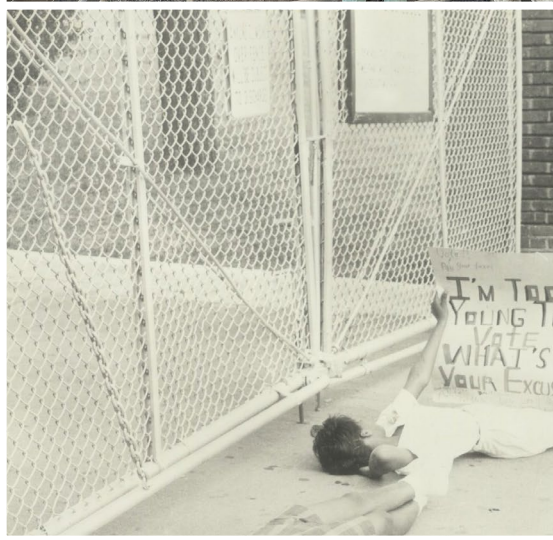
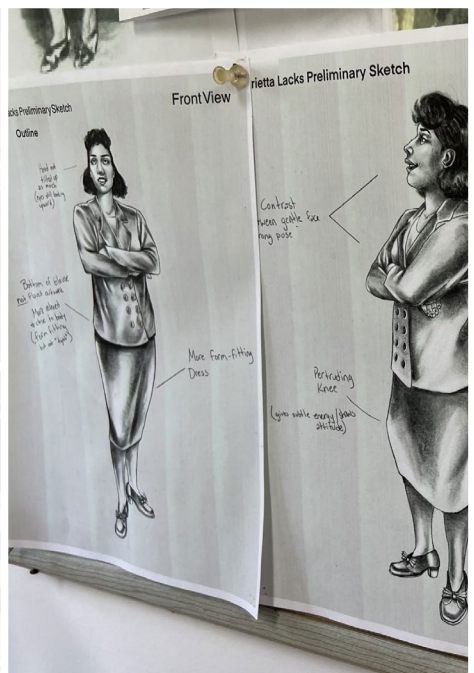
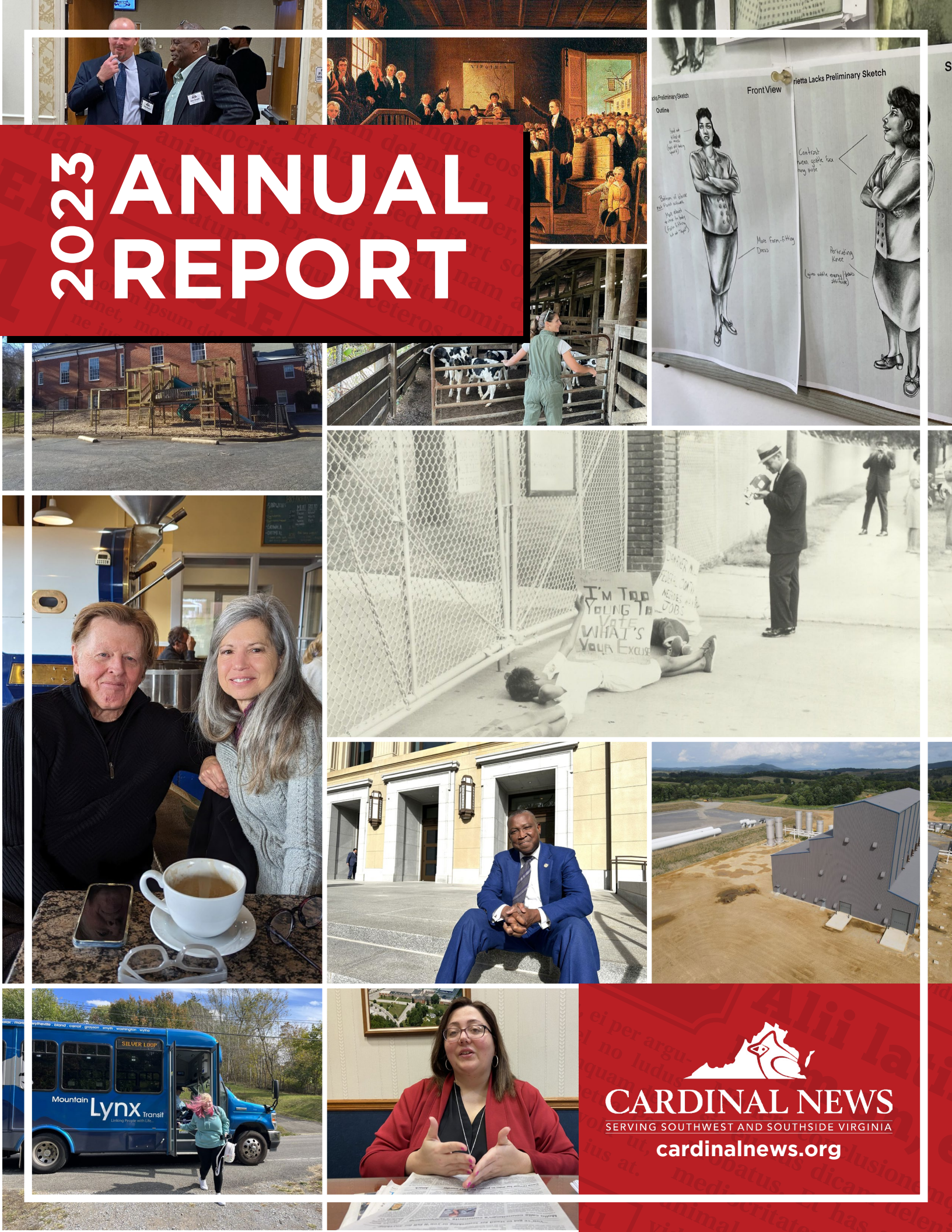


# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



# Contents

Message from Executive Director.....	3
Mission and values.....	4
Staff and board.....	5
Story Impacts.....	6
New projects.....	17
Collaborations.....	17
Awards.....	18
Financial Snapshot.....	19
By the Numbers.....	20
Supporters.....	21



*Courtesy of Eleazar Yisrael and Jeyhoun Allebaugh, Inspired Storytellers*

## Message from Executive Director

When we launched Cardinal News in September 2021, we wanted to tell the types of in-depth, impactful stories that the region's legacy newspapers had abandoned. Our initial goal and bank account were modest. We did not foresee that by the time we completed our first full year that we would have outpaced our 5-year start-up plan and be ranked in the top 10% of Institute for Nonprofit News' members.

We engaged in strategic planning in 2023. We came to the consensus that we were quickly becoming the lead news agency for Southwest and Southside Virginia, and that we would embrace that role. We will focus on excellent journalism and on delivering our stories to people in the forms and on the platforms where they seek to read them.

During 2023, we began using video storytelling. We launched specialty newsletters. We hired another editor and five additional reporters. We also began to build our operations and development staff by hiring a sponsorship manager and development director.

By December, we had doubled the number of readers to our newsletters, and doubled the amount of the support from recurring reader donations. We had increased traffic to our website, ending the year with more than 3.2 million page views.

We're just getting started.

We have been lauded by our national peers for our achievements and our financial stewardship, but we truly would not be able to do this without having such strong support from our fellow Virginians who understand the role independent journalism plays in strong communities.

We are very grateful to our financial supporters and our readers, and especially so to those who are both.

*Luanne Rife*



## Mission and Values

Cardinal News is an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan news site that serves Southwest and Southside Virginia. Our mission is to report the untold stories of Southwest and Southside Virginia, and strengthen the voices of the people in our communities who have been sidelined in the commonwealth's political, economic and cultural conversations simply because of where they live.

We believe people need independent, unbiased information about their communities in order for their communities to be vibrant. Access to our stories is free, as we do not believe one's financial means should create a barrier to independently gathered information.

# Staff and Board

## **Board:**

Chair Caroline Glickman

Debbie Meade

Chris Turnbull

Quinn Graeff

## **Leadership:**

**Executive Director** Luanne Rife

**Executive Editor** Dwayne Yancey

**Managing Editor** Megan Schnabel

**Volunteer Accountant** Tonya Hart

## **Staff:**

**Politics and State Government** Markus Schmidt

**Business** Matt Busse

**Technology** Tad Dickens

**Education** Lisa Rowan

**Health** Emily Schabacker

**Danville** Grace Mamon

**Martinsville** Dean Stephens

**Bristol** Susan Cameron

**Audience Engagement Editor** Brooke Stephenson

**Development Director** Dutchie Jessee

**Sponsorship Manager** Sherry Quinley

**Copy Editor** Erica Myatt



Courtesy of the Danville Historical Society

# STORIES WITH IMPACT



## The first Black speaker of the House of Delegates takes pride in his rural roots



*Markus Schmidt*

I consider this an important piece, not just because it's a very personal look at the first Black speaker of the House of Delegates in its 405-year history, but it also says a lot about a man and his relatability to our readers, and his incredible story of redemption.

[READ THE FULL STORY](#)



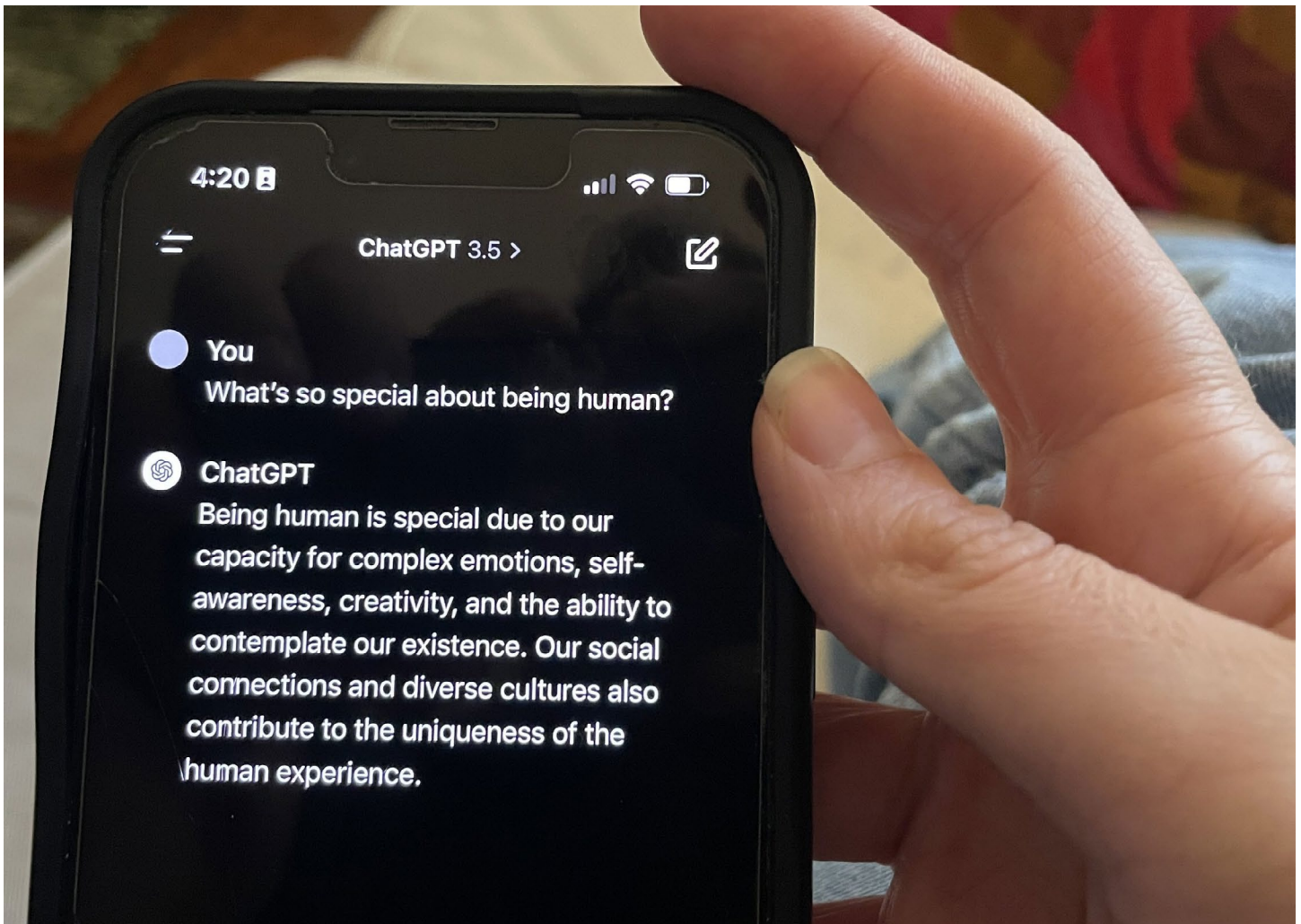
## Glove factory set to bring 2,500 jobs to Wythe County on hold with funding uncertain



