

Activity Report Highlights

City of Staunton



GROUNDBREAKING FOR THE J&DR COURT

On April 16, the City of Staunton officially broke ground on the new Staunton Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court in the former Chestnut Hill Shopping Center in Staunton's West End. The ceremony was held in front of the former Heck's department store, which sits roughly on the footprint of the future courthouse. A rendering of the new courthouse, designed by Moseley Architects, was on display. The courthouse will be constructed by Howard Shockey & Sons, Inc. The construction contract for the new court facility is \$18.8 million. The ceremony brought together key players in the design and construction of the project along with judges, the sheriff's office, and staff that will work out of the new facility.



April 2024

Dispatched Calls for Service*

Police	2,570 ↓
Fire & Rescue	292 ↓

Average Response Time month/year

Police	3'52"/4'02"
Fire & Rescue	4'31"/4'47"

*arrows indicate if calls are up or down compared to the previous month

By the Numbers

The Commissioner of Revenue's Office issued **46** new business licenses in April. The **2nd** highest count on record.

The Library distributed **1,000** pairs of eclipse glasses.

60 fifth graders from Ware Elem. celebrated Arbor Day at Gypsy Hill Park.

Into the Future

As summer approaches, City Council has chosen to cancel two meetings. The first meeting in June (**June 13**) and the first in July (**July 11**) have been cancelled. The meetings on **June 27** and **July 25** will occur as regularly scheduled.

STREAM RESTORATION BEGINS

The Gypsy Hill Park Stream Restoration Project is now underway and is expected to be completed in March 2025. This project will help improve the health of the stream by repairing the damaged channel, stabilizing the stream banks, and planting native vegetation to provide a better habitat for aquatic life. It will also involve measures to slow down the flow of water during heavy rains, which will help reduce the risk of flooding downstream.



FIREFIGHTER EARNS SCHOLARSHIP

Firefighter Savannah Snider received one of three Duane Dixon Scholarships through the Virginia Professional Fire Fighters to help obtain her degree through Southeastern Oklahoma State University. Snider is studying business administration with a concentration in management. She is on the B Shift at Station #2 on Grubert Avenue under Capt. Michael Lyle and Lt. Adam Dolan. The scholarship is named after D. Duane Dixon, former Virginia Professional Fire Fighters Secretary-Treasurer and Roanoke Local 1132 President Emeritus.

BREAKING BREAD CONNECTIONS

Rebecca Joyce, Housing Planner and Grants Coordinator and Tim Hartless, Planning Manager, participated in the Building Bridges annual Breaking Bread For the Greater Good at Booker T. Washington Community Center. This year's theme was "Making Connections to Meet Community Needs," and the event included roundtable discussions on a variety of topics.



Notes from the City Manager

If you've driven past the J&DR project at the old Big Lots, you've seen the progress. But there's even more happening inside and behind the building.

- Prep for demolition continues on the Heck's building and should be done in late May. They'll then move to the Big Lots building.
- Erosion controls in place and clearing behind the Heck's building.
- Waterline work has started closer to Beverley Street, seen here in the digging photos.



The data shared in the Activity Report and Activity Report Highlights are from the month prior, unless otherwise noted.



April 2024 Activity Report

Community Development

Key Construction Project Updates

Dunkin Donuts

Framing is underway for the construction of a Dunkin Donuts at 704 Greenville Ave. to replace the former Wendy's Restaurant.

Middlebrook Trace II

Construction continues on a four-story apartment building consisting of 48 units and a common area with a total of 62,011 square feet to be located at 914 Middlebrook Avenue. The construction is expected to be completed in fall 2024.

106 Industry Way

A building permit has been issued and rough-in inspections are being scheduled for a new 40,000 square foot commercial manufacturing facility. *Picture below.*



106 Industry Way

Reports

Site Plans

The following are newly approved site plans:

- 300 Grubert Avenue, Shelburne Middle School Addition-Building permit issued for renovation
- 511 A Street - Construction Plan- Habitat Townhomes

Environmental Inspections Report

The Environmental Programs Division of Community Development completed erosion and sediment control inspections on residential and commercial construction sites throughout the city as follows:

- Residential Construction – 54 active sites with 112 inspections in April
- Commercial Construction – 9 active sites with 17 inspections in April

Community Development

During the month of April, staff from the Community Development participated in various community events.



John Glover, Building Official speaks at the Augusta Home Builders Association luncheon about recent building code changes. Mr. Glover also toured the Valley Career and Technical Center.



