

# HASHTAG

JANUARY 2026

FREE

ISSUE #173

## WEST VIRGINIA



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### Winter Sound, Warm Hearts | Lewisburg Winter Music Festival is back January 30 & 31!



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Winter Sound, Warm Hearts | Lewisburg Winter Music Festival is back January 30 & 31!

Snapshots from last year's Lewisburg Winter Music Festival - music and energy lit up downtown Lewisburg for a good cause. Images courtesy of Joshua Baldwin.

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PAGE

CONTENTS:

- 
4. COFFEE SHOP TRAIL MAP
- 
4. UNTRAINED PROFESSIONALS
- 
5. FROM THE EDITOR
- 
6. ON THE COVER  
Lewisburg Winter Music Festival
- 
7. CHAD NICKELL & THE LOOSE CHANGE
- 
8. BLUEGRASS FOREVER  
Richard Hefner & The Black Mountain Bluegrass Boys
- 
9. MLK JR. DAY CELEBRATION
- 
- 10-11. LEWISBURG/WSS MAP
- 
- 12-13. ALABASTER BOXER
- 
14. WILLIAMSBURG WINTER FESTIVAL
- 
15. ASTROLOGY  
Let our robot overlords tell you which regional artists belong on your playlist!
- 
- 16-17. THE AGENDA  
January 2026
- 
18. STATE WRESTLING CHAMPIONSHIPS
- 
19. RIVERBEND GARDEN CENTER
-

# NO TRAINING? NO PROBLEM! HOW THE UNTRAINED PROFESSIONALS ARE ROCKING THE STAGE



The **Untrained Professionals**, a high-voltage pair from Beckley and Boomer made up of Chris Huddle and Clinton Scott, have been shaking up the regional music scene since 2018. What began as a couple of casual shows quickly turned into something much bigger, and Chris and Clinton have been rocking stages together since.

They recall, “We started playing together in 2018. We were both involved in other projects and we just thought it would be fun to do a couple shows together. We quickly realized that we were on to something much bigger than we had planned for, and we’ve been together ever since.”

### A Name That Fits

The duo’s name is a playful nod to their journey. Initially, they considered calling themselves “10 and 12,” a reference to their 10 fingers and 12 strings. But as they laugh, “It was pointed out to us by a dear soul that we were idiots ... we had 20 fingers and 12 strings. So we scrapped that. Untrained Professionals just came out as sort of a joke, but now it actually makes total sense. Neither of us have any official musical training, but after all of our years on the road, we are definitely professionals.”

### Evolving Sound

Both Clinton and Chris are self-professed metalheads, a style that influenced their early music. While the local metal scene dwindled, they adapted, expanding their sound to cover a wide range of genres alongside original tracks.

### Musical Influences

The duo’s influences run the gamut

of rock and metal legends:

**Chris Huddle:** “I went to see KISS when I was 8 years old and Ace Frehley immediately made me realize that I wanted to play guitar. I later became mesmerized by Pantera and Slayer, so the combination of those three are definitely where my style comes from.”

**Clinton Scott:** “I was raised on classics like Elvis and Buddy Holly.



The Untrained Professionals, Clinton Scott and Chris Huddle, bringing their high-energy performance to the stage.

Image courtesy of Clinton Scott and Chris Huddle.

In my teen years I got into Hootie & The Blowfish and Oasis ... Oasis was actually my first concert. Later I got into bands like Slipknot and Korn, but my biggest influence has to be Dad... he’s where I got the spark!”

They agree there’s little they won’t try musically, and that versatility shows in their performances.

### Duo Chemistry

Their strong partnership comes from deep mutual understanding. “We mesh together really well and play off each other’s strengths and weaknesses. We know what the other guy is going to do most of the time and can

have whole conversations on stage with just a look,” Chris says.

### Memorable Moments

Every show is meaningful, but performing at local festivals has been a particular highlight: Tamarack Summerfest and Fallfest, The Oak Leaf Festival, The Lemonade Festival, and The Cherry River Festival are among the events that have left an impact.

“We are beyond grateful to be able to do what we do for a living. But we are most definitely honored to be a part of all the festivals that we are asked to play at,” they say.

### Local Roots, Big Impact

Their community has shaped them as musicians. “Just being able to play music for a living is such an amazing experience that it shapes us into the performers that we are. Without the amazing fan base that we have, we are just two losers with guitars,” they joke.

### Connecting With Fans

Rather than relying on rigid setlists, the duo adapts to each crowd. “We just want everyone to feel good and have a great time,” they say.

They also stay busy with their other project, **NOTHING NOBLE**, a full four-piece rock band featuring longtime friends Chris Berry and Dave Marcus. Both acts are on the road for nearly all of 2026.

Fans can follow The Untrained Professionals on Facebook to keep up with shows, tour dates, and the latest updates.

### Words of Wisdom

When asked for advice for aspiring musicians, they keep it simple and heartfelt: “DO IT!!! Don’t be scared!!! GO LIVE YOUR DREAM!”

# FROM THE EDITOR

Happy New Year, friends! New calendars, new chapters, new vibes: Hello, 2026! From our hills to our hollers, our hometowns are buzzing with energy, creativity, and all the heart that makes this place feel like home.

Adding to the excitement of January, the much-anticipated Lewisburg Winter Music Festival returns January 30–31 with two full days of live music woven throughout downtown Lewisburg. With more than seventy musicians performing across downtown venues, the festival is the perfect way to immerse yourself in the vibrant music scene that makes our region so special, all while supporting a great cause. Be sure to check out our cover story to learn more.

On January 19, downtown Lewisburg will unite to honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision and

reflect on his enduring message of overcoming hate with love during the annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration. The day begins with a march starting on Court Street and continuing through town to Lewisburg United Methodist Church, where participants will have opportunities for learning, fellowship, and a delicious free lunch. This celebration is a meaningful reminder of the strength of our community in action and of Dr. King's lasting legacy.

For those who find joy in the outdoors, January is packed with opportunities thanks to Appalachian Headwaters. From bird counts and guided walks to expert talks, there's no better way to start the year than connecting with nature. Check out The Agenda to learn why "Bird is the Word in 2026," and enjoy all the chances to learn about and connect with the birds around us while soaking up some fresh winter air.

Music pulses through our region like a heartbeat. It's in our streets, our venues, our gathering spaces, and it echoes through the lives of everyone who calls this place home. We're incredibly fortunate to be surrounded by musicians who shape our culture with their talent, stories, and deep love for community. I recently had the pleasure of speaking with some of our area's remarkable artists, from seasoned storytellers like Richard Hefner to rising bands like Alabaster Boxer. Hearing about their journeys and passions and how music weaves through their lives and ours was truly inspiring.

And speaking of music, Carnegie Hall has two special events on the calendar this month. January Jazz will feature the Bob Thompson Unit, joined by Lena Seikaly. Later in the month, Danny Paisley and The Southern Grass will bring their signature sound to the stage. Both events are sure to fill winter with warmth and rhythm.

We're also looking forward to the Williamsburg Winter Carnival, a joyful reminder that even in the coldest months, there's plenty of fun, connection, and reasons to celebrate together.

Looking ahead just a bit, sports fans can mark their calendars for February, when the West Virginia Dual Team State Wrestling Championships return to the State Fairgrounds. This event showcases incredible talent, dedication, and the strong community spirit that brings people together across our region.

January is a month of fresh starts and new beginnings, a reset button we all get to press together. This is the perfect time to celebrate the music, nature, culture, and people that bring our neighborhoods to life. Whether you're catching a live show, cheering from the sidelines, exploring the trails, or simply soaking it all in, there are endless ways to feel inspired and connected. Take a peek at The Agenda and see what's waiting for you this month.

May your January be filled with music in the streets, warmth in every note, and joy in every moment. Wishing you a wonderful start to 2026!

Lisa

## EVENTS TO LOOK FORWARD TO ACROSS THE GREENBRIER VALLEY

### JANUARY

- Lewisburg Winter Music Festival, Lewisburg
- January Jazz Special Event, Carnegie Hall, Lewisburg
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration, Lewisburg
- Winter Carnival, Williamsburg

### FEBRUARY

- Opry Night at Pocahontas County Opera House, Marlinton
- Gatsby at the Greenbrier, White Sulphur Springs
- Guys & Dolls Sr., Greenbrier Valley Theatre, Lewisburg
- WV Wrestling Dual State Championship, State Fairgrounds

### MARCH

- Sweet Honey in the Rock Mainstage, Carnegie Hall, Lewisburg
- The Joe Stamm Band, Pocahontas County Opera House, Marlinton

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# A WINTER TRADITION WITH HEART: LEWISBURG WINTER MUSIC FESTIVAL RETURNS JAN. 30–31, 2026

Each winter, when tourism slows and the hills around Lewisburg settle into a quiet rhythm, music once again sparks energy throughout the town. **The Lewisburg Winter Music Festival** returns on **January 30–31, 2026**, offering two full days of live performances across multiple downtown venues, while also supporting musicians when they need it most.