*Matt Busse*

This story came about after a reader wrote to us wondering what was going on with that project, which was announced to great fanfare in 2021 but has yet to begin hiring the 2,500 promised jobs. We were the first to report that the business is struggling financially. Other newsrooms, including NPR and The Washington Post, later followed with their own stories. I'm proud of this story because Cardinal News scooped the national news organizations, but more importantly we were able to find answers for the readers we serve.





## **‘An antidote to so much of what ails culture’: A Virginia Tech fellowship aims to bring humanities to tech leadership**



*Tad Dickens*

In a world where technology is increasingly dominant, people are still in charge. A former top executive at Google and Twitter is working at Virginia Tech to make sure that tech professionals have a grounding in humanities. With controversies across social media and the emergence of AI, Rishi Jaitly felt the time was right to develop the Leadership in Technology fellowship.

**READ THE FULL STORY**



## VMI alumni association suspends members who it says misused thousands of email addresses



*Lisa Rowan*

When it comes to impact, my favorite story is definitely the VMI alumni suspension story. I spent so many hours tracking the events and personalities related to the alumni rift at VMI, and am grateful that I had the time to do that background work over the span of 10 months. The political climate at VMI is just an example of battles over diversity, equity and inclusion happening at colleges around the country.



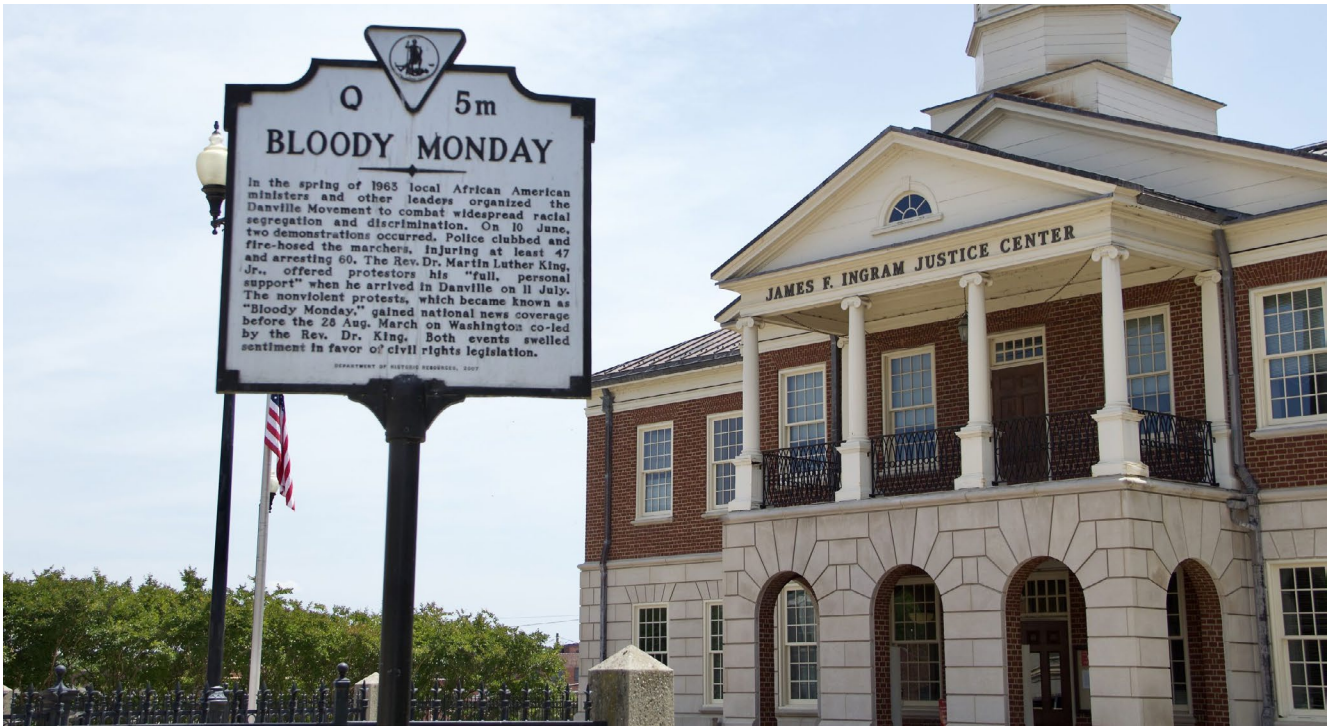
## Virginia's health insurance marketplace debuts with some hiccups, but higher enrollment



