

June 2019

VAPT News

NEWS



Virginia's
June 2019
Pupil
Transportation
Conference
a HUGE
Success!



Evacuation Drill



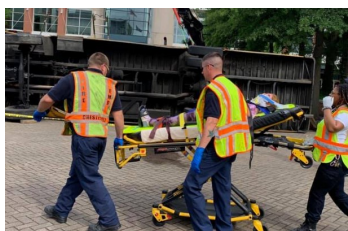
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Newsletter: Beth Brown, Frederick County



From the Opening Session to the last business meeting, the VAPT Conference was a great success! Thanks to everyone! "In an Instant" was very interesting and captured the attention of more than pupil transportation professionals. Emergency Personnel from the Richmond, Virginia area used it as a training tool as well as structuring this mock accident to help Virginia Pupil Transportation Staff get a feel of what an accident like this is and how being prepared as a school division and transportation department is crucial to the safety of our students and the public. News Crews were able to capture this situation on the news for the Richmond area. VAPT President Cheryl Fisher stated that "This entire conference was a well-attended, informative conference. I encourage departments all over the state to be proactive and teach drivers to take care of our students across this great state."

2018 Virginia's "Best" School Bus Technician Competition

- Thanks to our 2019 Sponsors:**
- Sonny Merryman, Inc
 - Kingmor Supply, Inc
 - Bluebird Bus Sales of Virginia
 - National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence



Lee Sutton
Hanover County



- 1st Place: Lee Sutton, Hanover County**
 2nd Place: Greg Elrod, Loudoun County
 3rd Place: Carl Belew, Jr., Louisa County

Each contestant competed in a written exam and hands-on exercises.

2019 Technicians Committee

- Bob Clinebell, Norfolk Public Schools
- Dave Preston, Kingmor Supply, Inc
- Brady Childress, Sonny Merryman, Inc
- Billy Estes, Williamsburg/James City County Public Schools
- Donald Ertel, Bluebird Bus Sales of Virginia



2019-2020 Public Pupil Transportation Scholars Announced

Each year, through a scholarship endowment established by the Merryman Family, Virginia Tech provides scholarship awards to deserving Tech students from across the Commonwealth whose parents or grandparents are current or former employees in the state's pupil transportation community. The 2019-2020 recipients of the scholarship awards were recognized at the VAPT Awards Banquet in June. The eight scholars are shown below along with their hometown high school and family member who is affiliated with pupil transportation. The VAPT wishes to congratulate these individuals for being selected!

Best Wishes!



Melanie Candray-Rios
Prince William County

graduated from C.D. Hyton Senior High School in Prince William County. She is from Woodbridge. Her mother, Ana Evelin, Rios De Candray has been a School Bus driver for Prince William since October 2017.



Brianna Whitmore
Southampton County

Graduated from Southampton High School. Her grandmother, Barbara Whitmore drove from 1976-1985 in Suffolk, Va.



Prasanna Joshi
Fairfax County, VA

graduated from Mount Vernon High School. His father, Prabin Joshi drove a school bus for Fairfax County, Virginia from September 2007 to March 2018.

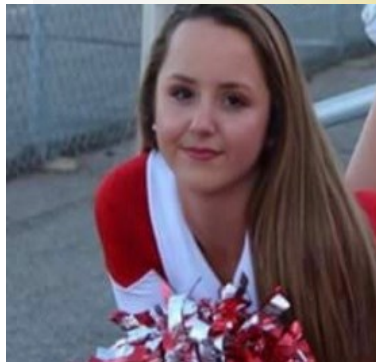


Dayna Lafferty
Tazewell County

graduated from Tazewell High School Her grandfather, Bill Neel was a bus driver for the county from 1969 to 2005.



Scholarship
Winners



Emily Moore
Pittsylvania County

Graduated from Tunstall High School. Her father has been a school bus mechanic since October 2018.



Caleb Todd
Craig County

graduated from Craig County High School. His father, Christopher Todd has been a bus mechanic for the county since 1999 in nearby Montgomery County.



Ryan Yankey
Fairfax County

Graduated from West Springfield High. His grandparent, Dennis Yankey was a driver from 2003—2013.