Produced by the **Southern Appalachia Musician's Association (SAMA)**, the Lewisburg Winter Music Festival is more than a celebration of sound. It is a mission-driven event created to raise funds for musicians facing crisis situations and to invest directly in music education. SAMA is a West Virginia-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit led by an all-volunteer board of musicians and music professionals who believe in strengthening communities by supporting the people who create the music.

## Music With a Purpose

SAMA's work extends far beyond a single weekend. The organization focuses on disaster relief, emergency assistance, and educational support for musicians, with the goal of expanding its impact throughout Southern Appalachia, including West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, and Kentucky. While events may take place in different cities, funds raised are distributed locally, ensuring that each community directly benefits from the music it hosts. All distributions are approved by board vote and documented through SAMA's annual reporting.

According to **Joshua Baldwin, Board President of SAMA**, the winter festival plays a particularly meaningful role for Lewisburg.

"It comes at a time when local tourism is at a low point in the winter," Baldwin said. "It's a huge economic boost for the community. We have near a thousand people staying in hotel rooms, eating at restaurants, shopping at shops. It's kind of the only thing that happens in the winter months that allows an injection of energy into the local economy."

Baldwin also emphasized the importance of music to the town's identity.

"Lewisburg, in essence, is an arts town first," he said. "I think it's important that we continue to put that at the forefront of the community's identity, and the music festival does a lot to help that."

## A Festival Born From Community Care

The heart of the Lewisburg Winter Music Festival is rooted in care for fellow musicians, a tradition that dates back to its very begin-



ning. The first festival was organized after local drummer **Tim Pyne** and his wife **Tammy** lost their home in a house fire, along with Tim's instruments. What began as a grassroots effort to help one musician quickly grew into something much larger.

That spirit of support has been ongoing and came full circle this year following the recent passing of **Tammy Pyne**. Baldwin reflected on the festival's origins and their desire to honor her memory: "When Tammy passed away, we wanted to find a way to do something in her memory because she was so well known in the musician community."

In her honor, SAMA has established the **TNT (Tim and Tammy) Scholarship**, a new annual award that will provide a \$1,000 scholarship each year to a graduating senior in the local community who is pursuing music education.

"It will be ongoing every year," Baldwin said. "It will provide a \$1,000 annual scholarship to any graduating senior in the county that is going into music education."

Students can learn more about the TNT Scholarship through their school counselors, who receive details on local scholarship opportunities.

## What to Expect During the Weekend

The 2026 festival will showcase more than seventy artists and bands across eight to nine venues throughout Lewisburg, spanning genres from bluegrass and jam bands to hip hop and



hardcore. The schedule is carefully staggered to help attendees experience it all.

"Across all eight venues, the start times are a little different," Baldwin said. "It really allows you to bounce across town to different venues."

Each venue will display QR codes that allow attendees to access the full schedule directly on their phones.

"The best way to do it is scan that early and bookmark that webpage or save that file to your phone so you can pull it up wherever you are and see who's playing where next," Baldwin advised.

## Volunteers Make It Happen

The festival's organization is a massive undertaking, powered entirely by volunteers.

"We have an all-volunteer board of eight people," Baldwin said. "We have eight or nine different venues, eight sound engineers, and sometimes eight to twelve bands per venue over two days. There's a lot that goes on behind the scenes."

In addition to the board and production teams, approximately 50 volunteers help make the Lewisburg Winter Music Festival possible each year. Volunteer sign-ups are now open, and all volunteers receive a free two-day festival pass. Those interested in volunteering can find the sign-up form on the official festival website.



**Musicians performing at last year's Lewisburg Winter Music Festival, bringing the community together with music, talent, and celebration. Images courtesy of Joshua Baldwin.**

## Looking Ahead

As the festival continues to grow, Baldwin encourages music lovers to bundle up, explore the venues, and experience Lewisburg at its most creative. "It gives you a lot to work with," he said. "And it's all about supporting musicians and keeping music alive in our communities."

## Learn More

Tickets, schedules, artist announcements, scholarship information, and volunteer sign-ups will be available online at [lewisburgwintermusicfest.com](http://lewisburgwintermusicfest.com). You can also get more information from the Lewisburg Winter Music Festival Facebook page. The Lewisburg Winter Music Festival takes place January 30–31, 2026, across downtown Lewisburg venues.

# CHAD NICKELL & THE LOOSE CHANGE: SERVING UP APPALACHIAN JAM FOR EVERY EAR



Photos courtesy of Chad Nickell

If you haven't heard of **Chad Nickell & the Loose Change** yet, you're in for a treat. With a sound they call Appalachian Jam, the band blends local roots with a mix of rock, country, blues, and soul, "an Appalachian buffet with a side of rock, country, blues, and soul," Chad says. The band is rounded out by **Daniel Jackson** on guitar and vocals, **Brandon Ross** on drums, **Evan Collins** on bass, and **Chad** himself on guitar and vocals.

## Origins and Evolution

When it comes to how the band came together, it's been a journey of growth and evolution. Chad explains, "I started off wanting to put together a folk/singer-songwriter style band with some guys in the area. I had a decent catalog of songs to get us going, but various member changes kept us growing and adapting to the journey. In 10 years of being a band, the most important things are to be true to yourself and let the music go where it wants to go. We aren't necessarily the band that we sought out to be. I think we're better off because we didn't handcuff ourselves to our own ideas."

## Influences and Sound

That evolution shows in their sound. "We've had a few lineup changes along the way. Rotating different people with different tastes and influences shifts my approach to songwriting to try to encapsulate the personality of everyone. We're all similar, but pretty different at our core," Chad says. Influences run deep, from My Morning Jacket and Susto to The 1975, Modest Mouse, John Mayer, and Kings of Leon. "That's what is constantly in our 6-disc changer," he adds.

## Creative Process

The creative process is equally collaborative. "Typically I start with either a melody in my head or a phrasing of words that I build on. It seems like it's the same process, but it never works out the exact same way if that makes sense? After I get the foundation of the song, I'll bring it to the guys at rehearsal or sometimes even at soundcheck for us to work out. Most of the time, it comes easy for us when we all get together. We all have a great trust and respect for each other in the songwriting process. For that, I'm incredibly thankful."

## Themes and Inspiration

Currently, Chad is focusing on music that resonates with growth and self-love. "I've been more focused in my writing, recently, to make the lyrics resonate with who I am and who I'd like to become. Not that it hasn't been important before. I just have more to say about it nowadays. I still write a lot about love. It's a beautiful feeling. A feeling everyone needs and deserves. Currently, I'm writing songs about picking yourself up and loving yourself during times of struggle. We're living in a strange time. Sometimes it's difficult to separate the good from the evil. I feel like most of us want good to win. We just need to be better teammates to each other."

## Live Performances

Live performances are where the magic happens. "For the entirety of the performance, I am happy. I am locked into that moment. I'm not thinking about stress, deadlines, or commitments. I'm living in the moment and pouring every bit of energy and emotion that I have into these little songs," Chad says.

Standout moments? "Every show is important. I don't mean that in a cliché way. We set goals as a band and try to make them attainable. So far, I'd say we've been successful in that regard. Playing nearly every Winter Music Festival in Lewisburg has been incredible. FloydFest in 2024 is something that none of us will ever forget. Our set in the VIP tent as the festival was winding down was rowdy and full of energy. The crowd was buzzing and it fueled us even more. Those are the ones that artists dream of."

## Community and Connection

Their music thrives within a supportive local and regional scene. "We've been fortunate to have connected and made friends with some really special people. People that have believed in us as musicians and as humans. Those aren't relationships that we take for granted. It's not just a venue owner, a bartender, or a fan to us. These people are legitimately family to us. We cheer each other's success and help out when we're needed."

## Festival Vibes

Playing at this year's **Lewisburg Winter Music Festival** means everything. "It's something to get excited about in the first month of the new year. The success of last year's fest was

amazing and that kind of growth should continue for years to come. We appreciate the people that make it all happen. It feels like a homecoming to us and we love the opportunity to share a weekend with so many of our friends, old and new."

