Artist on Display: The Dragon Lady **Good Eats:** The Twist **In The Valley:** Appalachian Arts & Crafts Fair

HASHTAG WEST VIRGINIA

AUGUST 2026 FREE ISSUE #180



Proudly covering the Greenbrier Valley, including Lewisburg, Ronceverte, White Sulphur Springs, Alderson, Frankford, Renick, Fairlea, Caldwell, Union, and beyond!





Let There Be Light!

A Day of Inspiration, Intuition, and Discovery in Monroe County

And don't miss the 101st WV State Fair in Fairlea, WV August 13-22!





LEWISBURG'S OLDEST STORE CELEBRATES 49 YEARS!

Join Plants, ETC. and Bookstore for a month long celebration.

Founded in 1977, Plants, ETC. and Bookstore is Lewisburg's oldest stores! Plants, ETC. provides community members and visitors to Lewisburg an opportunity to purchase West Virginia and regionally made art and unique collectibles featuring pottery, stained glass, beeswax candles, journals, wooden utensils, toys, towels, leatherwork, and more. Plants, ETC. is 100% woman owned and operated. However, one thing that is not for sale is the sense of joy, welcome, and whimsy once you enter their doors.

Today, the Bookstore continues the legacy of founder, Robert Head. It offers curious shoppers a special space for finding a rare selection of books that are scarce, scholarly, and out of print.

Plants, ETC. and Bookstore are celebrating their 49th birthday in August, 2026, with a grand series of events. Kicking off the month's events are two opportunities to enjoy the beauty, artistry, joy, and community of Plants, ETC. and Bookstore.

Saturday, August 1 at 6 pm join Plants, ETC. and Dr. Rob Meyer-Kukan from 7 Notes Natural Health for a sound bath in the hidden garden. The sound bath is offered to the community FREE of charge.

Friday, August 8 from 4 - 7 pm, as part of First Friday's after 5 in downtown Lewisburg, enjoy light refreshments, wine, and herbal tea. To mark the occasion, a celebratory ribbon cutting ceremony hosted by the Greater Greenbrier Chamber of Commerce will take place.

Other events are being planned throughout the month. Stay up to date with upcoming 49th anniversary events at Plants, ETC. and Bookstore on their social media: @oldeststoreinlewisburg (Plants ETC) on Facebook, @plantsetc-wv on TikTok or by calling the store at (304) 645-6910.









FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to August!

There's a specific kind of magic that settles over the Greenbrier Valley every August. You can feel it in the shifting mountain breeze, in the steady pulse of traffic rolling down US-219, and in the collective anticipation that fills in air in Fairlea.

This issue is a celebration of that enduring pull. In our cover story, The Gathering Ground of Summer, we take a look at the heart of summer traditions. From the living heritage of the 101st West Virginia State Fair to the vibrant creativity of the Appalachian Arts & Crafts Fair in Beckley, these gatherings remind us that our greatest traditions aren't frozen in time, that they are renewed by the people who carry them forward.

Throughout this issue, you'll meet the local faces who make fair season so special. We catch up with a hometown musician as he plans his next appearance on Center Stage, sample a fresh spin on an iconic West Virginia comfort food, and visit with a Renaissance Faire artist whose hand-sculpted dragons are driven purely by the joy of bringing wonder to others.

The fair reminds us that our living traditions are shaped by the people who gather, celebrate, and carry them forward, one summer at a time. We hope this issue serves as a warm companion for your summer of discovery. See you out on the fairgrounds!

Warmly,
Hashtag Staff

HASHTAG WEST VIRGINIA

HAVE AN EVENT? SUBMIT IT!
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FREE CITY PAPER!

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HashtagWV Arts and Entertainment is a free, colorful, high-quality print and digital multimedia platform for all things Greenbrier Valley and the surrounding areas! Our cultural focus is local music, unique shopping, the arts, events, things to do, theatre, food and drinks.

Digitally, we serve all 55 counties in WV (and more!) and we distribute thousands of print editions directly into area households and throughout the Greenbrier Valley region in strategic, high-traffic areas through local businesses and paper boxes.