*Emily Schabacker*

This story gave me my first opportunity to talk with locals since moving to Virginia. Their experience with enrolling in the state's new health insurance marketplace brought a voice to the consumer experience. Including local voices in news allows us to pinpoint the gaps in government assistance, educates us and helps us better understand the communities we live in.

[READ THE FULL STORY](#)



## 'We're trying to let those voices be heard': Recordings bring Danville's civil rights court cases to life



Grace Mamon

Cardinal's coverage of Bloody Monday included a historical overview of Danville's civil rights movement and interviews with members of the city's Black community who participated in the protests when they were teenagers 60 years ago. We



Courtesy of the Danville Historical Society

also created a collection of other resources and media from the movement, including a gallery of never-before-seen photos of the protests, microfilm of court documents, recordings of testimony from protesters and police officers, an interactive map, and a timeline of events. This project was impactful because the story of Danville's civil rights movement was not discussed by the community in a meaningful way for decades afterwards, and it was also often passed over by institutional historians. Today, there is more of an effort to keep these stories alive as the people who experienced the movement in person grow older, and Cardinal's coverage has aided that mission.



## Warming Center sheds light on invisible problem of homelessness in Martinsville



*Dean Stephens*

This story places a spotlight on one of the city's most readily apparent problems that it hasn't done much to address until recently. Since the publication of this story, the city has done more to, at the very least, acknowledge there is a housing and homelessness problem and I'd like to think this story played a role in that.

[READ THE FULL STORY](#)

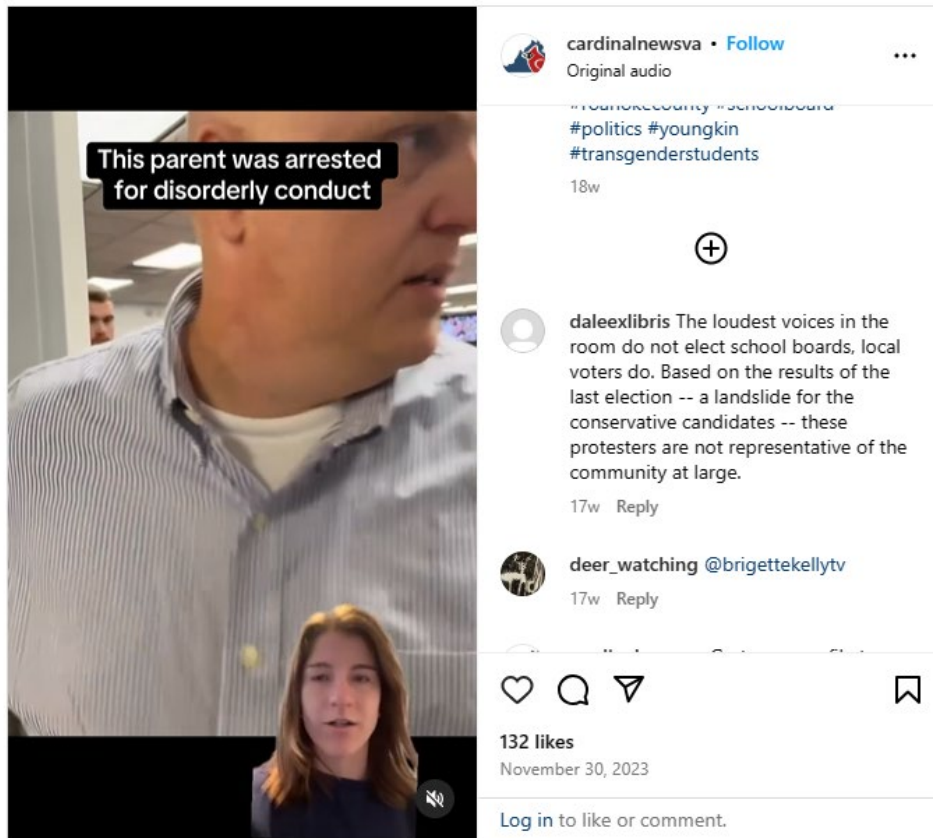


## The 'crazy FOIA lady' used state law to dislodge public records — and improve emergency response times and finances in her town



*Susan Cameron*

This story received the most attention of any story I did last year. People seemed to connect with Laura's story and her persistence. As a reporter, I use and appreciate FOIA and it's great to see a citizen use it to bring about so much needed change. Not only did she get what she was seeking, a change that meant faster response times during emergencies in her town, but all the town council members and some of the town officials left as a result. It seems like the new government is a lot more transparent.