Willow Hughes, Environmental Programs Specialist, engages with citizens at Earth Day at Gypsy Hill Park. Ms. Hughes also participated in the City's Arbor Day event.



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Stream Restoration Projects



The Gypsy Hill Park Stream Restoration Project is now underway and is expected to be completed in March 2025. This project will help to improve the health of the stream by repairing the damaged channel, stabilizing the stream banks, and planting native vegetation to provide a better habitat for aquatic life. It will also involve measures to slow down the flow of water during heavy rains, which will help reduce the risk of flooding downstream.



The Cole Avenue Stream Restoration Project went out to bid on April 19, and all bids will be due by 2 p.m. on May 24. This project will include both sanitary sewer upgrades and stream restoration efforts. The restoration will repair the extreme channel erosion and reestablish a stream buffer of native vegetation. It will also include measures to help reduce the impact of flooding on downstream residents, Gypsy Hill Park, and downtown.

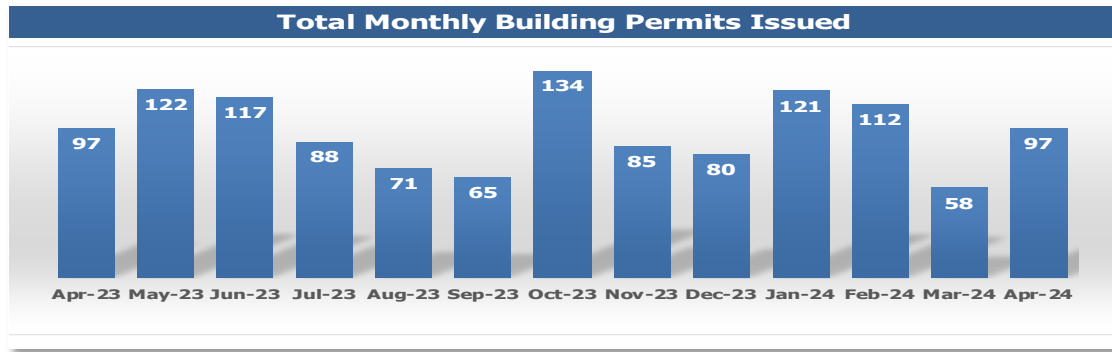
Both of these projects help the City meet state and federal stormwater pollution reduction mandates.

Housing and Grants Coordination

CDBG 5-Year Consolidated Plan (CP) Stakeholder Workshops: In April, the planning process of the five-year update of the CP included several opportunities for public and stakeholder input. The plan, a requirement of the CDBG program, describes the needs, resources, priorities, and proposed activities to be undertaken over the next five years to benefit the community, especially community members with low-to-moderate income. On April 1, citizens participated in a public input workshop at the Montgomery Hall Park Irene Givens Administrative Building. An online public survey was made available for community members and stakeholders to express their thoughts about the Community Development Block Grant program. All the input gathered will be incorporated into the draft updated CP.

Building Construction and Related Activity

Permits Issued	Apr-24	Apr-23	# Chg	% Chg
New Residential	3	4	-1	-25.0%
Residential Renovations	26	10	16	160.0%
Electrical Permits	25	28	-3	-10.7%
Mechanical Permits	12	14	-2	-14.3%
Plumbing Permits	11	22	-11	-50.0%
Commercial New-Renovations	9	9	0	0.0%
Miscellaneous	11	10	1	10.0%
Total	97	97	0	0.0%



Economic Development

Virginia Scenic Railway

On April 2, staff met with leaders of the Virginia Scenic Railway for an update on progress at their Staunton site located off of Middlebrook Road. The site will be the location for loading and unloading passengers for their various excursions as well as including a gift shop, museum, restrooms, and ticket counter created from stationary boxcar trains.

