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Radford University
Student Newspaper

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Annual "Fall Into the New" Event Brings New River Valley Together

By: ABIGAIL STEPP
alstepp@radford.edu

On Saturday, Aug. 29, more than 100 people gathered at Bisset Park along the banks of the New River for Fall Into the New, an annual cleanup that gives New River Valley residents an opportunity to help preserve the river and surrounding communities.

Volunteers included young families, seniors, Radford students, and other members of the local community. The volunteers spent the morning collecting trash and debris from the riverbanks and the surrounding grounds of Bisset Park. Some groups took to the water in kayaks, canoes, and paddleboards to scoop litter from the river and sections of the water's edge inaccessible from the park. By noon, volunteers were wet, dirty, and tired, but they had helped remove trash from the river and park.



Photo Credit: @newriverconservancy on Instagram - newriverconservancy.org



Photo Credit: @newriverconservancy on Instagram - newriverconservancy.org

Since 2007, the Giles County committee Renew the New has sponsored community cleanups every spring and fall along the 37 miles of the New River that flows through Giles County. In 2017, the organization expanded to the wider NRV region, collaborating with neighboring counties Pulaski, Montgomery, and Floyd as well as the city of Radford. In the past 25 years, volunteers have contributed approximately 32,000 hours and collected an estimated 225 tons of trash and 5,000 tires from the New River. According to renewthenew.org, this year 351 volunteers worked at the Giles County and Radford sites to collect 165 bags of trash and 92 tires from the water and its banks. This year's cleanup added to more than two decades of volunteer efforts to remove litter from the New River and its banks. More information about future volunteer opportunities is available at renewthenew.org.

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the Tartan Staff
Fall 2026

Editor in Chief: Brandon Whitaker
Assistant Editor: Baylee Peterson

Staff Writers:
Rylee Meadows
Lacey Banks
Amanda Farlow
Rylee Lyons
Angelina Capots - Cooper Lucas
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Matthew Rutley

Photographers:
Morgan Wade
Haley Celso Rosas
Hailey Hutchison

the Tartan Presents: The Club Corner

Upcoming Events:

RAD Talk: The History of Radford through Artifacts

Sept. 8, 7 p.m.
Andrew Ross Student Art Gallery-McConnell Library

The Radford University Office of the Provost will host Ashley Palazzo, university archivist/head of Archives and Special Collections as the next RAD Talks speaker. She will use McConnell Library's archives and special collections to talk about the artifacts that have shaped Radford University into what it is today.

University Performance Series: The Jason Carter Band

Sept. 19, 7:30 p.m.
Main Stage Theatre - Artis Center

Three-time Grammy winner and six-time IBMA Fiddle Player of the Year, Jason Carter, brings The Jason Carter Band to the Main Stage Theatre in the Artis Center on Sept. 19, 2026 as the first event in the University Performance Series for the 26-27 season. Special guests, Denim & Plaid. Tickets are on sale now.

Family and Friends Weekend

Friday, Sept. 18 - Sunday, Sept. 20

Mark your calendar to join the campus community in celebrating Family and Friends Weekend. It is free to all visitors, families and friends alike. Events include the campus cookout on Sept. 19, multiple planetarium shows and the annual Family Weekend Dog Show. Certain events are ticketed and meals may include additional costs. **You can find more information**

Reach out to tartan@radford.edu or visit @rutartan on Instagram for interview/advertising inquiries

Senior Artist Showcases the Art in Architecture with New Collection

By: ANGELINA CAPOTS
acapots@radford.edu

Buildings that often fade into the background of everyday life take center stage in senior Kaylee Ligon's photography exhibit at the Andrew Ross Gallery. Ligon invites viewers to examine the structures that surround us from a different perspective. The pieces emphasize the artistry within the architecture. Her collection is described as a "display of abstract architecture," highlighting underappreciated shapes and perspectives.