## The Roanoke County School Board



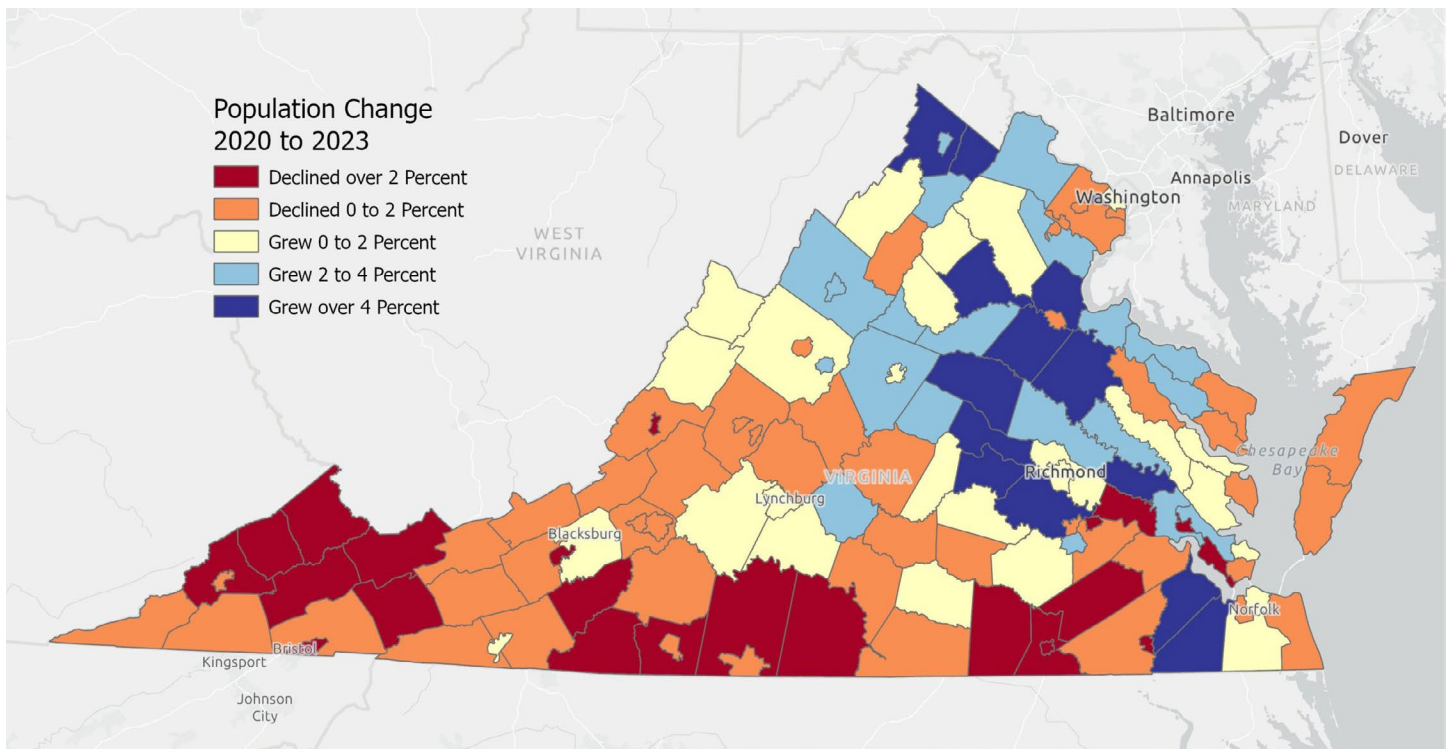
Brooke Stephenson

We tell our stories on Instagram because we know we reach a different, younger audience on that platform. It's also a very shareable format — we often see about 10% of the people who engage with our reels share them with friends. In this way, our posts become a quick way to introduce people to our stories and our organization.

The Roanoke County school board story was an important story to cover. There's an impression that trans issues are an urban problem. Telling this story makes it clear there are trans kids in Southwest Virginia and these debates exist here as well. This story is a microcosm of a larger statewide and national issue.

Finally, there were lots of folks in Roanoke and beyond who were passionate about the story, which makes it 1) easier to find an audience for and 2) worth telling if no one else is doing it like we can.

[READ THE FULL STORY](#)



Courtesy of Hamilton Lombard

## New population figures show Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads losing population, parts of rural Virginia gaining



Dwayne Yancey

This column on Virginia’s demographic trends probably produced more reaction than any other column I wrote. The demographics columns consistently get lots of traffic and I hear lots of comments about how they are re-shaping how political and business leaders think about the state.

**READ THE FULL STORY**



# New features and products

**Cardinal 250:** Cardinal News is embarking on a three-year project to tell the little-known stories of Virginia's role in the march to independence in advance of the nation's observation of its 250th anniversary, or semiquincentennial.

New stories are published monthly to the website and released in a special Cardinal 250 newsletter.

The project is made possible in part by funding from the Virginia American Revolution 250 Commission.

**Obituaries:** Free to families and made possible through a partnership with Regional Obituaries. Published on the website, with listing in the daily newsletter.

**Events Calendar:** Providing a sortable list of events throughout the region that is hosted on the website. A curated list is sent in The Weekend newsletter.

**Sponsorships:** Our five newsletters, including West of the Capital — a weekly political insiders newsletter launched in 2023, and website are now available.

## Notable Collaborations

**The Cardinal Way:** Civility Rules: Cardinal News was selected by the American Press Institute to participate in a nationwide project to promote civic discourse. We partnered with the Roanoke Collaboration Project to give people in our demographically and politically changing communities the tools to engage in constructive dialogue.

**Institute for Nonprofit News Rural News Network:** We were part of a cohort with the Texas Tribune, Mississippi Today, Shasta Scout and KOSU to explore the realities rural students face in higher education.