Fans can expect a "fun and loving atmosphere filled with positive energy. We're here for a good time and will ensure everyone in the place feels like they're part of it."

## Where to Find Them

For those who want more, Chad points readers to all major streaming platforms: "Our music is on YouTube, Spotify, Apple Music, Tidal, Amazon Music, and I'm sure some other places. Basically, anywhere you can find music these days. We're also on Facebook and Instagram if you do social media."

## What's Next

Looking ahead, the band has recordings in the works. "We have some new recordings that should be released some time in 2026. A full band EP and maybe some acoustic tunes if I can find time to get them recorded. The process is always in motion. Life is also always in motion, as well, and can alter the best of plans. We'll be around the region doing our thing. Check out our social media for updated info."

## Advice for Musicians

For aspiring musicians, Chad offers straightforward advice: "Keep going. Learn and grow. Find people that you get along with and build that fire. Music is such a fun and beautiful process. Some things come easy. Sometimes it's really tough. But, just like anything that you put your heart and soul into, it's very worth it."

## Final Words

As the interview wraps up, Chad Nickell leaves fans with a few final words: "Be yourself. Have confidence. Love your neighbor. Compromise, but stand your ground. Anything is possible. Success is more attainable with a positive attitude. This answer is with the help of my two incredible sons Sam (14) and Lennon (10). Stay classy, not gassy. Much love, Chad Nickell."

# BLUEGRASS FOREVER:

## *Richard Hefner and The Black Mountain Bluegrass Boys Keep the Tradition Alive*

With banjos ringing, fiddles dancing, and harmony vocals echoing through the hills, **Richard Hefner and the Black Mountain Bluegrass Boys** have been keeping West Virginia's traditional bluegrass alive for more than five decades. At 79 years young, Hefner continues to lead the band with the same energy and passion that sparked the group back in 1968.

### Roots Run Deep

Richard's journey into music began in Mill Point, Pocahontas County, surrounded by a family who lived and breathed music. His uncle, a talented mandolin, guitar, and banjo player who used a wheelchair due to polio, introduced young Richard to the music of Bill Monroe and the Stanley Brothers. By the mid-1960s, Richard was playing along with his family, and by 1968, the Black Mountain Bluegrass Boys were born. Their first radio appearance was on **Richwood Radio (WVAR)**, where they performed every Saturday morning for five years, recording live sessions that were then broadcast to fans across the county.

### Recordings and Collaborations

Over the years, Richard and his band have recorded multiple albums, including live CDs that capture the energy and spirit of their performances. Their discography includes early releases such as the 8-track ***Pure Old Bluegrass*** (1971), the LP ***Million Lonely Days*** (1973), which was later revisited in early 2025 by bluegrass greats Kenny and Amanda Smith, and ***Talk of the County*** (1975). He has shared the stage with bluegrass legends like Bill Monroe, Ralph Stanley, Lester Flatt, and Del McCoury, and has even performed internationally in Ireland and Scotland.

### Local Stages, Lasting Impact

Richard has remained deeply rooted in his community. For over two decades, he performed every Friday night at the **Sweet Shop** in town, drawing crowds of loyal fans. In the early 1990s, he rented Carnegie Hall in Lewisburg for his own sold-out shows, and has also performed at other beloved local venues, including Greenbrier Valley Theatre. Local festivals and events like Pioneer Days, Art in the Park at Watoga, Hillsboro Heritage Days, and the Cranberry Mountain Visitor Center Car Show have consistently

featured his music. Even now, Richard continues performing solo shows and occasional band gigs throughout the year.

### Musical Style

The Black Mountain Bluegrass Boys' style is rooted in traditional bluegrass, inspired by Monroe, Flatt & Scruggs, and Jimmy Martin. Their



Photo by Bob Brown

performances feature fast instrumentals, strong banjo work, and harmony vocals, a hallmark of the band's sound. "We've always tried to keep our music traditional," Richard says. "Even though festivals and audiences have changed, the heart of the music stays the same."

### Mentoring the Next Generation

Richard has also dedicated himself to teaching young musicians. For over a decade, he taught banjo at **Allegheny Echoes** in Marlinton, mentoring students who have gone on to achieve recognition in their own right.

### Staying Connected with Fans

Richard prefers personal connections, shar-

ing updates with fans mostly through **word-of-mouth** and Facebook. Fans can follow his updates on his personal **Facebook** page or the Black Mountain Bluegrass Boys' page. Most of his following comes from word-of-mouth and loyal friends who have been with him for years, a testament to the tight-knit nature of the local bluegrass community.

### Reflections on a Life in Music

Looking back on more than 50 years of performing, recording, and mentoring, Richard reflects on a life enriched by music. "I've met so many good musicians all over the country, even when I lived temporarily in Michigan and Maine. Music really is a big family," he says. From kitchen-table jam sessions in Pocahontas County to festival stages and international tours, Richard and the Black Mountain Bluegrass Boys have remained steadfast in their mission: to honor the roots of bluegrass and share the joy of music with every audience they meet.

### Upcoming Shows

Look for Richard and The Black Mountain Bluegrass Boys this February with Kevin Prater Band at Greenbrier Valley Brewing Company in Maxwelton.

### Advice for Aspiring Musicians

When asked if he had advice for aspiring musicians, especially those who may just be finding their way into bluegrass, Richard said, "Pick out what you really like and *listen to it* and *listen to it* and just do like I did. Anytime you can see where somebody's going to be out playing live, go and get up as close to them as you can and watch every move they make. Then go home and practice, practice, practice."

### Experience the Music

For fans of traditional bluegrass and anyone wanting to experience a true piece of West Virginia's musical heritage, Richard Hefner and the Black Mountain Bluegrass Boys offer a performance that blends history, skill, and heart.

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# COMMUNITY INVITED TO 2026 MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY CELEBRATION IN LEWISBURG

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Celebration on **January 19, 2026** will honor Dr. King and other civil rights proponents when people gather in Lewisburg for the event which will take place from **11:00 AM until about 2:00 PM**. It is also an opportunity to show one's support for that movement which is still so important.



**Keynote Speaker, Reverend Jeremiah A. Jasper**

As usual, the event will begin at 11:00 AM with a short ceremony in front of the **Greenbrier County Courthouse** followed by a **march** to the **Lewisburg United Methodist Church**. Along the way, marchers will sing a traditional civil rights song about their determination to ensure liberty and justice for everyone.

A **free community lunch** will be served in the church's **Wesley Fellowship Hall**. That meal will be catered by **Smash Pots** and will feature beef chili, veggie chili, veggie wraps, chicken wraps, roast beef sandwiches, and turkey sandwiches.

The **program** in the church sanctuary will begin at **12:30 PM**. Near the beginning of the program, everyone will sing "Lift Every Voice and Sing", and featured musicians will perform at other times.

**James Wilmer** will be the emcee for the program as he was a few years ago. He will introduce **Rev. Beverly Colombo** who will welcome everyone to the church and make them feel at home. **Lewisburg Mayor Beverly White** will read a moving proclamation of Martin Luther King, Jr. Week which will begin on that day.

One highlight of the program will be readings of their essays by **MLK Day essay contest winners**. That contest has been expanded this year to include entries from students in grades from kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grade in Pocahontas, Monroe, and Greenbrier Coun-



**Celebrants gather outside the Greenbrier County Courthouse in Lewisburg in 2024 as they prepare to march to the church.**

ties. That includes students at private schools and home-schooled students. The winners in four categories based on grade levels will be awarded cash prizes provided by the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine Chapter of the Student National Medical Association. Art work entries created by students in the youngest category who chose to enter them instead of essays will be on display.

The essays and pictures entered by the students will be based on each student's choice of one of Dr. King's fourteen quotations that are engraved on the Martin Luther King Jr. memorial in Washington, DC. On the other hand, the theme for the entire celebration was derived from his words "Let no man pull you so low as to hate him".

The **keynote speaker** for the event will be **Jeremiah A. Jasper**, pastor of Woodford Memorial United Methodist Church in Elkins, West Virginia. He has been featured in Martin Luther King, Jr. Day programs at Davis and Elkins College and also West Virginia Wesleyan College in Buckhannon.

Originally from Oak Hill, Rev. Jasper has a B.S. in Education from West Virginia Institute of Technology and a Masters of Divinity from Garrett Evangelical



**Community members gather in the sanctuary of Lewisburg United Methodist Church during Lewisburg's 2019 Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration.**

Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois.