Shenandoah Community Capital Fund

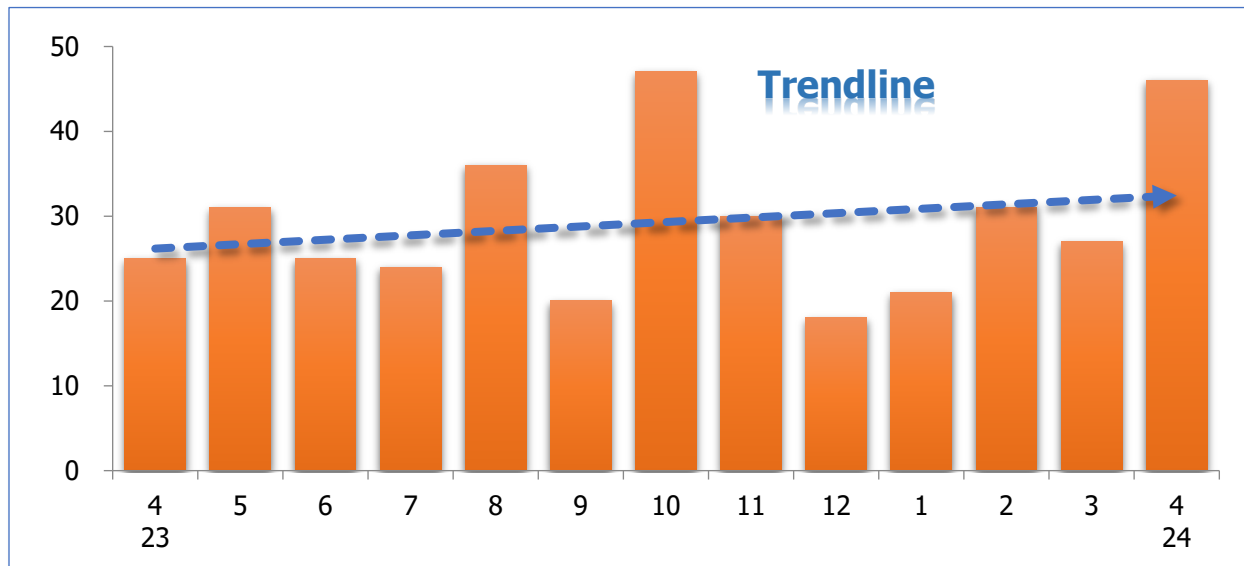
Current SCCF Director of Growth and Revenue Ryan Hall has been named the acting executive director.

LEAD

Economic Development Specialist Amanda DiMeo attended a leadership development class offered by the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center, April 6-12. Included in the 26 participants were local government managers from California, Texas, Illinois, Minnesota, North Carolina, and Virginia. With completion of this course, Ms. DiMeo successfully earned 48 credit hours of graduate level instruction.

New Business License Activity

During the month of April, the Commissioner of Revenue's office issued 46 new business licenses, the second highest count on record, compared to 27 the previous month, representing a 70.4% increase. This month a year ago, 25 new business licenses were issued. The following bar chart provides a monthly comparison for the total number of new business licenses issued for the past year.



As seen in the following pie chart, the services sector accounted for 82.7% of the total new licenses issued in April.



Finance

- The department issued 3,393 utility bills and general bills totaling \$1,107,174 during April.

- Collection activities in April resulted in the recovery of \$9,135 in delinquent utility invoices.
- The Utility Payment Office processed 3,357 receipts in the amount of \$682,998 during April.
- The department processed 431 City and 177 School accounts payable checks totaling \$4,151,466. 838 City and 571 Schools payroll-related advices totaling \$3,761,033; and 29 ACH debit/wire transactions totaling \$2,329,864 during April.
- The Finance Department assisted in awarding a contract to Howard Shockey and Sons, Inc. for the construction of a new Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court Building.
- The Finance Department assisted with the posting of the following Invitations for Bid:
 - Engineering Department, Staunton Crossing Water and Sewer Extensions
 - Engineering Department, Staunton Crossing Elevated Water Storage Tank
 - Engineering Department, W. Beverley Street Sidewalk Improvements and VDOT SGR repaving project
 - Environmental Programs, Cole Avenue Stream Restoration & Sanitary Sewer Project
- The final copy of FY23 Cost Allocation Plan has been received from Maguire Associates. The cost allocation plan distributes central service overhead costs such as finance, city manager, engineering, and legal to operating departments such as public works, parks and recreation and public safety.
- Changes were made to the city code regarding utility shut offs to align with state code. Going forward customers will have 90 days from the bill date before they are susceptible for disconnection. Customers will now receive a hang tag two weeks before disconnection. Disconnections were suspended in February until the city code could be updated and have resumed starting April 30.

Fire & Rescue

- Staunton Fire and Rescue responded to 292 incidents in April, with an average response time of 4 minutes and 31 seconds, with an average of 4 minutes and 47 seconds for the year.
- Staff received over 489 hours of training in April.
- Staff conducted 35 business fire safety inspections and 26 re-inspections in April.
- Crews with the fire safety trailer participated in the Adventures at the Museum event held at the Frontier Culture Museum.

