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The Declaration

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Today's Edition

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Independence, Virginia

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Three hunters charged

Three hunters have been charged in connection with an alleged deer spotlighting incident that occurred in the Flat Ridge community on Nov. 25.

Virginia Conservation Police Officer Jason Harris charged Roy McKinley Payne of Galax with spotlighting deer, no hunting license, no big game stamp; Richard Lee Poole of Waynesboro with hunting from a motor vehicle, two counts of spotlighting deer, exceeding daily limit; and William D. Poole of Fries, with spotlighting deer and shoot or attempt to take animal from the roadway.

Their trial date is set for Jan. 23, 2012 in Grayson County General District Court.

Harris said three freshly killed deer were found at the scene.

The Grayson County Sheriff's Department and Virginia State Police assisted with the case along with Rugby Fire and Rescue, Independence Fire and Rescue, Baywood Search and Rescue and the Troutdale Rescue Squad.

Public hearing scheduled for Oracle request

The Grayson County Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission will once again receive comments regarding proposed construction of The Oracle Institute's retreat center, known as the Peace Pentagon.

The board and commission will hold their joint public hearing 7 p.m. Dec. 13 in the Grayson County Courthouse courtroom regarding a request from Laura George for a special use permit for "rural commercial recreation use" of the property in western Grayson.

The Oracle Institute is an educational charity dedicated to promoting spiritual enlightenment through study of the scriptures and the teachings of the world's religions, according to its website.

Grayson County Administrator Jonathan Sweet said that the hearing is scheduled "to rehear the original application."

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WHAT DO YOU THINK?

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TREES FOR TROOPS



Photo submitted
FedEx driver Alex Holland is shown wearing the Santa hat given to him when he picked up the trees at Elk Creek.



Top, the FedEx truck was loaded with Christmas trees at Severt's Warehouse in Elk Creek last Wednesday. Right, Carlos Taylor and others loaded the trees at Elk Creek.

Declaration photos by Larry Chambers

TREES BRIGHTEN CHRISTMAS FOR MILITARY BASES

By Larry Chambers
Staff

ELK CREEK – Troops at two military bases received a free Fraser fir Christmas tree last week thanks to the efforts of members of the Mount Rogers Christmas Tree Growers Association.

For the sixth year in a year, Mount Rogers growers donated trees to the Trees for Troops program, which provides trees to servicemen and their families at this special time of the year.

John Rosser of Comers Rock, association president, said there was two drop off points again this year.

Last Monday, growers donated 252 trees, which were loaded on

the FedEx truck at the association's warehouse in Whitetop. Those trees were delivered and distributed to troops and their families at Camp Lejeune Marine Corps Base last Thursday.

Last Wednesday, trees were picked up at Severt's Tree Farm warehouse in Elk Creek from Mount Rogers members in eastern Grayson, Wythe, and Carroll counties. Those trees were distributed last Friday at the Marine Corps Air Station in Cherry Point, N.C.

Sherrie Taylor, Virginia's representative to the National Christmas Tree Assoc., said one grower from Laurel Springs in Alleghany County, N.C., Smokey Holler Tree Farm, drove about 60 miles to deliver their

trees to the Elk Creek drop point.

The trailer from Alleghany County had a layer of snow under the trees. Taylor made a large snowball and placed it among the trees for the trip to Cherry Point.

The Trees for Troops program was launched in 2005, with the support of FedEx Corp., which provided free delivery to more than 50 military bases across the United States and several foreign countries.

Joining FedEx in sponsoring the project are the National Christmas Tree Association, The Christmas Spirit Foundation and other sponsors.

The project was expected to provide more than 100,000 trees this holiday season.

Man arrested after break-ins at Galax businesses

GALAX – A Hillsville man faces six charges following incidents that occurred in Galax.

Police Chief Rick Clark said Nathaniel Templeton, 20, was arrested and charged with offenses that occurred on Nov. 29 and Nov. 30 at two Galax businesses.

Clark said in a news release that on Nov. 29 Galax Police responded to a burglar alarm call at the Valero convenience store on South Main Street and discovered that it had been broken into. Property including cigarettes and merchandise valued at more than \$200 was allegedly stolen.