Washington, DC Area Camp Bus Plows through Flooded Waters Over Bridge

On a webpage: townhall.com authored by Michele Blood on July 8, 2019 stated that ABC 7's Transportation Reporter, Sam Sweeney, shows a passenger-filled bus from Valley Mill Camp crossing a dangerously flooded bridge in Montgomery County, MD. "The small school bus, carrying several passengers [from Valley Mill Camp] approached the bridge on a two-lane road". There was a major rain storm in the areas of Washington DC, Arlington and Alexandria, Virginia on Monday morning. There were numerous videos making their way to social media and this one was particularly alarming. Torrential rainfall crossing DC metro areas during the morning commutes and numerous flash floods were in effect. Valley Mill summer camp is a sixty acre Washington DC area camp that "emphasizes the development of group cohesiveness and or resilience through outdoor challenges."

Source: <https://townhall.com/tipsheet/micheleblood/2019/07/08/dc-area-camp-bus-plows-over-flooded-bridge-n2549697>



Source: National Weather Service

Don't underestimate the power of water!

6 inches of fast-moving water can knock over and carry away an adult.

12 inches of fast-moving water can carry away a small car.

18-24 inches of fast-moving water can carry away most large SUVs, vans and trucks.

Bus Crash in March 2019 reveals Serial Killer in Virginia!



A Virginia man whose work with a traveling carnival may have taken him up and down the Eastern seaboard is now feared to be a serial killer after he allegedly confessed to the killings of two women and a girl who were shot dead over the course of 18 days. News Channel 11 Staff person, Ashley Sharp reported on May 14, 2019 that "Authorities in Washington County, Virginia say the fact that a suspected serial killer was involved in a bus crash (in March 2019) could have saved others. Those same authorities revealed Monday that a man named James Michael Wright (23 years old) admitted to



killing three women in Washington County, Virginia. Two of those women's bodies, those of Elizabeth Vanmeter and Jocelyn Alsup, were found in shallow graves by investigators. Authorities are still searching for the body of a Johnson City mother Athina Hopson (25 of Johnson City, Tennessee. She was reported missing March 21st by a cousin who told investigators he had picked her up four days earlier so she could clean his house. But, she never returned and two days later, he was involved in a horrific car crash. He veered over the center of the road and collided headfirst with a school bus. Everyone on the bus was unharmed, but, the crash totaled his pickup and left him with a broken leg, hip and arm. His Facebook post revealed numerous well wishes from coworkers and friends. However, one comment was left during this time of a different kind of urgency. "Have you seen Athina, "her father wrote to Wright. "She is missing people say she was with you...this is her dad."

Commonwealth Attorney Josh Cumbow said they hope evidence was collected that will lead to more answers and a motive. Wright has reportedly told investigators all three deaths were accidents. The driver of the pickup, Wright, was airlifted to the hospital. This crash led investigators to find

Hopson's cousin, Alyssa Chapman, told WJHL-TV she also reached out to Wright to find out where she might be, and she said he claimed to have dropped her off at Chapman's apartment before the collision occurred. Chapman didn't believe Wright and she contacted police. Authorities exercising a search warrant looked through Wright's damaged truck said they found Hopson's cellphone inside the vehicle, and another warrant allowing investigators to search Wright's home was issued. That same day, Wright allegedly told police he shot and killed Hopson the day he picked her up from her cousin's home. Hers was the last in a series of three killings for which Wright allegedly claimed responsibility.

Police said he told them he shot and killed 17-year-old Joslyn Alsup on March 9, one day after she was reported missing from Cobb County, Georgia. Police said he also confessed to killing 22-year-old Elizabeth Marie Vanmeter, of Carter County, Tennessee, on Feb. 28. Vanmeter, who was described in court documents obtained by WCYB-TV as cognitively disabled with the mental capacity of a 13-year-old, was reported missing by her parents March 17. On the evening Wright allegedly killed Vanmeter, he posted a meme on Facebook that said: "I know there's a special place in hell for me. It's called a throne."

Wright claimed to have fatally shot Vanmeter after they argued, according to police.

Police said Wright told them he accidentally shot Hopson twice in the head. He allegedly said they were taking a walk when he tripped and shot her in the head, then tripped and shot her again, court documents said. Wright said all three killings were accidental, officials said. "We find that hard to believe," Washington County Sheriff Fred Newman told reporters Monday. Investigators said they found Vanmeter and Alsup's bodies on Wright's property. One victim was buried in a shallow grave, while the other was near and under logs, officials said.

