

VTC

VIRGINIA
TOWN & CITY

VOL. 57 NO. 6 JUL./AUG. 2022

THE MAGAZINE OF THE VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

Rethink your recreation!

Advice for successful outdoor adventures

Also inside:

Shaping our future with play

Outdoor fitness for adults

Outdoor recreation – clean water connection

2022 survey results



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ABOUT THE COVER

Any geologist glancing at our cover would immediately think, “Oh look, columnar jointing!” For the non-geologists among our readers, this curious feature is formed by the heating and cooling of rock (typically basalt) causing columns (typically hexagonal) to form. Rock formations like these are found in places like New Zealand, Ireland, California, and...at Compton’s Peak in Virginia’s Shenandoah National Park. Learn more about the park, and other great outdoor recreation locations, inside!

Cover photo courtesy Jessica Bowser.

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Save the date and register now at www.vml.org

BE LOCAL, BE BOLD
RICHMOND MARRIOTT DOWNTOWN
OCTOBER 2 - 4

The common good for the Commonwealth!

DURING THE LAST TWO WEEKS of July, VML's policy committees met virtually to discuss current and emerging issues and their impact on Virginia communities. These discussions will be part of developing policy language and potential legislative positions. Once the committees give final approval to their draft policy statements, those statements will be posted on the VML website (and members notified of their posting) so they can review them before they are discussed and adopted during the VML Annual Business Meeting during the VML 2022 Annual Conference in Richmond (October 2-4).

And, speaking of the conference, VML's staff is in full conference planning mode! We were pleased to secure Rich Schragger from UVA's school of law to speak during the Closing Session. Mr. Schragger's scholarship focuses on the intersection of constitutional law and local government law, federalism, urban policy, and the constitutional and economic status of cities. Keep an eye on our *eNews* and conference page (www.vml.org/2022-annual-conference) for more conference news as it develops.

And now, I'd like to use the remainder of my message this month to share with you an article that I published in *The Virginia Mercury* (www.virginiamercury.com) on July 28. I think it demonstrates what can be accomplished when the people who work at all levels of government put aside their differences to focus on the common good.

Virginia's opioid settlement distribution is a model for the nation

In the coming weeks, Virginia and each of its cities and counties will begin to receive the first of several payments from recent legal settlements with the country's three largest wholesale drug distributors and a major opioid manufacturer that helped fuel the devastating opioid crisis. Virginia and its numerous localities will receive a combined \$530 million as part of a multi-year, \$26 billion national settlement with the drug distributors Amerisource-Bergen, McKesson, Cardinal Health, and the opioid manufacturer Janssen Pharmaceuticals.

As Executive Director of the Virginia Municipal League, and as a former county attorney and prosecutor, I've had a front-row seat to the tragic impacts of opioid addiction on our communities. I am grateful that Virginia's localities worked together to commit to spend a substantial portion of these settlement dollars on opioid abuse prevention, treatment, and recovery programs.

From 2006 through 2014, distributors such as Amerisource-Bergen, McKesson, and Cardinal shipped more than 2.1 billion doses of highly addictive oxycodone and hydrocodone prescription pain pills into Virginia. Many addicts later turned to heroin and the powerful synthetic opioid fentanyl, which helped fuel the most recent wave of overdoses and deaths.

Between 2007 and 2021, more than 14,500 Virginians died from opioid overdoses – a number approaching the population of the City of Williamsburg. It's close to double the population of the Town of Abingdon.

In fact, fatal drug overdoses have been the leading cause of accidental death in Virginia since 2013, and the opioid tragedy is

still unspooling every day. In 2020, nearly 2,000 Virginians died from fatal opioid overdoses, and in 2021 over 10,000 overdoses were treated in Virginia hospital emergency rooms.

That's why elected leaders and policymakers in Virginia, at the state and local levels, agreed to dedicate a substantial portion of the opioid settlement dollars to strengthen and support efforts to combat this devastating drug epidemic. Recently, state, and local leaders across Virginia, working in close partnership with the Office of the Attorney General and outside plaintiff's counsel, struck an agreement which allocates a substantial portion of opioid settlement dollars to local governments.

The Virginia Municipal League worked closely with our colleagues at the Virginia Association of Counties to make sure our local government members had a seat at the table. And I'm grateful every single one of Virginia's localities that stood shoulder-to-shoulder are allowed to participate in the settlement regardless of whether they had hired outside legal counsel to pursue litigation against the pharmaceutical industry.

Most Virginia localities bear scars from battling on the front lines of the opioid epidemic for more than 20 years. The crisis has touched virtually every program and service provided by local governments – from police, fire and EMS departments to courts, jails, and behavioral health services. Sadly, even local school programs and foster care services have been impacted by an influx of children from homes that have been broken or destroyed due to the tragedy of opioid addiction.

Localities agreed to a settlement allocation formula that's based on data collected by the Virginia Department of Health, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. The formula is based on quantifiable metrics, including each locality's number of overdose deaths and opioid-related emergency room visits, and the volume of opioid prescription pain pills shipped into each jurisdiction and tracked by the DEA.

Virginia localities have committed to use settlement dollars to fund local opioid abatement initiatives. These new resources will go a long way to launch and further support effective, evidence-based prevention, treatment, and recovery programs.

Over half of the settlement funds received by the Commonwealth will be administered by the new Virginia Opioid Abatement Authority, which was created with bipartisan support in the General Assembly last year. The Authority's oversight board includes state and local government representatives, officials from law enforcement, and experts in behavioral health and addiction treatment. The Authority will seek out and fund best practices, incentivizing cities and counties to work together to build-out regional opioid abatement programs that have real impact.

These new resources, strengthened by the remarkable bipartisan support over several years and across every level of government, will make a difference. Virginia has become a model nationally for how to build on consensus and accountability. We owe nothing less than this to the individuals, the families and the communities across Virginia that are still reeling from the devastating effects of the nation's opioid epidemic.

Register to these events and additional opportunities at www.vml.org.



- Aug. 31** **FOIA/COIA Training & OSHA Risk Mitigation** - Free workshop. Marion Police Department, 307 South Park Street, Marion, VA
- Oct. 1-2** **Virginia Mayors Institute** - This event immediately precedes the VML Annual Conference. Downtown Richmond Marriott, 500 East Broad Street, Richmond, VA
- Oct. 2-4** **VML Annual Conference** - Downtown Richmond Marriott, 500 East Broad Street, Richmond, VA

PEOPLE

Adams named Williamsburg’s new economic development director

Yuri Adams is the City of Williamsburg’s economic development director. Adams has



- Adams -

served as the interim director for the past year and as economic development specialist since 2017. As director, she will oversee the Economic Development Department, which is

responsible for recruiting and retaining businesses to the City of Williamsburg. She will also manage the Tourism Development Fund, serve as landlord of the Triangle Building, and staff the Economic Development Authority.

Adams succeeds Michele Mixner DeWitt, who was promoted to assistant city manager in August 2021.

“I’m very excited to make it official and have Yuri serve as the next director of economic development,” City Manager Andrew O. Trivette said in a press release. “Over the past year, she has done nothing but respond to the needs of businesses, improve our standing as a community in the eyes of prospective businesses, and earn her position on the City of Williamsburg’s leadership team through her performance.”

In her role as the economic development specialist Adams managed the Business Retention & Expansion program, acting as staff liaison between the city and its existing businesses; administered the Economic Development Authority grant programs and incentive packages; and managed the department’s social media channels, newsletters, and website.

Adams has previously served as chair for ASPIRE Young Professionals of the Williamsburg Business Council and executive secretary on the board of An Occasion for the Arts. She volunteers on the Business Council’s Economic Growth Committee,

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and is a member of the LEAD Greater Williamsburg Class of 2019.

Adams holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from William & Mary University.

Bedford welcomes new members of management team in 2022

Earlier this year, the Town of Bedford announced that **Anne Cantrell** would be joining the management team in the position of



- Cantrell -

finance director. Cantrell came to Bedford directly from Vinton where she served as treasurer and finance director for five years with great distinction (being named Employee of the Year there in 2018). Prior to that affiliation she worked for Roanoke County and as an accountant and financial services professional within the private sector. In addition to her approximately 10 years of professional experience, Cantrell is a cum laude graduate of Liberty University and a Certified Public Accountant.

As a native of Bedford, Cantrell stated in a press release, “I’m deeply honored to have this opportunity to return to my hometown and to serve in the community.”

Also in 2022, **Ronnie Lewis** accepted an offer to become the Bedford’s next Chief of Police. Lewis came to Bedford directly from the City of Fairfax, where he held the rank of captain within the 90-person Police Department there. He was involved in all facets of administration of the department and directly supervised a patrol division consisting of 34 sworn personnel as part of his responsibilities to date.

Lewis is a native of the Lynchburg area and a graduate of Rustburg High School. His professional career, which spans 28 years up to this point, began with the City of Lynchburg Fire Department where he worked as a law enforcement deputy fire marshal in addition to serving as a firefighter and emergency medical technician. He also worked as a deputy sheriff in Loudoun County before joining the Fairfax Police Department as a patrolman in 2011.

Lewis is a 2008 graduate of Keiser University and holds a Master of Science degree in management from Kaplan University. In addition, he has completed several other training programs including the Senior Management Institute for Police and a Certified Public Management program administered by George Mason University.

In a press release, Lewis stated, “I am excited to have the opportunity to serve in the area that I was raised. I look forward to working with the great people of the Town of Bedford Police Department and building lasting relationships with the community. I am truly grateful for this opportunity.”

Starke is Hopewell’s new police chief

In June, the City of Hopewell welcomed



- Starke -

Antonio “AJ” Starke as chief for the Hopewell Police Department. Chief Starke served as interim police chief in Hopewell since December 2021.

“Chief Starke was a phenomenal addition to the City of Hopewell as interim Chief,” said March Altman, Hopewell city manager in a press release. “He immediately became a community-focused leader and achieved great success in just 6 short months. We’re excited to welcome him to the city in a permanent capacity and for his future achievements with our police department.”

Chief Starke began his law enforcement career in 1991 with the Chesterfield County Police Department. He has 30 years of policing experience, with the past nine years as a member of command staff at the rank of captain. Chief Starke held several command positions within the Chesterfield Police Department to include Office of Professional Standards, Personnel and Training, Special Operations, and the Information Services Division.

Chief Starke served four years active duty in the United States Army. He earned his Bachelor’s degree from Virginia State University and his Master’s degree in Criminal Justice from Liberty University. He is a graduate of the 34th session of the Police Executive Leadership School and a graduate of the National Criminal Justice Command College.

Albemarle County Board of Supervisors names Rosenberg as county attorney



- Rosenberg -

In June, the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors named **Steven Rosenberg** as the county attorney following a nationwide search. Rosenberg’s first day with Albemarle County was July 27. Rosenberg will provide legal counsel to the Board of Supervisors and lead the County Attorney’s Office.

“Steve’s experience in local government is unparalleled, having served as a counsel at the University of Virginia, a county attorney, and a city manager during his career. His familiarity with our community, its leaders, and our organization will allow him to quickly provide strong counsel to our Board and allow us to continue to advance our local and state-level priorities,” said Supervisor Donna Price, chair of the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors in a press release.

Rosenberg has over 30 years of experience, with 25 years of public service in local and state government. Most recently, Rosenberg served as the city manager of Staunton after having served there as deputy city manager. Previously, Rosenberg held the positions of associate general counsel and special assistant attorney general at the University of Virginia and county attorney for Augusta County.

Rosenberg has a Bachelor of Arts in History and Government from the College of William and Mary and a Juris Doctor from Emory University School of Law.

Jabri named director of economic development for Prince George County

In July, Prince George County Administrator Jeffrey D. Stoke announced that **Panayiotis**



- Jabri -

“Yoti” Jabri, had been appointed director of economic development for Prince George County. Jabri assumed the responsibilities August 1. Previously he was the director of economic development for Surry County.

This marks a return for Jabri as he previously held the position of economic development specialist for Prince George County.