- Daniel Hinkle was promoted to Lieutenant and Jordan Keyser was promoted to Master Firefighter in April. Brandon Tinson joined the B-Shift team at Staunton #1 to fill a full-time vacancy.
- Each shift provided food and drinks to the dispatchers for National Dispatcher Week.
- The Firefighters for Literacy Program for the 2023-2024 school year wrapped up in April.
- Hosted a Station visit from a group of home-schooled children and visited Elk Hill School for fire safety talks.

Human Resources

Employee Actions

The following employee actions were processed:

Terminated:

Full Time—3

Part Time/Seasonal—2

Hired:

Full Time—3

Part Time—6

Retired—1

Activities

Human Resources staff members took part in the following activities in April:

Recruitment:

- Initiated recruitment for the following positions:
 - Deputy Sheriff – City
 - Deputy Sheriff, Sergeant – City
 - Police Officer – Certified Only
 - Water Treatment Plant Operator
 - Deputy Clerk, Circuit Court – Part-time
 - Deputy City Engineer
 - Sanitation Worker
 - Director of Public Works

- Continued recruitment for the following positions:
 - Equipment Operator I – Public Works Utilities
 - Police Officer – Certified
 - Equipment Operator II – Public Works Utilities
 - Lifeguards – 2024
 - Referees/Umpires – Parks & Recreation
 - Horticultural Intern – Susan Blackley Horticulture Internship
 - Probation/Pretrial Officer Position – Blue Ridge Court Services
 - Firefighters/EMTs – Part-Time
 - Equipment Operator I – Park Maintenance

Orientations:

- Conducted orientations for four full-time employees.

Training:

- Staff participated in a Virginia Retirement System webinar on upcoming rate separation for the Hybrid program and other legislative changes.
- Staff attended a Virginia Society of Human Resource Conference in Richmond.

Other:

- A Service Pin Luncheon was held April 18, honoring six employees with a combined 90-years of service and three employees recognized by the Staunton Employee Committee as exemplifying at least one of the city's values of Integrity, Inclusion and Equity, Excellence, Engagement, or Environmentally Consciousness over the prior quarter.

Information Technology

Information Technology staff took part in the following activities in April:

- SAW representative completed onsite Customer Factory Acceptance Testing with Aviat, the vendor supplying microwave connectivity for the SAW Regional Public Safety Radio system. This was a critical milestone to verify programming and functionality before the equipment is shipped.

- Completed migration of over 200 cell phones to T-Mobile. A team of 10 including IT, Staunton City Schools IT and T-Mobile technicians completed most of the migration in two days. The new contract will save nearly 20% and improve data speed and coverage within the City. Aircards will be migrated to the new plan in May.
- Completed office moves for the Utility Billing and Registrar's office. This included moving hardware, reconfiguring phones and devices.
- GIS Coordinator Jessica Wright resolved an error with Public Works water meter layers. The GIS server was also upgraded to improve performance.
- Replaced seven workstations, upgraded three additional workstations. Over 70% of the City's workstations are running Windows 11 and are on target for completing the migration before Windows 10 support ends in October 2025.
- Continued work on building security projects including several camera upgrades to the City Courthouse and design for access control in the Library and City Hall. Upgrades started in May at the Library.



Library

- Beginning April 29, a valid Staunton Public Library card allows patrons to check out a cultural pass good for two free tickets to select American Shakespeare Center shows. ASC approached the library about reinstating the previous partnership the library had with them in order to make theater more accessible to local residents. This new initiative was featured by both *The News Leader* and WHSV. This season's select shows are *Julius Caesar* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Two cultural passes are available on a first come, first served basis and may be checked out for two weeks at a time.
- To celebrate the solar eclipse, the library distributed 1,000 pairs of eclipse glasses and hosted a viewing party on the library lawn. Over 170 people congregated at the library to view the eclipse together.



- In addition to regular outreach to pre-schools and daycare centers such as Covenant, Community Childcare, Dixon, and Bears & Blankets, staff also attended various community outreach events:
 - Senior Health Expo at Gypsy Hill Park
 - Neurodiversity Fair at Montgomery Hall Park
 - Adventures at the Frontier Culture Museum
- 27 people attended the tween and teen cartooning event featuring local illustrator Ryan B. Kids learned how to make their own panel comic or folded zine.
- The Friends of the Staunton Library continued to make progress towards a renovation of the library's back yard. The committee met with contractors and consultants to discuss the terrace project, and members have begun considering design proposals for a shade structure.