A gun was also recovered that police said they believe was used in all three killings. Police said Wright told them he threw Hopson's body into a river. Wright allegedly said he was transporting her body in the back of his truck when it fell out and rolled down an embankment near the bridge on Norkyke Road, officials said. Cops said he told them he then placed her body in the river. The search for her body is ongoing.

The victims met Wright through the James H. Drew Carnival, where he was employed as a sub-contractor, police said. It was not immediately clear exactly how the women came into contact with Wright, but officials said Alsup's father worked with Wright at the carnival.

"We're working with that carnival to make a determination of the locations they did set up the carnival and attempt to see if there are missing persons that might have been reported," Newman said. "That carnival traveled extensively, throughout the East Coast," the sheriff's office said.

Wright is being held without bond in the Southwest Virginia Regional Jail in Abingdon. If convicted of the charges he is facing, prosecutors said the death penalty is "definitely" on the table.

Source: <https://www.wjhl.com/uncategorized/authorities-school-bus-crash-may-have-saved-others-from-suspected-serial-killer/>

Source: <https://www.insideedition.com/traveling-carnival-worker-feared-be-serial-killer-after-allegedly-admitting-killing-3-52965>

2019 VAPT Poster Contest Winners:

Division 1 Winners: Kindergarten-2nd Grade

1st Place	Alexander Billie	Grassfield Elementary	Chesapeake
2nd Place	Wyatt Thomon	Bristow Run Elementary	Prince William County
3rd Place	Jason Patterson	Bristow Run Elementary	Prince William County

Division 2 Winners: 3rd–5th Grade

1st Place	Carlee Miller	Bethel Elementary	Gloucester County
2nd Place	Lina Billie	Grassfield Elementary	Chesapeake
3rd Place	Vanvi Nguyen	Bristow Run Elementary	Prince William

Division 3 Winners: 6th–8th Grade

1st Place	Emily Quiroga	Riverbend Middle	Loudoun County
2nd Place	Daliah Minkara	Riverbend Middle	Loudoun County
3rd Place	Caliana Redlin	Dozier Middle	Newport News

Division 4 Winners: Students with EXCEPTIONALITIES

1st Place	Anthony Birchette	Surry County High	Surry County
2nd Place	Marcus Charity	Surry County High	Surry County
3rd Place	Jamari Moody	Surry County High	Surry County

Congratulations

VAPT Poster Contest 2020 REMINDER!

Who May Enter - Anyone enrolled in a public school. Five winning divisions that include: Division #1-Grades K-2; Division #2 –Grades 3-5; Division #3-Grades 6-8; Division #4-Special Education; and Division #5-Computer Aided Drawing (CAD). The first place winner from each division will be entered in the national poster contest. This year’s theme: Red lights mean “STOP”!

Deadline Date - Watch for the DEADLINE—April 2019

Poster Specifications - Completed poster size must be 12” by 18” only, with a one-inch (1”) blank border completely across the bottom of the poster. This space must be available due to printing requirements. If not provided, poster will be disqualified. Poster may be illustrated on the vertical or horizontal axis.

Prizes - Prizes will be awarded for the first, second, and third places in each division as follows:

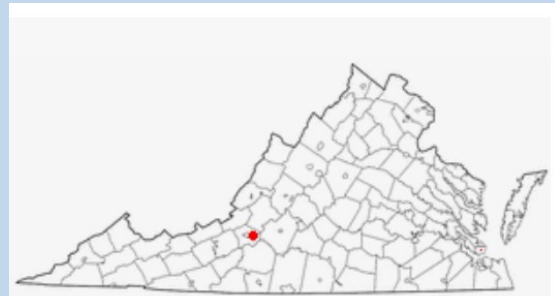
1st Place Winner for each division	\$100.00 Check and Blue Ribbon
2nd Place Winner of each division	\$ 75.00 Check and Red Ribbon
3rd Place Winner of each division	\$ 50.00 Check and White Ribbon

For complete instructions and entry form go to the VAPT website at www.vapt.org

Spotlight on—City of Salem, VA

Salem City, Virginia (according to their website at www.salemva.gov) was founded in 1802. There is much history to this little area with lots to do. The best known early settler was pioneer/patriot Andrew Lewis. He was an experienced frontier fighter and colleague of George Washington. He led colonial forces against the Shawnee at the Battle of Point Pleasant in 1744. After his death, his land was sold and an investor named James Simpson took a portion and named it the Town of Salem. The town continued to grow throughout the years; WWI lost fifteen young men and World War II lost forty-three. The local foundry employed many of its residents to construct the parts for the atomic bombs that ended the war. Back in 1967, the Town of Salem officially became the City of Salem. Progressiveness for this city is apparent through tourism, sports and many events near the Roanoke Valley. Prior to 1983, schools within the Salem City limits were operated by Roanoke County Public Schools. Since '83, the City formed its own school division: Salem City Schools which is a little over 35 years—it’s just a young city!