Jabri received his Bachelor of Business Administration from Longwood University, and his Master of Arts in Economics/Public Administration from Virginia State University. He is a life-long resident of Prince George County, graduating from Prince George High School, and stills calls Prince George County home.

“We are very pleased to be able to appoint Mr. Jabri to this very important county position,” stated County Administrator Jeff Stoke in a press release. “He has worked on several major economic development initiatives over the years and is very familiar with our community. We expect continued growth and success for Prince George County.”



In memoriam: Kerry J. Donley

Former Mayor and “Living Legend” of Alexandria **Kerry J. Donley** died on July 13, 2022, at the age of 66. A fixture in the community, Donley and his family called the City of Alexandria home for nearly 60 years.

“Kerry was a transformational mayor of our city,” stated Alexandria Mayor Justin Wilson. “So much of the progressive and dynamic city we enjoy today has its roots in Kerry’s leadership and persistence.”

The former mayor had an enduring career as both an elected official and civic leader of the City of Alexandria. First elected to council in 1988, Donley served as mayor from 1996 to 2003. He also served as vice mayor from 1994-1996 and 2009-2012.

As a councilmember mayor, Donley led the resolution for the construction of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, attracted the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office to the city and worked to save 500 market-rate affordable housing units. He was instrumental in the building of the first elementary school in the city in 35 years, Samuel Tucker School. He led Alexandria through the shock and

tragedy of the 9/11 attacks on the Pentagon and the subsequent economic fallout.

During his tenure, Donley served on several boards, including: the Alexandria Transit Company Board (DASH) (vice-chair), Cameron Station Development Task Force (co-chair), the Alexandria Campaign on Adolescent Pregnancy (chair), the Youth Policy Commission and the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership (chair).

The former mayor also served on several non-profit boards, including Carpenter’s Shelter, the Scholarship Fund of Alexandria, the Center for Alexandria’s Children, Alexandria Senior Services and Alexandria Renew Enterprises.

In 2017, Donley was recognized as a “Living Legend” of Alexandria. In his lifetime, he also received the Lifetime Achievement Award (2016) by Volunteer Alexandria, the Carpenter’s Shelter Wall of Honor (2015), served as the Grand Marshall for the Alexandria St. Patrick’s Day Parade (2016) and was named Business Leader of the Year by the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce (2004). In 2002, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments bestowed Donley with the Elizabeth and David Scull Metropolitan Public Service Award



In memoriam: Jane Alexandra Haycock Woods

Jane Alexandra Haycock Woods passed away peacefully at her home in Fairfax on July 18, 2022. Woods is well known in Fairfax and in Richmond for her many years of public service and dedication to health care, especially for seniors, and for her dedication to the arts.

Woods was born on October 10, 1946, in Bethesda, Maryland, to Stephen and Ruth Haycock. She was married to James R. F. Woods from 1973 until his death in November 2000.

After graduation from American University with a B.A. in Education, Woods taught in Fairfax County public schools for almost 20 years. Her graduate work at various universities was in education administration, law, and business administration.

From 1988 to 2000, Woods served in the Virginia House of Delegates and the Virginia State Senate, where she chaired the Senate Committee on Education and Health. Her work in the legislature also included serving as vice chair of the Joint Commission on Health Care, as well as numerous other commissions and joint committees. From 2002 to 2006, Woods served as Secretary of Health and Human Resources in the cabinet of Governor Mark Warner, after which time she joined the College of Health and Human Services, Department for Health Administration and Policy at George Mason University, and she opened her own consulting firm, Driftwoods Consulting, LLC. In her capacity as adjunct faculty, CHHS community liaison/advisor and affiliate faculty, Woods led the work to develop a regional health information organization throughout northern Virginia, securing grant funding to launch the organization and prove the value through a medication reconciliation at a local hospital emergency department.

Woods’ extensive community service includes serving as board member and former vice chair of the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board and as a board member of the Virginia Health Quality Center. She also served on the Northern Virginia Health Foundation and a National Advisory Board for Disability Services. Since 2006, Woods was a registered lobbyist for Virginia Association of Area Agencies on Aging and a registered lobbyist for the Virginia Association for Adult Day Health Care, as well as a registered lobbyist for more than a dozen other clients, mostly related to health and human services.

Woods also served in various ways in her local community – as a board member and officer of the City of Fairfax Band Association; as a board member and officer of Fairfax Spotlight on the Arts; as an officer of the Women’s Club of Fairfax; as a board member of the City of Fairfax Senior Center; as an appointed member of Fairfax Village in the City Advisory Board; as a member of the City of Fairfax Charter Review Commission; as a member of the Green Acres Feasibility Study committee; as a member of the Independence Day Celebration Committee; as a facilitator for American Legion Auxiliary Girls State; on the board of Fairfax United Methodist Church; as an officer of Phi Delta Kappa Working Women’s Forum; and as a member of the National Association of Parliamentarians and Virginia State Association of Parliamentarians.

Among the awards that Woods received are City of Fairfax Outstanding Woman (1986); Central Fairfax Chamber of Commerce, Woman of the Year (1988); 2010 John Mason Arts Achievement Award; Outstanding Woman, City of Fairfax Commission for Women (1987).

PEOPLE

Charlottesville names Hawkes new director of information technology



- Hawkes -

In late June, the City of Charlottesville promoted **Steve Hawkes** to the position of director of information technology. The department is responsible for overseeing the city government's information technology infrastructure, working to supply the IT solutions and services required to meet various technology needs.

Hawkes had served as the interim director of information technology since November 2021 and prior to that served as applications manager with the City of Charlottesville since 2011. In that role he led the Application Team's development of award-winning mobile apps and web applications.

Hawkes has a B.A. in Finance from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and an M.S. in Kinesiology from Indiana University-Bloomington. He also is a certified Chief Information Officer from the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill Government Program and was a member of the City of Charlottesville's Leadership Development Academy.

Nicholson is the new manager for Narrows

The Town of Narrows appointed **Terry Nicholson** as Town Manager at their Town Council meeting on Monday, July 11, 2022.



- Nicholson -

In this role, Nicholson will be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the town government, implementing policies and priorities set by the elected officials on town council. Nicholson is currently the chair of the Narrows Planning Commission, having served in that role for 6 years.

Nicholson brings a wealth of experience to the town manager position, including most recently as code enforcement officer and residential building inspector for the City of Radford. He was the museum administrator for the Town of Blacksburg during the restoration of the St. Luke and Odd Fellows Hall and the planning for the restoration of the Alexander Black House. Nicholson was the executive director of Historic Smithfield Plantation in Blacksburg, and coordinated regional outreach and advocacy for Preser-

vation Virginia, the statewide preservation organization which owned Smithfield. In addition, he owned his own business inspecting and consulting on the restoration of historic properties.

Nicholson and his wife, Terri Fisher, have lived in Narrows for 20 years, and have both been involved in community activities such as the grant management team for the current Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) downtown improvements, and the former Progress in Narrows Now (PINN) groups.

Movers and shakers

Do you know someone who's on the move? Send your announcements about new hires in local government, promotions, retirements, awards and honors to Rob Bullington at rbullington@vml.org.

Nicholson studied in the Master of Architecture program at Virginia Tech, focusing on historic preservation. Prior to his studies at Virginia Tech, Nicholson earned his B.S. in Chemistry from the College of William and Mary, and had a 15-year career in quality control for B. I. Chemicals, a pharmaceutical company in Petersburg.



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Fall Line Trail planned for Central Virginia

NAMED FOR ITS UNIQUE GEOGRAPHY along the trail corridor, the Fall Line denotes the area where the Piedmont plateau and Atlantic Coastal Plain meet, resulting in numerous rapids and waterfalls. The planned Fall Line Trail will course through seven localities: Ashland, Hanover, Henrico, Richmond, Chesterfield, Colonial Heights, and Petersburg.

The Fall Line trail came together as an opportunity to “connect the dots” of active transportation networks taking shape in the greater Richmond region. Several sections of the trail already existed or were planned in localities’ comprehensive and special area plans, including the existing Ashland Trolley Line Trail and Chester Linear Park, and the planned Trolley Line Connector in Henrico, Brook Road protected bike lanes in Richmond, and the Northern Jefferson Davis Special Area Plan in Chesterfield. A natural corridor for a long-distance trail began to emerge that would provide opportunities for active transportation, recreation, and economic development.

Between 2019-2020, the Virginia Department of Transportation launched a study to determine a preferred route to connect all seven localities. Since then, jurisdictions along the Fall Line route have been hard at work planning for and building out the trail.

When complete, the Fall Line Trail will connect rural, suburban, and urban landscapes and connect a multitude of places of interest and use.

Key connections along the trail:

- 24 public schools
- 4 colleges/universities (Randolph Macon, Virginia Union, Virginia Commonwealth, Virginia State)
- 2 community colleges (Brightpoint, Reynolds)
- 2 major regional trails (Virginia Capital Trail, Appomattox River Trail)
- 3 river crossings (Chickahominy, James, Appomattox)
- Transit connections in Richmond and Chesterfield, including the new GRTC Bus Route 111 along the Route 1 corridor that launched earlier this year
- Numerous parks, including Bryan Park, Battery Park, Abner Clay Park, James River Park System, Charlie Syndor Playground, Falling Creek Trail, Bensley Park, Goyne Park, Ettrick Park

Learn more at www.falllineva.org.

Manassas holds seminar on how unmanned aircrafts are transforming aviation

ON JULY 7, MANASSAS REGIONAL AIRPORT hosted a free event focused on how Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) and Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) are changing the aviation industry.

Speakers discussed how airports and communities should prepare for this new technology and its potential benefits, and how this technology will integrate into current and future air travel. Speakers included John Campbell, director of the Virginia Department of Aviation Communications and Education Division; Dr. Amber L. Wilson, manager of aviation technology at the Virginia Department of Aviation; Dr. Michael Patterson, lead for the Emerging Applications and Technologies Group at the Aeronautics Systems Analysis Branch at NASA Langley Research Center; and Dr. John Langford, chairman and chief executive officer of Electra.aero.

Ahead of the event, Airport Director Juan Rivera said the seminar was planned in response to the rapid expansion of new unmanned technologies, some of which are being developed by companies in the Manassas Regional Airport’s commercial corridor.

“We are entering an era of autonomous flight and Manassas Regional Airport wants to be a leader in this initiative. The rapid development of this technology paired with our location gives us an exciting future moving forward,” said Juan Rivera.

Manassas Regional Airport (HEF) is the largest general aviation airport in the Commonwealth of Virginia.



City of Alexandria celebrates National Night Out

ON TUESDAY, AUGUST 2, from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m., the Alexandria Police Department, Alexandria Fire Department, Alexandria Sheriff’s Office, city officials, and other city agencies partnered with community members to celebrate National Night Out (NNO). NNO is a celebration of community and public safety agencies coming together to promote community policing partnerships.

During the event, residents throughout Alexandria were asked to come outside and enjoy the evening with their neighbors, police, firefighters, and other city officials. Events varied by neighborhood and included cookouts, block parties, and more.

The Alexandria Police Department’s K-9 Unit, Motorcycle Unit, Bike Patrol, Command Bus, and Crime Scene Mobile Lab toured neighborhoods and offered special demonstrations.

“National Night Out is a fun evening for all. Our agency believes in community policing and National Night Out gives us a chance to celebrate our success in working together to reduce crime and improve the quality of life throughout our city,” said Chief Don Hayes ahead of the event. “I look forward to seeing everyone in the community.”

NNO is designed to heighten crime prevention awareness, generate support for anti-crime programs, and send a message to criminals that neighborhoods are organized, and they are working with law enforcement to help prevent crime.



Damascus Trail Center to open August 27

THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL Conservancy (ATC) and the Town of Damascus are excited to announce that the Damascus Trail Center will officially open to the public on Saturday, August 27 at 10 a.m. A collaboration between the Town of Damascus and the ATC, the Damascus Trail Center will further embrace and enhance southwest Virginia’s growing status as a hub for outdoor recreation.