**University of Missouri School of Journalism:** Audience Team surveyed our readers so we could know more about them.

**Virginia Tech School of Communication:** Taped and broadcast Candidate Forum.

# Awards

## **Institute for Nonprofit News**

Startup of the Year

Finalist INNnovation Award

## **LION Publishers**

Financial Health Award, medium to large tier

Finalist Business of the Year

Outstanding Coverage

Public Service

Product of the Year

## **Local Media Association**

Digital Innovation: Best Event, second place

## **Virginia Press Association**

**21 journalism Awards**, including Best in Show for writing to

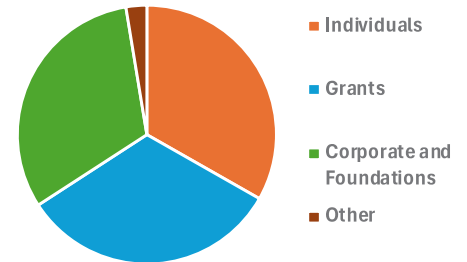
**Megan Schnabel** and **Markus Schmidt**.



# Financial Snapshot

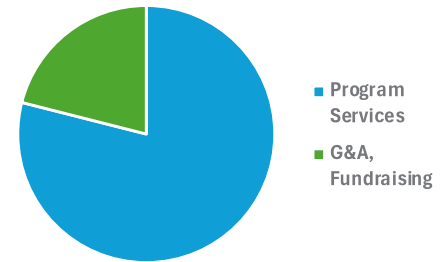
## Revenue and Support

	2023	
Individuals	\$ 440,386	33%
Grants	\$ 432,250	33%
Corporate and Foundations	\$ 418,336	32%
Other	\$ 34,527	3%
Total	<u>\$ 1,325,499</u>	100%



## Expenses

	2023	
Program Services	\$ 875,677	79%
G&A, Fundraising	\$ 233,379	21%
Total	<u>\$ 1,109,056</u>	100%



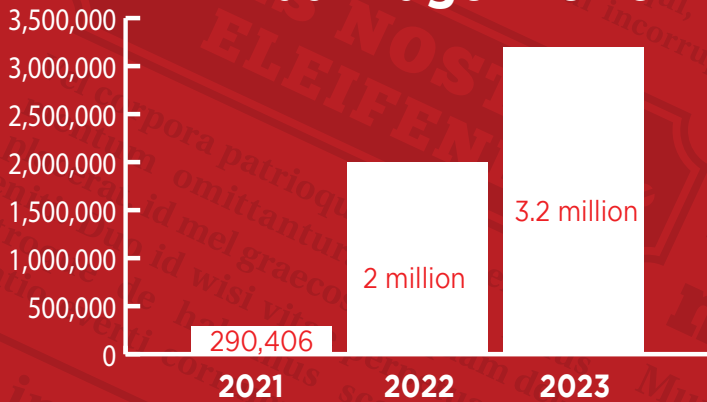
Tonya Hart

In 2023, our major new expenses were adding 7 new positions during the year, with 5 on the editorial side, and investing in a strategic plan with a focus on financial sustainability.

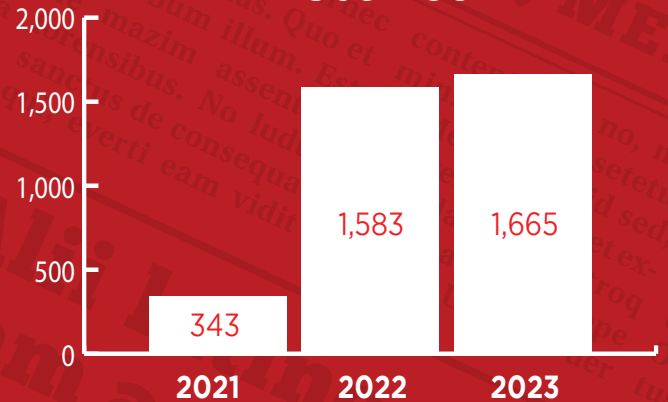


# By the Numbers

## Annual Page Views



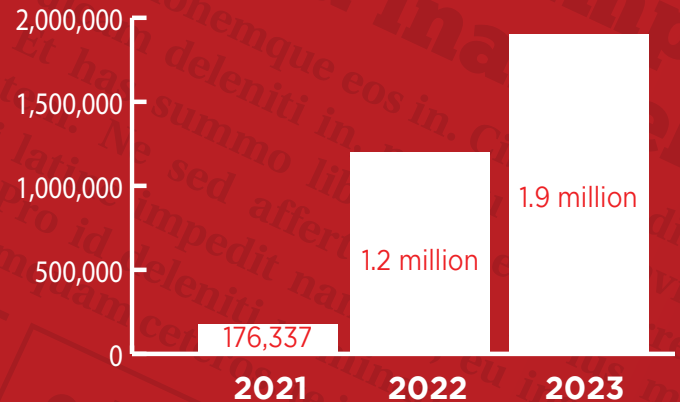
## Stories



## Newsletters Subscribers



## Annual Visitors



### Our 2024 plans include investing in:

**Journalism:** Add a Roanoke reporter and copy editor. Invest in staff development, listening tools and increase impact stories.

**Products:** Add an App and launch Cardinal News 250 podcast.

**Audience Growth:** More outreach, branding, engagement and new opportunities to convert readers to donors.

**Sponsorships:** Create more opportunities for businesses and nonprofits to support Cardinal News and our growing audience.

