

DanVegasNews launches as new community print publication

By Michael Swanson (Editor)

You are holding the very first print issue of DanVegasNews, a print publication serving the Danville and Southside, Virginia areas. Any city the size of Danville generates nicknames through the course of its history. Danville has been called "River City," "City of Churches," "D'Ville," and "Dan Vegas."

When Caesars representatives unveiled their plan for a \$500+ million casino resort in Danville in September of 2021, the Chatham Star-Tribune ran a story on the front page of their paper starting with the headline "Destination Dan Vegas!"

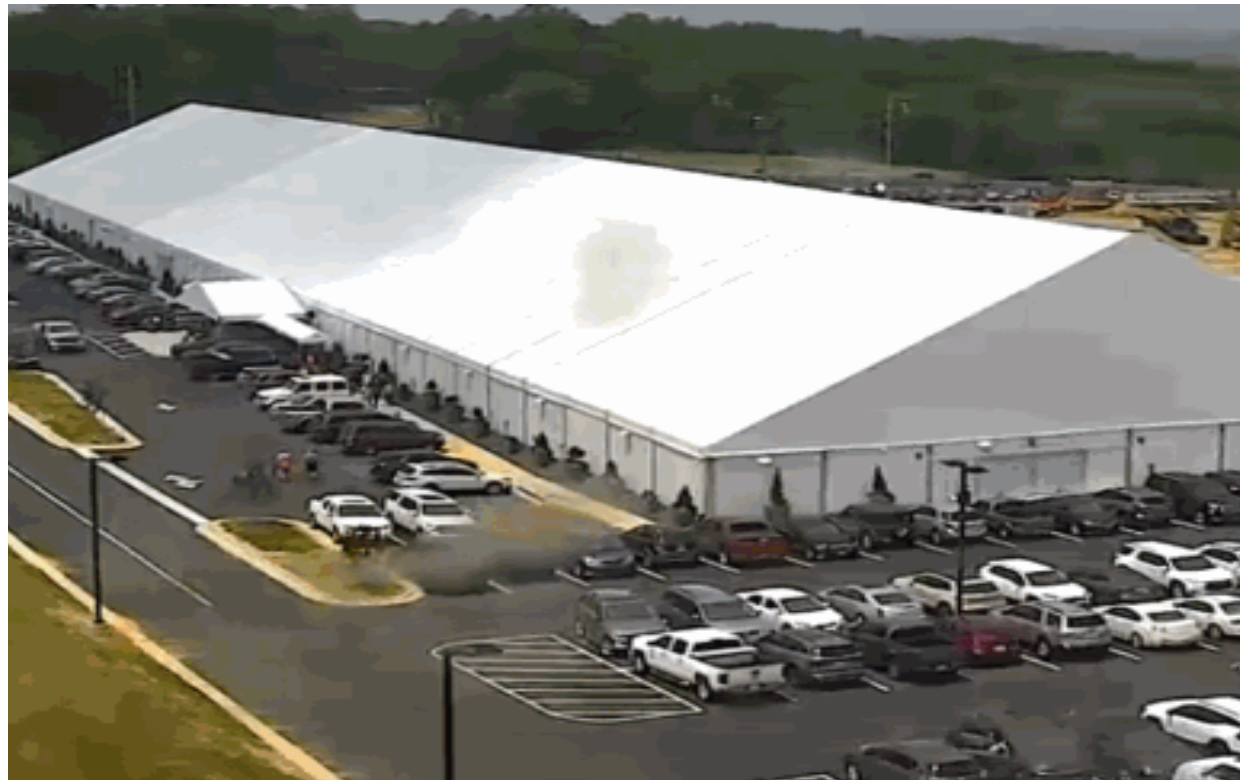
"Dan Vegas" has been a nickname for Danville for as long as I remember, and from what people say it began before I was born. Some people older than me think it was used as a negative phrase for Danville, signifying vice and there were some shady things going on in the area in the 1960's and 1970's. Moonshiners were big long ago and then the indictments in the case of the United States vs. Whitehead shocked many in Pittsylvania County in that latter decade. I guess that was "Dan Vegas" back then. However, by the 1990's, when I was in High School, the meaning of the phrase "Dan Vegas" came to mean fun. It meant that Danville was a place to hang out and enjoy the nightlife and the restaurants. It didn't mean crime anymore. If it meant anything negative it was that there was nothing else to do in Danville, but go to the restaurants. Danville, though, is not what it was in the 1960's or 1970's anymore - much less the 1990's even.

