



Wednesday
April 8, 2020
Volume 134 • Issue 43

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Steve Norris' Forecast



Scattered showers and thunderstorms expected today with a high of 73. Partly cloudy and colder Thursday with a high of 56 and low of 36.

Obituaries

Larry Micheal Davis
Earl Glenn Haverdink
Doyle Neal McCoy
Robert Eugene Music

Upcoming Meetings

The Crossville Regional Planning Commission will meet Thursday, April 9, at noon via ZOOM Video Conference and broadcast on the city's website, www.crossvilletn.gov.

Cotton fabric needed for masks

Protecting the Plateau is on a mission to protect the community's health-care workers during the COVID-19 pandemic by making masks for them. They are currently in desperate need of 100% cotton fabrics. A drop-off event will be held Tuesday and Thursday at the Dogwood Exchange, 92 E. First St., from 10 a.m. to noon. For more information, check out their page on Facebook.

Happy Birthday!



Happy 5th birthday, Virgil Gardner Thompson!
To place a birthday ad in one of our upcoming editions, call 931-484-5145.

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State projects less severe COVID surge

By **HEATHER MULLINIX**
Chronicle editor

No plans to change stay-at-home order

Gov. Bill Lee is hopeful that social distancing and staying home will help the state slow the spread of the novel coronavirus.

New data models sup-

port his hope, with a University of Washington model predicting the state will peak April 15 without experiencing shortfalls in hospital beds, ICU beds or venti-

lators.

"Over the last 24 hours, we have seen some positive trends in our state and across the country," Lee said during his Monday press

briefing. "It is a welcome relief to get some good news."

There were 3,802 people testing positive for the virus on Monday, with 352 people hospital-

ized due to the virus. To date, 65 people have died of the disease in Tennessee, while 356 are considered "recovered."

Cumberland County reported 26 cases on Monday.

See **SURGE** • 3A

Reacting to change



Social Brew owner Matt Miller refills a growler Monday afternoon. Like other businesses, Social Brew's hours and normal operations have changed based on COVID-19 precautions.

Michael Lindsay/Chronicle

Local small businesses adapting to quarantine life

By **MICHAEL LINDSAY**
Chronicle sports editor

With the changes COVID-19 are causing, Crossville-area businesses are adapting to new regulations designed to keep customers safe and slow the virus' spread.

Restaurants are able to offer take-out and drive-thru orders, but they're not the only establishments adapting to unprecedented times.

From yoga studios to optometrists, Crossville's businesses are getting creative.

"This quarantine has definitely hit CatFit Yoga hard," said owner Cathleen Kahn. "We are not able to have classes in the studio, but we have moved to virtual classes on Facebook. It has been successful [but] our people miss the personal connection. Hopefully, this won't last for a long, and we do

have a few other things planned to try and tide people over."

Yoga studios like CatFit and Ms. Cam's Studio are switching to online classes to stay engaged with their clientele.

"I am posting instructional videos for all my classes so my students can continue their dance training," said Cam Hill, owner

See **ADAPTING** • 2A

Gift of life gives Thompson family new memories to treasure

By **HEATHER MULLINIX**
Chronicle editor

Virgil Thompson stood before the congregation at Liberty Baptist Church in May 2019 and told them, in three or four months, he would be running — either in the yard with his sons or in heaven with his grandfather.

Thompson, 39, was leaving the next day for Durham, NC. He

and wife, Jennifer, would be spending the next several months there as they prepared for Virgil to have a double-lung transplant.

"What a blessing this has been," said Jennifer last week. "I'm thankful."

Jennifer had been scheduled to speak at the April Donate Life month observance, but concerns over group gatherings led to that event's cancellation.

Growing up with Cystic Fibrosis

Thompson was diagnosed



photos submitted

Virgil Thompson, wife, Jennifer, and sons Landon and Virgil, enjoyed a hike to the base of Ozone Falls in the fall, just a few months after the elder Virgil underwent a double-lung transplant. It was the first time he had the energy for such an excursion in years.

with cystic fibrosis when he was 2. The disease affects the cells that produce mucus, sweat and digestive juices, making them thicker. Thompson described the effect to the congregation as similar to stopped-up pipes, causing damage to lungs, the liver, pancreas and other organs.

Parents James and Linda Thompson were told little Virgil would likely never make it to school age and to enjoy the time they had. And that's what they did. They didn't tell the toddler about his diagnosis, allow-

See **GIFT** • 6A

Firefighters probe fire at business building

Crossville firefighters were called to a fire at an unoccupied business structure early Saturday and reports that the cause of the blaze remains under investigation.