Two months ago, Rev. Jasper and Mike Brooks, both from the Woodford Memorial Methodist Church, were among the local winners of Extra Mile Heroes national awards, presented by Elkins Mayor Jerry Marco. This was primarily due to the church's weekly Common Ground Meals program and also their Backpack Program. Rev. Jasper had previously won that award for public services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additional information about the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Celebration is available on the Facebook page: **MLK Celebration in Greenbrier Valley**. Two or three days after the event, a video of the program at the church prepared by the church's audiovisual expert, **Darren Campbell**, will be accessible via that Facebook page.

Anyone wishing to be a sponsor for this event may make out a check to Greenbrier Valley Community Foundation and write Greenbrier Valley MLK in the memo line. The foundation's mailing address is **GVCF, PO Box 1682, Lewisburg, WV 24901**.

*Special thanks to Larry Davis for compiling this information and providing photos.*

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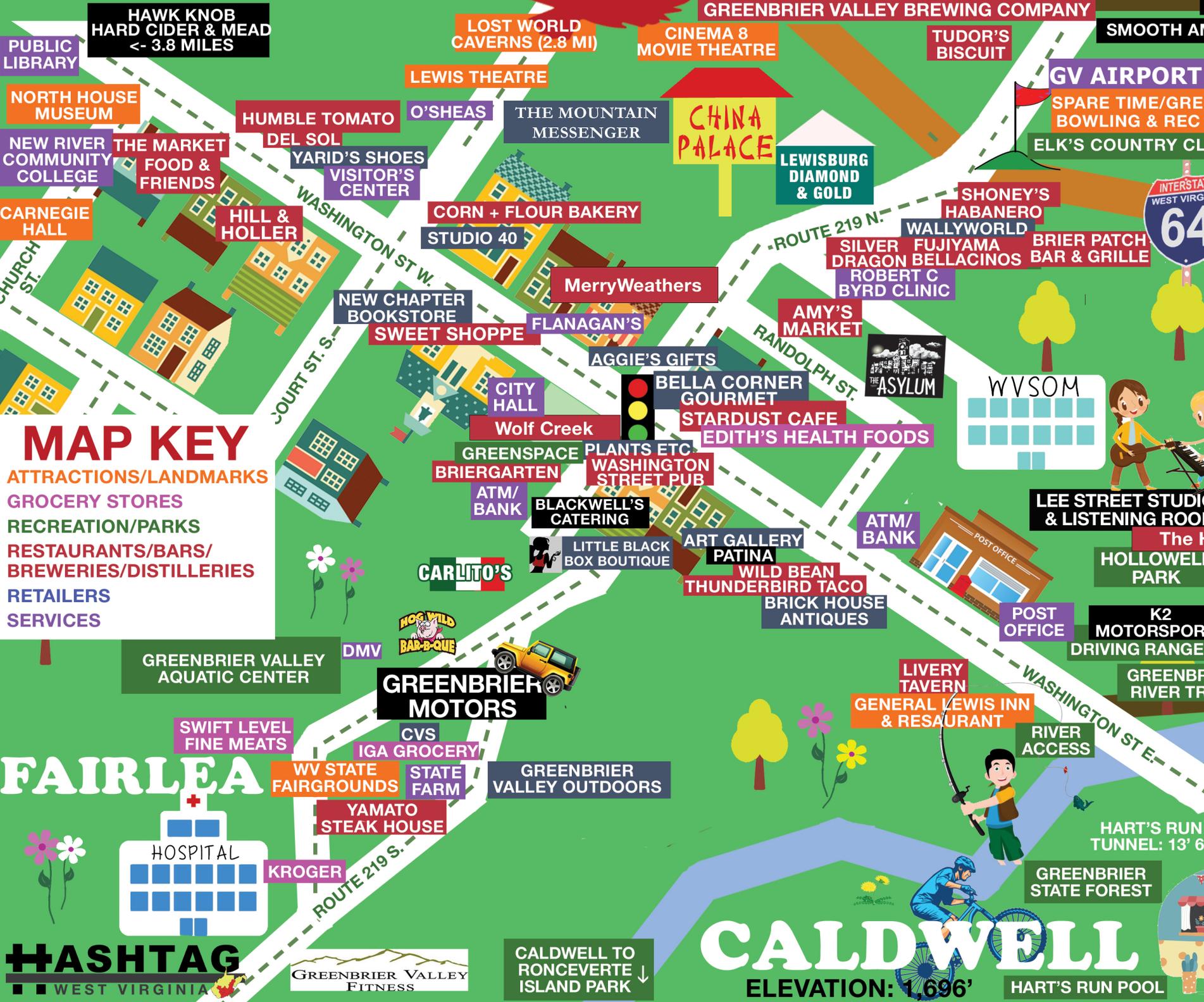
HASHTAGWV.COM

HAVE AN EVENT?  
SUBMIT IT!

# LEWISBURG

## WEST VIRGINIA

EST 1782. ELEVATION 2,080'



### MAP KEY

- ATTRACTIONS/LANDMARKS
- GROCERY STORES
- RECREATION/PARKS
- RESTAURANTS/BARS/BREWERIES/DISTILLERIES
- RETAILERS
- SERVICES

# FAIRLEA



HASHTAG WEST VIRGINIA

# CALDWELL

ELEVATION: 1,696'



CALDWELL TO RONCEVERTE ISLAND PARK

HART'S RUN POOL



MOHAWK POWERSPORTS

BLEBLER SPIRITS

& MI TEQUILA

ENBRIER CENTER

JB



SNOWSHOE MOUNTAIN



OS M

ub Cafe

TS

IER MAIL

WEST VIRGINIA GREAT BARREL COMPANY



Map is not to scale

LYNCH FIELD: PUBLIC POOL & TENNIS COURTS

GREENBRIER AVE

DRY CREEK ANTIQUES

CITY HALL

GILLESPIES

ART COLONY SHOPS AT THE GREENBRIER



THE GREENBRIER HOTEL & RESORT

BUNKER

WSS TRAIN STATION PERFORMANCE CENTER

GREENBRIER SPORTING CLUB

GREENBRIER CHRISTMAS DEPOT

BARNWOOD PUBLIC LIVING LIBRARY

SWEET CEDAR

MOUNTAINEER GUNS



MAIN ST. E.

DRY CREEK HEMP FARMS

ACE HARDWARE

SCHOOLHOUSE HOTEL

SOURCE OF FOODS AT GUM STORE STUDIOS

TOOTSIE'S COFFEE & PASTRIES

50 EAST

MTN WATER ADVENTURES

THIS & THAT COLLECTIBLES

STONE WALLS FARM YARNS WALLS FINE ART GALLERY

APRIL'S PIZZA

FISH HATCHERY

FOODLION GROCERY

MILL HILL DR.



POST OFFICE

OLD MILL PARK

BIKE TRAILS



BRAD PAISLEY PARK

OAKHURST LINKS (1884)

VALLEY VIEW GOLF COURSE

BIG DRAFT ROAD



DRY CREEK ROAD

LAKE SHERWOOD (25.9 MILES)

BLUEBEND (19 MILES)

THE BONEYARD (14 MILES)

SALT CAVE & SPA (6.7 MILES)

RT 92

MAIN ST. W.

MOUNTAIN AVE.

LAKE TUCKAHOE



MONCOVE LAKE STATE PARK (12.5 MILES) ↓



# WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS

EST 1909. ELEVATION: 1,857'

# ALABASTER BOXER: APPALACHIAN EMO, HEARTFELT SONGS, AND A BAND BUILT ON TRUST

Trying to put Alabaster Boxer neatly into a single genre is a bit like pinning down a feeling; you can describe it, but mostly, you just feel it. Folk-pop, Americana, pop-rock, punk, bluegrass... all true, and yet defying easy labels. It turns out, bassist and vocalist **Bill Fraley** has found the description that seems to land just right.

“I’ve heard us called Folk-Pop, Americana, and almost any variation of that you can think of, but my favorite description is ‘Appalachian Emo’... so I’m sticking with Appalachian Emo; I think it fits best.”

Guitarist, vocalist, and primary songwriter **Nick Durm** couldn’t agree more.

“The original vision and idea was a fusion of pop-rock/punk and bluegrass... I feel like we’ve taken that vision and really grown with it, and from it, into something brand new. As Bill mentioned above, I’m absolutely in love with the idea of being labeled Appalachian Emo haha.”