As I graduated from school Dan River Mills was on its last legs and would go bankrupt just before the 2008 financial crash and national recession. Danville's economy went south before the rest of the country's did in that decade. But it bottomed out and recovered and what was once an empty spot, where the mill used to be, is now a spot where daily construction is happening for the coming Caesars casino. A temporary casino tent has been drawing thousands of visitors a week to Danville, many coming from North Carolina, since it opened on May 15, 2023.

Businesses are growing in Danville. Construction isn't just happening at the casino, but new apartments are being constructed in the old Dan River "White Mill" building and also downtown. Meanwhile, in Pittsylvania County things are starting to move forward there, with positive changes among its Board of Supervisors and the growing attention being received by the Berry Hill Mega Park. Developers are planning a mixed use residential/retail development out on 58 West in the Axton area that could be home to well over 1,500 housing units.

When you go out of town people now don't speak negatively of Danville, but talk about the casino and prospects for economic growth, and many people in Danville are finding ways to be a part of that and benefit (continued next page....)

Raleigh Visitors Find That Efland Road Is The Scenic Route To The New Danville Temporary Casino



By Michael Swanson (Editor)

It has been a couple of months now since the temporary casino tent facility opened up in Danville, Virginia and it is still attracting thousands of visitors a week, many of whom are coming from North Carolina. This temporary tent facility is about 40,000 square feet in size and if you go to it you'll see the construction going on at the property site for the coming Caesars Virginia gaming and entertainment complex set to open towards the end of 2024. Danville is right on the Virginia/North Carolina border and is drawing people from the Piedmont and RDU regions of North Carolina.

A friendly Facebook group has formed for fans and those interested in the casino called Caesars Danville VA Casino. In the group several people living in the RDU area asked people in it what is the best way to drive to the casino for them.

One person asked last week:

"Question for the people who go up through Raleigh. We're driving up tomorrow morning from south of Raleigh (taking I-40 west), and Google maps is giving me two routes that are about the same distance. One is to take the Hillsboro exit and pick up 86 there, and the other is the Efland exit and pick up 86 a little past Efland. Any recommendations on which is the best?"

A group member answered:

"Efland. I drove from Danville to Durham or Danville to Raleigh 5 days a week. By the mileage, it's about the same. Much safer and more comfortable driving through Efland. Trust me."

And another chimed in to say:

"Efland is the way to go for sure. A lot faster. And you can stop at Missy's Grill for a BLT and a hot dog! Bring cash."

Someone replied:

"We came from Fuquay Varina and did 86/Efland. It was an enjoyable drive."

The person who asked a few days later then came back to say:

"Thanks! It's almost four hours one way for us, but the man fell in love with the area (it is beautiful and a very scenic drive once you get off 40) and we liked the casino, so he's decided that it will be a nice day date when we want something to do on my days off."

Now I live in Danville and I'd say that both roads take about the same amount of time. So, I actually like to mix it up when I come back from the Raleigh area, even though there is no doubt that the Efland way is much more scenic.

One person from Raleigh gave this report after they took the drive and made their visit:

"Went up this morning to check it out. Thanks everyone for the recommendations on the drive. We did Hillsboro on the way up and doing Efland on the way back to see which we prefer. We got there about 8:30 and there was hardly anyone there. Stayed until about 12:30. It was starting to get a little busy and the tables that were open were packed, but there were still plenty of machines open when we left, even the popular ones like Dragon Links. Review: It's a nice space, all the employees were friendly and helpful if we had (continued next page....)