Statistical Report: April 2024

CIRCULATION	Month	YTD	PROGRAMS	Month	YTD
Adult	10,618	101,777	Adult	13	119
Young Adult (YA)	711	7,623	Attendance	1,225	3,111
Juvenile	6,311	67,426	YA	5	72
Digital	5,517	50,708	Attendance	694	6,758
			Juvenile	48	397
Total Circulation	23,157	227,534	Attendance	2,014	15,600
Talking Book Center Circulation	1,280	12,545			
			PEOPLE		
Items Checked In	19,631	199,296	Library Visits	13,840	129,144
			Curbside Visits	78	795
Outgoing to VLC Libraries	1,910	19,674	Computer Users	788	6,894
Incoming from VLC Libraries	1,561	17,119	Juvenile Computer Users	1,344	8,341
Total Holds Filled	5,024	50,800	Meetings Held	8	39
			Volunteer Hours	84.25	1,243
Added to Collection	1,020	9,093	New Card Registrations	335	1,779
Withdrawn from Collection	83	10,369	Total Registered Cards		17,818

SERVICES	Month	YTD				
ILLs Borrowed	15	133				
ILLs Lent	0	0				
Proctoring/Book-a-Librarians	1	49				

Parks & Recreation

Horticulture

Horticulture completed the following tasks:

- Students from the Valley Career & Technical Center Horticulture class visited with Horticulturist Matt Sensabaugh in Gypsy Hill Park. During their visit they discussed the city's horticulture program, how the department operates, and what kind of career options are available in the green industry.
- Parks and Recreation hosted a pesticide re-certification and training meeting for city employees. Tom Tracy from Virginia Turfgrass Council led the meeting and training. Six employees earned credits for recertification and an additional six employees attended the training session to prepare for the registered tech exam.
- Approximately 60 Ware Elementary 5th grade students celebrated Arbor Day at Gypsy Hill Park to learn about trees, stormwater runoff, and the impact on the parks. In addition to Mr. Sensabaugh, Williw Hughes from Environmental Programs and Cole Young from Virginia Department of Forestry spoke to the students.
- Grubbed and removed old plantings from the borders along Landes Park. The plantings were removed in preparation for a renovation and new planting that will be installed with support from the Community Foundation of the Central Blue Ridge.
- Tree pruning and tree work:
 - Pruned 49 trees along Statler Boulevard and three trees in the golf course.
 - Removed dead and hazardous limbs from three trees in Gypsy Hill Park.
 - Removed low hanging limbs from three trees at Reservoir Hill Park.
 - Planted nine trees in Gypsy Hill Park.

Maintenance

Park Maintenance completed their seasonal tasks and began prepping the city's pools for opening on Memorial Day weekend.

Community Outreach

Staff engaged in the following community outreach activities

- Preparations are underway for Camp Staunton, staffing for this eight-week program is complete and the program will begin on June 3.
- Offered annual Senior Health Expo at the Gypsy Hill Gym.
- Explorers Club had a fun day in April making and flying kites in Montgomery Hall Park.
- Archery is underway for the summer session.

Police

- Dispatcher Jena Wolfe was promoted to Dispatch Team Leader on April 28.
- The Staunton Police Foundation selected Investigator Caleb Pappalardo as the Officer of the Quarter.
- All sworn officers participated in semi-annual physical fitness evaluations.
- The Police Department's E-911 Center handled a total of 3,966 telephone calls during the month, including 957 9-1-1 calls.
- Police personnel responded to 2,570 incidents during the month, including 1,354 citizen calls for service, 631 officer initiated activities, 165 administrative calls, and 420 directed patrols.
- The average response time for police emergency calls for service during the month was 3 minutes and 52 seconds; it is 4 minutes and 2 seconds for the year.