That blend, emotionally honest, rooted in Appalachia, and shaped by a wide range of influences, has become the backbone of Alabaster Boxer’s sound and identity.

## From a Project to a Band

Alabaster Boxer wasn’t initially meant to be a full-fledged band. It began as a songwriting project, with Nick collaborating with **Robbie Lanham** at **Monarch Entertainment**. But as songs were recorded and friends from different musical backgrounds were pulled in to help bring them to life, something unexpected happened.

“Once we started playing shows, I think we all knew we had something special,” Nick said. “From there we agreed to equal ownership of this project, continuing to blend and co-create, call it a band and see what happens. That’s when things really truly started to take off.”

Joining Nick and Bill to complete Alabaster Boxer are **Jason Lockart on keyboard and vocals, Corey Lee McQuade on dobro, banjo, and vocals, Brian Bell on electric guitar, and Scott Hinkle on drums and vocals**, a group of talented musicians who bring their own flavors to the Ap-



Images Courtesy of Alabaster Boxer

palachian Emo mix. **Fun fact: Corey Lee McQuade did the voice of Grumpy Bear from the Care Bears.**

## Honoring the Man Behind the Name

The band’s name carries just as much meaning as its music. **Alabaster Boxer** is a tribute to Nick’s grandfather, **Noah Salango**, the man who raised him.

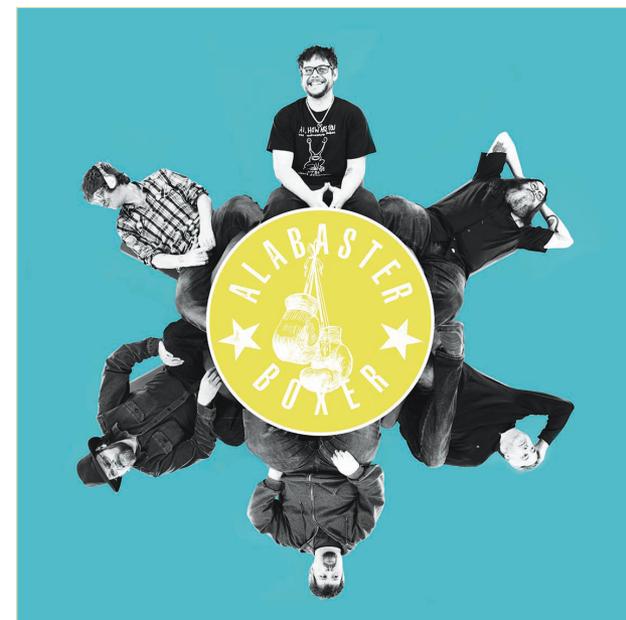
“He was a tough old Italian man (who is actually in the West Virginia Boxing Hall of Fame) who I never saw the tough side of. He raised us kids with nothing but love and core values that truly shaped me into who I am today.”

Nick explains that alabaster represents creativity, healing, growth, and even a spiritual journey, a fitting symbol paired with the strength of a boxer.

“So I kind of took all of those thoughts and meshed them together to represent one’s own personal journey but also pay homage to the Italian man who sculpted me. The Alabaster Boxer, Noah Salango.”

## Live Shows, Connection, and Community

This year, Alabaster Boxer will be performing



as part of the **Lewisburg Winter Music Festival**, an event they’re genuinely excited to be part of.

“The great thing about LWMF is that you can find amazing music all day and night at all of the venues,” Bill said. “And while we obviously would love for everyone to come see us, we know that no matter which venue they go to, they will get to see great artists.”

For the band, live shows aren't about a single standout moment. They're about connection.

"What we are excited about is sharing our songs with others who are nice enough to share their time with all of us, supporting local music and art," Bill said. "We appreciate it so much... that people find some joy in our songs and take time out of their lives to enjoy them with us."

Nick echoed that sentiment, adding one recent favorite to the mix:

"It always means the most connecting with a listener through original music. If I had to choose one, though, lately we've been closing our sets with 'Holiest Ghosts', a song our keyboardist Jason Lockart penned, and I always have fun ending the evening with that one."

**Phases? Maybe. Flow? Definitely.**

Ask Alabaster Boxer what creative phase they're in, and there's no simple answer, and that's part of the fun.

"You know, I'm not entirely sure we're ever really truly in a phase," Nick said. "Everything with this band is constantly so fluid... but most importantly we're always having fun together." Nick jokes, "Wait, are we in the honeymoon phase? S--, we're in the honeymoon phase."

That sense of trust and enjoyment runs deep within the group, shaping how they write and collaborate.

"We don't call a song finished until everyone touches it," Nick explained. "While someone may spawn the initial idea or blueprint, the house isn't built until everyone designs their room."

Bill says that collective respect is exactly why it works.

"We all trust each other enough to serve the songs in our own way."

## What's Next

Looking ahead, the band shows no signs of slowing down. New music is already in the works.

"Nick and Jason are always writing and we plan to record another EP some time in 2026," Bill shared, along with hints of upcoming shows and house concerts.

Nick summed it up with trademark enthusiasm:

"Mixtapes to die to Side B!!! Picking out 4 songs of the 1,076 ideas we're sitting in and recording them."

## Follow & Connect

Fans can keep up with Alabaster Boxer and their latest music, shows, and projects on **Facebook** and **Instagram**, stream their albums on all major platforms, or purchase digital releases at [alabasterboxer.bandcamp.com](http://alabasterboxer.bandcamp.com). For booking inquiries or house shows, email the band directly at [alabasterboxer@gmail.com](mailto:alabasterboxer@gmail.com).

## Rooted in Life, Guided by Heart

When it comes to inspiration, the answer is genuine.

"Oh, it's life 100%," Nick said. "It's the journey we're on... all of that and Lord of The Rings."

And when asked what advice they'd offer to aspiring musicians, both Nick and Bill returned to the same core idea: authenticity.

"Be exactly who you are because there is only ONE of YOU," Nick said. "Even failure is still growth."

"Be true to yourself, choose kindness whenever possible, work hard at what you love," Bill added. "And it's okay if your voice/path/vision/plan changes."

That philosophy, grounded, open-hearted, and deeply human, is exactly what makes Alabaster Boxer resonate. Genre labels aside, this is a band building something real, together.