The fire alarm was received around 6:15 a.m. from a passerby who reported flames shooting through the roof at the vacant building located at 364 Hwy. 70 E., just east of Big John's BBQ.

Crossville Fire and Rescue Assistant Chief Chris South said the building, owned by Doug Howe, had previously been used as an automotive business but was for sale and was not occupied at the time.

South said the fire appeared to have started in the center of the building. There was electric service to the structure, but it is not known if that was the origin of the fire.

"The investigation is open and continuing," South said Monday. "The cause and origin is still to be determined."

The fire was reported at shift change and about 20 firefighters responded to the scene and were able to bring the fire completely under control by 6:45 a.m. No damage was reported to nearby structures, and no injuries were reported.

South said damage to the building was "significant."

BOE holds off on DOS interviews

By **HEATHER MULLINIX**
Chronicle editor

The Cumberland County Board of Education decided to pause its search for a new director of schools until after the state's stay-at-home order expires April 14.

Eleven individuals applied for the position by the March 25 deadline, with four local candidates.

"I'm not certain that we can effectively conduct interviews through Zoom, but I am open for discussion," said Teresa Boston, 8th District representative, during the Thursday meeting held via video conference. The meeting was also streamed live on Facebook for the public.

Anita Hale, 4th District representative, said the board had to interview candidates, either through video conferencing or in person but observing social distancing.

Boston said, "At this point, we are not encouraged to have anyone with a meeting over 10 people. There's nine of us."

BOE Attorney Earl Patton cautioned the board against choosing a course of action that was too different from the pro-

See **DOS** • 2A



GIFT: Thankful for every moment

• From 1A

ing him to have a normal childhood.

When Virgil was 14, he started having pain in his chest. He told his parents, and they shared that early diagnosis with him.

As he got older, he started needing to take medicine and making more trips to the hospital. He was accepted to law school after graduating from the University of Tennessee, but his health forced him to leave.

"That hurt. That's what I was going to do. I was going to become a lawyer. That was always my plan," he said.

Virgil said he was lost for a time.

"But God was with me the whole time," he said during that May testimony.

A Love Story

Virgil first met Jennifer when both were students at Roane State Community College. They dated briefly but went their separate ways after college.

"I always thought he was so handsome," she said. "I always wondered what happened to that guy."

In early 2012, social media brought the two back together. He asked her to meet up for a cup of coffee. The now-single mom of a 4-year-old thought, "Why not?"

"He was doing so well with his health then," she said.

"I'd always felt in my heart I had met the person I was supposed to be with. Virgil was the one," she said.

As their relationship progressed, they began talking about marriage. When a cystic fibrosis flare-up left him hospitalized that December, he worried his condition would be a "deal breaker" for the relationship. He needed to relocate from Knoxville to Crossville.

"I quickly said, 'Well, I can come with you,'" Jennifer said. "I am honored God thought enough of me to bring us together."

The two married in April 2013 and set up their home in Cumberland County.

Virgil had been told he would likely never have children of his own. Doctors also cautioned him against stepchildren, because children often have illnesses. Cystic fibrosis made him susceptible to respiratory infections and pneumonia.

Virgil said becoming a stepfather was a miracle.

Then, in 2015, the couple had a second miracle, when Virgil Blue was born, named that for his blue eyes.

His 36th birthday was a celebration. That had been the average life expectancy of CF patients, though treatments continue to extend that number.

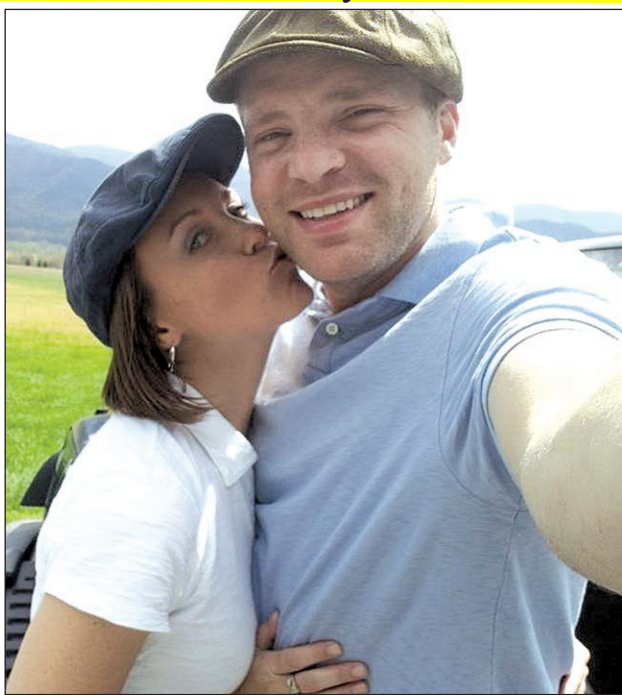
A Gift

In the last few years, Virgil's hospital visits had become more frequent. He started having to carry an oxygen backpack and his lung function decreased. He had trouble making plans with friends or family because he never knew how he would feel that day.

