months for giving false information in case

Her ex-husband got a life sentence for wife's murder, burying body



P. Wiggington

JUSTIN FAULCONER
The News & Advance

A Madison Heights woman facing two charges in connection with a murder case involving her former husband, who is serving a life sentence for killing his wife and burying her body on their property, was found guilty Friday of giving false information to an investigator.

Patricia Gail Wiggington, 50, initially was charged with

accessory after the fact to homicide, a Class 6 felony, and obstruction of justice, a Class 1 misdemeanor. Court records show she entered an Alford plea in Amherst Circuit Court on Friday to a misdemeanor count of providing false information to investigators, which was amended from the obstruction of justice charge.

An Alford plea means she does not admit guilt but acknowledges that the evidence is sufficient

for a conviction. Wiggington was sentenced to 12 months in jail, with 10 months suspended and a 2-month active sentence, according to court records.

Wiggington was arrested Jan. 12, 2025, in connection with the investigation into the murder of Elsie Mae Wiggington, an Amherst nurse whose body was found in August 2024, more than a year after she was last seen alive.

Frederick Lewis Wiggington Jr., of Rockbridge County, was arrested Aug. 14, 2024, the day Elsie Wiggington's remains were

Please see **WIGGINGTON**, Page A5

BEDFORD | HIGH-SPEED INTERNET

2 providers give reports on work almost finished

Shentel, ZiTEL discuss getting broadband to thousands in the area

Initiatives (VATI) projects with the county, which started in 2022 and 2023.

The 2022 project covered 3,204 locations and cost \$19.7 million, while the following year's project covered 565 locations in the county and was tallied at \$4.1 million, according to Wilmer's presentation.

"We have a lot of locations that weren't part of the VATI build, but we were able to pick them up along the way," Wilmer said.

About 39% of residents subscribed to Shentel's service from locations it built in the past few years, she said.

Please see **BROADBAND**, Page A3

JUSTIN FAULCONER
The News & Advance

Shentel and ZiTEL, two internet service providers, gave in-depth reports Tuesday on the combined work they have done over the past few years to bring high-speed broadband to thousands of county residents.

Jessie Wilmer, senior manager of operations for Shentel, addressed the Bedford County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday on the company's work with two Virginia Telecommunications

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High 62 • Low 35
Forecast • B8

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