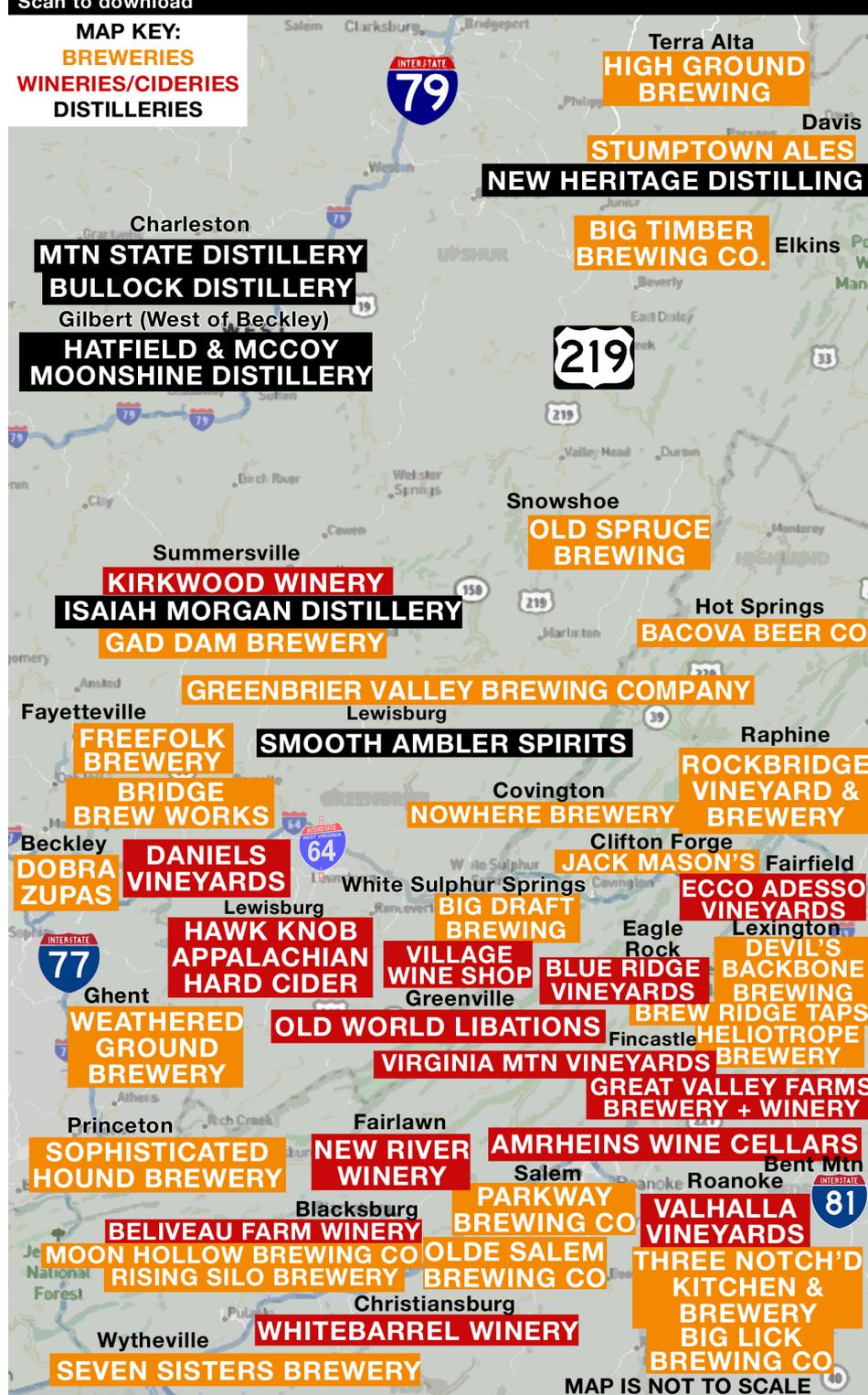
# ASHTAG

## SPIRITS MAP

Scan to download

**MAP KEY:**

- BREWRIES
- WINERIES/CIDERIES
- DISTILLERIES



**SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL BREWERY, DISTILLERY, WINERY+ CIDER!**

MAP IS NOT TO SCALE

# BEAT THE WINTER BLAHS AT THE WILLIAMSBURG WINTER CARNIVAL!

## WILLIAMSBURG'S WINTER CARNIVAL



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Snowflake Lake  
Jailhouse  
Corn Hole  
Axe Throwing  
Dart Balloons  
Connect 4  
Mini Golf  
Basketball  
Cornhole  
Plinko  
Bouncy House  
(5 years & under)

### Contests:

Snowman  
Costume Contest  
or Dress Up As  
Anything to do  
With Winter  
(Prizes!)

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

JennClutter16@yahoo.com • 304-661-2847  
Facebook: Williamsburg's Winter Wonderland

### Activities:

Guess Cake  
Cake Walks  
Door Prizes  
Gift Certificates  
50/50 Drawing  
Snowflake Guess

### Food & Drinks:

Pizza  
Corn Dogs  
Nachos  
Funnel Cakes  
Popcorn  
Snow Cones  
Hot Chocolate  
Soda & Water

(Food provided  
by Williamsburg  
Community Action)

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 31, 2026, 3:00PM - 6:00PM**  
**WILLIAMSBURG COMMUNITY BUILDING**

When the days feel a little too gray and the chill settles in, Williamsburg knows exactly how to warm up the season: **the Williamsburg Winter Carnival** is back and ready to bring some joy to the last weekend of January! "We do this for the kids after Christmas because winter's just so dreary, and we want the community and other communities to come together and just have a good time," said Jennifer Clutter, president of the carnival.

Happening **Saturday, January 31, 2026 from 3:00 to 6:00 PM** at the **Williamsburg Community Building**, this beloved community event is packed with classic carnival games, winter-themed contests, family favorites, and plenty of good food to keep everyone smiling.

### Games (10 cents each!)

Try your luck, test your aim, or let the kids loose on their favorites: Snowflake Lake, Jailhouse, Cornhole, Ax Throwing, Dart Balloons, Connect 4, Mini

Golf, Basketball, Cornhole, Plinko, and a **Bouncy House (5 years & Under)**.

### Contests

Bring the winter magic to life with the **Snowman Costume Contest**, or dress up as *anything* to do with winter. There will be prizes, so get creative!

### Activities

Guess Cake, Cake Walks, Door Prizes, Gift Certificates, 50/50 Drawing, and the Snowflake Guess will keep the fun going all evening long.

### Food & Drinks

Fuel the festivities with: Pizza, Corn Dogs, Nachos, Funnel Cakes, Popcorn, Sno Cones, Hot Chocolate, Soda & Water (Food Provided by Williamsburg Community Action)

### Need More Info?

Contact: **JennClutter16@yahoo.com, 304-661-2847** On Facebook: **Williamsburg's Winter Wonderland**

Bundle up, bring your smile, and head to Williamsburg's Winter Carnival for a Saturday evening that's anything but dreary!

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# ASTROLOGY

## Your Horoscope According to AI

### Let our robot overlords Tell You Which Regional Artists Belong on Your Playlist!



**Aries (March 21 – April 19)**

**The Firestarter**

Your energy is loud, fearless, and ready to go. You thrive on bold, exciting music that keeps your adrenaline high.

Main Artist: The Untrained Professionals

Rising Sign Pick: Steel Pterodactyl



**Taurus (April 20 – May 20)**

**The Steady Soul**

You're loyal, grounded, and rich in taste. You prefer music that feels warm, soulful, and steady, like a trusted friend.

Main Artist: Andrew Adkins

Rising Sign Pick: Greenbrier River Optimistic Ukulele Players



**Gemini (May 21 – June 20)**

**The Dual Vibe**

You're curious, witty, and always switching lanes. You enjoy playful, versatile music that can match your ever-changing moods.

Main Artist: Alabaster Boxer

Rising Sign Pick: Cat Head Biscuit



**Cancer (June 21 – July 22)**

**The Heartstring Player**

You're emotional, intuitive, and full of depth. You gravitate toward heartfelt and expressive music that resonates with your feelings.

Main Artist: Emmalea Deal & The Hot Mess

Rising Sign Pick: Elements of Us



**Leo (July 23 – August 22)**

**The Spotlight Magnet**

You're bold, charismatic, and built for the stage. You love music that's dramatic, powerful, and makes a statement.

Main Artist: J-Mane

Rising Sign Pick: The Kind Thieves



**Virgo (August 23 – September 22)**

**The Detail Dreamer**

You're thoughtful, organized, and quietly intense. You appreciate music that is precise, layered, and thoughtfully crafted.

Main Artist: Nathan Seldomridge

Rising Sign Pick: Jim Snyder



**Libra (September 23 – October 22)**

**The Harmonizer**

You're graceful, balanced, and socially tuned. You are drawn to music that is melodic, smooth, and harmonious.

Main Artist: Group Therapy

Rising Sign Pick: Greenbrier Grass



**Scorpio (October 23 – November 21)**

**The Deep Diver**

You're intense, mysterious, and magnetic. You favor music that is powerful, emotionally deep, and transformative.

Main Artist: Deep State

Rising Sign Pick: The Black Twig Pickers



**Sagittarius (November 22 – December 21)**

**The Wanderer**

You're free-spirited, adventurous, and ready for the next good time. You enjoy music that is lively, roaming, and inspires adventure.

Main Artist: Cody Wickline

Rising Sign Pick: Chad Nickell & the Loose Change



**Capricorn (December 22 – January 19)**

**The Old-Soul Builder**

You're focused, grounded, and timeless. You are drawn to music with tradition, depth, and enduring quality.

Main Artist: Richard Hefner & The Black Mountain Bluegrass Boys

Rising Sign Pick: Tupelo Drive



**Aquarius (January 20 – February 18)**

**The Innovator**

You're unique, unconventional, and a little wild. You like music that is creative, eclectic, and surprises you in every way.

Main Artist: The Carpenter Ants

Rising Sign Pick: Vince Lewis Trio



**Pisces (February 19 – March 20)**

**The Dreamer**

You're emotional, intuitive, and poetic. You gravitate toward music that is atmospheric, expressive, and transports you to another world.