Public Works

- The Utility Office established 40 new owner accounts, 27 new rental residential accounts, and three commercial accounts.
- The Public Works Utility Office collected \$51,808 in payments.
- Twenty-nine accounts were cut off for non-payment during one cut off week. Of those cut off, 19 were reconnected after payments were made or a payment plan established.
- Utility crews repaired one water main break, one water service break, and six water meters. The crew responded to two sewer main blockages and 11 sewer lateral blockages. The crew completed three sewer lateral repairs and installed one new sewer connection.
- The Facilities crew has been busy this month setting out electric boxes for events, moving offices in City Hall with the help from Street Department. They have also been busy with A/C units and different plumbing problems throughout City buildings.
- Pat McCauley has been promoted to Supervisor in the Refuse Department. Marty Stuples and Eric Miles, also in the Refuse department, were awarded Employees of the Quarter by the City of Staunton Employee Committee.
- The Recycling Center had almost 3,000 customers for the month of April.

- The Streets Department completed Heavy Trash and Brush pickup. They began paving which will be ongoing throughout the summer months. Line painting has also begun.

Tourism

Activities:

Visit Staunton staff took part in the following promotional, networking, or administrative activities in April:

- April blog promotions featured Staunton's Guided Outdoor Adventures, Iconic Sites in Staunton, Let Your Senses Run Wild, and Treat Your Kid(s) to a Day Out in Staunton
- Staunton was named the #6 [Best Small Town Cultural Scene by USA Today](#)
- ["A Day in ... Staunton, VA"](#) Sponsored content in Blue Ridge Outdoors April Family issue – ½ page print itinerary and online version.
- ["Discover Staunton, a town where historic charm meets modern comfort"](#) WTKR, Dave Parker
- Staunton featured by Daily News Record, ["Architecture Invigorates Downtown Experiences"](#)

Public Relations

The Following is a list of newspapers, websites, magazines, and television stations that published articles about Staunton:

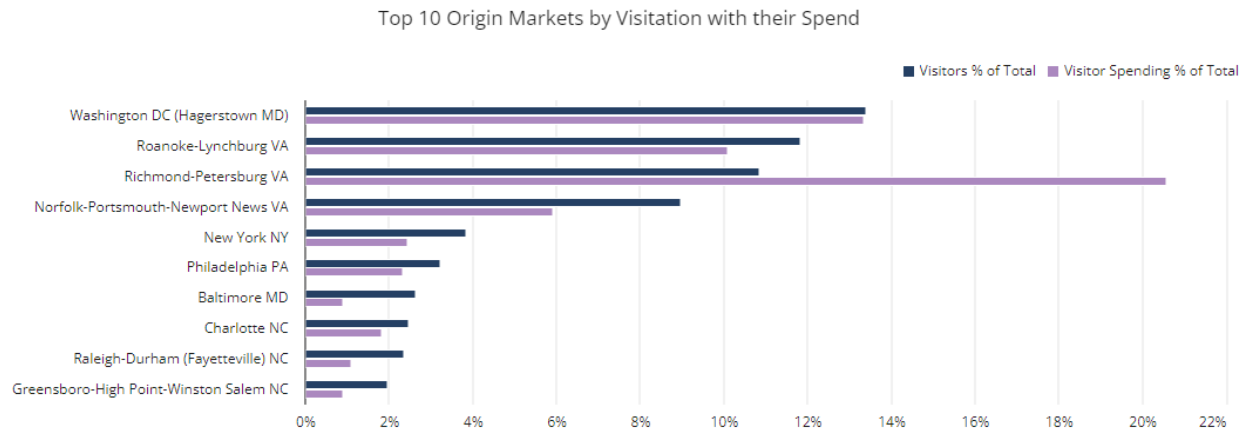
Date	Headline	Source	Reach
Apr 10	<u>10 Small Towns You Can't Miss for A Culture-Centric Escape</u>	USA Today	76,140,145
Apr 25	<u>5 Food Trucks Serving Up Delicious Eats In 2024. Plus Our Newest American Culture Quiz</u>	Fox News Channel	46,810,789
Apr 22	<u>10 Most Affordable Towns to Retire in Virginia</u>	World Atlas	4,830,079
Apr 11	<u>9 Most Scenic Small Towns in Virginia</u>	World Atlas	4,830,079
Apr 02	<u>State Parks Within 100 Miles Of RVA</u>	Richmond Times Dispatch	768,366
Apr 30	<u>Discover Staunton, A Town Where Historic Charm Meets Modern Comfort</u>	WTKR-TV	483,549
Apr 26	<u>SNP: Virginia's Natural Wonder Part Two</u>	WHSV-TV	465,681
Apr 06	<u>Staunton's Shop and Dine Out Begins</u>	WHSV-TV	391,985