(Raleigh Temporary Casino Visitors Continued.....)

any questions, the machines aren't crowded up on each other, and the restrooms are clean. We lost a little but not much, about \$150 between us. We were both actually up at one time, but you know how that goes. But we had fun and played for four hours, so I'm not complaining. The only bad thing was that the servers were few and far between (yes I tip well, there just weren't many of them on the floor and they were busy) and there was nowhere you could just walk up and get a soda or coffee yourself without paying. A self-service soda/coffee station would be nice. But I know they are just getting started and probably short handed, so... Edited: I stand corrected, someone commented there is a small stand at the end of the casino if you turn right at the entrance that serves soda and water at no charge. We will definitely be making a day trip at least once every month or two."

Another visitor had this to say:

"Visited yesterday around noon, now I am visiting the area from PA, where casinos are plentiful. I was highly impressed, roomy, clean, friendly staff from your entrance to food court to games and security. I came out with quite a bit more \$ than I entered so that was a plus. I could get on any slot I wanted. If this level of service continues I will make this a part of my quarterly visits. Cannot wait for the brick and mortar building but cannot say enough positive things about the temp location."

WSET ABC 13 did a news report on December 21, 2023, with the general manager of the Caesars casino property. He told them that construction is on schedule. Everything is on track for the casino and hotel to be completed by the end of 2024.

(DanVegasNews Launches Continued....)

from it, whether that be job opportunities or new business ideas - and that's what this print publication is.

I believe there is an audience of people not only just in Danville, but outside of the area, who are now coming to visit, who want to know what is new. They want to know what new restaurants are opening up, what new recreational opportunities are coming,

and how the area is growing. They want to know what new funs things there are to do, or things that have already been here and they just did not know about. That's what I believe "Dan Vegas" is now about. Along with this print publication I have set up the website DanVegasNews.com along with it.

At the same time, people want to know what is going on. Danville and Pittsylvania County are connected together and people visit them and travel to them and go through them from Martinsville, Henry County, South Boston, Halifax County, and from Caswell and Rockingham counties across the North Carolina line.

If you go to the website DanVegasNews.com you can subscribe to my free weekly email newsletter. Each issue contains links to the top news stories of the week for these areas from various media outlets. The more media outlets in the area the better it is for everyone.

The business plan for this paper is simple. It's to start small. This issue is essentially a four page mock up. As we get advertisers, and hopefully more advertisers, we'll increase the size and frequency of the issues. I hope to be able to report to you in future issues how this little print paper is growing. New Years 2024 has already brought you something new and more new things are to come this year!



Mulchi and Younger to face off for Southside Virginia Senate seat

By Sarah Vogelsong, (Virginia Mercury)

Republican Tammy Brankley Mulchi and Democrat Tina Wyatt Younger will face off in a special election this January to represent state Senate District 9 in Southside Virginia.

Voters elected long-time Sen. Frank Ruff this November to represent the district, which encompasses Pittsylvania, Halifax, Charlotte, Lunenburg, Mecklenburg and Nottoway counties, the southern part of Prince Edward County and the city of Danville. Ahead of being sworn in to his next term, however, Ruff an-

nounced that he would not take office due to a cancer diagnosis.

Gov. Glenn Youngkin, who on Wednesday asked the General Assembly during his budget presentation to rename the commonwealth's Center for Rural Virginia in Ruff's honor, has set the special election for Jan. 9, the day before the General Assembly reconvenes for the 2024 session.

With a Dec. 20 deadline for candidates to file with the state Department of Elections to run in that race, both Republicans and Democrats held nominating contests Tuesday.

Republicans held a six-hour mass meeting in Drakes Branch in Charlotte County Tuesday night, selecting Mulchi, who had been endorsed by Ruff, after four rounds of voting. Six people ran for the nomination.

A member of the Clarksville Town Council and realtor, Mulchi previously served as a legislative aide to Ruff and Del. Tommy Wright, R-Lunenburg.