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ARTIST ON DISPLAY

THE DRAGON LADY

By Hashtag Staff

For Ali Montgomery, imagination is not an escape from the real world. It is something worth keeping alive.

"Are these 3D printed?" There is a particular kind of magic hidden in the question. Ali Montgomery loves it.

She has heard it many times while selling her work at the Renaissance Faire and Causeacon, where visitors encounter her Dragonspirations booth filled with small, hand-sculpted dragons nestled among gemstones. When someone asks the question, Montgomery sees an opportunity to inspire.

"No," she tells them. "They're all hand-sculpted." Then she watches their eyes light up. "It's like a light goes on in their head," Montgomery says. "'-Oh! this is actually something real!'"

That moment gets to the heart of what Montgomery does. She makes dragons. But, as a mixed-media artist, she also makes something increasingly difficult to find. Real, passion-driven art that takes time, skill, and vision to create.

"I think to be an artist in a world where things are mass-produced is kind of an act of defiance, almost," she says. "To say, 'I want to do this the hard way because there's value in it, even though there are easier ways out there.'"

For more than a decade, Montgomery has been creating dragons from polymer clay. But the creatures themselves have been with her much longer.

"I've been obsessed, since… I want to say the third grade," she says.

For Ali, dragons have been a lifelong passion. The obsession began with a documentary, or, more accurately, a fake documentary. She remembers watching an Animal Planet program that presented itself as a serious investigation into the discovery of a dragon living in a remote cave.

For a young Ali, the possibility was thrilling, and her fascination with dragons was locked in.

"One of the first chapter books I ever read was Eragon," she says. "I fell just head over heels."

From there, she began researching dragons, and that never really stopped.

"I still consider myself researching, because I always learn something new."

Montgomery's interest in dragons might have remained a childhood fascination, but instead, it followed her to college. She earned her BS in Marine Biology and a BFA in 3D Media Art from Old Dominion University. She recalls that her professors were not always convinced that dragons belonged in the serious study of art, but Montgomery made them anyway. In every class.

"I run on spite! I've got dragons that I created out of blown glass," she says. "I've got dragons that I made in a blacksmithing class, ones that I carved out of plaster, ceramics, metalsmithing, and silversmithing. Every class that I took, I managed to fit a dragon in somewhere."

It is a funny story, but it also reveals something important about Montgomery's work. She does not seem particularly interested in being told what her art is supposed to be. Her work has moved through glass, metal, plaster, ceramics, illustration, plush design, and polymer clay.

"I don't lock myself into any one category," she says. "I'm a mixed-media artist."

Clay is her primary medium today, but the other materials have not disappeared. The diversity of materials and the free movement between them still influences her creative process. "Sometimes a sculpture begins with an idea. Sometimes it begins with a gemstone. Sometimes it begins with another creature entirely, a lot of them are actually hybrids," Montgomery says.

Her creations include the luna moth dragon, the possum dragon, and, because she is a true West Virginia artist, there is a Mothman dragon. At the Renaissance Fair, the possum dragons became particularly popular. "People absolutely love them," she says.



Photo of the Dragonspirations booth at Causeacon in Beckley WV, photo credit Ali Montgomery

The designs can begin with a sketch, but not always.

"Sometimes I'll start without an idea, and the dragon will come to me as I'm making it," Montgomery says.

Other times, she begins with an illustration. However, drawing a dragon requires thinking about what the finished object will eventually have to become.

"Sculpting something limits what you can do in an illustration," she says, "because I'm cognizant of the limitations of the clay versus the limitation of what I can draw."

The same is true of her work designing plush animals for Charlie Bears. An idea that works beautifully on paper still has to survive contact with the real world. Somewhere between imagination and material, the dragon has to become something that can actually exist in the physical world. This is exactly where Ali's work lends insights into her impressive vision

and success as a true mixed-media artist.

Success, however, can create its own problem.

Montgomery has spent approximately 11 years creating her clay sculptures. Over time, she has learned that the thing people love most is not always the thing she wants to create.