Growing up, Ligon was surrounded by many artistic influences that shaped her own artistic drive. She was inspired by her father's bathroom and kitchen designs and developed an appreciation for many art styles through her aunt and grandmother's art store. Ligon said she would follow her father to work, often finding herself "sketching out rooms and buildings on scrap pieces of paper." She made artistic connections with customers at the store who shared their work, such as "a woman who once came in, she taught me how to make origami jumping frogs … that's something I still remember how to do to this day." Because of these experiences, Ligon has developed an appreciation for the beauty in things that others may not always notice.

Ligon's original project was driven by her interest in Brutalist architecture. "It's something commonly hated by most people … I think it's so interesting how geometric the buildings are. They are so intimidating, a lot of times they are made out of concrete, which gives an interesting harder texture to them, and I started to seek out more brutalist buildings … I was fascinated by them and kept searching for them," Ligon said. She mapped out buildings in both Blacksburg and Richmond, originally trying to avoid greenery to highlight the architecture.

"In a lot of the first few photos, I took out a lot of the trees … The further I got, especially in Richmond, which was my last location, I couldn't escape the trees … they were everywhere. I got to a point where, like the structure, I felt like I should embrace the greenery and the trees."



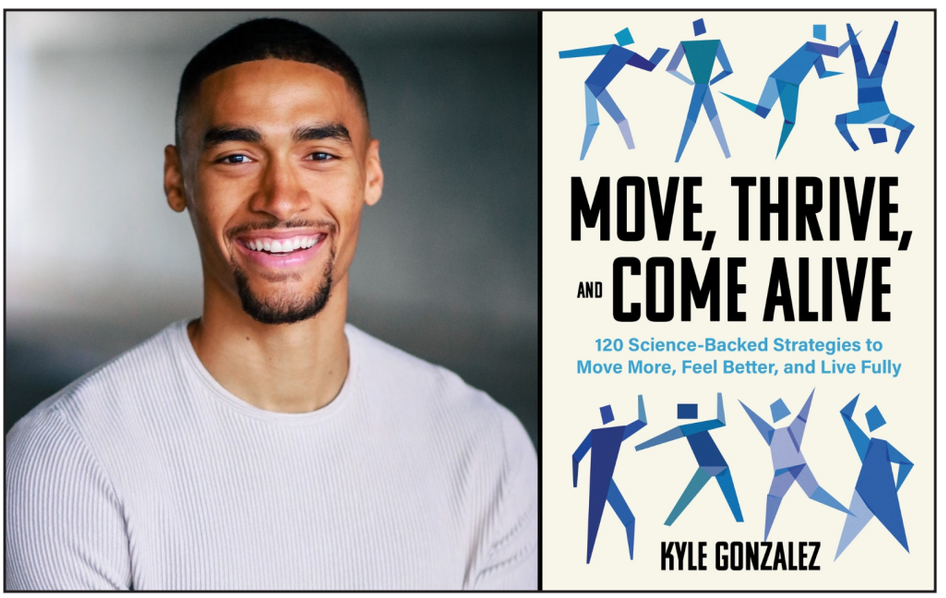
Kaylee Ligon Photo Credit: Angelina Capots

Her pieces were first presented in thecontemporary photography class last fall. When she laid out the photos, both Ligon and professor Sal Privertera felt that these pieces were already a show on their own, only missing a space to show them. Ligon reached out to Ross Gallery curator Nathan Popp, asking if it was possible to present her work in McConnell Library. The collection is now displayed in the Andrew Ross Gallery, where a reception was held Aug. 28 to celebrate her work. Ligon said she is grateful for her professor and the curator of the gallery. **"Not only has this opened many doors and opportunities for me, but for many other students as well."**

Ligon's collection, The Beauty in Structure, is on display from Aug. 18 through Oct. 2 in the Andrew Ross Gallery on the third floor of McConnell Library.

