

# CULPEPER STAR-EXPONENT

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SUNDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2018

## CULPEPER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AWARDS

### About this series

Throughout the holiday season, the Star-Exponent will publish a series of articles highlighting winners from the 2018 Culpeper Chamber of Commerce awards.

On Nov. 9 Leon Fincher was featured in a Star-Exponent article after he was announced as the 2018 winner of the chamber's most prestigious honor, the L.B. Henretty Outstanding Citizen Award, at Germanna's Daniel Technology Center. On Dec. 2, we featured Belmont Farm Distillery, which took home the award for Agribusiness of the Year.

Today's article features Small Business of the Year winner, Demolition Services Inc. Future articles will include Russell Furr (Entrepreneur of the Year); Rebecca Ramsey (Young Professional of the Year; Appleton Campbell (Large Business of the Year) and Career Partners Inc. (Nonprofit of the Year).



ALLISON BROPHY CHAMPION/STAR-EXPONENT

Melissa Feather and her husband, Ron "Boots" Feather, of Demolition Services Inc. accept the Small Business of the Year Award from the Culpeper County Chamber of Commerce.

## Culpeper business an explosive winner

BY CLINT SCHEMMER  
CULPEPER STAR-EXPONENT

Ron "Boots" Feather has built up a robust business by tearing things down, expertly.

He has tackled often huge, sometimes risky, frequently challenging projects—structures such as the mammoth Navy Annex opposite the Pentagon, bomb-loading plants at the naval

arsenal near Yorktown, or a West Wing staircase at the White House.

The Culpeper County resident founded Demolition Services Inc. See **FEATHERS**, Page A8

## Longtime science educator teaches until the very end

"The people of Culpeper will remember and miss you"

BY CLINT SCHEMMER  
CULPEPER STAR-EXPONENT

Deborah Jean, a veteran Culpeper County educator who taught eighth-grade physical science at Floyd T. Binns Middle School, died at home Tuesday night of natural causes.

Jean, 61, had spent a full day in the classroom on Tuesday teaching her students, Assistant Principal Khaled El-Nemr said.

"We did not expect this," Principal Nathan Bopp said in an interview Friday. "Debbie's death is a sad loss for all, a personal and professional loss. It has been an extremely difficult week.

"She taught generations of kids in Culpeper County, and loved how she had taught the chil-



FLOYD T. BINNS MIDDLE SCHOOL

Deborah Jean, a longtime Culpeper County teacher, happily sports an "Element of Surprise" periodic-table T-shirt and a wizard-style hat.

dren and grandchildren of her former students," Bopp said. "She literally loved kids and lived for her students, and everyone knew that."

Eastern View High School student Joshua Houston, one of Jean's former students, tweeted on Wednesday: "Mrs. Jean was a dedicated, fun-loving teacher who always brought energy and smiles to her classroom. She taught both of

See **JEAN**, Page A9

## Jury convicts Fields of first-degree murder

BY DENISE LAVOIE  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Ohio man who drove his car into counterprotesters at the white nationalist Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville last summer was convicted Friday of first-degree murder, a verdict that local civil rights activists hope will help heal a community still scarred by the violence and the racial tensions it inflamed nationwide.

A state jury rejected defense

arguments that 21-year-old James Alex Fields Jr. acted in self-defense. Jurors also convicted Fields of eight other charges, including aggravated malicious wounding and hit-and-run.

Fields drove to Virginia from his home in Maumee, Ohio, to support the white nationalists on Aug. 12, 2017. As a large group of counterprotesters marched through Charlottesville singing and laughing, he stopped his

car, backed up, then sped into the crowd, according to testimony from witnesses and video surveillance shown to jurors.

Prosecutors told the jury that Fields was angry after seeing violent clashes between the two sides earlier in the day. The violence prompted police to shut down the rally before it even officially began.

Heather Heyer, a 32-year-old paralegal and civil rights activist, was killed, and nearly three

dozen others were injured. The trial featured emotional testimony from survivors who described devastating injuries and long, complicated recoveries.

After the verdict was read in court, some of those who were injured embraced Heyer's mother, Susan Bro. She left the courthouse without commenting. Fields' mother, Samantha

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ANDREW SHURTLEFF/THE DAILY PROGRESS

Demonstrators marched through downtown Charlottesville after James Alex Fields Jr. was found guilty of first-degree murder in the car attack that killed Heather Heyer.

## INCUMBENT ANNOUNCES DISTRICT 18 REELECTION BID

BY STAR-EXPONENT STAFF

Del. Michael Webert, R-Marshall, announced on Facebook last week that he intended to seek reelection next year to a fourth term representing District 18 in the Virginia House of Delegates.