There were several years at the Renaissance Faire when her little possum dragons became especially popular. For roughly three years, she says, "that's all anybody wanted." At first, the response was gratifying. Then it became an obligation.

"People start to expect an item, people come up and ask me about it, and so now I have to have it because it's expected of me," Montgomery says. "That does definitely take some of the joy out of it when I'm not being creative; I am filling something that somebody needs."



Ali Montgomery at the Dragonspirations tent at the WV Renaissance Festival, photo credit Crystal Montgomery



Photo of Ali's personal collection of polymer clay dragons that she has made over the 11 years running Dragonspirations

That may be one of the most difficult tensions for any working artist. The thing that brings people joy can become the thing the artist no longer wants to make. The pieces she loves most are not always the ones that sell.

Montgomery has learned to negotiate a balance while preparing for an event like the Renaissance Faire.

"Usually I try to power through because I know I need to make the item," she says. "And then once I finish that item, I'll invest time in something that I want to make, something that brings me joy, to kind of pull myself back into the right head space."

It is a practical solution to a creative problem, and a message she has for others earning a living through their art. "Artists should remember someone else may love a piece, even if they don't."

Her advice: make the possum. Then make something inspired, strange or unexpected. She believes that balance always returns when creating something that's more passion driven.

The dragons have also become part of the way Montgomery survives the ordinary demands of life. She currently carries clay with her to work. "It's enough to break up my workday," she says. "For a few minutes, the rest of the world recedes. I can pull myself out of it, focus on something that matters and is important to me, and then plug right back in, because I've had that brain reset."

Here, her process is almost the opposite of the way most people think about making art. There is no perfect studio. No uninterrupted afternoon. No ideal conditions. Just a moment in time with a small amount of clay, and the intention to create something meaningful. That is the artist's journey.

"I didn't go into this for the money. I went into this for the passion of it, because I loved it, because it brought me joy."

Then something unexpected happened. Other people enjoyed it, too.

That may be the real connection between Montgomery's dragons and the events where many of them find their new homes. People do not necessarily go to a Renaissance Faire because they are looking for another version of everyday life. They go because they want something else, a different setting, a different set of rules. A few hours in which the ordinary world is allowed to loosen its grip.

Montgomery understands that.

"I like to think that my work brings joy and whimsy into people's lives, especially in a time where those things are harder to come by," she says. "You can take a minute, you can step away from the real world, step into this little bubble where there's just happiness."

The people who encounter her work put their own meanings to it. Sometimes, they see things she never intended. "A lot of people will tell me things that I never even considered when they look at my work," Montgomery says. "They say, 'This speaks to this for me.'"

After speaking with Ali Montgomery something becomes clear, the image of the dragon is unique and personal to the observer. It might be a creature of mythology or a piece of someone's childhood. It can be a symbol of strength or simply a small, strange, beautiful thing that makes somebody happy. Montgomery does not have to determine which one it is. The work leaves her hands and begins another life.

"The dragon is one of those unique threads that kind of goes through every culture in the world."

For Montgomery, there is a certain irony in the fact that dragons, creatures that have never been proven to exist, have become one of the most enduring creatures of human imagination. That persistence is part of her fascination.

"Dragons are the ultimate embodiment of human nature, kind of born out of unbridled imagination," she says. "They've been a way for humans to express their desires, their fears, and they really represent an untamed nature found within humans."

Every new dragon becomes part of a much older story.

"Every single person that makes dragons, that tells stories about dragons, they're adding to this lifelong lore that humans have been cultivating about this creature since basically the dawn of humanity."

Montgomery's own dragons join that tradition in clay, glass, paint, and plush. Some are graceful. Some are familiar. Some are ridiculous and have the body of a possum. All of them are made by hand.

"I absolutely love that I get to bring that joy to other people," she says. "That other people see value in it."

She also values the community that forms around the work, the people who return to the same fairs, the collectors who come back for another dragon, and the strangers who stop to ask a question.



The Charlie Bears that Ali designed.

"I have repeat customers who come back to me and say, 'I can't come here without bringing something home because now I have a collection and I need to add to it!'"

