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**By Chris Graham/AFP** The public-opinion survey commissioned by the Valley Leadership Trust earlier this month that posed apparently leading questions to Shenandoah Valley

**'Goodbye, Charlie'**

*Players preparing to bring gender-bending comedy to the stage*

**In the Spotlight**

**Chris Graham**

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Charlie Sorel was the kind of guy that women love to hate.

It turns out that other men tended to hate him as well - which is how it was that good-ol' good-time Charlie ended up sleeping up with the fishes after being shot by a jealous husband whose wife he had just been caught romancing.

As fate would have it, Charlie wasn't quite ready for an eternity in heaven or, more likely, hell.

Only Charlie doesn't realize this right away, of course.

"The first moment you meet me on stage, it's just a few minutes after I've discovered this has happened. So you're meeting a character in the midst of the most unbelievable thing that they can imagine happening to them," said Jenny Howard, who is bringing Charlie to life in the Waynesboro Players' production of *Goodbye Charlie*, which will



residents on issues including the state budget, the repeal of a ban on civil unions that was passed by the Virginia General Assembly last year and the future of Weekday Religious Education might very well not have been a push poll.

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#### **INSIDE ... Will Russ run?**

**By Chris Graham/AFP** It's official - almost. Winchester Republican Sen. Russ Potts is holding a news conference in Richmond today to announce his plans relative to the 2005 gubernatorial race. The speculation for the past few months has been that Potts will enter the race for the governor's mansion as an independent - something that the veteran politician has neither confirmed nor denied.

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#### **IN FOCUS: Treasurer, city bracing for legal battle**

**By Chris Graham/AFP** The battle is on. Staunton City Council voted 5-1 Thursday night to approve a series of changes to the city code that will give sweeping powers of discretion over fiscal matters to the city finance office. Moments after the vote, city treasurer Elnora Hazlett, whose office will lose its powers of oversight on matters including public bonds, long-term investments and banking services, among others, informed city-council members that she has retained the Richmond law firm ...

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#### **NOTES FROM THE PRESS: Virginia politics news and notes**

**By Chris Graham/AFP** House Republicans want the state to get serious about its commitment to making improvements to the transportation infrastructure in the Commonwealth. The House GOP Caucus on Thursday endorsed a package of amendments to the 2004-2006 state budget that would earmark more than \$1 billion in additional and recurring revenues ...

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#### **EYE ON THE VALLEY: Weatherholtz announces retirement from House**

**By Chris Graham/AFP** The words were hardly out of Del. Glenn Weatherholtz' mouth before the struggle to see who will be the next delegate from the 26th House District had taken on a new dimension. Weatherholtz, R-Harrisonburg, announced on Thursday that he will not seek re-election to the seat representing the Friendly City and the

run March 3-5 in the Louis Spilman Auditorium at Waynesboro High School.

To say that the role is a challenge would be to understate things by a good bit.

"I've been struggling with the male-female thing. He's still male in his mind, he's dealing with this new body, and these female traits slip out. But he's still male," Howard said.

Howard has prepared herself by "talking to a lot of guys and watching guys and trying to pick up the mannerisms. Which is hard, because you guys walk and stand very different than we do," she said.

"I e-mailed a bunch of male friends and asked them, 'OK, if you woke up tomorrow as a woman, tell me, what would interest you, what would confuse you, what would be the first thing that you would do. And don't worry about being lewd,' " Howard said.



Actor Ben Houseknecht, who portrays Charlie's long-time best friend, George Tracy, pitched in by slipping on a pair of high heels during an early rehearsal.

"It helped me to see how a man could struggle with something like that. I've been trying to get those kinds of insights because I don't have that insight from a personal perspective, obviously," Howard said.

Neither did her costars, to hear them tell it.

"I find myself in response acting much more female. My posture is better, I swish around a little bit more," said Jennifer Launt, who portrays Rusty Sartori, one of Charlie's many mistresses.

"I think it does make you very much more aware of your body and the subtle things that make you different. You never stop to think that, you know, oh yeah, a guy walks differently than I do. You just walk," Launt said.

"It becomes very strange to have both of us on the stage at the same time. You get to see a woman walking the wrong way, and you tell yourself, 'That's not right.' But you don't place it at the time," Launt

northern half of Rockingham County in the House of Delegates.

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**EYE ON THE VALLEY: Travel Channel to feature Waynesboro business**



**By Chris Graham/AFP** Waynesboro is going to get some invaluable prime-time exposure next week. A segment featuring The Chatter Bus is going to air on the Travel Channel on Monday night at 8 p.m. and 11 p.m. The segment will be included in an episode of the Travel Channel series "Dreaming Big." Filming on the segment was completed on one day back in June at The Chatter Bus ...

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**EYE ON THE VALLEY: I-81 accident cleanup continues**

**By Chris Graham/AFP** A contractor employed by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality is continuing with its efforts related to the cleanup of a tributary to the Middle River in the aftermath of a Feb. 5 tractor-trailer accident on Interstate 81 in Augusta County. "It's not a quick process," said Dan Kain, the water compliance and monitoring manager at the DEQ regional office in Harrisonburg.

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**IN THE SCHEME OF THINGS: Winning and losing**

**By Nan S. Russell** The sound of wood-on-wood sealed the outcome even without seeing the orange-striped ball roll past the wicket. "I don't want to play croquet with her," the division vice president laughed as she offered consolation iced tea to the players gathered for the teambuilding. She added, "Congratulations! I had no idea you were so competitive." She was right.

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**STOP THE PRESSES: Big boned**

**By Chris Graham/AFP** Did I hear that right? Obesity is at epidemic proportions here in these grand ol' States of ours? Let's think this through. We're in an obesity epidemic. OK ... And this means what exactly? That there are too many Krispy Kreme and Dunkin Donuts franchises on the average Joe and Jane's way to work for any of us to be rightfully expected to have enough willpower to not stop

said.

The question that begs to be asked here, with all the attention that has been put on the subject ... so how do men and women walk differently, anyway?

"Men tend to walk in a straight line putting one foot in front of the other one, whereas women tend to walk in a straight line keeping their feet straight and walking like they're straddling a straight line," Houseknecht said.

"Your feet kind of go out a little when you walk," Howard said.

"I've tried to walk with my feet turned out, which actually hurts my knees," Howard said.

Howard is also working on standing with her feet apart, another telltale guy thing.

"There are certain times now and then when something really female will slip out, or I'll gesture in some way, and say, 'Oh, that's a woman.' I guess it's good that I realize it, and hopefully can catch myself when I'm on the stage," Howard said.

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**In a Nutshell**

**March 3-5: Goodbye Charlie**, presented by the Waynesboro Players, 8 p.m., Louis Spilman Auditorium, Waynesboro High School, 1200 W. Main St., Waynesboro. Tickets available on-line, at the door, or in Waynesboro, Quality Cleaners, Donna's Hallmark, Sharon Bookstore; in Staunton, Terry Court Florist, The Bookstack; in Stuarts Draft, Village Green Florist; and in Fishersville, Quail Hill Herb Shoppe. Info: (540) 949-7464.

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**On the Web**

- [www.waynesboroplayers.org](http://www.waynesboroplayers.org)

*Chris Graham is the co-publisher of The Augusta Free Press.*

*What do you think of this story? Share your thoughts at [news@augustafreepress.com](mailto:news@augustafreepress.com).*

every now and then ...

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**OBITUARIES: Feb. 25, 2005**

Ernest D. "Ernie" Fortney Jr., 77

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Edited by Crystal Graham & Chris Graham



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