As a farm manager, the 39-year-old statesman is very familiar with unpredictable circumstances, which was demonstrated during his scheduled campaign announcement Tuesday in Fauquier.

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STAR-EXPONENT FILE PHOTO  
Del. Webert

## Cyber intelligence expert seeking District 18 seat

BY ALLISON BROPHY CHAMPION  
CULPEPER STAR-EXPONENT

Another millennial Democrat wants to represent District 18 in the Virginia House of Delegates.

Cyber intelligence consultant Laura Galante, 33, of Marshall recently announced her candidacy for the office currently held by three-term Republican Del. Mike Webert, a 39-year-old farm manager who also resides in Marshall in Fauquier

County.

Galante, like many others before her, said she is focused on bringing modern technology to the rural district.

"I am running because I think we need someone that's effective with positioning this district for an economy that's getting a lot more complex and for a society where we actually want to be—in small towns with a really great sense of community," she said in an interview

Friday with the Star-Exponent.

"If we don't set the right seeds in place," she said, "we're going to be 10, 15 years behind when we wake up and put our heads up in a couple of years and not know what sort of technological changes



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO  
Galante

came by and left us."

Webert announced last week on Facebook he was seeking reelection to another term representing the district that includes part of Culpeper County (Brandy Station, Rixeyville, Eggbornsville and Jeffersonton), all of Fauquier and Rappahannock and the Front Royal area.

Rixeyville media producer and musician Tristan Shields, 35, announced last month his

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# Fields

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Bloom, who is disabled, left the courthouse in a wheelchair without commenting.

A group of about a dozen local civil rights activists stood in front of the courthouse after the verdict with their right arms raised in the air.

"They will not replace us! They will not replace us!" they yelled, in a response to the chants heard on the eve of the 2017 rally, when some white nationalists shouted: "You will not replace us!" and "Jews will not replace us."



Fields

Charlottesville City Councilor Wes Bellamy said he hopes the verdict "allows our community to take another step toward healing and moving forward."

Charlottesville civil rights activist Tanesha Hudson said she sees the guilty verdict as the city's way of saying, "We will not tolerate this in our city."

"We don't stand for this type of hate. We just don't," she said.

White nationalist Richard Spencer, who had been scheduled to speak at the Unite the Right rally, described the verdict as a "miscarriage of justice."

"I am sadly not shocked, but I am appalled by this," he told The Associated Press. "He was treated as a terrorist from the get-go."

Spencer had questioned whether Fields could get a fair trial since the case was "so emotional."

"There does not seem to be any reasonable evidence put forward that he engaged in murderous intent," Spencer said.

Spencer popularized the term "alt-right" to describe a fringe movement loosely mixing white nationalism, anti-Semitism and other far-right extremist views. He said he doesn't feel any personal responsibility for the violence that erupted in Charlottesville.

"Absolutely not," he said. "As a citizen, I have a right to protest. I have a right to speak. That is what I came to Charlottesville to do."

The far-right rally in August 2017 had been organized in part to protest the planned removal of a statue of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee. Hundreds of Ku Klux Klan members, neo-Nazis and other white nationalists—emboldened by the election of President Donald Trump—streamed into the college town for one of the largest gatherings of white supremacists in a decade. Some dressed in battle gear.

Afterward, Trump inflamed tensions even further when he said "both sides" were to blame, a comment some saw as a refusal to condemn racism.



ANDREW SHURTLEFF/THE DAILY PROGRESS

Demonstrators marched through Charlottesville Friday. In addition to the first-degree murder charge, a jury also found Fields guilty of five counts of aggravated malicious wounding, three counts of malicious wounding and one count of hit-and-run.

According to one of his former teachers, Fields was known in high school for being fascinated with Nazism and idolizing Adolf Hitler.

Jurors were shown a text message he sent to his mother days before the rally that included an image of the notorious German dictator. When his mother pleaded with him to be careful, he replied: "We're not the ones who need to be careful."

During one of two recorded phone calls Fields made to his mother from jail in the months after he was arrested, he told her he had been mobbed "by a violent group of terrorists" at the rally. In another, Fields referred to the mother of the woman who was killed as a "communist" and "one of those anti-white supremacists."

Prosecutors also showed jurors a meme Fields posted on Instagram three months before the rally in which bodies are shown being thrown

into the air after a car hits a crowd of people identified as protesters. He posted the meme publicly to his Instagram page and sent a similar image as a private message to a friend.

But Fields' lawyers told the jury that he drove into the crowd on the day of the rally because he feared for his life and was "scared to death" by earlier violence he had witnessed. A video of Fields being interrogated after the crash showed him sobbing

and hyperventilating after he was told that a woman had died and others were seriously injured.

The jury will reconvene Monday to recommend a sentence. Under Virginia law, jurors can recommend from 20 years to life in prison on the first-degree murder charge.