In a world increasingly built for convenience, speed, and sameness, there is something quietly radical about continuing to make things the hard way. Somethings can be made faster, or more efficiently, but Montgomery keeps working with her hands, connected to her work. And often, for just a few minutes at a time, she keeps making room for something that does not need to be practical.

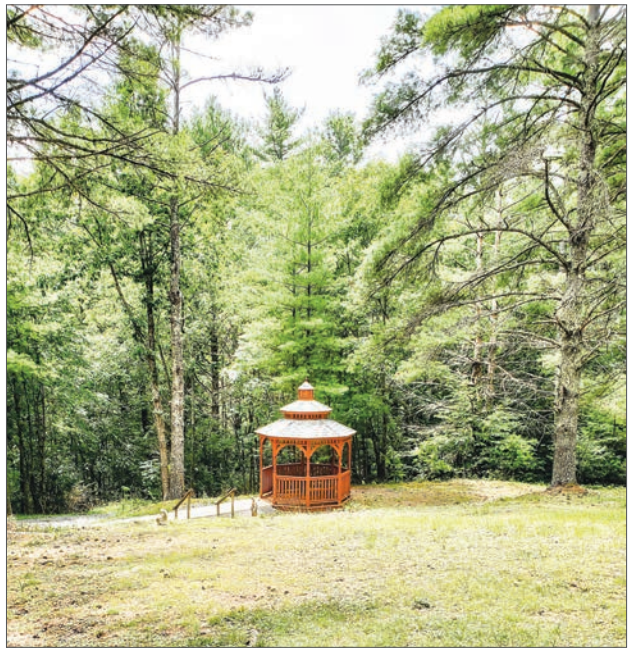
"It feels like I'm doing something that's worthwhile," Montgomery says, "something that's keeping something alive in a world that doesn't really cater to it."

Maybe that is the real magic of the dragon. Not that one might exist somewhere in history, in a cave, but that people continue to find a connection with the lore that they represent. They becomes reconnected to their imagination, and thanks to Ali Montgomery, The Dragon Lady, they get to take a piece of that home with them.

LET THERE BE LIGHT: A DAY OF INSPIRATION, INTUITION, AND DISCOVERY IN MONROE COUNTY







By Debra Smith

If you're searching for a day of personal growth, spiritual exploration, and meaningful connection, mark your calendar for Saturday, September 26, 2026, when "Let There Be Light" comes to the beautiful Stansell Conference Center in Glace, West Virginia.

Hosted by Leah Stansell-an intuitive leader, healer, author, teacher and paranormal investigator-along with Carol Tjaden, Leah's assistant for over 35 years, the event offers an opportunity to explore intuition, dreams, crystals and spiritual awareness through presentations by respected speakers in their fields.

Nestled in the scenic countryside of Monroe County near White Sulphur Springs, the Stansell Conference Center is an inviting outdoor venue designed for learning, fellowship, and reflection. Consisting of 170 beautiful acres, guests are invited to take a look around and enjoy the tranquility this property has to offer. Covered picnic and speaker areas ensure the event will continue comfortably, even in the event of inclement weather. Guests are encouraged to bring a picnic lunch and enjoy the peaceful surroundings during the day. Water and desserts are provided.

This event's featured speakers include:

Kim Chestney presenting "The Illuminated Way: How to Trust Your Intuition," an inspiring program focused on developing and trusting your inner guidance.

Gary Wallace, owner of Mahalo Minerals, presenting "Life on Earth with Crystals," exploring the fascinating relationship between crystals and everyday life.

Dr. Richard Bargdill presenting "An Easy Way to Interpret Your Night Dreams," offering practical insights into understanding the messages found in our dreams.



Whether you are new to these topics or have spent years exploring personal and spiritual development, Let There Be Light promises a welcoming atmosphere filled with knowledge, inspiration, and engaging conversation.

Pre-registration is available through August 31, 2026, for $70 per person. Registration at the door is $80 (cash or checks only).

To register or to receive additional information, contact:

Carol at merrimna@msn.com or 484-459-3810 or Leah Stansell at 304-536-3576.