On Nov. 30 Galax Police responded to the Tobacco and Candle Outlet on East Stuart Drive after an employee discovered that someone had tried to break into the store.

Templeton was charged after he was stopped by Det. J.B. Greer and Capt. James Cox after information was gathered that identified him as a suspect.

Templeton is charged with the burglary of the Valero Store on Nov. 29; destruction of property belonging to the Valero Store on Nov. 29; attempted burglary of the Tobacco and Candle Outlet on Nov. 30; attempted burglary of the Tobacco and Candle Outlet on Nov. 30; contribute to the delinquency of a minor on Nov. 29; contribute to the delinquency of a minor on Nov. 30.

He is being held in the New River Valley Regional Jail in Dublin pending his appearance in Galax General District Court.

Clark said two Hillsville juveniles have been petitioned to appear in Galax Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court and are alleged to have participated in the Nov. 29 burglary of the Valero Store and attempted burglary of the Tobacco and Candle Outlet on Nov. 30.

Also, the Carroll County Sheriff's Department is expected to place charges against the suspects in connection with a burglary that occurred in Carroll County.

Power rates to rise in February

A TYPICAL HOUSEHOLD WILL SEE AN INCREASE OF ABOUT \$7 A MONTH ON THE ELECTRICITY BILL.

Landmark News Service

Electricity customers will pay a mid-winter rate increase to Appalachian Power Co., shelling out an average of 7.4 percent more to run heaters and other appliances.

Effective in February, monthly electric bills will rise from \$94.66 to \$101.66 for a typical household using 1,000 kilowatt-hours of energy, Virginia energy regulators said last Wednesday.

The Virginia State Corporation Commission, ruling on two rate increases sought by the company this past spring, granted the company an additional \$85.1 million in annual revenue.

But the increase comes to just \$4 of every \$10 originally requested. Regulators rejected aspects of both proposals, citing disagreement with some of Appalachian's numbers and analysis.

Of the new revenue granted, \$56.8 million relates to the cost of pollution controls required by state and federal law for the coal-reliant utility. But regulators declined \$33.8 million in other environmental claims asked for by Appalachian.

The rest of the new revenue will stem from a general rate increase, which the utility can seek every two years.

Appalachian officials were still digesting the ruling and a spokesman had only a brief comment.

"Did we get everything we need? No," company spokesman Todd Burns said. "But we did get some of what we need to help cover our increasing expenses."

Prior to the ruling Wednesday, Burns said the company is aware of the burden higher electric bills places on customers. The company has made efforts to keep the rate increase smaller than the amount

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Albany Industries to invest more in Galax plant

Landmark News Service

GALAX — Albany Industries will invest \$700,000 of its own funds for new equipment at its new Galax plant, according to Terry Treadaway, vice president of the company.

This is in addition to a \$2.5 million investment from local and state incentives for equipment, facility upgrades and job placement.

The New Albany, Miss.-based company recently began training and operations at Vaughan Furniture's former B.C. Vaughan plant.

Albany Industries, which makes upholstered household furniture, plans to create 335 new jobs for the area over

three years.

Treadaway said the investment is for its operation to assemble seat cushioning in-house. "This will help make us as self-supported as possible."

Treadaway said the equipment for this operation is already being purchased, and this type of operation will begin at the plant in two months or less.

Treadaway said the company had looked at outsourcing this part of the manufacturing process to a company in Hickory, N.C., but it is more cost-efficient to do it in-house.

Albany Industries will have hired about 25 people to begin its operation this week.

The company has received a \$300,000 grant from the Governor's Opportunity Fund to assist Galax with the project. The Virginia Tobacco Commission approved \$680,000 in Tobacco Region Opportunity Funds for the project.

Through its Virginia Jobs Investment Program, the Virginia Department of Business Assistance will provide funding and services to support the company's recruitment, training and retraining activities. The City of Galax has also provided funding.

Once the product leaves the Galax facility, it will be a completely-assembled piece of furniture and will be distributed to dealers in the eastern states.