Date	Headline	Source	Reach
Apr 29	<u>Staunton Jams Returns with More Than 45 Performers, American Shakespeare Center Partnership</u>	Augusta Free Press	230,761
Apr 19	<u>Wilson And the Income Tax: President Mistakenly Credited with Most Dreaded American Law</u>	Augusta Free Press	230,761
Apr 18	<u>Staunton To Celebrate Historic Garden Week with Walking Tour of Ridgeview Road on Saturday</u>	Augusta Free Press	230,761
Apr 18	<u>American Shakespeare Center Invites Public to Free Day of Celebrating Bard's 460Th Birthday</u>	Augusta Free Press	230,761
Apr 14	<u>25 Best Hotels Near Shenandoah National Park</u>	VacationIdea	118,656
Apr 13	<u>20 Best Things to Do in Staunton, Virginia</u>	VacationIdea	118,656
Apr 29	<u>Shakespeare Center And Local Libraries Team Up to Provide Free Shows to Residents</u>	News Leader	112,571
Apr 29	<u>Staunton Jams Musical Festival Is Back This Weekend</u>	News Leader	112,571
Apr 11	<u>Staunton Among USA Today's Best Small-Town Awardees</u>	News Leader	112,571
Apr 09	<u>Take A Tour of Europe at Staunton Music Festival's Springfest Concert</u>	News Leader	112,571
Apr 19	<u>Architecture Invigorates Downtown Experience</u>	Daily News Record	88,701
Apr 17	<u>Garden Club to Host Historic Garden Tours Next Week</u>	Daily News Record	88,701
Apr 11	<u>Spring 2024 Festival & Event Guide</u>	Blue Ridge Country	13,886
Apr 11	<u>Fall 2024 Festival & Event Guide</u>	Blue Ridge Country	13,886
Apr 01	<u>Britchin' Brown Renaissance Festival Coming to Stable Craft Brewing</u>	The News Virginian	13,002
Apr 29	<u>From The Editor: Path Of the Parkway - 29 Mountain Counties</u>	Blue Ridge Country	12,888
Apr 29	<u>A Day In...Staunton VA (Sponsored Content)</u>	Blue Ridge Outdoors	45,524
			136,607,901

Website Visitation

Website Traffic		
April 2023	April 2024	% Change
32,318 visitors	35,074 visitors	+8.53%
141 visitor's guide requests	168 visitor's guide requests	+19.1%

Top 10 Origin Markets and Visitor Spending



Office on Youth

Crime Control Programs

- Thirteen youth received detention alternative services.

Parenting Programs

- Twelve adults participated in Parenting and Divorce co-parenting program.
- Five adults participated in The Parent Project program.
- Four adults participated in Active Parenting program.

Check and Connect – Truancy Prevention

- Participants include 70 students from 11 area middle and high schools. There were 6 students from Staunton High School and 16 from Shelburne Middle School.
- An additional Truancy Mentor was hired and trained.
- Two students participated in Truancy Board on April 8.

Personal Responsibility Education Programs (PREP)

- 271 students participated in PREP education programs. There were 164 Shelburne Middle school students.

Safe Routes to School (SRTS)

- The Safe Routes to School program provided bicycle safety instruction to all third, fourth and fifth grade students. Staff provided the bikes, helmets, and know-how, and taught students how to fit a bike helmet, perform a bike safety check before riding,

proper braking and gear-changing techniques, and use of hand signals. Emerging riders were taught how to balance on a bike and transition from balancing to pedaling.

Community/Etc.

- Five OOH staff attended guest speaker at Staunton High School, Julie Hofmans, “One Pill Can Kill” on April 3.
- OOH staff participated in *Adventures at the Museum* April 16-18 hosted through a collaboration of area school social workers, held at the Frontier Culture Museum for all area elementary students and their families.

Staunton Downtown Development Association¹

Downtown was hopping with excitement in April! The Downtown Chick was at the Wharf Saturday April 6 and April 13 available for free festive photos for friends and family. The Downtown Chick welcomed the return of the Farmer’s Market, Shop and Dine Out in Downtown, and the warm weather of the spring season!



¹ The Staunton Downtown Development Association (SDDA) is an independent, non-profit corporation, separate from the City of Staunton. Pursuant to the Staunton City Code and a contract with the city, SDDA provides facilities and services funded by the City in the City’s downtown service district. SDDA furnishes information to the City Manager’s Office for inclusion in this Activity Report to update the city in the performance of its obligations.