In addition to providing information to help visitors experience the great outdoors in the area, the Trail Center will feature high-quality exhibits and programming that highlight the surrounding landscape and inspire visitors to protect nearby outdoor spaces. It will also serve as a center for environmental conservation and trail stewardship throughout the region, providing a location for volunteers and outdoor enthusiasts to take part in workshops and trail maintenance training.

“Damascus has always been an iconic part of the Appalachian Trail experience, so it’s hard to imagine a more appropriate place for the new Trail Center to call home,” said Sandra Marra, President and CEO of the ATC in a press release. “We are excited to work with the town to ensure the Damascus Trail Center provides opportunities for hikers, bikers, and adventurers of all ages and experience levels to better enjoy and care for our irreplaceable great outdoors.”

Located in the middle of downtown, the Trail Center is ideally positioned to greet visitors of three of the area’s most renowned National Trails: the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (A.T.), the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail and the Virginia Creeper National Recreation Trail. The

2,194.3-mile A.T. is situated just feet away from the entrance to the Trail Center as it travels through downtown.

“We are super excited about the grand opening of the Damascus Trail Center next month,” said Damascus Mayor Katie Lamb. “In a perfect location for hikers, bikers and visitors, the Center brings a beautiful, aesthetically pleasing addition to our town. We are looking forward to continuing to collaborate with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and the fine folks who represent them.”

For more information about the Damascus Trail Center, visit www.appalachiantrail.org/dtc. For more information about all the outdoor recreation opportunities in the Damascus area, be sure to check out the March 2022 edition of VTC at www.vml.org/publications/town-and-city.



TOWN OF DAMASCUS

Blacksburg selects key projects for ARPA funding

BLACKSBURG TOWN COUNCIL has approved a plan prioritizing 11 projects to be funded by a \$13.3m American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allocation over the next four years. ARPA was signed into law by President Biden on March 11, 2021. The \$1.9 trillion dollar plan aids millions of Americans, and assistance to communities struggling to retain and regain normalcy coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic.

After several months of community engagement and brainstorming, priority projects that would have the greatest impact were identified. Through this process, the town learned a great deal about the community’s priorities, and that knowledge significantly influenced the final list of projects to be funded by the ARPA allocation. Over 1,500 surveys were completed, in addition to extensive staff, community partner, and town council involvement to narrow down 11 out of 57 proposed projects for funding. Many of the selected projects are not traditionally funded by local

governments, including strengthening the childcare workforce, supporting food security programs, creating new community gardens, and making a significant investment in affordable housing opportunities.

“These funds have presented a once in a generation opportunity to invest in our community,” said Assistant to the Town Manager Matt Hanratty in a press release. “It was critical that the town selected projects that aligned with community needs, helped those hit hardest by the pandemic, and made

strategic investments to move our community toward the future we envision.”

The final report which outlines in detail the process, timeline, community priorities, and the funded projects can be found on the town’s public engagement site, Let’s Talk Blacksburg, at www.letstalkblacksburg.org/arpa. Annual progress updates for these projects will also be shared through this website.



Manassas Park celebrates new city hall, downtown

Originally published in Potomac Local News www.potomaclocal.com

THE MANASSAS PARK COMMUNITY came together on Saturday, July 16 to celebrate the city's new town hall and the makings of a new downtown. Members of the city's governing body and Virginia Delegate Danica Roem (D) welcomed hundreds of attendees to the celebration that began at 11 a.m.

The new building at 1 Park Center Court will replace the existing city hall building and house the city's library and a Jirani Coffeehouse. The milestone comes after years of discussion about transforming the city from a city of single-family homes into a downtown, providing residents a place to gather, shop, and dine without leaving their hometown.

Planning for the city's downtown began more than five years ago. "It's a plan that will take our city into the next decade and



beyond. It's a plan that does not depend on the status quo," said Mayor Jeanette Rishell.

The development is a public-private partnership between the city and private developer Norton Scott, which has borne the initial cost of the development, allowing the cash-strapped city an opportunity to create a new destination for businesses and residents in hopes of increasing tax revenue.

In the late aughts, at the onset of the financial crisis, the city invested heavily into new public facilities, like a community center and police station, plunging the city into debt, from which it is still trying to emerge. Despite its best efforts to attract retail businesses to the City Center development across from city hall, its street-level retail shops have remained empty for over 10 years.

"The city's economic incentives weren't working," added Rishell. "This project corrects shortcomings downtown has had for some time.

The new city hall is located next to the Manassas Park Virginia Railway Express Station. In addition, a newly created village has a 36,000-square-foot public plaza with public programming on weekends and evenings, a splash pad for warm days, and will have restaurants, and 300 townhome condominiums.

A movie theater will be the anchor tenant of the new plaza. On May 17, the city's governing body unanimously approved changes to the agreement allowing Cafe Cinema to build a standalone movie house and a three-story office annex next door.

Following a ribbon-cutting ceremony, an event called "Shop the Park" was held to encourage residents to come out and support local restaurants that have been negatively affected due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

Shenandoah debuts welcome center, museum

THE OPENING OF THE SHENANDOAH Welcome Center earlier in June marked a community vision becoming a reality.

On June 21, town officials alongside members of the Shenandoah Vision Team debuted the Town of Shenandoah Welcome Center, Museum and Covid-19 Information Center on First Street, thanks to community contributions and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding.

Plans for a town museum first materialized in 2011, following the creation of the Shenandoah Vision Team, when the group of community volunteers envisioned establishing a museum to showcase railroad artifacts collected and donated to the Town over the years.

In October 2021, the Shenandoah town Council voted to use ARPA funds to purchase the building at 507 First Street to utilize not only as a Welcome Center for visitors, but to display an extensive collection of items showcasing the N&W railroad, town history, and the USS Shenandoah.

The Town of Shenandoah Welcome Center and Museum further spotlights the town's railroading roots. The building is adjacent to the Norfolk Southern Railroad — the only working railyard between Hagerstown, MD and Roanoke, VA — offering sights and sounds for train enthusiasts.

The Welcome Center and Museum is open 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Mondays through Saturdays. The facility is closed from noon to 1:00 p.m. each day. Printing, copying, and laminating services are available on-site Mondays through Thursdays.

If you are interested in donating or loaning items to the new town museum, contact Museum Curator Joyce Fluharty by calling (540) 652-8773 or e-mail jfluharty@townofshenandoah.com.



Richmond's 2nd Street Festival is a great reason to come to the VML Conference early

THE 2ND STREET FESTIVAL returns in 2022 on Saturday, October 1 and Sunday, October 2. This community festival celebrates the rich culture of the historic Jackson Ward neighborhood in Downtown Richmond.

Over the years, the 2nd Street Festival has grown to be one of the Mid-Atlantic's largest street festivals. Thousands visit historic Jackson Ward to reminisce about the days when 2nd Street was the heart and soul of Richmond's Black community and was known as "the Harlem of the South." Today, Jackson Ward continues to be a thriving neighborhood and the 2nd Street Festival serves as its annual celebration and homecoming that features three stages of live musical entertainment along with a Kidz Zone, popular food vendors, a marketplace and artists.

This FREE event is walking distance from the VML Annual Conference at the Richmond Marriott Downtown.

Headlining on Saturday, October 1st is DJ Grandmaster Flash!

The career of DJ Grandmaster Flash began in the Bronx with neighborhood block parties that were the start of what would become a global phenomenon — the dawn of a musical genre. He was the first DJ to physically lay his hands on the vinyl and manipulate it in a backward, forward, or counterclockwise motion. He laid

the groundwork for everything a DJ can do with a record today. In 1978, he started his own group, Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five. They went Platinum with their single, "The Message," and their single, "The Adventures of Grandmaster Flash on the Wheels of Steel," introduced DJing to a larger listening audience than it had ever known before. The group's fame continued to grow with "Superappin," "Freedom," "Larry's Dance Theme," and "You Know What Time It Is." In 2007, Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five became the first hip hop group ever inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. In 2021, the Smithsonian Museum of American History in honor of Black History Month opened its exhibit RECOGNIZE! Hip Hop and Contemporary Portraiture that Grandmaster Flash along with other hip-hop artists such as LL Cool J, Erykah Badu and Common are featured. And in 2022, Grandmaster Flash and The Furious Five were awarded the Music Educator Award, presented by the Recording Academy and GRAMMY Museum.



The VML Voice is the official podcast of the Virginia Municipal League. Each episode explores a different locality or issue but the focus is always on Virginia and the local governments that make the Commonwealth work for everyone.

Contact Rob Bullington, rbullington@vml.org to suggest topics, ask questions, or inquire about sponsorship opportunities.

Listen to our newest episode at www.vml.org.





BE LOCAL, BE BOLD
RICHMOND MARRIOTT DOWNTOWN
OCTOBER 2 - 4

About the VML Annual Conference

Each fall hundreds of local government officials, speakers and member organization representatives attend the VML Annual Conference. The conference includes:

- General sessions featuring political leaders, nationally-known speakers and local government experts.
- Workshop sessions on a variety of local government issues.
- Business meeting focusing on the adoption of the annual VML legislative program and the election of officers for the upcoming year.
- The presentation of the annual Innovation Awards recognizing excellence in local government programs.
- The opportunity for networking with colleagues from across the state.

Visit www.vml.org for up-to-date information and registration.

Rethink your recreation!

By Rob Bullington

IT MAY SEEM COUNTERINTUITIVE, but it's possible to get stuck in a recreation rut. For some folks, this might mean going to the same gym and going through the same motions every visit or taking the same walk through the same streets each day. For others, it might mean taking their young children to the same playground to play on the same structures with the same kids every morning. Even local governments can find themselves in a recreation rut as they fail to think of new and creative ways to encourage their community to get outside and get some exercise.

This issue of *VTC* is for those seeking to break out of their recreation rut. Check out these great ideas:

How to recreate in Virginia...Take it from a Virginia outdoors nut like Jessica Bowser, there are some simple things everyone can do to make the most of their getaways. And be sure to check out VML's podcast, the *VML Voice*, for an in-depth discussion with Ms. Bowser. My favorite piece of advice: "Slow down and take it all in."

Shaping our future with play...Kids aren't all the same. So why would we expect every kid to enjoy a merry-go-round or slide? Kaiya Frauenhofer and the team at outdoor playground experts Sparks@Play are dedicated to making sure that inclusive playgrounds have something for every kind of kid. My favorite story: The child who experienced the sensation of spinning for the first time! (Spoiler alert: he liked it!).

Outdoor fitness for adults...Does your locality need a reason to make a modest investment in outdoor recreation spaces? Well, Michele Breakfield and the team at Cunningham Recreation have five compelling reasons why a healthy community is a happy community. My favorite reason: Active students are better students. (Or, to put it in bumper sticker language: "Less Screens, More Teams").

The outdoor recreation – clean water connection...How does a locality make a drainage ditch more than just a drainage ditch? How does an abandoned shopping center become a community asset? Then answer lies in the win-win-win of funding, clean water, and community recreation outlined by Ola-Imani Davis and Laura Cattell Noll. My favorite win: Using the Community Flood Preparedness Fund to create a new municipal trail system.

How to recreate in Virginia



Hiking Devil's Marbleyard in James River Face Wilderness, Natural Bridge Station.

VIRGINIANS ARE BLESSED with an abundance of public lands and natural beauty. We can boast about containing more miles of the Appalachian Trail than any other state. We can coast along Skyline Drive and the adjacent Blue Ridge Parkway. We can spend a weekend taking in views of the mountains and then put our toes in the sand at the beach the next weekend. We have natural

wonders such as The Channels, The Breaks, and Natural Tunnel. We can go sailing, surfing, and deep-sea fishing, or go rock climbing, mountain biking, and caving. There's no limit to the outdoor recreation options available to us, and with State Parks, National Parks, Wildlife Management Areas, Natural Area Preserves, National Recreation Areas, State Forests, and National Forests, there's public land open and available for our use in every region of the Commonwealth.