Join Leah Stansell and an outstanding lineup of speakers for a memorable day of learning, inspiration, and enlightenment in the heart of the beautiful West Virginia mountains.

AL JETER SERIES EVENT

LEWISBURG, W.V — The Piano Jar with John Maddy returns to Greenbrier Valley Theatre on August 7th at 7:00 PM. This is an interactive, one-of-a-kind evening as John Maddy takes your song requests live from The Piano Jar. Just drop your request in the jar and enjoy an unforgettable night of music, storytelling, and maybe a few surprise guests!

"The beauty of The Piano Jar gig is that I don't really know what I am going to play", says Maddy. "I normally have two or three songs prepared that I just want to play and then I pull song requests out of a jar and play whatever is written down. When I draw the requests, I often perform them in a different style than people are used to hearing to show the song's possibilities."

Tickets for this one night only performance are available at https://gvtheatre.org/al-jeter-series/ or by calling the box office at 304.645.3838

THE GATHERING GROUND OF SUMMER

THE TIMELESS, TRANSFORMATIVE SPIRIT OF FAIR SEASON









By Zachery Miller

There is an undeniable shift that takes over as summer reaches its peak. You feel it the moment your tires hit the warm gravel lot and that familiar sensory whirlwind takes over; the nostalgic aroma of kettle corn and sun-baked pine shavings, the distant roar of the grandstands, and the hum of thousands of neighbors moving to the exact same relaxed rhythm. Fairs have a way of suspending time. In a world increasingly dominated by screentime, stepping onto the fairground offers a nostalgic sanctuary built entirely around human connection, tradition, and discovery.

As West Virginia marks the historic 101st year of the State Fair in Fairlea, alongside the growing magic of the West Virginia Renaissance Faire and countless small community festivals across the region, we find ourselves reflecting on a simple question: What is it about fair culture that keeps pulling us back, year after year, generation after generation? The answer goes much deeper than carnival lights and cotton candy. It stems from a rare balance of honoring where we came from, while leaving plenty of room to surprise us with what's next. It's found at the intersection of tradition and innovation.

At their foundation, fairs are a living archive of a community. They are where we safeguard our regional heritage. In Greenbrier County, we honor the agricultural roots, hand-forged crafts, and community pride that have long shaped the Mountain State and defined the culture of its people. Walking the grounds connects us directly to the generations who walked them before us, anchoring us to a sense of place that feels sturdy, honest, and unchanged. Fair culture has never been a static museum piece tucked behind glass. It is kinetic, evolving, and constantly reinventing itself. Fair culture isn't about keeping the past in a bottle; it's about giving our heritage fresh room to breathe, experiment, and play with new possibilities.

Every season brings a fresh surge of creative energy to these gatherings. We see it in classic mountain recipes being reimagined with a new twist, in local musicians giving voice to the contemporary West Virginia experience, and in artisans who throw out the rulebook to create pure, unexpected wonder. Fairs thrive because they respect where we've been while enthusiastically opening the door to what's next, proving that tradition doesn't have to be rigid to endure.

It doesn't matter if you prefer the timeless traditions of the Sate Fair, Heritage Days in your hometown, or the fantasy of the Renaissance, you discover the exact same heartbeat driving them all. These spaces satisfy a deep, modern craving for escapism grounded in real community. Fairs grant us permission to step outside the demands of daily life, set down our phones, and immerse ourselves in environments crafted by hand and driven by the heart. They are rare sanctuaries where value isn't measured by algorithms or mass production, but by genuine human connection and the simple traditions that inspire us forward.

Whether it's the thrill of a blue ribbon, the swell of live music across a crowded lawn, or the discovery of a local maker, fairgrounds serve as open-air stages for the diversity of human expression. They remind us that culture is something we build together. Fairs don't just reflect a community, they renew it, one summer at a time.

APPALACHIAN ARTS & CRAFTS FAIR RETURNS TO BECKLEY AUGUST 7 & 8













By Debra Smith

One of southern West Virginia's most anticipated celebrations of Appalachian heritage returns Friday, August 7 and Saturday, August 8, as the 61st Annual Appalachian Arts & Crafts Fair welcomes visitors to the Beckley-Raleigh County Convention Center for two days of handcrafted art, live entertainment, and mountain traditions.

