

The Importance of Voting in Local Elections

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Voting is the right given to most American Citizens, an ability to choose the leaders of your community, your states, and even your country. Many parties in the past fought for the right to have their say, one popular example being women, who didn't gain the right to vote until 1920. However many people today don't take advantage of voting and getting their say in important decisions. Today, in an effort to encourage you to vote, I'm going to tell you the benefits of voting and why it is one of the most important things you can do as a citizen.

Direct impacts on daily life: Starting off with arguably one of the most important parts of voting in local elections is the direct impact it can have on one's life. Firstly an important part for students being local education, school board members set policy, curricula, and budgets for the local school district and many of those students end up here at Radford University. It's our responsibility to make sure they have the best education possible available to them. Another important aspect is public safety, local leaders control police and fire departments and make decisions about policing and emergency preparedness. This can directly impact students as when there is an emergency on campus it is often local



Photo edit by: Brandon Whitaker

officials that respond to them rather than university officials. One other main issue that impacts students is zoning and housing: Local planning and zoning boards regulate how land is used, which affects the availability and location of affordable housing and businesses in your area. With Radford University's recent housing crisis more students are being forced into non campus housing and therefore this directly affects them. **Vote Weight:** It goes without saying that unfortunately local elections are not nearly as popular as presidential elections but with a smaller population voting comes a greater voter weight. In fact in Radford's last election the city turned blue(democratic) by a mere three votes. When less people are voting, your vote weighs more and you should make it count.

Represents your interests: Continuing, when voter turnout is low, decisions are often made by a small, unrepresentative portion of the population. Historically marginalized communities-

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in particular, can shift the balance of power by participating in large numbers. Voting ensures that your specific needs and values are represented by those who lead your community.

Fosters community engagement and change: Voting locally can foster a stronger sense of civic engagement and can lead to broader, long-term change. Many significant policy movements, from environmental initiatives to education reforms, begin at the local level. By participating, you help set the stage for the changes you want to see both in your community and beyond.

Accessible/Accountable Individuals: Would you want an individual that responds to emails, letters, and your concerns as a member of their community? Of course you would. Well in order to get responsive candidates in office you have to vote for responsive members of the community. If you leave it up to others you may get a candidate that isn't responsive nor accessible to yourself and others. Hold individuals accountable and vote for the candidate you feel best represents your interests.

Allocation of Tax Dollars: If you live in Radford, even temporarily, your taxes are going towards the community. Whether that's through your rent, your groceries, or your job, that money goes back into the community and officials dictate where/what that money is used for. In order to have a say in how that money is spent you need to vote on candidates you feel will use that money wisely.

Whether you're worried about your rent increasing, you want to see changes in local emergency procedures, or you simply want your tax dollars spent wisely, local voting is the way to get these things addressed and accomplished. Choosing the right candidate for your community can make a huge difference, Therefore today, get out and vote at your local polling location, it makes all the difference and it directly affects you.

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The Tunnels Beneath Us: A Radford Ghost Story

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In honor of the Halloween season, it is only right to tell a ghost story that involves a place that Radford residents walk over every day: the tunnels underneath Radford's campus. The McConnell Library Archives provided a 1984 issue of the Tartan, where columnist Richie Ellis analyzes the history of the tunnels and a spooky story about a Radford University student.



Photo Credit: uer.ca

The tunnels beneath campus were built around the 1960s, allowing women of the college to travel around campus without having to go outside. Now, the tunnels are used for connecting different locations around campus for utility and heating purposes. They are not accessible to Radford residents whatsoever, as they once were a long time ago.

If you happened to hear any odd noises on Friday night, it may have been the cries of a ghost who is said to visit the tunnels every Halloween: Elizabeth. Elizabeth was a quiet and peculiar girl who was teased by five girls on campus.

The five girls constantly picked on her, and then they decided to create a secret admirer for Elizabeth.