Radford Alumnus Releases New Book Encouraging Readers to Stay Active

By: BRANDON WHITAKER
bmwhitaker@radford.edu



Kyle Gonzalez and the cover of his latest book Photo Credit: Agate Publishing

When Kyle Gonzales graduated from Radford University with a degree in exercise science, he knew he wanted to set himself apart. For Gonzales, studying the human body and the ways we exercise and stay active wasn't just a career path; it became a part of who he is today. He fell in love with the process of bettering himself through action, a passion that took him from parks and gymnasiums in Northern Virginia to playing under the lights at the Dedmon Center and now, publishing his second book.

His latest book, Move, Thrive, and Come Alive, aims to teach people how to incorporate movement into their daily lives, rethink their habits and combat the sedentary lifestyle that has become increasingly common. The book is described as "120 Science-Backed Strategies to Move More, Feel Better, and Live Fully."

From a young age, health-related topics were always a part of the conversation in the Gonzales household. His mother worked in healthcare for more than 20 years, and his father died of colon cancer. Those experiences made health impossible to ignore for Gonzales. Growing up in that environment led him to take a more scientific approach to health and fitness.
"For me, sports were kind of the thread. I played football, I played basketball, I played all the sports. I ran track, and growing up I started to have this fascination with the human body and how to get the most out of myself … I was a late bloomer. I wasn't the tallest, wasn't the strongest or the fittest, but I knew that if I kept showing up, I could get better, and I was kind of addicted to the process of getting better."

Gonzales continued to deepen his understanding of fitness and human performance. He researched supplements and recovery methods such as cold therapy
"I was an experimenter, and I loved the fact that if I did something and was consistent with it, I could see myself improve. Sports got me started and then seeing improvement and continuing to be curious about the human body kept me going and continued throughout my high school and college career."

Once Gonzales finished high school and learned that Radford had an exercise science program, he knew where he was heading to college. He set a goal of trying out for the men's basketball team and ultimately walked on as a freshman. He played on the team from 2013 to 2016 while his curiosity for exercise continued to grow.
"Every class I showed up to it was like, 'Whoa there's even more that I still don't know about' and for me that was encouraging because I realized there was more information I could dive into, and so year after year I kept getting more intrigued with what I could learn."



Gonzales blocks a layup attempt against UNC Asheville
Photo Credit: citizen-times.com

Gonzales would later receive his master's degree at James Madison University and after that, he began brainstorming ways he could share what he had learned with the world.

He started a community newsletter where he shared tips for staying active with friends and family. He started a hashtag on social media, #ManOnAMission where he would make a point to share what he was doing each day to stay active. **"My mantra was man on a mission and thinking less of 'all or nothing' and more of 'always something'**. That started seven or eight years ago and it's something I continue to this day. I can probably count on one hand how many days I've missed not doing anything exercise-related. **I do that to show people that it takes nothing to show up; all it takes is a little bit of attitude and effort. It doesn't take anything that's not already within every one of us."**

These pursuits led Gonzales to create a multimedia space where he could share tips for improving people's health and staying active. His first book, The Vitality System, started as a fitness guide and later became the name of Gonzales' website where he continues to post articles and record podcasts to help people stay healthy.

"Movement and exercise shouldn't just be a box that we check. It should be something that we can integrate joyfully … The world pushes us for convenience, for efficiency. How can we fight against the grain and break free from the sedentary lifestyle and rediscover the joy of movement? … I hope that all people can understand the resources and tools they have available to them, not only on Radford's campus but also in everyday life."

Move, Thrive, and Come Alive is available on all major bookselling platforms and you can find more of Gonzales' work by visiting www.thevitalitysystem.co.

A Closer Look at Collegiate Mental Health

By: JOELLE WATKINS
jwatkins31@radford.edu

As Radford University students seek help for their mental health, many learn about **Student Counseling Services** through information shared around campus. How that information reaches students varies, which can create confusion about what to expect from Radford's mental health services and whether students should seek help at all. At the same time, questions arise among students about whether Radford's outreach can keep pace with rising student demand.