Organized by the Beckley-Raleigh County Chamber of Commerce, the fair has become a cherished summer tradition, bringing together talented artisans, craftspeople, quilters, and makers from throughout the Appalachian region. Visitors will have the opportunity to browse a wide variety of handcrafted items, including pottery, woodworking, jewelry, textiles, paintings, photography, metalwork, home décor, specialty foods, and much more. The event remains a juried show, ensuring the high quality and authenticity of the work on display.

A longtime highlight of the fair is the Appalachian Treasures Quilt Show, where beautifully handcrafted quilts showcase the artistry, history, and storytelling traditions that have been passed down through generations. The quilt exhibition continues to be one of the event's most popular attractions, drawing both quilting enthusiasts and first-time visitors alike.

In addition to shopping for one-of-a-kind handmade creations, guests can enjoy live Appalachian music throughout both days. Daniel Lilly and The Lilly Mountaineers are scheduled to perform from noon to 4 p.m. on Friday and Saturday, adding traditional mountain music to the festive atmosphere.

The fair will be open Friday from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Beckley-Raleigh County Convention Center, located at 200 Armory Drive in Beckley. Admission is $5 for adults, with a two-day pass also available for $5. Seniors (65+) receive discounted admission, while children and students 18 and under are admitted free.

Whether searching for a unique handcrafted gift, meeting talented Appalachian artists, or simply spending a day enjoying the region's rich cultural heritage, the Appalachian Arts & Crafts Fair offers something for every member of the family. The event continues its six-decade tradition of celebrating the creativity, craftsmanship, and enduring spirit of Appalachia while supporting local artists and preserving the regions rich artistic legacy.

For more information and a complete schedule of events, visit the Appalachian Festival website.

LET THERE BE LIGHT

Check-In: 9:00am — Closing: 5pm

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2026

10716 Hollywood Glace Road, Union, WV 24983



Kim Chestney

Author of *Radical Intuition & The Illumination Code*

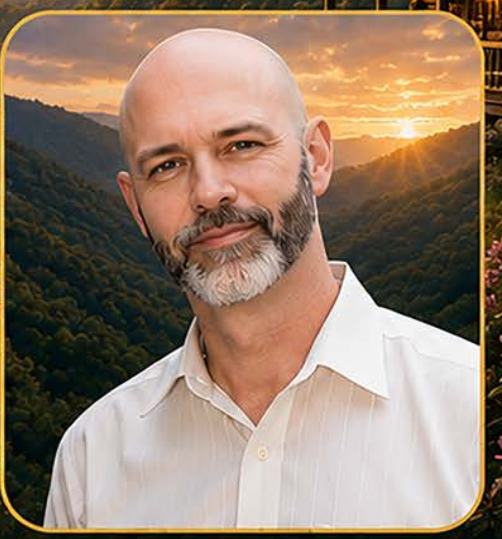
Presentation:
The Illuminated Way: How to Trust Your Intuition & Live by Your Inner Light



Gary Wallace

Owner of Mahalo Minerals

Presentation:
Life on Earth with Crystals



Dr. Richard Bargdill

Associate Professor of Psychology, VCU-Author of "A Dreamer's Thought Book: Intriguing Ideas about the Dreaming Process"

Presentation:
An Easy Way to Interpret Your Night Dreams



Bring a packed lunch/picnic area on site. Crystals & Books will be sold at lunch and after the conference.