Using notes and flowers, the five told her to come to a halloween dance dressed as a princess, and then eventually luring her to the tunnels to meet the secret admirer. When she arrived in the tunnels, her admirer wasn't there, Elizabeth cried and called his name. The lights went out in the tunnel and she heard laughter, she began to run through the darkness frantically, still calling his name, and then sadly tripped and fell to her death. Legend says that Elizabeth, still dressed in her princess costume, haunts the steam tunnels and halloween parties every Halloween looking for her admirer.

Elizabeth's story isn't the only ghost story that resonates at Radford University, the McConnell Library Archives provides very interesting and infamous ghost sightings and stories of haunted buildings around campus. While these stories are just urban legends, every place has a history, and the tunnels below us have history we may never know about.



Radford Fiddle and Banjo Jam Finds A New Home in The Artis Center

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It started in a small diner on Tyler Avenue 25 years ago. A way for local musicians to come together to play and enjoy their favorite tunes. They've been playing and preserving the sounds of the region for over two decades and now, **for the first time in the group's history, you can hear them jam right here on campus.**



Photo Credit: Radford Fiddle and Banjo Jam Facebook

History of the Radford Fiddle and Banjo Jam

In February of 2000, journalist and fiddle player **Ralph Berrier** decided that he wanted to bring a bluegrass jam to Radford Virginia. He and his wife took a trip to Nova Scotia visiting Cape Breton Island and he admired how in nearly every corner of the Island you could find a pub playing live music. He thought to himself, "I wonder if you could do something like this in southwest Virginia?" He started his own jam when he came back to Radford in a coffee shop on Tyler Avenue where 7 Eleven is currently, and although he was just starting to learn to play, he got the word out and started a tradition that is still present to this day. **"Music is a big part of the culture, this sort of music, this is a bluegrass jam, there's old time Appalachian music...It's the soundtrack of the region; It's like jazz in New Orleans or blues in Memphis or Celtic music in Ireland. It's the soundtrack of this region, and these are just regular folks who come out and play it."**

In February the group received a proclamation from the City of Radford honoring the 25th anniversary of the jam.

What is the Jam Like?

The Radford Fiddle and Banjo Jam typically features 15-20 musicians from all over Virginia, bringing with them their instruments of choice and playing their favorite bluegrass/Appalachian tunes for anybody who wants to listen. They sit in a circle and each musician gets a chance to pick which tune they play as they move around the circle in between songs. The jams are open to all who would like to participate or listen and they've featured students and faculty in the performances as well. Berrier shared that the **players range from 14 to 95 years old** and that **"We've prided ourselves on being kind of an open, welcoming jam. We have some really good players and we also have some beginners, and some who are intermediate...this one has always been open to a little bit of everybody."**

Where can you find the Jam?

If you'd like to hear some live music and attend a jam they are now playing in the Artis Center atrium on Mondays from 6 to 9 P.M. For updates on venues and schedule changes you can visit the Radford Fiddle and Banjo Jam group on Facebook.

One Month of Government Shutdown – The Threat on SNAP Benefits

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Millions of people across the country were concerned about the prospect of losing their SNAP benefits in November and possibly going hungry. After the federal government shutdown threatened to halt the funding of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). SNAP is the nation's largest food-assistance program and serves roughly 40-42 million people, averaging at about \$187 a month per recipient. These benefits cost the federal government about \$8 billion to provision each month.



Graphic via henrico.gov

Americans were initially concerned about losing their benefits to lack of funding under the government shutdown, as the federal government is at 33 days of shutdown at the time of writing. However, on Friday, October 31st, two judges issued rulings requiring the administration to either use contingency funds or continue SNAP payments. Judges ordered that the government needed to use contingency funds to provide partial benefits for November or fully fund the program using all emergency reserves. Virginia also moved to protect residents in advance, anticipating possible federal interruptions. Governor Glenn Youngkin declared a state of emergency and authorized the use of state funds to issue Virginia Emergency Nutrition Assistance (VENA) benefits if

federal SNAP payments weren't made on time.

On another note, there are local food banks available for those who may need it in the New River Valley, but Radford University also offers on-campus support for students and faculty in need of discreet access to food items. The Highlander Food Pantry, located in 215 Heth Hall, is open Mondays and Fridays from 8 to 6 pm, Tuesdays through Thursdays until 5, and from 1 until 3 pm on Sunday afternoons. However, the pantry is not available when the university is closed.