How the Center Operates

SCS provides **free, confidential mental health services for eligible Radford students**. The counseling center is a short-term model. They have traditional counseling which includes six 50-minute sessions or concise counseling including 12 30-minute sessions for one semester. However, if students need long-term care, the counseling center will ask if the student would like a referral to places like New River Valley Community Services (NRVCS), a public provider for mental health treatment that offers outpatient services and a crisis center.

Rise in Student Demand

Even with the short-term model, David Diana, the director of Student Counseling Services, shared that there has been an increase in students coming to the counseling

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center. The data from the 2024-25 academic year shows there has been a 40-50% increase in incoming students. **"People are recognizing, I can get the help and that's okay, and so, that's why I think more students are coming in," Diana said**. There has been an uptick in students that have greater awareness and reduced stigma around seeking help. A 2024 Pew Research Center survey found that **50% of U.S. adults were extremely or very comfortable talking about their mental health with a therapist.** According to the Center for Collegiate Mental Health, **the percentage of students who have used counseling services with prior counseling in 2025 reached 64.4%, the highest level in the organization's 13-year data set**. The finding comes as conversations around mental health and treatment have become more common on college campuses. However, Diana does note that the students "are coming in with more concerns than I've seen in my 40-year career."

Common Mental Health Concerns

According to CCMH, the top concern among students in counseling centers is anxiety. 24.5% identified anxiety as a top concern, while 64.9% were experiencing anxiety. The second biggest concern and experience is stress with 7.2% saying it is a top concern and 48.5% experiencing it. However, according to the Healthy Minds Study students experiencing moderate-to-severe anxiety symptoms have gone down from 37% in 2022 to 32% in 2025.

Even though there has been a slight drop in anxiety, depression, and loneliness, young adults still have negative views around their mental health, **according to Pew Research Center. They say that 36% of adults younger than 30 view their mental health as fair or poor. Pew also reports that roughly two in 10 adults say they are doing well managing their stress**.

Expanding Support

Diana said the center is working to expand its outreach. **"My goal is for us to do more programming out there among students and student organizations as well."** Diana said. He hopes that after Radford's most recent Healthy Minds Survey the Student Counseling Center and Substance and Violence Education Support can use that data to bring in programs that'll get information out and expand further into Radford University's campus. Diana thinks it would be great if the center could expand the Mental Health First Aid training class to the Radford University community and Radford city community, "so they recognize people who are struggling with suicidal ideation" Diana said. He wants to expand into the sororities and fraternities on Radford's campus as well. Saying that the counseling center "would be more than happy to go in and do some training with them." Leading to more students becoming trained ambassadors that can recognize signs and symptoms on campus.



USS Abraham Lincoln Ports in Thailand after Record Long Deployment

By: *JACQUELYN DWYER*
jvdwyer@radford.edu



USS Abraham Lincoln Photo Credit: Anthony Wallce/AFP/Getty Images

The USS Abraham Lincoln, which carried about 5,000 crew members, arrived at Laem Chabang, Thailand, on Sept. 2 after a 286-day deployment supporting U.S. military operations against Iran.

According to a Statement from Acting Secretary of the Navy Hung Cao, the ship dropped 1.5 million pounds of ordnance and completed more than 10,000 sorties. Reports say the Lincoln surpassed the previous record for consecutive days at sea; The Associated Press reports 264 consecutive days at sea. When a reporter asked if the deployment had gone on long enough, President Donald Trump said, "Not nearly long enough."