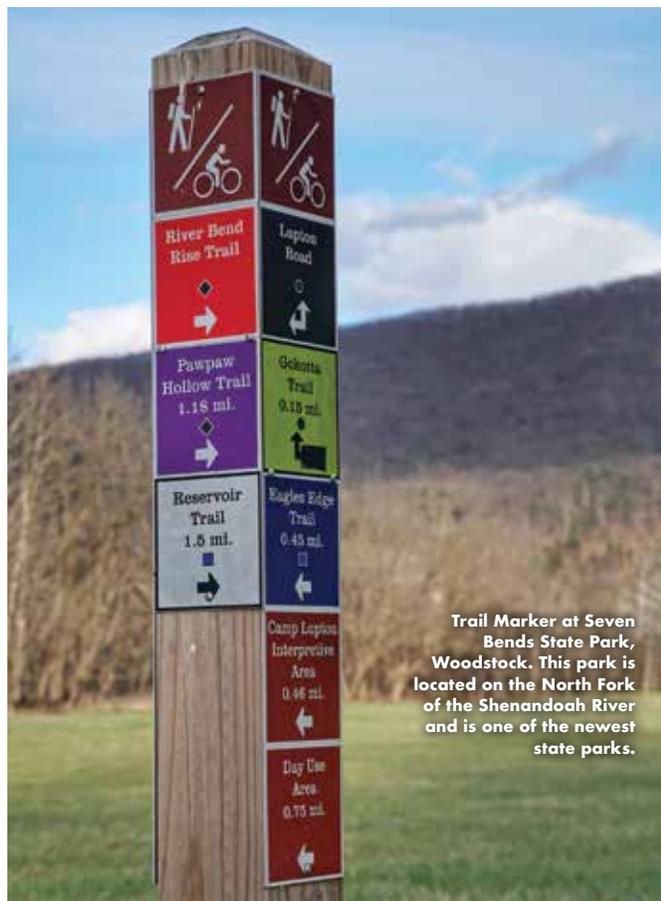
In fact, if there's anything bad to say about Virginia's recreation options it's that there are so many, it can be tough to choose!

As the Host of *Virginia Outdoor Adventures*, a podcast about outdoor recreation in Virginia, I frequently receive messages from listeners asking for advice about how to plan their own adventure in Virginia. Here are my suggestions for making the most of your time in the Virginia outdoors.

Set a goal

Setting a goal can motivate you to keep exploring. Do you want to visit every Wildlife Management Area or every Virginia State Park? Do you want to summit the highest peaks, visit every LOVE Sign during your travels, complete the Virginia Nature Triathlon, or hike every trail in Shenandoah National Park? Setting goals can make trip planning fun and create anticipation and excitement. It can also lead to a feeling of accomplishment and bring you and your family or friends closer as you check off the goals on your list.

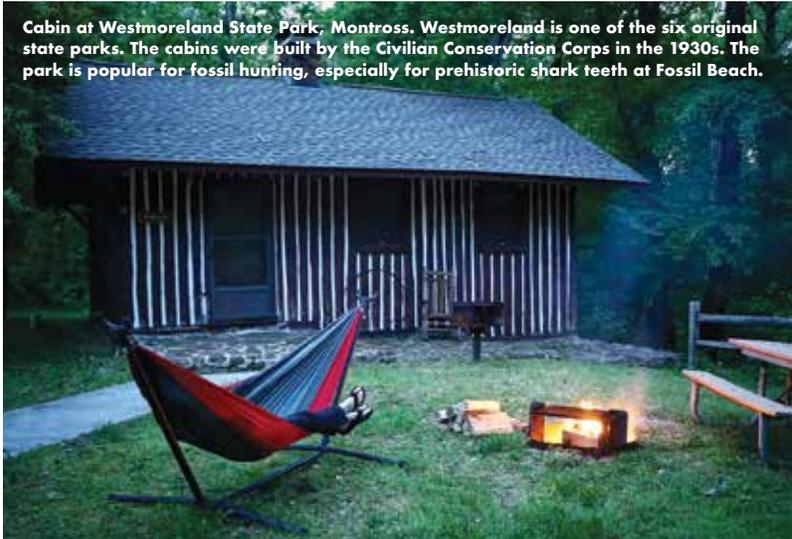
Many of these goals already exist as formal challenges. For example, Virginia State Parks offers the Trail Quest challenge. After registering for Trail Quest on the Virginia State Parks website, participants receive pins in the mail for visiting 1, 5, 10, 20, and 41 state parks. Once completed, participants will also receive a "Master Hiker" certificate presented by a park ranger. Be sure to look for other official challenges or get creative and set your own goals. Keeping a checklist will also lead you to new places you may not have otherwise explored.



Trail Marker at Seven Bends State Park, Woodstock. This park is located on the North Fork of the Shenandoah River and is one of the newest state parks.

Try something new

One of the advantages of living in Virginia is the plethora of outdoor recreation options close to home. There's so much more than hiking and camping here. What are some new activities you might enjoy? Have you considered rock climbing, caving, kayaking, ziplining, stand up paddleboarding, cross-country skiing, birding, mountain biking, surfing, star gazing, whitewater rafting, bike packing, or foraging? No experience is needed to try any of these activities (though I do suggest you don't try to do them all at the same time). Start by looking for a club, outfitter, or guide to introduce you to new activities. For every activity, there are enthusiasts who are happy to share their hobby with newbies. Groups and guides can provide the equipment you need, so you can try an activity before you commit to purchasing the gear. Look for Facebook Groups where members share tips and information. Also look for upcoming events and outings offered by local outfitters or clubs. State and National Parks and local recreation centers often have a schedule of events that may include a guided activity, such as a full moon paddle or introduction to foraging.



Cabin at Westmoreland State Park, Montross. Westmoreland is one of the six original state parks. The cabins were built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. The park is popular for fossil hunting, especially for prehistoric shark teeth at Fossil Beach.



Caving. Caves should be accessed by joining a local grotto visit <https://var.caves.org> for more information.

Know before you go

Be sure to spend time researching the locations you plan to visit so you can properly prepare for the experience. Keep in mind that many people have “discovered” the outdoors since the pandemic, and places that used to receive sporadic visitors are now often crowded.

Know if fees, passes, licenses, or permits are required. Paying a one-time entrance fee may be more expensive in the long run if you plan to return to a location. Parks offer annual passes that will save money if you are planning to visit several parks during the year. For example, a “Restore the Wild Membership” from the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources will grant entry to every Wildlife Management Area in Virginia, and the proceeds will support conservation efforts. Some activities, such as fishing, hunting, or boating, require a license. Backpacking sometimes requires a permit. Popular



Canyon Rim Ziplining at Breaks Interstate Park. Breaks is known as the “Grand Canyon of the South” and is a geologically unique area. This is also a popular location for rock climbing, mountain biking, and whitewater paddling.

Explore your location options

Familiarize yourself with our public lands and understand the difference between them. Parks offer amenities such as a visitor center, restrooms, kayak rentals, food, boat ramps, campgrounds, and cabins, etc. Public lands that are not parks, such as National Forests and Wildlife Management Areas, do not offer amenities. Understand that choosing to recreate on public lands that do not offer amenities will require more planning, proper gear, and extra safety precautions. The benefits to recreating in these areas are the solitude and pristine wilderness you will experience, which can be tough to find among the crowds at the parks. Parks also have higher entrance and reservation fees but offer more conveniences for visitors.

trails, such as Old Rag in Shenandoah National Park, now require a day use pass. Register for licenses and permits and pay fees or purchase passes in advance to save time and money.

Secure a reservation in advance. Nothing can be more disappointing than arriving at a campground with a packed car and excited family or friends in tow, just to learn that no sites are available. As outdoor recreation has become more popular, reservations sometimes need to be made months in advance, especially for peak season visits. If your schedule is flexible, opt for reservations during the week or in the off-season. More availability and less crowds are an advantage to being flexible.

Understand the parking logistics. A Natural Area Preserve may only have parking for three to five cars, or a popular location may fill up quickly during peak times, necessitating an early arrival or a visit on a less busy day.

Be prepared for crowds in popular locations or trails. White Oak Canyon in Shenandoah National Park or McAfee Knob in Catawba receive thousands of visitors each year, for example. While people are drawn by the images of stunning natural beauty awaiting them, the reality may start with full parking lots, lines of people on the trail and at the pit toilets, and wind up with crowds at waterfalls and overlooks. If this isn't your idea of a good time, plan to begin your visit hours before the crowds arrive or choose a different location all together. There are plenty of scenic locations off the beaten path.



Backpacking at Shenandoah National Park requires a permit. Permits can be obtained on the park's website or at one of several locations inside the park. SNP contains over 100 miles of the Appalachian Trail.

Connect with the outdoor community

Like-minded outdoor enthusiasts are often the best resources for tips and recommendations. Looking for an easy day hike near Staunton? Searching for the best trout fishing locations in the George Washington National Forest? Want real reviews of gear you are considering? Social media groups are a great place to communicate with the outdoor community. Posting a question on a social media group might get you the answers you could not find online or faster than searching on your own. Interacting with a community will also expose you to information you might not have found in other places or factors you may not have considered on your own. If you have a specific interest, there is likely a group for you. Interested in hiking with dogs, traveling with kids, surfing in Virginia Beach, or backpacking for women over 40? There's a group for that.

Be a thrifty spender

Some outdoor activities can seem out-of-reach if there is specialized gear needed to participate. Kayaks, fishing rods, bikes, climbing equipment, and tents may have you thinking, "cha-ching, cha-ching, cha-ching." The good news is there are plenty of alternatives to purchasing expensive gear. Consider renting gear from an outfitter for one-time use. Outfitters usually have a complete checklist of gear for a specific activity, so you won't need to worry about forgetting an essential item. It's also a great opportunity to try out gear so you can get a feel for the features you like if you are considering purchasing your own equipment. Another option is to join a group or a guide that will provide the equipment for you or let you share and borrow items you may need. This is another way to try out equipment you are considering purchasing for yourself. Used gear can be purchased at a deep discount at an outdoor gear resale store. Used items can also be found on popular resale sites, such as Craigslist. There are also Facebook Groups for specific used items, such as camping and backpacking or rock-climbing gear. Purchasing used gear or renting gear is an eco-friendly option that will reduce your environmental footprint and eliminate waste. Lastly, if you are planning to purchase new gear, consider shopping at small, local businesses rather than large chain retailers. Shopping local supports our communities and improves Virginia's economy.



Kiptopeke State Park, Cape Charles on the tip of the Eastern Shore. Kiptopeke is best known for the fleet of ten "ghost ships" permanently docked a quarter mile off the beach. The ghost ships are decommissioned warships from WWII. It is also a popular and geographically unique area for birding. It is the site of one of several annual fall migration Hawk Watches. Cabins and campsites are available at this park.



Box Turtle at False Cape State Park, Virginia Beach. False Cape is only accessible by hiking, cycling, or paddling into the park, or by taking a tram tour. Primitive camping is available in the park.

Follow the “Seven Principles of Leave No Trace”

Spending time in the outdoors is good for our physical and mental health but the impact of many people recreating in the outdoors can be detrimental to the environment. Overuse, trash, and disturbance of wildlife are all examples of negative impacts people can have on the outdoors. Choose to recreate responsibly and follow the “Seven Principles of Leave No Trace,” which are:

1. Plan ahead and prepare
2. Travel and camp on durable surfaces
3. Dispose of waste properly
4. Leave what you find
5. Minimize campfire impacts
6. Respect wildlife
7. Be considerate of other visitors

More information about Leave No Trace can be found at www.Int.org.

Int.org.



Camping at Burke Lake Park, Fairfax Station.



Snowshoeing at Blandy Experimental Farm, State Arboretum of Virginia. Great location for snowshoeing because of the rolling hills and open fields.