Scan the QR code for more information regarding the Highlander Pantry



A Spooktacular Event: CVPA's "Big Hairy Deal" Performance

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Radford University's College of Visual and Performing Arts presented a collaborative effort across many programs in their 2025 Spooktacular titled "Big Hairy Deal!" Including projects like a larger than life-sized Werewolf, lycanthropic makeup, dancers, and musical performances. It was difficult to determine if the production was scarier or hairier.

The performance began with a mashup of "Calling all the Monsters" and "I Want Candy," performed and edited by **Gabe Armstead**. Then an unsettling, yet terrifyingly impressive film, of **Dr. Matt Cataldi** turning into a Werewolf appeared on screen, followed by the Commercial Music Ensemble's performance of "Werewolves of London." **Joe Williams** from the ensemble said, "It was really cool to work with all the different departments, especially having the dance people on stage, since we hadn't done that until a day ago. Then all the stuff in the atrium, the big wolf and the story book, is super cool." The big wolf in reference was a creation from design students from classes DSN 100.01 & .02. "The design students wanted to create an experiential art piece so people coming to the event could experience art in a life scale situation," said Design Professor Laura Kimball. They were challenged to create this piece from materials such as cardboard boxes, PVC pipe and foam, from which they made a huge werewolf mouth that people could step into. A video by Sean Kotz was then shown showcasing

the artistry behind turning someone to a werewolf through makeup. The video showed the intricacy and detail that is necessary to create fantastic horror makeup. Following this was a performance of Roland Orzabal's "Mad World" where Rachel Robert featured beautiful piano and vocals, accompanied by a moving performance from dancers **Kathleen Petroski, Sydney Crump, and Abbey Matlock**, who choreographed the piece. After more musical

performances of "Great Pumpkin Waltz," "Hungry Like The Wolf Man," and "Enter Sandman," from the Radford Jazz Combo, the Commercial Music Ensemble, and The Radford University Jazz Ensemble, a showing of the silent film "Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde" was displayed. This film was accompanied by live synthesizer music played by **John Hildreth**, which immensely elevated the eerie experience of the film.

Following this was a performance of "Little Shop of Horrors" from the Radford University Choirs. Director **Ryan Rogers** said, "Since

the theater department is doing Little Shop of Horrors in the spring, this would function as a little bit of a plug for that production coming up, it was a lot of fun to see all the moving parts come together." The show closed out with a striking musical and visual performance of Michael Jackson's "Ghosts," from the Commercial Music Ensemble beside dancer and choreographer **Abbey Matlock**. The show was a spooky success, **Joe Williams** said, "We started this in August, so it's been a lot of fun to get to do this. It was a good show, lots of people came out, and it was just a lot of fun."



CHBS Speaker Series, Liner Notes: Grief and Pop Music By Dr. Jamie McDaniel

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In the latest CHBS speaker series event on Wednesday, Dr. Jamie McDaniel with the School of Writing, Language and Literature presented his debut manuscripts sharing the devastating journey of losing his partner Jim, his best friend Josh and his father. He uses music and film that were important to his loved ones to represent his relationships, as well as express the deeply rooted love towards the people he has lost, and will never forget. He uses the power of writing to convey the crushing experiences that follow loss, an experience that can be too painful to keep inside. Films and music can have impacts on our lives—how our own experiences could be reflected through their storylines.

Some stories can be too painful to revisit after such a painful loss because it reminds us of characteristics or moments with the people we love. In a popular episode of *Sex and the City* called “The Good Fight” he shared how the connection and power of having a good friend is deeply important for us to learn how to trust people, and how true friends are supporters. They lift you up in moments of sorrow and don’t judge you when you weep. Dr. McDaniel cannot watch this episode after the loss of his best friend Josh, whose bright, passionate outlook on true friendship is reflected in this episode of *Sex and the City*. We can feel a connection to these music albums and film scores because of the emotions they bring to us through their messages that are echoed in our own experiences. He states how, **“I can’t listen to Taylor Swift’s new album [The Life of a Showgirl] because I can hear Jim in it.”**