The **Salem City Public Schools Transportation Department** is led by Lewis Armistead. There are four elementary schools, one middle school and one high school. The school’s mission is to “provide a loving and engaging environment that inspires children to reach their full potential which requires focus while avoiding distractions, being innovative while avoiding fads, and recognizing that we can do anything well, by being strategic and selective to avoid trying to do everything.” (Source: www.salemk12.va.us). The Transportation Department serves approximately 3,875 students utilizing 39 buses and 3 vans; 24 regular routes and 7 special needs routes. There are 30 contracted drivers, 7 contracted aides, and approximately 15 substitute drivers and aides. In a year, this little city travels approximately 320,000 miles to transport their students to and from school.





Above: Vendors are set up for the Trade Show & School Bus Display at the Richmond Convention Center.

Below: Heather Handschin of Prince William County assists the keynote speaker on Monday afternoon. Mr. Paul Mellor, from Success Links presented "Onboard to a Better Memory" by demonstrating the use of bricks and links of chain to simplify how we can remember things and why we forget things we shouldn't.



Right: Round Table Discussions were very well received. Topics such as: Safety, Special Needs, IEP Meetings, Aggressive Students, and other hot topics were discussed.



Virginia Association of Pupil Transportation

Annual 2019 Conference

Richmond, Virginia



Below: Franklin Military Academy Presentation of Colors at the Opening Session on Monday, June 17, 2019

Above: Cheryl Fisher, VAPT President presents opening remarks along with Richmond City Schools Superintendent, Mr. Jason Kamras (middle picture). Michael Wright of Richmond City Schools (top, right pic) performed the National Anthem.





As Virginia schools ready themselves to return to school, transportation staff all over the Commonwealth are busy closing out the 2018-2019 School Year and starting the 2019-2020 School Year! It's been 20 years since all the big rave of Y2K and how it would affect computers and business. Here we are 20 years later and we have so much more technology than ever before. Remember when the trade shows at the conference was small with not many products? Today, there are numerous vendors with the latest and greatest. Innovation surrounds our transportation worlds and it is hard not to want it all. But, really—it's all about safety. What can your drivers do to just be safe? Every school division in the Commonwealth can make a purchase of the best and brightest innovation. But, it takes a skilled driver, a skilled technician, a skilled office worker, dispatcher, and trainer to do the very best work. While Directors work very hard to make magic from the budget they receive, others are working hard to obtain drivers, pass physicals, clean buses, repair buses, and the list goes on. While we prepare to retrieve students, let's encourage everyone to take their time. Everyone is in such a rush that time takes a back seat. We must be vigilant and start the discussion with every employee to be careful, be mindful, be patient, have customer service, and above all—be drug/alcohol/cell free when taking care of our students. Each employee represents the school division they work for—let's be a statewide team without incidents and a superb safety record. Have a great year, everyone!

From your VAPT Team

Looking
Ahead

2020

2020

***Southeastern States Pupil Transportation
and VAPT hold Conferences together 2020!***



Next year's VAPT Conference will be held in conjunction with the **70th Annual Southeastern States Pupil Transportation Conference**! Instead of the conference being held in June 2020 as it has always been, the dates have been moved for the 2020 Year only. It will be July 19th through July 22nd in Hampton, Virginia. Keep an eye on our website for registration and booking information. Mark your calendars now to attend.

According to the SESPTC website, the Southeastern States Pupil Transportation Conference began in 1951 and is the oldest and one of the most prestigious regional conferences on school transportation in the nation. (<https://www.sesptc.com/>).

Delegates from the following states attend this conference: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia.

Virginia Association of Pupil Transportation will combine with the SESPTC to have a very informative conference workshops on a variety of topics. It will be held at the Embassy Suites by Hilton and Hampton Hotel Convention Center and Spa. Plan now to attend!