Outdoor recreation is a year-round activity

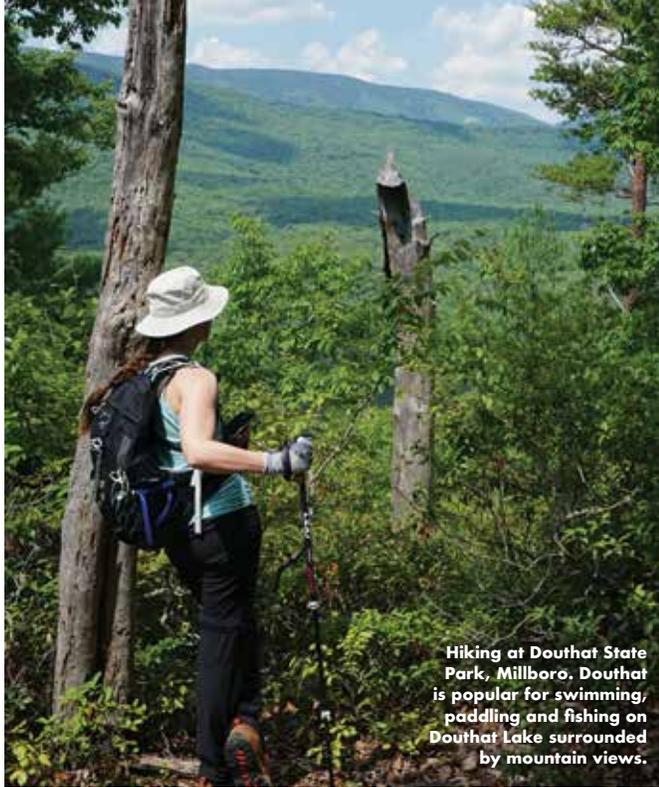
There is a perception that outdoor recreation is a warm weather activity. There are many benefits to cold weather recreating, including decreased heat and humidity, fewer insects, lower risk of dehydration and heat stroke, less threat of thunderstorms, fewer crowds, cheaper accommodations, and more availability. Reimagine some of your favorite summer activities in winter. Landscapes and evidence of human and animal activity is more noticeable with less foliage on the trees and ground. The beach in winter offers solitude and opportunities to see migrating waterfowl. Visiting the same location in every season can give you a new perspective and an opportunity to experience change over time. Colder temps come with a different set of precautions. Dress appropriately for the weather by wearing layers, carry extra food and water, keep your head warm, protect your skin from the sun’s intense winter rays, and take precaution around icy areas or cold water.

Know your limitations and take safety precautions

The backcountry can provide experiences and memories that will last a lifetime. Be sure those experiences and memories are positive. Emergency crews are deployed many times each year to rescue people who are unprepared for the outdoors. Some of those people don’t come back alive. It’s imperative that you know your physical limitations and plan accordingly. The American Hiking Society provides a guide on what to bring on every hike, called “The Ten Essentials of Hiking,” which include:

1. Appropriate Footwear
2. Map and Compass/GPS
3. Water
4. Food
5. Rain Gear & Dry-Fast Layers
6. Safety Items
7. First Aid Kit
8. Knife or Multi-Tool
9. Sun Protection
10. Shelter

In addition to the Ten Essentials, be aware of additional safety precautions for your specific activity or area. For example, if you plan to kayak, know the water temperature, wind speed and direction, and tide patterns. If you plan to go caving, be sure to have multiple sources of light, wear a helmet, and dress for colder temperatures underground. If you are hiking or backpacking where hunting is permitted, wear blaze orange or pink to ensure you are seen by hunters. If you are rock



Hiking at Douthat State Park, Millboro. Douthat is popular for swimming, paddling and fishing on Douthat Lake surrounded by mountain views.

climbing, be sure you are experienced in using climbing gear. Always check for updates in the area you plan to visit. Prescribed fires, floods, and storm damage can result in an area being closed to the public.

Check the weather forecast and plan accordingly. Have the proper clothing, such as sweat-wicking fabrics, and rain or snow gear with you, and dress in layers. Plan to finish your activity before a thunderstorm rolls in. Know where to take shelter if you are caught in a storm. Bring a headlamp in case you do not return before dark.

Avoid dehydration by drinking water at a rate of one quart per hour, eating salty snacks, and avoiding sugar. Do not consume unfiltered water or plants that you cannot positively identify. Check for ticks when you return home and know how to properly remove them from skin.

Campfires are a popular component to spending time outdoors. Whether you choose to use fire to cook or to add ambiance, be responsible for supervising and extinguishing your campfire. Know the local regulations. Many locations do not allow fires outside of designated sites, such as campgrounds. Keep the area around the fire free of fuels, such as dead leaves and wood. Be aware of the fuels you are burning. Poison Ivy or Mountain Laurel, for example, will release harmful chemicals when burned. Only use wood that has come from

the local area. Bringing in firewood from outside the area can introduce non-native invasive insects that could decimate an ecosystem.

Always inform someone of your whereabouts, what time you plan to return, and agree upon a plan of action if you don't return at the expected time.

More information about the Ten Essentials and Safety and First Aid can be found at www.americanhiking.org.

Slow down and take it all in

Some of my most joyful and memorable moments in the Virginia outdoors do not include reaching a summit, setting a personal record, or checking a location off a bucket list. Instead, I have most enjoyed the peaceful moments, such as reading a book in a hammock, watching a sunset, or listening to bird song. Nature has a way of surprising us with the unexpected. Finding an interesting insect or butterfly, coming face-to-face with a red fox or wild turkey, seeing beams of sunlight pour through a break in the clouds, watching a black bear and her cubs eating fruit from a tree, enjoying a distant thunderstorm, being followed by a pod of dolphins leaping through the waves, witnessing a barred owl swoop down on a mouse, watching a full moon rise above the mountains, being surrounded by hundreds of fireflies, or gazing at an endless universe of stars have all been epic experiences I am grateful for having in the Virginia outdoors.

I have found the old saying to be true, "It's about the journey, not the destination." Take a moment to truly connect with the outdoors. Breathe in the fresh air, listen to the sounds around you, and feel the elements on your skin. These are the moments that heal us and connect us to nature. These are the moments that will live in our memories and keep us coming back. Stand on a mountain or put your toes in the sand and be grateful... You're in Virginia!

About the author: *Jessica Bowser is the host of Virginia Outdoor Adventures, a podcast about outdoor recreation in Virginia available on all podcast players, including Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts, and anywhere you listen to podcasts, or visit www.VirginiaOutdoorAdventures.com.*

Listen to a conversation with Jessica Bowser in the latest episode.

The Podcast of the Virginia Municipal League



View from an overlook on Skyline Drive in Shenandoah National Park.

Inclusive playgrounds are about more than just play

... but they're all about play too!

By Kaiya Frauenhofer



IT'S FUNNY HOW SOME THINGS stick with you. For example, I clearly remember my fourth-grade teacher telling my class that recess was not for the kids. Rather, in her estimation, recess was a chance for the teachers to get a break! I remember that my classmates' faces scrunched with confusion; even at eight years of age we knew that sounded suspect. We were right, of course: recess was meant for – and good for – us kids. Although we intuitively knew the truth, we had no way of knowing just how valuable our play time truly was!

The wisdom of my fourth-grade teacher aside, today we know that play is an essential part of growth and playgrounds are not simply places for children to have fun and expend energy. They are also places where children learn and grow. By presenting challenges, playground equipment helps children learn problem solving, socialization, and awareness of how to control their physical motion and strengthen themselves in the process.

But what about kids who are not developing along typical lines? Some of these children may not have the ability to swing. Others may not even be able to come close to the play structures due to uneven mulch surfacing. Still others may simply get overwhelmed by the sights and sounds of a busy playground. The concept of inclusive play maintains that it is not their disability that limits these children, it is the

environment. Inclusive play means that every child deserves to have the opportunity to experience the value of an outdoor playground.

What is an inclusive playground?

People tend to think “ADA compliant” when they hear “inclusive play,” but it is more than that. Inclusive play takes the bare minimum of ADA compliance and elevates it to a new level. Integrative designs have subtle differences that allows both typically abled and individuals with special needs to play in the same spaces because inclusive play is just that, inclusive. Creating equitable spaces on the playground helps remove bias and sets the foundation for a better future in which these children grown into adults able to appreciate people with all levels of ability.

Ingrid Kanics, the occupational therapist consultant for Landscape Structures, Inc., notes that before building an inclusive playground it is important to ask, “Who is this playground for?”

Ingrid has a good point.

At its core, inclusive play is for everyone, but due to the sheer range of playground equipment options, many builders find it necessary to tailor their effort to meet the needs of specific disabilities.



A playground at a school for kids with autism, for example, would be designed differently than a playground built in a community with many individuals using wheelchairs. The playground for children with autism would likely focus on sensory play since many autistic children need stimulation through touch, sound, visuals, smells, and/or taste, to regulate their emotions. This playground would have equipment like sensory panels or musical instruments to meet those needs. The playground for the community with individuals using wheelchairs, however, would focus on surfacing and ease of maneuvering with wide ramps and perhaps a We-Go-Swing®; a swing developed by Landscape Structures that's fully inclusive and can be integrated directly into the playground setting.

While it's important to carefully consider the design of an inclusive playground, it is equally important to put a great deal of thought into the equipment. When doing so, it's essential to understand how the merits of each piece of playground equipment contributes to the inclusivity of a playground. Inclusive play is about filling those gaps that cause exclusivity in a playground. It all starts with a simple question: "What is missing?"

From that starting point, Ingrid observes that the inclusive play advisory team and the product development team at Landscape Structures brainstorm how those gaps can be filled. After rigorous back and forth, edits, suggestions, and design drafts, they produce a semi-final design and test a prototype. The real playground experts, the children, are then asked to give their final review of the design before it gets sent for manufacturing.

Inclusive play equipment makes a difference for every kid

A great example of the insight that kids provide during the process came during the testing of the OmniSpin® Spinner, a high-backed spinner with interior facing seating. When it was in the design phase, kids were asked to check out the new play equipment. Among the children trying out the equipment were twin boys, one typically developing and one with cerebral palsy. The typically developing twin was excited to stay on the outside and be the one to push the OmniSpin® and spin his brother. His brother was able to hold himself up while



Inclusive playgrounds

the OmniSpin® was still. However, once the device started spinning, the centripetal forces caused him to begin falling sideways. Without hesitation, the other kids on the OmniSpin® (who had never met him before that day), moved closer to hold him up with their bodies while they spun. The twin with cerebral palsy was experiencing the sensation of spinning most likely for the first time in his seven years of life! His laughter confirmed that his disability did not preclude the ability to experience joy through play.

The goal of inclusive play had been accomplished! A child that had previously been limited by his environment, unable to play with his peers, got to enjoy himself in a new way. The interactions observed that day brought to light that the way we view disabilities is not truth.

Jill Moore, an Inclusive Play Specialist at Landscape Structures who is a wheelchair user herself, notes, “Inclusive environments switch to that social model where we understand that people with disabilities are not the problem, it could be their environment. An inclusive environment is important because that is where people are going to see those abilities. I love to play tag, I am competitive, I have an imagination but in an environment that is not inclusive, people would not know that about me. In an inclusive environment, people are going to see that these are the things I love, and my disability is secondary to that.”

The kids rushing to the boy’s side in the OmniSpin® are proof of this. Play allowed them to learn how to interact with someone with a disability and get close enough to learn that he loves spinning. This



perfectly illustrates how inclusive play has so much more to offer than just providing a place for kids of all abilities to play, it provides a space for young people to better understand how to interact with people different than themselves. This will help form the foundation of a more accepting and inclusive society in the future.

What isn't an inclusive playground?

It's important to keep in mind that inclusive play does not mean everyone of all abilities can experience every aspect of a playground. Rather, an inclusive playground is a place where everyone has the chance to interact. This could mean something as simple as a viewing bubble at the top of a structure so kids at the top can interact with children who are afraid of heights on the ground below. Seemingly tiny things like this makes a large impact to a child's development – both the kids at the top and those on the ground.

As an occupational therapist, Ingrid Kanics has definite ideas for the design of inclusive play equipment, but her experience with her own disability helps her relate to the children she seeks to serve with her designs. She explains, “inclusivity does not mean I have access to everything, it means that I have access to the best of my ability to the majority of what is there, but not every kid needs to get to the top of every element. I do not think that is what inclusivity is about. I think inclusivity is about playing together.”

Ultimately, the ideal expressed in Ingrid's statement is the goal of every inclusive playground: a place for children to interact and play together. Inclusive play provides a space where more demographics can join in this critical component of development.