"Virgil had been prepping his whole life that one day he might need a lung transplant," Jennifer said.

His lung function was about 20% at this time. Vanderbilt referred him to Duke University Medical Center's transplant center. One of the doctors asked why Virgil wanted a lung transplant.

"He said, 'I've got these two boys. I feel like if I can spend a little more time, quality time, with them and grow them in their walk with the Lord, and train them right, that it would be worth it,'" Jennifer said.



Virgil first met Jennifer when both were students at Roane State Community College.



"I'd always felt in my heart I had met the person I was supposed to be with," said wife Jennifer.

Jennifer said.

"The doctor said, 'I think we can help you, son.'"

The couple made their plans to relocate to Durham in June. Duke brings transplant patients to the campus and starts their rehabilitation prior to surgery. That can help improve recovery time.

But a lung transplant comes with a lot of possible complications. Virgil said during that May testimony at his church doctors said there was up to 60% chance he wouldn't survive the transplant.

His lung function was at 17% at that time.

"That's half a breath," Virgil said.

The surgery was a success, Jennifer said. The surgeon said everything went perfectly.

Virgil also made a donation of his lungs to advance research in cystic fibrosis treatment.

That was in July. As school was getting ready to start, he felt good enough to send Jennifer back home for the kids as they started back to school. Soon, he rejoined his family.

"Virgil had energy," Jennifer said.

They played outside. They hiked to base of Ozone Falls. He put up lights outside their home.

The family had a happy Christmas. Around the new year, as they walked up the hill in front of their home, Virgil turned to Jennifer and said, "Even if I don't have a lot of days, this transplant was worth it. Look at what I'm able to do. I'm not using oxygen. I'm getting to watch the kids play. I'm getting to do things I've not been able to do."

Life is a Vapor

In January, Virgil began feeling short of breath again. He required increasing amounts of oxygen, as well.

Duke sent a plane to Crossville to transport him and Jennifer back to Durham for treatment. Transplant patients take a variety of drugs to prevent their immune system from attacking their new organs. Unfortunately, the donor lungs carried a virus Virgil had never

been exposed to, and the immunity-suppressing drugs were unable to stop his body's response. His lungs were scarred too much to allow him to recover. Virgil passed away Feb. 20.

Jennifer said, "He had quality time after the transplant, and we have a new set of memories that would not have been possible without our donor family."

She's thankful for every moment she had with Virgil. She's thankful for every memory she and her boys have to treasure.

When she returned home, she found the beginnings of Virgil's next testimony. Several churches had asked him to speak when he felt up to it.

"God is with you," it begins. "The reminder that life is a vapor (James 4:14) has been revealing in my mind," he wrote.

Jennifer said the Cumberland County community has wrapped her in love these past months. There were care packages while in Durham, gifts of food when she returned and countless prayers.

Jennifer is holding to her faith and hopes she'll see him again one day in Heaven.

There are more than 115,000 people currently awaiting the gift of an organ donation. Another person is added to the waiting list every 10 minutes.

Donations include vital organs like lungs, hearts, livers or kidneys. One person can save up to eight lives through organ donation. Tissue donations of corneas, heart valves, skin, nerves and more can impact 50 lives.

Individuals can authorize organ donation through an advanced directive or living will, the Apple Health app, through the Department of Safety driver's license or online at www.donatelifetn.org, www.registerme.org or www.BeTheGiftToday.com.

■ Heather Mullinix may be reached at hmullinix@crossville-chronicle.com.



The average life expectancy for someone with cystic fibrosis is 36. Every day afterward is a gift.



Virgil Thompson is pictured after graduating Duke rehab, post surgery August 2019.

CUMBERLAND COUNTY:

"Sometimes we are tested not to show our weakness, but to discover our strengths."

-Unknown

Cumberland County Courthouse

Be STRONG when you are weak

BRAVE when you are scared

HUMBLE WHEN YOU ARE VICTORIOUS

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