Dr. McDaniel Photo Credit: @ruchbs on Instagram

His poems immortalized his loved ones through his expert usage of footnotes along his poems. He infuses a sense of reflection that enriches his poem’s resonance and creates a personal, warm environment

for his readers as he explains key details that inspired certain lines and references he uses throughout his writing. He comments on how other poets believe that footnotes cause “distractions” to the poems overall flow, which in turn creates a dissonance and dulls the impact they seek to achieve. However, he follows up this line of thinking by stating how “Grief and trauma are a distraction.” These rare, powerful emotions cause such drastic impacts to our lives and regular routine, they are distracting. Grief distracts us from the good things in life as it consumes us so fully. Trauma can distract aspects in our lives that could be rewarding and fulfilling to our happiness, but we are too distracted by the weight of these feelings that we miss out on key opportunities and moments.

Dr. McDaniel and his partner, Jim, shared a love for anything cinematic. Movies became a key part of their relationship with one another. After his tragic passing, Jim’s community commemorated his memory at an important destination for both Jim and Dr. McDaniel. The Grandin Theatre, in Roanoke, Virginia with a star embedded with a tailored quote from Jim’s favorite movie, *Blade Runner* “Twice as bright, half as long.” Cherishing the people we have lost is the most important thing we can do as family, friends, or lovers. Death can come as sudden as a car crash, or it can be drawn out like an illness where the “body was ready, mind was not” quoted by Dr. McDaniel in reference to his father’s passing. His beautiful poems are in the process of being published and shared with the world where they will capture other readers with their vibrantly spun personalities and creatively warm retelling of his own experiences through loss. Everyone walks through pain differently, we all express and internalize our own battles in ways others might not connect with. But hearing a song that someone we loved would sing at the top of their lungs during long car rides, or watching a movie where it would bring them to tears or belly laughs, is an experience that is both heartwrenching and beautiful. **We hold these memories of our loved ones with us for the rest of our lives. They are still a part of the music we listen to, and the movies we will forever enjoy.**

Highlander Highlights: Cross Country Conference Championship Recap, Men's Soccer Sneaks in Conference Tournament After Tie

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Men's Soccer Highlanders Tie Spartans in Dominant Defensive Showing To Earn Postseason Bid

For the first time since 2019 the Highlanders will be heading to the Big South Conference Tournament, securing the sixth seed following a tie vs USC Upstate. The game on Saturday was a physical affair, culminating in 21 total fouls with seven yellow cards on the day, with five being attributed to Radford.

After just four shots total in the first half the Spartans came out of the halftime break aggressively putting pressure on the goal. In the 50th minute USC Upstate's leading scorer Oskar Kauffman got free on the left wing after a bad pass and attempted the go ahead shot. Goalkeeper **Ben Miller** made a diving save but deflected the ball back into the box. Three more Highlanders sprinted back to the ball and made deflections to keep the score 0-0. **Miller had two more saves in the final ten minutes to seal the tie and send the High's to the postseason.** The tournament will start on November 5th and Radford will play Presbyterian College in the first round.



Freshman Anton Jerga (top left) and sophomore Devin Conway vs USC Upstate Photo Credit: Brandon Whitaker

Cross Country Women's Team Earns 3rd Place Finish, Men's Finish 5th in Championship Races

The Big South Cross Country Championships wrapped up on Friday with the women's team finishing third and the men's team fifth. Senior **Sophie Magson** finished first for Radford and sixth overall with a time of 17:48.4 and earned first team all-conference honors. Grad student **Delaney Eller** finished second and 15th overall and earned the women's newcomer of the year award, becoming the first to win it in program history. Sophomore **Katelyn Campbell** was recognized for her work in the classroom earning all-academic team honors. First for the men's team was senior **Charlie Dance**, finishing sixth overall and earning first team all-conference honors. Senior **Hayat Khan** received the Big South Scholar Athlete of the Year award for maintaining a 3.98 GPA. Next for Radford Cross Country will be the NCAA Southeast Regionals in Charlottesville on November 14th.