"Southside Virginia faces challenges unlike other regions of Virginia. The people of the region need a senator who shares their conservative values, understands the challenges facing their region, and knows how to meet those challenges by increasing opportunities," said Senate Minority Leader Ryan McDougle, R-Hanover, in a statement. "Tammy Mulchi will be that senator, and she has the full support of her future colleagues in the Senate Republican Caucus."

Democrats elected Younger, a former vice mayor of South Boston and chair of the Halifax Democrats, in a firehouse primary. With 89 votes, she narrowly edged out the next closest candidate, Danville vice mayor Gary Miller, who received 82 votes. Four candidates ran in the party's firehouse primary.

Senate Democratic Caucus Chair Mamie Locke, D-Hampton, said in a statement that "Tina's wealth of experience will greatly be an invaluable asset to our caucus."

"Given their background, I'm confident they will be yet another durable brick in our blue wall as we continue to ensure economic security, enhancing the quality of public education, and ensuring a bright future for every Virginian," she said.

Senate District 9 is considered a strongly Republican district, with 65% of voters casting ballots for Republicans in elections in 2021 and 2022.

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Pittsylvania County IDA Announces KTL Restorations Expansion in the Ringgold East Industrial Park

The Pittsylvania County Industrial Development Authority (IDA) announced the approval of a lease to purchase agreement with KTL Restorations Inc.

Under the terms of the agreement, KTL Restorations will lease the IDA-owned building at 2311 Cane Creek Parkway in the Ringgold East Industrial Park. The agreement gives KTL Restorations the right to purchase the building, and that is expected to occur in 2027. The agreement provides KTL Restorations the flexibility to expand its business, representing a \$3 million investment and 30 jobs in Pittsylvania County.

"The IDA loves investing in local businesses and local citizens. This project is unique in that it assists a nationally recognized company with its plans to expand here in Pittsylvania County, bringing jobs, revenue, and recognition to Southside Virginia. It also highlights KTL Restorations' commitment to remaining in the County into the future. The IDA would also like to thank the Longwood University Small Business Development Center and local Director Michael Duncan for their support of this project," said Pittsylvania County IDA Chairman Joey Faucette.

KTL Restorations specializes in classic car repair restoration and customization, from fabrication and structural repair, show-quality refinish, and the latest aftermarket upgrades.

As a high-end restorer of classic cars, KTL Restorations offers

Pittsylvania County IDA Announces KTL Restorations Expansion Continued.....



educational and employment opportunities that complement existing workforce development programs in the region, to include the first work-based learning program by a custom car builder in the U.S, in partnership with the Pittsylvania County Career and Technical Center (PCTC).

“With a client base that extends beyond the U.S., we feel that the expansion is going to only further the partnership, client base, and highly skilled trade jobs to our area. Across the U.S., there are only a handful of highly reputable restoration and custom shops – many do vintage work – but not to the “car boutique” level, as we do. We opened our “Vintage Quick Lane” only one year ago, and the response has been overwhelming with cars coming from many states to receive the new services KTL is offering. The building expansion opens up more job opportunities, revenue growth, and preservation of classics,” said KTL Restorations co-owners, Kurt and Crystal Lawrance.

KTL Restorations plans to begin work on the 12,000 square foot building in early 2024 and is expected to begin operations at the Ringgold location by mid-year.

“The Pittsylvania County Board of Supervisors applauds the IDA for its hard work in helping a local business remain and grow in the County, and it thanks KTL Restorations for choosing the County for its expansion. This will not only create new jobs and opportunities for our citizens, but it also contributes to the economic growth in the County and beyond,” said Pittsylvania County Board of Supervisors Chairman Darrell Dalton.

KTL Restorations is an active

member of the community and its advocate, providing yearly donations to Pittsylvania County Schools, fire and rescue agencies, law enforcement and more. KTL Restorations brings a wide variety of industry specialists to Southside, including business owners, CEO’s and various industries leaders, as it is ambassadors and partners with more than 70 companies across the U.S. During those visits, the company highlights the region and exposes them to the growth within the local community.