About the author: *Kaiya Fraunhofer is the sales and marketing coordinator for VML Community Business Member Sparks@Play, an organization with expertise and a passion for playgrounds, parks, and sports infrastructure. The Sparks@Play team provides consulting, design, installation, construction and maintenance services to a wide variety of commercial and governmental clients.*

Learn more at www.sparksatplay.com.

The delight is in the details

INCLUSIVE PLAY is all in the details. Everything down to color is carefully selected. As an example of how much the details matter, the staff at Landscape Structures shared the story of working closely with a mother whose daughter was able to see color but had no depth perception. If the girl walked down a sidewalk and came to a place where the concrete changed color, she would stop because she was unable to tell if the change was a barrier that would cause her to trip. However, by carefully selecting the colors on the playground, Landscape Structures could help her to use the equipment with less worry. In this case, a different color was used on each step of the equipment and the playground to signify the change in elevation. Aside from an awesome color scheme, the changing step colors could also be beneficial for a deaf or hard-of-hearing child who relies heavily on their hands for communication. The step colors would help these children better navigate the stairs by using their peripheral vision.

Outdoor fitness opportunities make healthier communities

By Michele Breakfield

OUTDOOR FITNESS PARKS have been around for years, but their popularity has increased significantly in recent years due to the rising rates of obesity and the COVID-19 pandemic. These parks not only provide a safe and convenient alternative to indoor gyms, but they also help people stay connected to their communities.

If you are considering adding an outdoor fitness park to your community, you're onto something great! Here's why you will want to take advantage of the growing trend for outdoor fitness spaces.

Reason #1 – Promote healthy communities

Obesity rates are at all-time highs. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that obesity is a “common, serious and costly disease.” In 2017-2018, the US obesity prevalence was 42.4 percent. The estimated annual medical cost of obesity was \$147 billion in 2008. Moreover, the disease raises the risk for heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and certain types of cancer.

The best ways to prevent obesity are to eat healthy foods and exercise. Because many people struggle to get to the gym, outdoor fitness parks are a great alternative. Families in the community can visit the fitness park at a time that works for them, while also bringing

their children. Making it easier for people to engage in physical activity promotes healthy habits and healthier lifestyles.

Reason #2 – Active students are better students

Regular physical activity has been shown to improve mental health, reduce anxiety and stress, enhance cognitive functioning, and boost academic performance. Despite these crucial benefits, roughly 40 to 50 percent of college students are physically inactive.

College students who exercise are happier, healthier, and perform better in school. College and university campuses are finding, especially since the pandemic, that both the student body and staff can benefit from outdoor fitness and recreation spaces. Offering an outdoor fitness space can:

- **Boost academic performance by improving blood circulation, which affects the amount of oxygen reaching the brain.** The more oxygen the brain has, the better it works.
- **Promote healthy sleep, which also leads to better academic performance.** Exercise makes students tired in time for bed.



Outdoor fitness

- **Strengthen the immune system by getting enough Vitamin D.** Sick students miss class more often and have a harder time keeping up their grades.
- **Decrease stress by releasing feel-good endorphins in the brain.** These chemicals are also responsible for sleep.
- **Encourage participation among peers.** Students can walk, run, and play sports together, strengthening community ties.

For example, anyone who has visited Blacksburg recently knows that Virginia Tech is a thriving and dynamic college. The campus recreation team is continually looking for ways to enhance the college experience and improve quality of life for students, faculty, and the surrounding community. In this spirit, Virginia Tech created an outdoor fitness space that accommodates users of all skill levels. The GT THRIVE 900 fitness system provides twenty training stations that can be used by multiple users simultaneously, and each station is adaptable for users of varying strengths and abilities. A custom trapeze trainer is also available for additional and advanced training.

Since it was implemented, Virginia Tech's outdoor recreation option has become popular with students, faculty, and sports teams for conditioning and training. As a bonus, the THRIVE outdoor fitness option has freed up space in the indoor facilities and made it possible for more people to enjoy the campus recreation amenities provided by Virginia Tech.

Because of their small footprint, THRIVE outdoor fitness structures are an excellent option not only for college campuses but also neighborhood and municipal parks. These structures offer a relatively low cost of entry to deliver a wide range of exercise options. Plus, THRIVE fitness now integrates shade options to provide additional comfort and protection for users.

Reason #3 – Lower community stress levels can reduce crime

Another reason outdoor fitness equipment is a growing trend is because it reduces stress in individuals and families. Within minutes of being outdoors in nature, endorphin levels and dopamine production can be significantly boosted, producing more happiness. Spending time in nature also reduces cortisol levels, a stress hormone that regulates a wide range of processes throughout the body.

We know that sitting for long periods of time at a desk is not healthy and can cause physical and mental stress. For this reason, many offices add courtyards with shade, seating, and fitness stations to get office personnel to take breaks and leave their desks and get some fresh air. Going outside or exercising for a few minutes can mean less stress at the end of a busy day at the office. It's important to have outlets for stress because high stress levels in communities can lead to higher rates of maladaptive behaviors, violence, and crime.

Reason #4 – Provide a space for training

Outdoor fitness equipment doesn't just offer members of a community a place to exercise. It also provides a place where police officers, firefighters, EMTs, and others can engage in training. Because these roles often involve working in challenging outdoor conditions, outdoor fitness parks are a great way to strengthen skills and improve overall mood and happiness.

The City of Chattanooga, TN was a pioneer in this concept with their commitment to create a unique visual experience in the city's Main Terrain Park. Working together, community stakeholders

turned a vacant lot into a dynamic and beautiful link between two sections of the city. The city's goal was to create a fitness component that would blend with the artistic and architectural aesthetics of the park. To this end, the city installed a total of five fitness stations in the urban park along a 1/4-mile loop track, including Trapeze Rings, Fitness Rack, Fitness Pommels, Parallel Bars, and Climbing Walls. Members of a local CrossFit gym, as well as local firefighters use the equipment as part of their training. The benefit to this type of equipment is its flexibility to provide a workout for adults at all levels of fitness.





Reason #5 – Encourage multigenerational fun

Families are always looking for new outdoor activities that everyone – from the youngest member to the oldest – can enjoy. Because outdoor fitness parks are versatile, they can accommodate people of all ages and abilities. Many are built alongside or adjacent to inclusive playgrounds, some may just be a handful of fitness pieces near the perimeter of a neighborhood green space or pocket park. Others, like Family Fit Zones are multigenerational destination fitness parks that offer the entire family a place to play, exercise and build memories. Family Fit Zones offer a variety of activities for people of all ages, abilities, and fitness levels. The Family Fit Zone concept includes traditional play and fitness equipment with innovative equipment from manufacturers such as Yalp – a developer of state of the art, innovative playsets, and sports equipment.

Family Fit Zones can also incorporate GameTime® Challenge Courses which are outdoor obstacle courses and outdoor fitness experiences for children, adults, and families. There are Youth and Pro Series preconfigured obstacle courses making it fast and easy to select a course that fits your locality's space and budget. You can also design your own course by choosing from more than a dozen obstacles like Locust Shade Park located in Prince William County.

Additional accessories like precision timing systems and a 40-yard dash can make your locality's Challenge Course a professional

experience. You can choose from multiple surfacing options like synthetic turf, poured-in-placed rubber, or engineered wood fiber. Add benches, shade, and other amenities to complete your obstacle course destination. Furthermore, logo and branding opportunities offer avenues to raise money from sponsors such as sports teams, universities, and businesses

Combining traditional play and fitness equipment with Yalp Interactive components and GameTime® Challenge Courses creates a unique destination park where the entire family can participate in a variety of physical activities or just relax and enjoy the outdoors.

A healthy locality is a happy locality

There's no question that outdoor fitness equipment is an emerging trend that more communities are looking to provide. Promote health and wellness opportunities at various venues throughout your community.

About the author: Michele Breakfield is the director of marketing for VML Community Business Member Cunningham Recreation/Game Time offering complete park and playground solutions from design to construction since 1966. Learn more at www.cunninghamrec.com.

Activating your outdoor recreation economy through clean water

OUTDOOR RECREATION IS a big business in Virginia. It employs thousands of residents, adds \$8 billion to the economy, and generates millions of dollars in local tax revenue. Capitalizing on this industry requires strategic investments in local natural resources, including clean waterways.



In some cases, the connection between clean water and outdoor recreation are readily apparent. Key recreation industries like fishing and boating, for example, depend on access to clean water. However, even features such as trails for hiking or biking attract more visitors if they include waterfront or streamside views. Recognizing this connection, your locality may be able to leverage clean water funds to improve public spaces or you may be able to capitalize on green space funding opportunities to meet clean water goals. These sorts of two-for-one projects are often attractive to a variety of funders and may help to meet regulatory requirements (such as stormwater) while also improving or creating a valuable outdoor attraction.

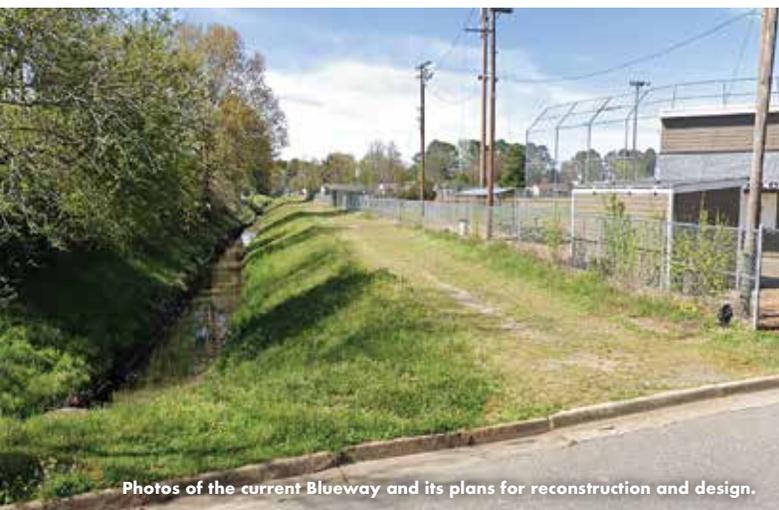
In this article, we'll look at a couple of the numerous localities across the Commonwealth that are implementing innovative projects and serving as models for other communities.

City of Hampton: Big Bethel Blueway

Nestled within the confluence of the Chesapeake Bay and the James River, the City of Hampton experiences water as both a great asset for tourism and recreation as well as an equally great challenge due to the increased potential for waterways to flood. One such major waterway is Newmarket Creek which flows just off the Bay with a substantial watershed that reaches thousands of the city's residents. However, because of heavy rainfall and historic urbanization within the watershed, flooding caused by stormwater along the inland channels has increased substantially in recent years.

With support from the Department of Conservation and Recreation's Community Flood Preparedness Fund and a city-issued Environmental Impact Bond, the Big Bethel Blueway project will help to mitigate this flood risk by converting an existing inland drainage channel into a multi-use blue and green space and stormwater storage facility. The Blueway, which flows near Big Bethel Road before connecting with Newmarket Creek, will be expanded to slow and store the accumulation of stormwater within the landscape. The waterway will be reconstructed to incorporate small dams and wetland shelves along its stream bed as well as native shrubs, flowers, and grasses along its banks. This merging of gray and green infrastructure will contribute to water level management, erosion reduction, and water treatment in a sustainable manner.

The Blueway passes through many neighborhoods where residents already utilize the grassy pathways along the channel. As such, the project will address the community's needs by incorporating 6,000 linear feet of trail within the project site. With accessibility and safety in mind, this walking and biking path will be retrofitted with crosswalks, safety signage, and street lighting. Also envisioned to be a part of the larger trail and park network outlined in the 2021 Newmarket Creek Water Plan, the Big Bethel Blueway project will eventually tie into a loop trail connecting the Newmarket Creek Watershed by way of walking, biking, or boating.



Photos of the current Blueway and its plans for reconstruction and design.