Main Artist: Matt Mullins & the Bringdowns

Rising Sign Pick: Tessa McCoy & The State Birds

# the agenda

LISTINGS, HASHTAGWV.COM AGENDA | Dec. 27, 2025 - Jan. 31, 2026

Dec.  
27

## Saturday, December 27

**Queen of Hearts Fundraiser Drawing for Gateway Industries Project: Mini Golf by Jardin**, 7 PM, Sportsman Tavern, 683 Edgar Ave W, Ronceverte

**Untrained Professionals Live at GVBC**, 6 PM, Greenbrier Valley Brewing Company, 862 Industrial Park Rd, Maxwelton

Dec.  
28

## Sunday, December 28

**Farm to Table Brunch**, 10 AM – 2 PM, Mountain Table, 24140 Seneca Trail N, Renick

**The Nutcracker Ballet at The Greenbrier**, 7:30 PM, 101 Main St W, White Sulphur Springs

**Sunday Brunch**, 10 AM – 2 PM, Hawk Knob Appalachian Hard Cider, 2245 Blue Sulphur Pike, Lewisburg

Dec.  
30

## Tuesday, December 30

**New Years Eve Supper (Reservations Recommended)**, 3 PM – 8 PM, Mountain Table, 24140 Seneca Trail N, Renick

**The Nutcracker Ballet at The Greenbrier**, 12 PM, 101 Main St W, White Sulphur Springs

Dec.  
31

## Wednesday, December 31

**New Year Party Hosted by SPACE FREQ**, 9 PM, Greenbrier Valley Brewing Company, 862 Industrial Park Rd, Maxwelton

**NYE Dinner @ Stardust Cafe**, 5:30 PM, Stardust Cafe, 1023 E Washington St, Lewisburg

**NYE at The Asylum**, 9 PM – 1 AM, The Asylum, 399 Ran-

Jan.  
1

## Thursday, January 1

**Scrabble Night**, 5:30 PM, A New Chapter, 922 Washington St W, Lewisburg

**Shanghai Parade**, Lineup at 11 AM (Lee St), Parade begins at Noon (Washington St area), Lewisburg

Jan.  
3

## Saturday, January 3

**Audubon Christmas Bird Count at Wood Thrush Park**, 9 AM – 12 PM, Wood Thrush Park, 334 Richland Ln, Lewisburg, Questions: Merri Collins – mcollins@appheadwaters.org

**Queen of Hearts Fundraiser Drawing for Gateway Industries Project: Mini Golf by Jardin**, 7 PM, Sportsman Tavern, 683 Edgar Ave W, Ronceverte

**One Eyed Jack Returns to GVBC (\$5 cover)**, 6 PM, Greenbrier Valley Brewing Company, 862 Industrial Park Rd, Maxwelton

Jan.  
7

## Wednesday, January 7

**Meet the Friends of White Sulphur Springs National Fish Hatchery**, 6 PM – 8 PM, Old School Brewing Company, 697 Main St E, White Sulphur Springs

Jan.  
8

## Thursday, January 8

**Book Group**, 11 AM – 12 PM, White Sulphur Springs Public Library, 344 W Main St, White Sulphur Springs

**Open Mic w/Ben Luckett**, 6 PM, Greenbrier Valley Brewing Company, 862 Industrial Park Rd, Maxwelton

**7 Notes Open House**, 12 PM – 3 PM, 298 Randolph St W, Lewisburg

**Game Night: Free-for-All Edition**, 4 PM, Tech Express, Powered by High Rocks, 232 N Lee St, Bldg C, Lewisburg

Jan.  
9

## Friday, January 9

**Cheat Mountain Riders (\$5 Cover)**, 6 PM, Greenbrier Valley Brewing Company, 862 Industrial Park Rd, Maxwelton

Jan.  
10

## Saturday, January 10

**Birds of WV w/Lorelei Eagle**, 10 AM – 12 PM, Rahall Meeting Room, Greenbrier Valley Visitors Center, 905 Washington St W, Lewisburg  
Questions: Kevin Johnson – kjohnson@appheadwaters.org

**Queen of Hearts Fundraiser Drawing for Gateway Industries Project: Mini Golf by**

**Jardin**, 7 PM, Sportsman Tavern, 683 Edgar Ave W, Ronceverte

**Keith Goggin Band (\$5 Cover)**, 6 PM, Greenbrier Valley Brewing Company, 862 Industrial Park Rd, Maxwelton

**The Untrained Professionals**, 7 PM – 9 PM, Old Red Mill, 970 Jefferson St N, Lewisburg

### Tuesday, January 13

**Free Coffee Talk**, 10:30 AM – 12 PM, New Vision Baptist Church, 268 Church St, White Sulphur Springs

### Thursday, January 15

**Silent Book Club**, 5:30 PM, A New Chapter, 922 Washington St W, Lewisburg

**Game Night: Free-for-All Edition**, 4 PM, Tech Express, Powered by High Rocks, 232 N Lee St, Bldg C, Lewisburg

### Friday, January 16

**January Jazz – Special Event**, 7 PM, Carnegie Hall, 611 Church St, Lewisburg

**Cathead Biscuit Live at GVBC (\$5 Cover)**, 6 PM, Greenbrier Valley Brewing Company, 862 Industrial Park Rd, Maxwelton

### Saturday, January 17

**The Met Live in HD: I Puritani**, 1:30 PM, Greenbrier Valley Theatre, 1038 Washington St E, Lewisburg

**Queen of Hearts Fundraiser Drawing for Gateway Industries Project: Mini Golf by Jardin**, 7 PM, Sportsman Tavern, 683 Edgar Ave W, Ronceverte

**The String Chiefs (\$5 Cover)**, 6 PM, Greenbrier Valley Brewing Company, 862 Industrial Park Rd, Maxwelton

### Monday, January 19

**Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration**, 11 AM, Meet at Greenbrier County Courthouse to begin march to Lewisburg United Methodist Church, Courthouse at 912 Court St N. Church is at 133 Washington St E, Lewisburg

### Thursday, January 22

**Game Night: Free-for-All Edition**, 4 PM, Tech Express, Powered by High Rocks, 232 N Lee St, Bldg C, Lewisburg

### Friday, January 23

**Beyond the Barrier (\$5 Cover)**, 6 PM, Greenbrier Valley Brewing Company, 862 Industrial Park Rd, Maxwelton

### Saturday, January 24

**Queen of Hearts Fundraiser Drawing for Gateway Industries Project: Mini Golf by Jardin**, 7 PM, Sportsman Tavern, 683 Edgar Ave W, Ronceverte

**Los Swamp Monsters (\$5 Cover)**, 6 PM, Greenbrier Valley Brewing Company, 862 Industrial Park Rd, Maxwelton

**Danny Paisley & The Southern Grass Special Event**, 7 PM, Carnegie Hall, 611 Church St, Lewisburg

**Little Sprouts Winter Storytime**, 2 PM – 3:30 PM, Splatter & Sprout, 729 Main St E, White Sulphur Springs

### Thursday, January 29

**Green Drinks January w/ Ornithologist & PhD Candidate Emily Williams**, 6 PM – 8 PM, Greenbrier Valley Brewing Company, 862 Industrial Park Rd, Maxwelton Questions: Merri Collins – mcollins@appheadwaters.org

**Game Night: Free-for-All Edition**, 4 PM, Tech Express, Powered by High Rocks, 232 N Lee St, Bldg C, Lewisburg

### Friday, January 30

**Lewisburg Winter Music Festival**, Lewisburg, For complete lineup and schedule visit <https://www.lewisburgwintermusicfest.com/>

### Saturday, January 31

**Williamsburg's Winter Carnival**, 3 PM – 6 PM, Williamsburg Community Building, 6571 Shoestring Trail, Williamsburg

**Lewisburg Winter Music Festival**, Lewisburg, For complete lineup and schedule visit <https://www.lewisburgwintermusicfest.com/>

**Winter is for the Birds Talk & Guided Walk w/Emily Williams**, 10 AM – 12 PM, Wood Thrush Park, 334 Richland Ln, Lewisburg Questions: Merri Collins – mcollins@appheadwaters.org

**Queen of Hearts Fundraiser Drawing for Gateway Industries Project: Mini Golf by Jardin**, 7 PM, Sportsman Tavern, 683 Edgar Ave W, Ronceverte

**Nothing Noble (\$5 Cover)**, 6 PM, Greenbrier Valley Brewing Company, 862 Industrial Park Rd, Maxwelton

# "YOU CAN'T HAVE GREAT MEMORIES WITHOUT GREAT MOMENTS": WEST VIRGINIA DUAL TEAM STATE WRESTLING CHAMPIONSHIPS RETURN TO THE STATE FAIRGROUNDS IN FEBRUARY

The West Virginia Dual Team State Championship, now in its seventh year, promises two full days of high-stakes wrestling, hometown pride, and unforgettable memories for athletes and fans alike. Endorsed by the WVSSAC and sponsored by the West Virginia Wrestling Coaches Association, this premier event brings together the top 16 teams from across the state, including eight in Division 1 and eight in Division 2, for a weekend of intense competition, camaraderie, and celebration of the sport.