KTL Restorations has been in business in Pittsylvania County since 2002 and is temporarily located at 239 Mayfield Road. The company got its start in Long Island, New York, where KTL Founder Tom Lawrance took his love of Mercury Cougars, and working in his two-car garage, pursued his dream of rebuilding these classic automobiles. Tom Lawrance passed away in 2014, and his son, Kurt, has carried on the vision his father began, rebranding and rebuilding KTL Restorations into a nationally recognized facility.

Its work has been featured in publications like the *Legendary Cougar Magazine* and its 1970 Mercury Cougar Eliminator, the “Lethal Cat,” was the 2019 Muscle Car of the Year.

“We preserve history. We bring back the memories and the dreams of the vehicle you rode in as a kid, or the one that has been passed down through three generations. We build the car that someone only dreamed of as a young adult. Each client is given ample attention to detail and becomes what we term the “KTL family” as we carry their treasures across the country to showcase,” said Kurt and Crystal Lawrance.

New Restaurant ISO ISO Ramen & Boba (Bar) Opens In Danville



By Michael Swanson (Editor)

Popeyes Chicken has opened on Riverside drive to create a mania for its food. I haven’t been there, because people talk about waiting in drive thru lines for 15 to 30 minutes when they go there. I decided a few days ago to check out the new restaurant right across the street from it in the Riverside Shopping Center, ISO ISO Ramen. It’s located right next to Red Crab, and I gotta say it was really

good.

I asked my waitress what the most popular dish was and she pointed to two on the menu (items 4 and 5), but I picked out item 1, which is the title dish Iso Iso Ramen, as it was listed on the menu as being spicy and it was. From its website ISO ISO Ramen is a new diner, with locations in Clemson, SC, Jacksonville, FL, and Raleigh. So, they chose Danville for their fourth location. Check it out.

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ad spots like this one you see here. This ad spots measures 4.916 X 6.3 inches and takes up 1/4th of this page. We also will sell full page and half page ad spots as our standard sizes.

Next issue will be published April 2024.

For more info contact us via email:
info@danvegasnews.com

Danville City Manager Announces New Chief of Police



In December, Danville City Manager Ken Larking announced the promotion of Christopher (Chris) K. Wiles from interim chief of police to the position of chief of police. Wiles served as interim police chief for nearly two months and, prior to that, as deputy police chief since last December.

He is a 30-year veteran of the Danville Police Department, having joined the department on Sept. 1, 1993.

“The hiring process was extremely competitive, as we had several well-qualified applicants,” Larking said. “However, it was apparent that Chris was the best fit for our community.”

Larking added, “I am pleased that we have strong leadership from the police department, so we had the luxury of promoting from within for this very important position. The department has made great strides, and Chris’ experience and knowledge of the system will allow us to continue the great progress.”

Wiles was chosen from a field of 48 candidates through a national recruitment. Developmental Associates LLC in Chapel Hill, N.C., was hired to coordinate the search. A 13-member assessment panel vetted finalists in skill-assessment exercises, including a presentation, a written exercise, a simulated community meeting and a coaching role-play. The panel included police chiefs from three states.

Wiles will be sworn in as police chief during tonight’s meeting of the City Council. He will succeed Scott Booth, who left at the end of October to become police chief in Roanoke.

“I am extremely honored by

the opportunity to serve our community and the women and men of the Danville Police Department as chief of police,” Wiles said. “I look forward to continuing to build upon the great successes our department has achieved in addressing crime and building strong partnerships within our community.”

During his career with the Danville Police Department, Wiles has held positions in patrol, criminal investigations, honor guard, and the community policing unit. He has served a major of the services division, major of the operations division, and deputy chief.

He has a bachelor’s degree from Virginia Tech and a master’s degree from Longwood College (now University). He is a graduate of the 272nd session of the FBI National Academy and the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police Professional Executive Leadership School (PELS) at the University of Richmond.