During the nine months at sea reports mentioned concerns over food shortages raised from crew members and their families. Concerns for the mental health of the crew were also raised as there were reports of at least two sailors attempting to jump overboard. Official statements from the U.S. Navy dispute that reports of suicidal ideation had increased. U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal wrote to Cao and Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth with these concerns after the USS Lincoln was nearing seven months at sea."There have been widespread reports of shortages of basic supplies, water contamination, plumbing issues, deteriorating mental health, deck safety concerns, and disruptions in the mail system, which have caused many care packages in route to the ship to be lost in transit for months," Blumenthal wrote. "Completely misrepresented," **Hegseth said. "Some deployments are longer than others and I have more respect and gratitude for those sailors than anybody."**

During the extended days at sea, families worried about the mental health of the sailors. In an interview with Military Times, Annabelle Loma received a call from the ship's ombudsman that her husband attempted to jump from the aircraft carrier. **"He's scared," Loma said. "He thinks he'll get a dishonorable discharge, and just because he was burnt out, his 13-year career is ruined, just like that. That's not fair, that's not right."**
According to the New York Times, seven sailors confirmed that the months at sea "sapped their supplies and morale." One sailor asked, "Did they think for a moment about the mental health of those aboard the Lincoln?"

The USS Lincoln docked in Thailand, giving sailors a five-day break from the sea. Families await the return of the 5,000 crew members who will travel to thier home port in San Diego after Thailand.

Highlander Highlights

Men's Soccer

Senior Day Shutout Gives Highlanders Momentum

By: *BRANDON WHITAKER*

Saturday's men's soccer match featured an early season senior day celebration and a dominant 3-0 win. The Highlanders faced off against Bob Jones University and made their presence felt early. Three minutes into the match Radford had a corner kick opportunitiy just behind the opposing fans at Cupp Stadium. Senior **Noel Zimbeva** sent a looping pass over to **Jayce Pagano** who knocked in a header for the first score of the contest.

The rest of the Highlanders honed in on defense, preventing the Bruins from attempting any shots in the first half and preserving a 1-0 lead into the break. In the second half it was **Martin Desir** who added a goal in minute 46. Later on junior defender **Carter McClain** had a breakaway one-on-one opportunity against the opposing goalkeeper and rifled a shot past him for the third Highlander goal. After the game Head Coach Andy Cormack shared his thoughts on the young season and his senior leaders. **"I told them in the locker room before the game that you've only been here a few weeks but you've already made our program better, and you'll leave here making this program better than it was when you came in."** The Tartan also spoke with senior forward and transfer Noel Zimbeva about his journey through collegiate soccer. **"It's superb, for me as an international player you never know what to expect because I didn't know the levels ... the highest you can go is division one and that where I am now. So I would say the objective has been completed and now it's just, embrace the dream because I am living the dream right now."**



Left to right; Head coach Andy Cormack, #13 Joseph Slaske, #1 Zack Murphy, #10 Noel Zimbeva, #12 Skyler Denny assistant coach Alex Palmbaum Photo Credit: @rsimmonsphotographer on Instagram

Women's Soccer

Highlanders Fall to Navy After Early Red Card

By: *ANDREW MARCHETTI*

Radford Women's Soccer fell 5-0 to Navy on Thursday, as an early red card put the Highlanders at a disadvantage for nearly the entire match.

Senior **Caitlyn Nottingham** was sent off the field just 2:43 into the game after officials declared after review she denied Navy a clear scoring opportunity. Despite losing one of their starting defenders, Radford's defense held strong early and kept Navy off the scoreboard for more than 25 minutes. Navy eventually broke through with 16:55 remaining in the first half when Navy's Jessica Black scored after a Radford turnover in the box. The midshipmen took a 1-0 lead into halftime. Navy quickly extended its advantage in the second half, scoring four more goals to pull away. Despite the loss, Radford's goalkeeper **Lexi Radvanyi** recorded five saves, while **Brooke Pearson** provided one of the Highlanders' best offensive chances, sending a long range shot just wide of the goal.

Navy dominated the shot battle 22-4 and controlled the tempo throughout the match. The loss was Radford's worst since a 0-5 defeat at West Virginia on Aug. 18, 2024.

Upcoming Radford Athletics Home Games: **Volleyball vs Liberty** Sept. 8 @ 6 p.m. | **Women's Soccer vs ETSU** Sept. 13 @ 7 p.m.