# Donors

	<u>Donor Count by Category</u>	<u>Total 2023</u>
Editorial Assistants	1,774	\$176,240
Correspondents	205	\$79,765
Pundits	50	\$69,479
Newshounds	7	\$36,189
Muckrakers	10	\$166,850
Above the Fold	3	\$200,000
<u>Publisher's Circle</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>\$566,250</u>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2,054</b>	<b>\$1,294,772</b>

## **Publisher's Circle:** \$100,000 and above

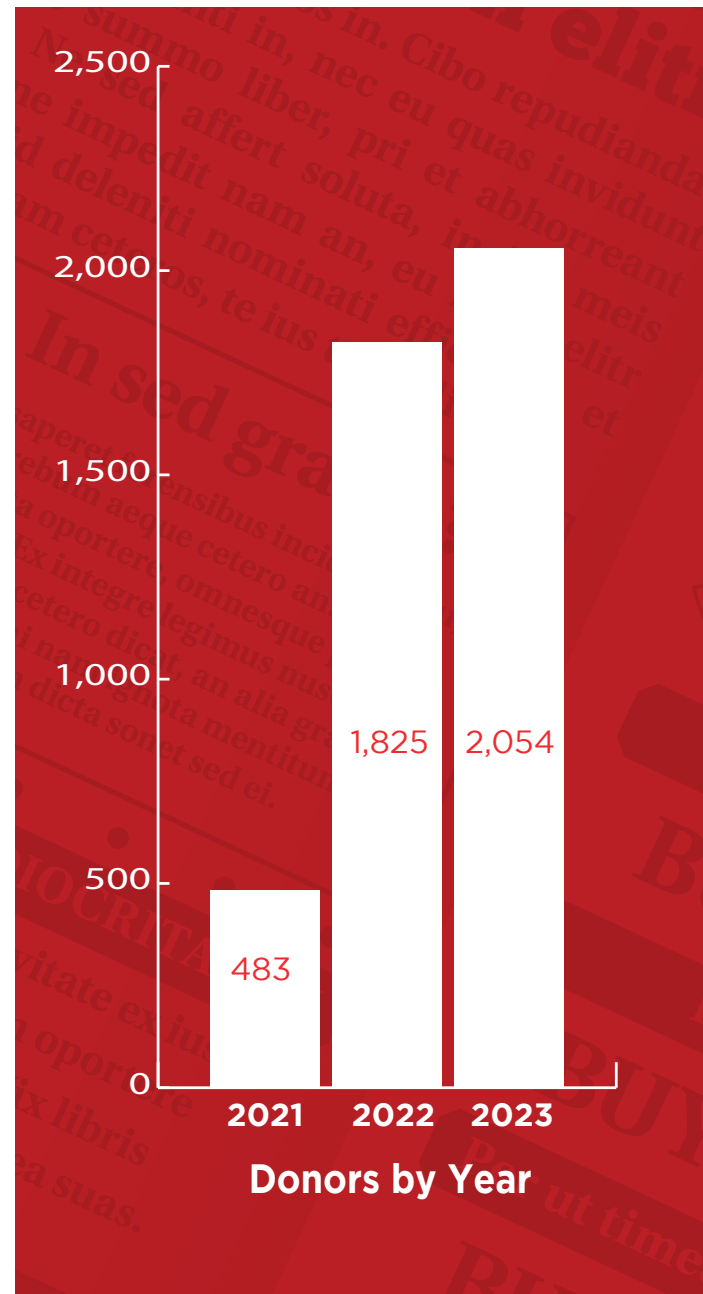
Danville Regional Foundation  
 Dominion Energy  
 The Genan Foundation  
 The Harvest Foundation  
 The Secular Society

## **Above the Fold:** \$50,000 - \$99,999

Carilion Clinic  
 PATH Partnerships / Virginia Funders Network  
 Verge/RAMP

## **Muckrakers:** \$10,000 - \$49,999

Ballad Health  
 Ben and Betty Davenport  
 Dodson Brothers Exterminating Co, Inc.  
 W. Heywood Fralin  
 Fund for Nonprofit News at The Miami Foundation  
 Scott and Quinn Graeff  
 Baron P. Schwartz and Lynn Rainville  
 Walter and Sally Rugaber  
 Virginia American Revolution 250 Commission  
 David Wine



**Donors by Year**

## **Newshounds: \$5,000 - \$9,999**

American Press Institute  
Anderson Investment Co. LLC Tristate Gambling  
Brewer Amusement Company, LLC  
John Buress III  
Anna Lawson  
Debbie Meade  
Morris Family Foundation

## **Pundits: \$1,000 - \$4,999**

Steven Agee	Starlette Johnson	Alex Trower
William & Ellen Baumann	Nancy Kaylor in memory of Steven Kaylor	Christopher Turnbull
Ernest Bentley	Andy Kegley	F. Roger Vaden in honor of Joe Stinnett
Daniel Brown	John and Mary Jean Levin	Venco Business Solutions
Diana Christopulus	John Milliken	Virginia Credit Union in honor of Rob Jones
Robert Clark	Jeffery Mitchell	Virginia Highlands Leadership Fund
J. Clements	Thomas Morris	John and Judy Walker
Warner and Barbara Dalhouse	Elizabeth Obenshain	Richard Wells
Dwayne Yancey Facebook Fundraiser	Beth and Mike OBrochta	John Williamson
James Elmore	Robert Peck	Barry and Libba Wolfe
Nancy Finch	Michael Quillen	Wendy Zomparelli
Beverly and Shirley Fitzpatrick	Luanne Rife	
G. Franklin Flippin	Edward Gralla and Randy Schwartz	
Marvin Gilliam	Trevor Smith	
Richard Gilliam	Raymond Smoot	
Karli Griffeth	John Tedesco	
Michael Hemphill	The Grymes Fund	
Institute of Nonprofit News	The Pozen Spraker Charitable Fund	
J&L Service Company	(Jonah Pozen and Jody Spraker)	
Mary Ann H. Johnson	Linda Thornton	