WAGGONNER & BALL ARCHITECTURE/ENVIRONMENT AND ENGINEERS, MOFFATT & NICHOL



“The Big Bethel Blueway is an exciting project as it will connect the community to their local watershed while simultaneously enhancing the quality of water passing through the Blueway drainage canal,” says Carolyn Heaps-Pecaro, resiliency officer for the city’s Community Development Department and Resilient Hampton. “And, since Hampton has many other similar drainage ditches around the city, we have an opportunity to replicate the project if it proves successful.”

Town of Warsaw: Revitalization Project

In 2015, the Town of Warsaw began a plan to revitalize its downtown center. Neighboring the Rappahannock River, and just off two major highways, the rural downtown area remains an accessible hub

for residents, business owners, and Northern Neck tourists alike. The revitalization project, led in conjunction with the town council and community members, focused on building the resilience of the area to benefit residents and the overall town economy.

The Town of Warsaw secured a planning grant which allowed it to create individual plans for economic restructuring, downtown marketing, downtown revitalization, and facade improvements. With support from the Northern Neck Planning Commission, the town was awarded a \$1,000,000 Community Development Block Grant for Business District Revitalization. In addition to reimagining building facades, plans for downtown renewal also included making improvements to landscaping, street lighting, pedestrian crosswalks, and parking lots, as well as installing beautification elements such as a central fountain. The project also included a marketing strategy for the newly established district.

With resilience in mind, Warsaw implemented a green infrastructure stormwater network within the district by replacing concrete sidewalks with brick and installing a stormwater pond on its 11.6-acre park, The Bounds. Situated on the former site of an abandoned shopping center, The Bounds has been transformed to include miles of trail systems and an observation deck where community members can learn more about these stormwater management systems. Furthermore, the town will be considering plans for a 9-hole disc golf course and zipline within the park.

“The Bounds recreational area in the Town of Warsaw is the perfect example of combining stormwater management, outdoor recreation, and economic development to form a wonderful addition to any locality,” said Town Manager Joseph Quesenberry. “I believe this is the way of the future, particularly for Virginia’s Coastal communities, and I hope that the example found within our small town can encourage all of Virginia’s localities to implement similar practices.”

Additional grants, including those from the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund and the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, accompanied by state and local investments and collaboration between state and regional entities such as the Northern Neck Tourism Commission and the Virginia Tourism Corporation allowed downtown Warsaw to bring its vision to fruition. Since the project was completed, the town has seen an overall increase in local businesses and new jobs. It also retains funding to assist new and existing businesses with economic growth.

TOWN OF WARSAW



Stormwater drainage system at The Bounds park.

TOWN OF WARSAW



Recently constructed stormwater pond at The Bounds park.

Resources

Projects that achieve multiple benefits for your community, like access to high quality parks and clean water, require collaboration. Your regional Planning District Commission is a good place to start connecting the dots between clean water, outdoor recreation opportunities, and your local economy. The state also has grant programs to improve your green spaces:

- **Virginia Trees for Clean Water Grant Program** – www.dof.virginia.gov/urban-community-forestry/urban-forestry-community-assistance/virginia-trees-for-clean-water-grant-program.
- **Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program** – www.dof.virginia.gov/urban-community-forestry/urban-forestry-community-assistance/urban-and-community-forestry-grant-program.
- **Land and Water Conservation Fund** – www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/lwcf.

The Virginia Outdoors Foundation is another excellent resource for grant funding.

If matching funds are a challenge, remember that by tying outdoor recreation projects to clean water, you may be able to access new or additional revenue streams, like American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds or stormwater funds. In fact, if the project is eligible for funds through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund or the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, it can fall within the fourth category of ARPA spending (necessary capital investments in water and sewer).

Clean water projects that promote outdoor recreation have a strong return on investment for your resident's quality of life and for your local economy. As the saying goes, Virginia is for (outdoors!) lovers!

About the authors: *Ola-Imani Davis is the local government projects coordinator and Laura Cattell Noll, is the local government projects manager at the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay.*

About the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay: *Since 1971, we've brought together communities, companies, and conservationists to improve our lands and waters and in 2021, we celebrated 50 years of fighting for the Chesapeake. We strive for clean streams and rivers flowing through resilient landscapes, cared for by the people who live, work, and play in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. We have offices in Annapolis, MD, Lancaster, PA, Washington, D.C., and Richmond, VA. For more information about the Alliance, please visit www.allianceforthebay.org.*



Readers' Survey Results

Skyline Drive view at Shenandoah National Park.

Shenandoah National Park: Front Royal to Rockfish Gap

Nominated by Lora Jenkins, Shenandoah and Christopher Barton, Charlottesville

Rough week at work? Pandemic got you down? Feeling out of touch with nature? Don't worry, because you live in Virginia, and we've got the antidote! Take a break from reality and explore the miles of trails, gorgeous views, rock scrambles, wildlife, and so much more at Shenandoah National Park! Situated along the Blue Ridge Mountains and encompassing a long stretch of the Appalachian Trail, Shenandoah National Park is over 200,000 acres of protected land established in 1935 that is known the world over as a place of immense natural beauty and wonder.

Shenandoah National Park has so many amazing features and places that it's not possible to touch on all of them even if we had a full book to do so (although many have tried). So, we'll satisfy ourselves by calling out a few of the best reasons to visit this true Virginia outdoor treasure.

Skyline Drive: A National Historic Landmark

President Herbert Hoover, who had a summer home in Rapidan Camp, called for the construction of a road along the Blue Ridge Mountains. Originally proposed as "Hoover Highway" the road was thankfully named the more poetical Skyline Drive when construction began in 1931. To be fair, President Hoover got a dam named after him, so he didn't really need a road too!

Today, Skyline Drive is a 105-mile-long parkway that runs the entirety of Shenandoah National Park, and takes slightly less than three hours to drive from start to finish. But what an amazing three hours it is! With 75 scenic overlooks and full of twists, turns, foliage, and wildlife, the parkway can be entered via four different entrances located in the localities of Front Royal, Thornton Gap, Swift Run Gap, and Rockfish Gap. Track your journey by following the mile markers and try to spot wildlife such as deer, black bears, and wild turkeys. As the only public road through the park, Skyline Drive is a unique experience enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of motorists each year.

Trails, trails, and more trails

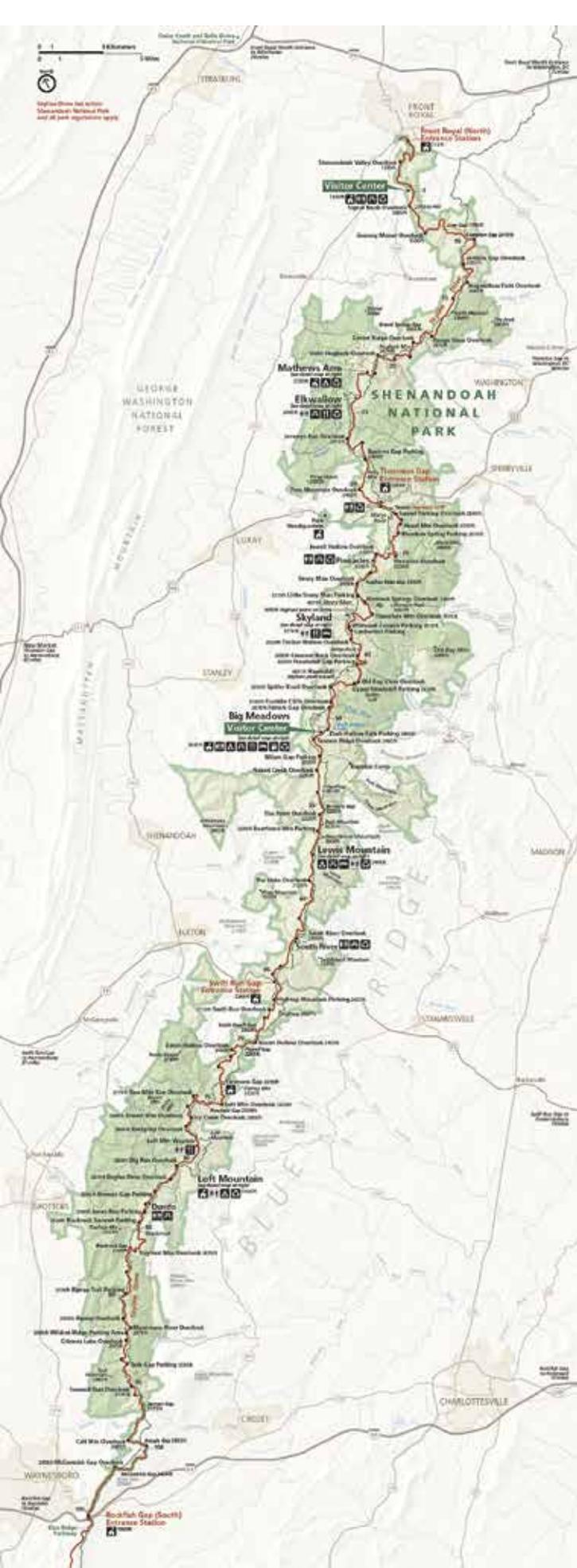
Being a national park, Shenandoah National Park has over 500 miles of trails (including over 100 miles of the Appalachian Trail). Avid hikers relish the challenges presented by the park's steep inclines, rocky edges, waterfalls, and strenuous features that push people to succeed in the best way possible. New to hiking? That's okay! There are several hikes ranging from 3 to 5 miles with varying views and grades that are excellent for those easing into hiking. Traveling with your family? No problem! Shenandoah National Park also has hikes that are akin to easily trod nature paths of only a mile or two long. And for those looking to avoid crowds, there are plenty of less traveled routes to explore.

Big Meadows makes for a big sky

Just up the side of the mountain from President Hoover's Rapidan Camp, Big Meadows Campground offers visitors the experience of a breathtaking night sky a little closer to the moon, stars, and planets. This large field at the top a mountain is perfect for stargazing with friends and family. Whether you choose to bask in the glory of the full moon, try your hand at spotting constellations, or watch the trees and fields for nocturnal animals, Big Meadows is sure to put a huge smile on everyone's face.

Take me to the (Shenandoah) River

If you drop out of the Shenandoah National Park near the Town of Shenandoah, you'll find a great place to enjoy one of the most beautiful rivers in the world. Shenandoah Landing and River Park has a variety of amenities for people to enjoy the great outdoors. Boating, canoeing, kayaking, wading, picnicking, strolling by the water, and so much more await visitors to Shenandoah Landing and River Park!



Town Centre Park: Kilmarnock

Nominated by Ashley Jones, Kilmarnock



From dusk until dawn, you can spend your day enjoying the sunshine as a family at the Kilmarnock Town Centre Park! Whether you are looking for water activity, family outings, a dog-friendly atmosphere, or a night of dancing – Kilmarnock Town Centre Park has it all.

Enjoy the summer sun while staying cool at the Waterworks and River Play Children's Area of the park. Waterworks contain various water attractions such as the Splash Pad which is like a fountain, but the water shoots off sporadically and each jet goes off at a different time making it the perfect game for kids. Open from 10:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Waterworks and River Play Children's Area are the ideal spots for children 12 years old and under.

Not big on water activities? No problem! You can spend your time having a picnic on the lawn, snacking under the pavilion, tossing a ball in the grass, and so much more at Town Centre Park. The pavilion is the perfect place to stay cool in the shade while still enjoying family time.

Do you have a furry member of your family? Well, they're welcome too! In 2011 the Scotty Dog Park was built making it the first ever dog park in the Northern Neck. Dogs of all sizes are welcome at the park and can be unleashed if they are supervised.

After a long day of enjoying the park be sure to stick around for one of the many nighttime events happening over the summer. The park is sure to be full of music, dancing, and great times.

No matter how you choose to spend your time outdoors, the Kilmarnock Town Centre Park is sure to have something for everyone to enjoy!

Virginia Capital Trail: Williamsburg to Richmond

Nominated by George Homewood, Norfolk



Have you ever wondered if it's possible to travel from Richmond to Williamsburg without taking a car? The answer is yes! The Virginia

Capital Trail is a 52-mile paved path for bikers, joggers, and walkers that extends through four jurisdictions.