Fields is eligible for the death penalty if convicted of separate federal hate crime charges. No trial has been scheduled yet.

# Webert

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"Farming can be tough. This evening we lost a momma cow and calf," he posted at 10:48 p.m. "The momma had extreme difficulty giving birth. Rose Hill Veterinary came out to assist us. Monica proceeded to help get the calf out. She is the definition of tough. This was the reason I was incredibly late to the Fauquier Republican meeting this evening. I was very grateful to be able to address the committee and announce that after discussion with another very tough woman (my wife) I will be seeking re-election for the 18th District in the House of Delegates. I look forward to a productive session. Please be on the lookout for our agenda and questionnaire."

Democrats Laura Galante, of Marshall, and Tristan Shields, of Rixeyville, have also both announced campaigns for the 18th District seat.

# Galante

From Page A1

second bid as a Democrat for the District 18 seat after losing to Webert in 2017.

A first-time candidate for elected office, Galante graduated in 2006 from the University of Virginia in Charlottesville with a degree in foreign affairs and Italian language literature. She also holds a law degree from Catholic University in Washington, D.C.

Galante moved to Fauquier County last year from Fairfax County, where she was raised, and started a consulting firm following 10 years as a federal contractor working such issues as Russian military hacking and cyber capabilities and the Chinese military's theft of American trade secrets.

Also in 2017, Galante gave a TED Talk, "How and why Russia hacked the U.S. election," which has been viewed millions of times online. According to Galante, the Russians did interfere in the 2016 presidential election, and it continues.

"Right now there is a little bit of a lull in how the Russian military is going about

trying to amplify divisive sentiment in the U.S., but there's certainly a continued interest in propping up narratives that really divide Americans and that's what they're doing," she said.

Galante added Russian President Vladimir Putin seeks to really question the western model of democracy and its freedoms while proposing a very different model in Russia.

"And that's not one where you have free speech, where you have a free press, and that should be scary to all Americans," she said.

In her bid for state office, Galante named broadband expansion at the top of her list of priorities, saying the future is rural.

"We need people focused on what are the economic and social issues that are going to make this a really good place to live. Making sure you have internet so we can still be plugged into the right markets and sources and information, but also live a really enjoyable close knit life," she said.

Extending fiber into the country is a must, Galante said, advocating for a "good, one-time investment from the General Assembly" in laying the groundwork for

high speed internet.

She supported investigating less-expensive methods as well, including fixed wireless stations similar to what she has at home. Once the infrastructure is in place, private companies will provide the service, Galante said.

"We need somebody who's actually going to go and bird dog it in Richmond and can ask the right questions on the technology side of this and who's not scared to navigate the bureaucracy," she said. "I am laser focused on this and it will be a project that takes years, but there's no excuse for us to not keep our eyes really focused on this and really plugged in. It's going to be the difference between whether you have access to the rest of the world and the economy, or not."

Galante also supported building a strong rural economy by promoting the building trades to high school students, higher pay for teachers and connecting local farmers to the urban customers desiring well-raised food.

A board member of the 4-H Center in Front Royal, Galante grew up raising and judging animals through the extension program at

Frying Pan Farm Park in Fairfax. Her leaders, Todd and Lee Brown, were from Culpeper, and it instilled a lifelong interest in the farming way of life: Galante leads a Cloverbud Club for her 5-year-old son in Fauquier and keeps sheep and horses at home.

Among her other campaign issues are promoting equal pay for equal work legislation and making health-care costs more transparent. The candidate supported investments in green building practices and renewable energies, but stopped short of backing solar farm proliferation.

"We've got to be careful how we site solar farms and where we want to do this and we've to respect the rural and historic nature of this district first and foremost," she said, adding, "It's situationally dependent, too. We've got huge transmission power lines going through this district too so it's not like we're in the midst of a state park here. Solar is worth investing in and Virginia is behind."

Zoning laws balance the rights of the property owner and public good, Galante said.

"The right question we

should be asking, is there a cap, for instance, on the number of acres that can be put into solar farms, are there remediating actions like planting trees on the edges other mitigation techniques that could be put into placed scaled to the size of the solar implementation," she said. "We have to get smart on how to do this so it's not a blemish and get best win-win of efficient solar energy with a landscape that's still beautiful."

Running as a Democrat in a historically Republican-leaning district did not faze Galante.

"Here's what I know about people out here—a lot of them are person before party. There is a real hunger for people who are just willing to sit down and talk again and to listen. They don't want politics to feel like it's this something where if you start talking about it someone's going to jump down your throat. People just want to have good conversations again and figure out what we should do next and really solve some problems that are right in front of our faces," she said. "My approach is, let's talk to everybody."

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