## Correspondents: \$250 - \$999

Richard Adams	Daniel Culkin	Gordon and Velva Groover
Rebecca Adcock	Jeffrey Culverhouse	Walter Hadlock
Nancy Aden	Rupert Cutler	Barbara Hairfield
James and Lisa Alderman	Janet Davis	John Hall
William Amos	Sandra Davis	Tonya Hart
Stephen Andes	Amy Dawson	James Hartley
Charles Andrews	Brad and Anita Denardo	Carey Harveycutter
Timothy Andriano	Henry Dendy	William and Sudie Heartwell
Jacqueline Archer	Jean Denton	John and Ann Hess
Frank Atkinson	Thomas Denton	John Henry & Joy Peterson Heyrman
Fred Augustine	Robert Denton	Anna Marie Hicks
Jacob Bacharach	Robert & Kathy-Lynn Devereaux	Larry Hincker
Stephen Beck	Ruth Dickerson	Greg Hodges
Laura Benjamin	Ruth Doan	Latala Hodges
Nathaniel Bishop	Michael and Kate Downey	Garrett Hollingsworth
The Blackbaud Giving Fund/Patrick Dixon	Jane Dure	Jeremy Holmes
Erv Blythe	William Elliot	Anne Holton
Barbara Bockner	Stephanie Elms	Peter Howard
Lynne Bolton	Dawn Erdman	Nancy Hulan
Tom Bondurant	Executive Leadership Forum	David Hunt
Jeffrey Bowling	Joseph Ferguson	Robert Hunt
John and Matilda Bradshaw	Michael Finnin	Susan Icove
Bette Brand	Diane Flynt	Daphne Jamison
Bill Broadhurst	Keith Franklin	Anne and James Jennings
Burgher Family Charitable Fund	Barbara Fried	Ben Jennings
E Carlisle	Susan Friedman	Cal Johnson
Jason Carter	James Frith	David Johnson
Francesca Caruso	Connie Froggatt	Kay Johnson
Ann Cassell	Rodney Fultz	Steve Jones
Larry L. Lackey & Karen Cavanaugh	Lisa Garcia	Rosalee and Andy Kaplan
Pearl Chiu	Ray and Jane Garland	Robert Kegley
Timothy Clark	Caroline Glickman	J. Keith Kennedy
George Clemo	Quinn Graeff	Brad Kerchof
Stephen Clinton	David Grant	Frank Kilgore
Lisa Collis	Harold Greer	Stephen King
Don Creamer	Hunter Gresham	Bill Kirk
Steven Critchfield	Marcella Griggs	Anne Kohinke
Dennis Cronk	Nancy Griggs	Edward Kohinke

Brian Konkell	Daniel Perrault	Judy Snoke
Jeffrey Krasnow	B. Sue Phillips	Jane Sorensen
Michelle Krocker	Dan and Barbara Pleasant	Michael Spiegler
Paul Lancaster	Robert Poff	Penn & Peggy Staples
Celeste Land	Patricia Polentz	Joe and Ellen Stinnett
Debra Landgraf	Jay Poole	Fay Street
Mark and Cynthia Lawrence	Elizabeth Povar	Neal and Jean Sumerlin
Kenneth Lewis	Thane Pressman	Michael Swanson
John Light	J Pugh	Leonard Swinehart
Donna Littlepage	Linda Pulliam	Julia Thomas
Marjorie Marcy	James Randles	Rosemary Thomas
Martha Martin	Catherine Read	Chris Thompson
Rich Martin	Carleton Reed	Susan Thompson
L. Richard Martin Jr.	Norma Reed	Gretchen Tipps
Nancy McDaniel	Richard Reynolds	Ed Tuchler
Matthew McKimmy	Wendi Richert	Joan Vannorsdall
McNeil Roofing Inc	Arline and Michael Riley	Virginia Association of Health Plans
Joseph Miller	Lon and Susan Rollinson	Melinda Wagner
Maureen Mills	Greg Rooker	Edward Walker
Michael Morency	Elizabeth Russo	Wendall Walker
Stephen and Heather Moret	Fred & Janet Sachs Charitable Fund	Jack Wall
Christopher Morri	Michael Sands	Douglas Waters
Kurt Navratil	Laurie Saunders	Mary Waters
Carol Nelson	Mike Scarry	Linda Webb
Clifford Nottingham	Michael Schewel	Terri Webber
Molly O'Dell	Mark Schreiner	Brian Weigand
William Ochsenwald	Harry and Penny Schwarz	Frances West
George Ohrstrom	Edward Sewell	Mr. and Mrs. W. Lee Wilhelm
Kimball & Leslie Payne	Rees and Katharine Shearer	Joseph Wright
James Pearman	K Smith	Nancy Yost
John Pendleton	Victoria Smith	

### **Editorial Assistants:** \$1 - \$249

To see a complete list of the **1,774 donors in 2023**, please visit our website.

Together these donors - many of whom **contribute \$15 a month** - have given **\$176,240**.



# Ways to Give

There are many ways to support our paywall-free, nonprofit journalism.

**Through our website:**

<https://cardinalnews.org/support-our-publication/>

**Vehicle donation:**

Make sure to send a picture of your donation to [dutchie@cardinalnews.org](mailto:dutchie@cardinalnews.org).

**Sponsorships of our newsletters and website pages:**

Contact [sherry@cardinalnews.org](mailto:sherry@cardinalnews.org)

**Stock donations:**

Contact [luanne@cardinalnews.org](mailto:luanne@cardinalnews.org).

**Yes, we do accept checks:**

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SERVING SOUTHWEST AND SOUTHSIDE VIRGINIA

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