The Virginia Capital Trail is an extensive trail with a variety of things to see and do along the way. Virginia Capital Trail Foundation has worked diligently to create a wonderful trail with a slew of events throughout the year. Whether you choose to tackle this trail alone or with a group of people there is guaranteed to be an attraction suitable for everyone.

What if you get hungry you may ask? Have no fear, there are over 50 restaurants along the trail. With breweries, pizza places, steak houses, wine shops, coffee shops, and so much more everyone is certain to find something appetizing along the way. Also located along the way are several picnic areas that you can stop at to enjoy a snack, have a drink of water, and take a break.

While on the trail be sure to stop by any of the 45 attractions along the way! Whether you want to tour a historic house museum, visit historic Jamestown Settlement, experience a Powhatan Native American Village, walk through the gardens of a plantation, enjoy various beaches, and so much more all located along the Virginia Capital Trail.

After walking, jogging, or biking for miles you may feel exhausted. If this is the case don't worry, there are several locations along the way to get a good night's sleep. Camp, glamp, or book a hotel room to truly experience all the trail has to offer.

When traveling along the Virginia Capital Trail, you are sure to experience the beauty of Virginia from a new perspective. With something along the way for everyone, the trail is a fantastic activity for those who enjoy being outdoors.

Crystal Springs Recreation Area: Wytheville

Nominated by Deana Kelley, Wytheville



Located on 1,800 acres of town property, Crystal Springs Recreation Area is a special place within the Town of Wytheville. Visitors find trails, a reservoir, wildlife, interactive activities, and history. Given the terrain and temperature in Virginia, hiking trails are common. However, at the Crystal Springs Recreation Area, you can choose the length, difficulty level, and view depending on which trail you take.

One of the trails leads to the town's crystal-clear reservoir. Known as Venrick's Run, the water in the reservoir constantly flows creating a gorgeous view, an enjoyable place to rest mid-hike, and is the namesake of the area. Built in the 1900s, the reservoir was originally designed to provide the town with sufficient water. Unfortunately, there was not enough water for the entire town to use, so the reservoir became a supplemental system with a beautiful view.

Among the features of Crystal Springs are interactive aspects

throughout the park thanks to the TRACK trail enhancements. TRACK trail enhancements are a series of interactive objects and written elements designed for kids. One of the elements of the TRACK trail enhancements within the Crystal Springs Reaction Area is varying brochures about wildlife and nature. Designed specifically to keep children focused on the hike while learning about nature, these self-guided brochures educate kids on the relationships between people, nature, and animals. TRACK trail enhancements also include aquatic and bird discovery stations. Located at the aquatic discovery station is a magnifying glass and net for kids to use in the creek. Once the water has been properly examined, stop by the bird discovery station to grab a set of binoculars, and settle in for some serious (or not so serious) bird watching!

Crystal Springs Recreation Area is open year-round, so next time you're in Wytheville be sure to stop and enjoy everything it has to offer!

Riverwalk: Hopewell

Nominated by Kiffy Werkheiser, Chesterfield



Stretching for 1,736 feet, the Hopewell Riverwalk is a wooden boardwalk following the path of the Appomattox River shoreline. The Riverwalk allows visitors to take a stroll surrounded by nature, beauty, and wildlife without having to get wet or dirty as you walk over the river. Although called the Hopewell Riverwalk, this wooden boardwalk has been approved to begin phase 2 and expand to become part of the Appomattox River Trail. The Hopewell Riverwalk will eventually be an integral part of a network of trails connecting Hopewell and Dinwiddie County. Once phase 2 is completed, Hopewell and Dinwiddie County will be connected by a stretch of 25-mile-long trails. With this in place, the Riverwalk will continue to be a beautiful and scenic trail for visitors to enjoy. As visitors experience the beauty of the boardwalk by taking in views of the historic City Point, they can take comfort in knowing they can do this every day of the year from dusk until dawn.

While exciting stuff is in the works, the current Riverwalk should be appreciated for its beauty and ingenuity. The Hopewell Riverwalk was voted the "best new facility" of 2019 at the annual Virginia Recreation and Park Society conference! Also recognized in three other areas statewide, the Hopewell Riverwalk is an incredible spot to see. Whether you choose to stroll, jog, run, or just enjoy nature this trail is for you!

To begin the peaceful stroll on the Hopewell Riverwalk you can start your journey by entering the City Park. This park is equipped with a playground designed to look like nature, a sandy beach, a picnic pavilion, a dedicated fishing spot, and most importantly parking!

Great Dismal Swamp: Suffolk

Nominated by David Westcott, Chesapeake



Located in Suffolk sits a vast wetland full of nature and animals that at one time covered over one million acres of land from Virginia to North Carolina. The Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge has been formally protected since 1973 after the Union Camp Corporation donated over 40,000 acres of wetland to the Nature Conservancy. Land from the Nature Conservancy was donated to the Federal Government to establish the National Wildlife Refuge in 1974.

One of the main goals of the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge is to work towards the restoration of biological diversity in the swamp's ecosystem. Home to over 200 different types of birds, almost 100 types of butterflies, turtles, white-tailed deer, bobcats, otters, and black bears. With an ecosystem so vast and complex as this one, the refuge must continue to flourish and thrive to keep the many animals happy and healthy.

When visiting the Great Dismal Swamp, you can enjoy nature walks on a series of trails throughout the refuge. Designated as a Virginia and Globally Important Bird Area, the Virginia Birding Trail allows birders to revel in the beauty and diversity of songs that the hundreds of bird species bring to the swamp. Woodpeckers, blue herons and egrets are just a few of the birds visitors typically encounter during even a short visit. If you're looking to immerse yourself in nature, then be sure to stop by the National Parks Service National Natural Landmark to learn more about the swamp. Also located within the wildlife refuge is the Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Site which proudly features the history of the path enslaved people took to freedom via the swamp.

Whether you are looking to become one with nature, possibly spot a bear, or simply learn about the flora and fauna of Virginia, the Great Dismal Swamp has something for everyone to enjoy!

Morven Park: Leesburg

Nominated by Kelly Burk, Leesburg



Located in Leesburg, Morven Park is a 1,000-acre estate entrenched in history, museums, gardens, and the manor house that was once home to former Maryland Governor Thomas Swann Jr.

VA You Love Survey

during the Civil War and former Virginia Governor Westmoreland Davis during World War I. This now famous home is available for tours so visitors can experience the manor, view the historic collections kept at the house, and hold events. Displayed throughout the 240-year-old mansion are antiques from Davis' private collection such as Belgian tapestries, silverware, paintings, Asian treasures, and more! This 45-minute guided tour will provide an insight into the former Virginia Governor's life during the Civil War.

Also on the property are two more museums – Winmill Carriage Museum and the Museum of Hounds and Hunting. The Winmill Carriage Museum, named after donor Viola Winmill, is a one-of-a-kind horse-drawn vehicle collection with antique coaches, carriages, sleds, and carts. Uniquely, the Winmill Carriage Museum is home to a miniature road coach designed for the Barnum and Bailey Circus as well as a piece used in the Grace Kelly movie “the Swan.” As an homage to the equestrian heritage of Morven Park and the Davis family's love of fox hunting, the Museum of Hounds and Hunting prominently displays art, artifacts, and fox hunting memorabilia in three rooms of the mansion.

Morven Park is also home to acres of fields and gardens. The Morven Park lawn is reminiscent of the 19th-century landscape that Westmoreland Davis once enjoyed. Today, these fields are equipped with a series of cross-country jumps for athletes involved in equestrian sports. With over half of the property's 1,000-acres of land placed under easement, the 19th-century landscape will be preserved for generations to come. Besides the gorgeous green fields, Morven Park also has amazing boxwoods throughout the garden to enjoy while taking a stroll.

Looking for museums, historic manors, gardens, and fields? Morven Park located in Leesburg is the perfect place to visit!

Virginia Creeper Trail: White Top to Abingdon

Nominated by Earl Mathers, Abingdon



Stretching for 35 miles, the Virginia Creeper Trail is a multi-purpose rail trail that runs gently downhill from White Top to Abingdon close to the North Carolina state line. Bike, hike, or horseback ride through national forests, restored trestles, and even along portions of the Appalachian Trail. Bikers can arrange for shuttles to top of the trail and make a day of exploring everything it has to offer.

Beginning in the 1970s, many abandoned railroads began to be converted to trails – combining beautification with recreation. This movement gathered steam (pun intended) in the 1980s which is when the Virginia Creeper Trail was created. Named for the engine that once traveled the track, and the Virginia Creeper Vine found throughout the area, the Virginia Creeper Trail was formally established in

An advertisement for Stalker Radar featuring a blue speed trailer, a speed limit sign, a flood area sign, and a data collection device. The background is a stylized cityscape at night. The text "Creating Safer Roads" is prominently displayed at the top. Below the products are three vertical red banners with white text: "Powerful Speed Trailers", "Proactive Life-Saving Devices", and "Critical Data Collection Tools". At the bottom, a red banner contains the Stalker logo, the phone number 1-800-STALKER, and the website StalkerRadar.com.

Creating Safer Roads

Powerful Speed Trailers

Proactive Life-Saving Devices

Critical Data Collection Tools

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1987. Citizens, localities, government entities, and the US Forest Service Board came together to establish the multi-purpose trail.

Along the former railroad path, visitors enjoy a series of attractions such as cafes, ice cream shops, a pet fountain, restrooms, and a restored rail depot. At the mid-point in Damascus, a culture related to the multiple trails passing through the town means adventurers will find restaurants, lodging, bike shops, and outfitters. Amenities such as these combined with the gentle grade and verdant surroundings, makes the Virginia Creeper Trail easy and fun for the entire family!

At the downhill terminus of the trail in Abingdon resides an old steam engine like the ones that used to ply the rail line before it was abandoned. Along with the old steam engine, Abingdon offers a multitude of shops, restaurants, parks, hotels, and the famous Barter Theatre to explore. The Virginia Creeper Trail is a distinctive, unique, and popular destination visited by thousands of people every year.

Riverview Park: Charlottesville

Nominated by Shellie Mechnick, Charlottesville

Located in Charlottesville at the end of Chesapeake Street is Riverview Park – a gorgeous 26.6 acres of land bordering the Rivanna River. Donated by the Riverview Cemetery and eventually converted into a public use park, Riverview Park was officially established in 1989.

Riverview Park is geared towards children and families. It features ample parking, a kiosk, an exciting playground equipped with a slide, park benches, and open fields. Whether you choose to exercise, play or picnic, Riverview Park is a fantastic place to enjoy a day.

Adjacent to the park is the Rivanna Trail which provides the opportunity to walk, run, bike, or fish while enjoying the sounds of



nature. The handicapped accessible paved trail extends for 2.3 miles and runs under Free Bridge and Route 250 East. Rivanna Trail is pet friendly and allows for off-leash access on certain parts of the trail during specific times.

As the summer months continue to heat up, cool down with your friends (furry or otherwise) at Riverview Park!

Tree Time Adventure: Prince George

Nominated by Stacey English, Prince George



Attention all thrill seekers – Tree Time Adventures is the place to be above it all! Tree Time Adventures is an outdoor recreation and high adventure experience designed to inspire, challenge, and encourage people to have fun courtesy of zip lines, obstacle courses, ropes courses, and more amazing things to do as you soar through the treetops! Take in the birds-eye view as you conquer the Dragon’s Back Bridge or confidently swing from Tarzan’s Net. Regardless of how you choose to enjoy it, you are sure to leave Tree Time Adventures with a smile knowing you are strong enough to take on any challenge.

Looking for something to enjoy with others? Tree Time Adventures has got your group covered. Experience zipping through the canopy with your friends or family and cheer each other on as you all push yourselves to overcome obstacles. Besides, what better way to bond than to collectively experience an enormous rush of adrenaline?

Tree Time Adventures is not only a fun outdoor activity but also a place for personal growth! Jumps from log to log while suspended above ground will make you feel assured. Zipping through the trees will make you smile and laugh. Pushing yourself and trusting that you will be okay releases endorphins, dopamine, and an overall sense of confidence.

If you enjoy thrills then you will enjoy the zip line, ropes bridge, and everything else Tree Time Adventures has for you!

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