Danville’s Economic Development and Tourism Team Grows

The Danville Office of Economic Development & Tourism has expanded its staff to meet the needs of a rapidly growing city.

Kelvin Perry was promoted to assistant director of Economic Development & Tourism in April. In this role, Perry oversees the existing business retention and expansion program, coordinates incentive and support efforts with local, regional, and state economic development organizations,

oversees capital projects, and serves as liaison for the Industrial Development Authority (IDA) of Danville. He joined the team in 2017 as project manager.

Lisa Greer was hired as the Danville Visitor Center manager in April. Greer is responsible for managing the tourism information center and overseeing staff’s ongoing training and development. She was previously employed by Daly Seven Inc, as the hotel general manager.

Hannah Barker joined the team as marketing and communications coordinator in August. She writes and edits news releases, website content, and social media content to stimulate economic growth for the region. Barker is also responsible for maintaining the inventory of industrial and commercial properties. She has experience in marketing at local nonprofits, God’s Storehouse, and the Center for Early Success.

Samantha Bagbey stepped into her role as project manager in November. Bagbey previously was employed as the executive director of the Roxboro Chamber of Commerce in North Carolina. As project manager, Bagbey provides support to the local small business community through technical and financial programming and also assists in the redevelopment of historic districts within the city limits, including the River District, North Main Hill, the Old West End (Five Forks), and Schoolfield District.

Vanessa Wise and Lesly Martin joined the team as travel counselors at the Danville Visitor Center. They assist and greet the traveling public, support Visitor Center operations, and interact with tourism partners.

“We are thrilled to welcome new members to the Danville Office of Economic Development & Tourism team, in addition to celebrating the promotion of a colleague,” said Corrie Bobe, director of Economic Development & Tourism. “This increased capacity will allow the department to increase programming and support provided to the local business community and also enhance our engagement with the traveling public.”

About the Office of Economic Development & Tourism

The Danville Office of Economic Development & Tourism recruits and retains businesses for the Danville area. The office provides information on available sites and buildings, incentives and other financial resources and offers a website

designed for the business community: www.discoverdanville.com.

The Danville Visitor Center serves as the gateway and information center for Danville and Pittsylvania County, as well as the entire Southern Virginia region. Its primary goal is to educate travelers about offerings in the region and the state. Knowledgeable staff are available to assist visitors and provide access to hundreds of flyers and maps for area attractions. This facility is located at 645 River Park Drive.

Casino Generated \$17.5 Million in November

The Virginia Lottery reports that gaming revenue totaled \$17.5 million for Danville Casino in November, which was the casino’s sixth full month of operation. Gaming tax revenue for the City of Danville amounted to \$1.05 million.

The City of Danville also receives direct payments as part of an agreement with Caesars Virginia. The direct payment for November will be \$437,541, bringing the October revenue total to nearly \$1.5 million.

Since the casino opened May 15, it has generated nearly \$125.4 million in gaming revenue and nearly \$7.5 million in tax revenue for the city. Direct payments total \$3.1 million since the casino opened.

The Virginia Lottery also released November figures for the state’s other two casinos now in operation. HR Bristol casino generated nearly \$12.1 million in gaming revenue, with Rivers Casino Portsmouth bringing in nearly \$21.6 million.

During November, gaming revenues from Virginia casinos totaled nearly \$51.2 million. Virginia law assesses a graduated tax on a casino’s AGR, or wagers minus winnings, and nearly \$10.3 million in taxes were paid. Of that total, nearly \$3.3 million goes to Danville, Bristol, and Portsmouth as host cities, with the remainder going into the state’s gaming proceeds fund, a problem gambling treatment and support fund, and a family and children’s trust fund. The numbers were issued on Friday, Dec. 15, by the Virginia Lottery.

Danville’s voters approved a Caesars Virginia casino in Danville by a wide margin in November 2020. The Virginia Lottery Board approved the casino license in April of this year. The permanent Caesars Virginia casino resort project in Schoolfield is expected to be complete in late 2024.