## Creating Unforgettable Moments

Event Coordinator Brian Miluk says the championships are about more than just wins and losses. "You can't have great memories without great moments," he notes, underscoring the festival-like atmosphere he creates each year. From the Parade of Champions and Senior Salute to the Breakfast for Champions with a guest speaker, Miluk aims to give every wrestler, coach, and family member experiences they'll remember long after the final whistle.

### In his words:

"We feed all 250 wrestlers, coaches, referees, and everything. We have a guest speaker, most of the time it's a wrestling Hall of Fame member or a pretty big dignitary. Then we have trivia for the kids, prizes from sponsors, and a lot of cheering, they all get excited, and it's good for the sport. And each year we add something a little different, like the senior salute and tokens for memories."

### Competition and Community

With over 300 wrestlers competing and more than 1,000 visitors expected to flood Greenbrier County, the championships have become a highlight of the winter sports season. Past participants include state champions, high school All-Americans, future college All-Americans, and Wrestling Hall of Fame coaches, all of whom contribute to a high-energy, competitive, and supportive atmosphere.

"It's team against team, so it's exciting. You root for the whole team. Long story



Brian Miluk presents the Archer Award to John Bonecutter, head coach of Point Pleasant's AA-A Championship team from last year's state championship. Image courtesy of Brian Miluk.

short, it's a pretty big to-do. There's a lot of good things happening," Miluk says. "We have state champions and high school All-Americans, and currently have over twenty wrestlers competing in college, many of them wrestling in NCAA Division I."

College coaches often attend, scouting talent, while live broadcasts, highlight films, and social media coverage help share the excitement with wrestling fans near and far.

### Event Logistics

The 2026 championships will be hosted at the West Virginia State Fairgrounds, with Division 2 matches on Friday, February 6, and Division 1 on Saturday, February 7. Doors open at 10:30 a.m., with matches starting at noon each day. When the doors open, fans are greeted by the parade of champions, team pictures, warm-ups, and the senior salute, while music plays as each team is introduced and the crowd cheers for their athletes. From the parade of champions to the National Anthem presented by the JROTC, every detail is designed to make the wrestlers' experience memorable. Awards and recognitions will close out the day around 5 p.m.

Tickets can be purchased at the door, and local lodging and restaurants are supporting the influx of fans.

"People travel from throughout the whole



The Rudis "Most Outstanding Wrestler" awards from last year's championship went to these eight AAA wrestlers. Image courtesy of Brian Miluk.

state to follow their teams. The hotels give a discounted rate. The communities have been great supporting us with sponsors. It's working out pretty well," Miluk says.

### Highlighting Athletes and Coaches

From the mat to the classroom, these championships help student wrestlers build memories and opportunities, including scholarships at renowned colleges, reflecting the dedication and heart they bring to the sport.

Each year, the winning coaches receive the **Archer Award**, a crystal trophy honoring their leadership and commitment. Wrestlers are recognized with Most Outstanding Wrestler awards and special tokens to commemorate their participation, helping build lifelong memories.

"It's about giving every wrestler, coach, and fan a moment they'll remember. Whether it's a hard-fought match, a shared victory, or cheering on the Parade of Champions, we deliver great moments that create great memories," Miluk says.

### Looking Ahead

Even as the championships have grown from eight teams in the inaugural year at The Greenbrier Resort to 16 teams today at the

Fairgrounds, Miluk continues to add unique touches that elevate the event, including trivia, guest speakers, senior salutes, highlight films, and personal extras for coaches and athletes alike.

"We stress that you can't have great memories without great moments. We're giving these kids a moment to have lifetime memories," he says.

From the roar of the crowd to the cheers of teammates after a big win, the West Virginia Dual Team State Championships are more than an athletic competition; they are a celebration of dedication, skill, and community.

### Contact & More Information

For tickets, event updates, and more information about the West Virginia Dual Team State Wrestling Championships, fans can visit:

**Twitter (X):** @WVStateDuals

**Instagram:** WVStateDuals

**Facebook:** West Virginia Wrestling Dual Team State Championships

**Website:** WVMAT.com

Or contact Event Coordinator Brian Miluk directly:

**Email:** bmiluk2000@yahoo.com

**Phone:** 304-667-7296

# Riverbend Garden Center: Growing Community, Growing Connections:

*A hub for families, gardeners, and neighbors to learn, explore, and connect in Lewisburg*

Riverbend Garden Center isn't just a place to pick up a plant. It's quickly becoming a gathering spot for families, gardeners, and neighbors who love to learn, explore, and connect. **Byron Black**, the current owner, is bringing his lifelong passion for landscaping and community engagement to the region, creating a space where horticulture and heart meet.

Byron grew up on a 300-acre Christmas tree farm, where retail and community connection were part of daily life. After earning a landscape architecture degree from West Virginia University in 2014, he found his way back to the retail side of horticulture. "I want other families to be a part of this," he says. "That's the big draw for me, creating a space where we can have educational events, teach families, and provide a service for the community."

### A Legacy of Growth

Riverbend began in the mid-1970s, when Josh and Judith Poland purchased the land to start a full-service garden center. Over the years, the focus shifted to design-build projects, responding to growing demand in Greenbrier County. Byron purchased the business in 2017, continuing its design-build services while reintroducing a vibrant retail presence.

"With the growing growth happening in this community and the lack of eclectic garden centers, we felt it would be a really good fit for this area," Byron explains. His vision is to offer everything from trees and shrubs to annuals, perennials, and flowers, all while providing education and community connection.

### A Community Hub in the Making

Riverbend is more than a garden center. It's a place for the community to come together. Recent events, including a holiday market, brought neighbors together for food trucks, hot chocolate, fire pits, s'mores, and live music. Byron hopes to continue providing these experiences for generations to come.

Looking ahead, Byron envisions spring reopening events, pruning workshops, and fall bananzas, all designed to engage families, teach horticulture, and celebrate the seasons. While educational programs are still in development, the goal is to create spaces for kids and adults to learn about plants, pollinators, and gardening techniques in a hands-on, enjoyable way. "We hope to provide a place for families to get educated on plant materials, and provide expertise on horticultural aspects of life," he says.

### Rooted in Values

For Byron, Riverbend is as much about people as it is about plants. He wants Riverbend to be a place where families, friends, and neighbors feel welcome.

"What keeps me inspired is really the potential of Greenbrier County and keeping this area beautiful, both horticulturally and spiritually," he says. "There's so much potential to provide a service for the community and create a space that people really relate with." His approach blends professional landscaping expertise with a genuine desire to add value to the community.

### Visit Riverbend Garden Center

Riverbend Garden Center is located at 39517 Midland Trail East in Caldwell, WV. Current hours are Monday-Friday from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. and Saturdays 9 a.m.-3 p.m., with plans to expand as new staff are added.

For more information, visit [landscapingwv.com](http://landscapingwv.com) or call 304-625-6251. Whether you're a seasoned gardener or a curious newcomer, Riverbend offers a warm, welcoming space to grow your knowledge, your garden, and your connection to the community.

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FRIDAY, JANUARY 9, 5:30 - 7 P.M.

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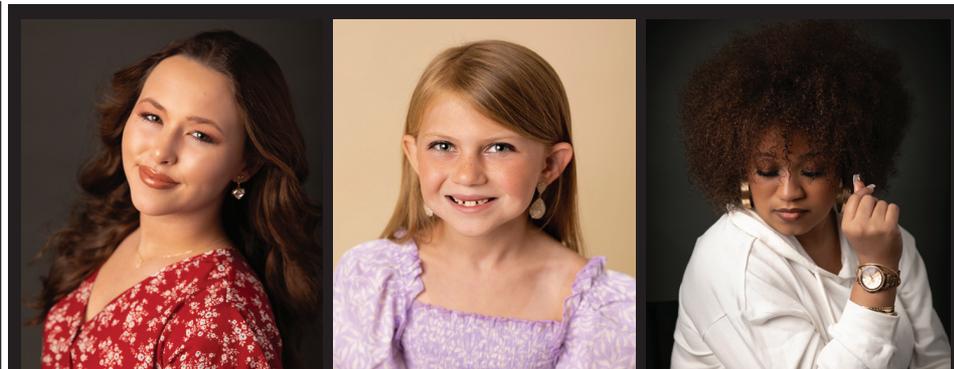
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