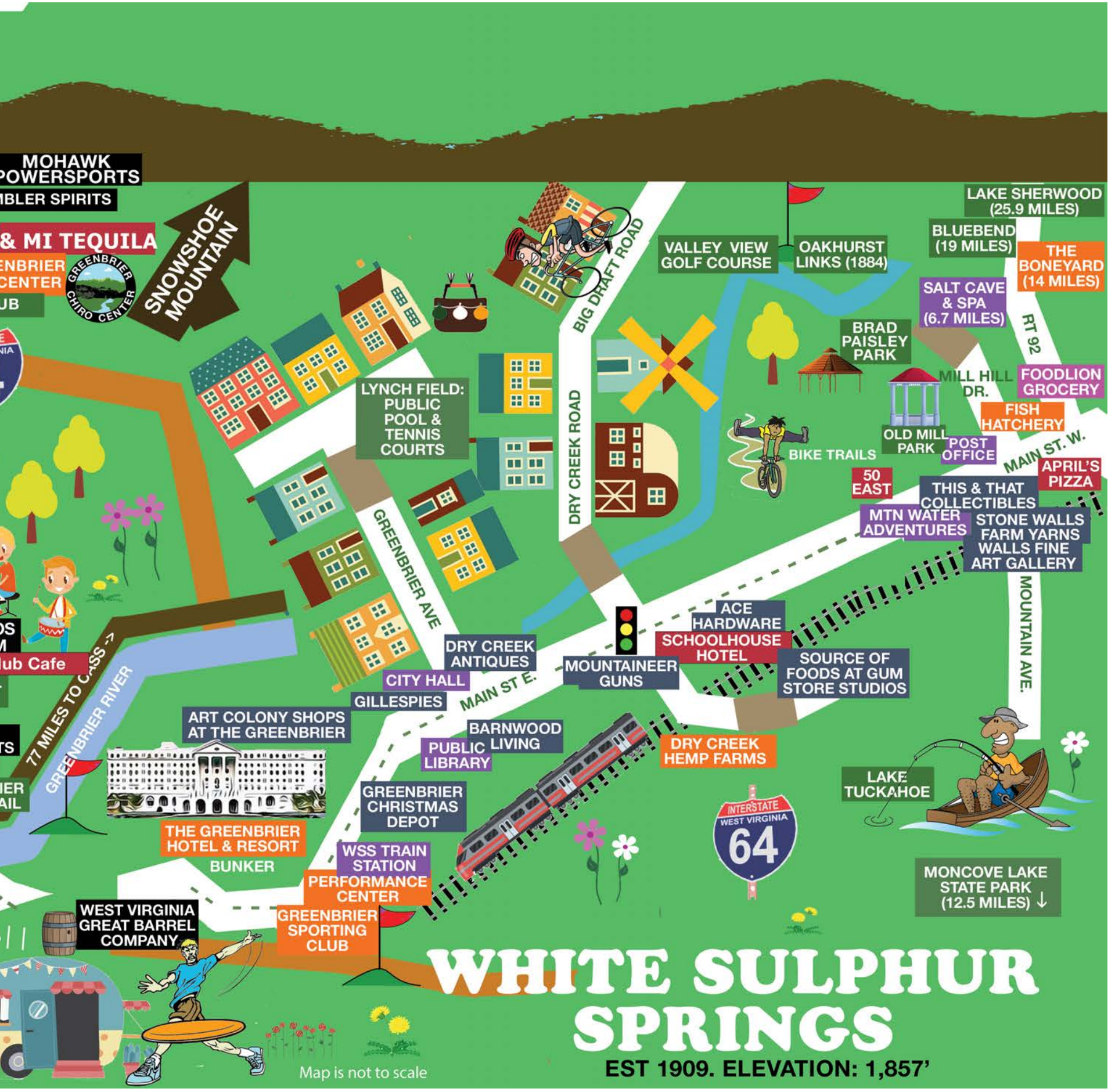


Pre-Registration by August 31, 2026 $70.00 | **Door Registration $80.00** (Cash & Checks Only)

To Register: email or call: Carol: merriamna@msn.com 484-459-3810 or Leah 304-536-3576.

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& MI TEQUILA
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DRY CREEK ROAD
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MONCOVE LAKE STATE PARK (12.5 MILES) ↓
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REMEMBERING HARNESS RACING – JIM ARBUCKLE

It has been seven years since fair goers last heard the sound of pounding hooves, the call of the race drivers, the roar of the grandstand crowd, and the beauty of the harness horse racing at the State Fair of West Virginia.

Some still remember going to an exciting afternoon of racing at the old wooden grandstand, prior to 1965. But many remember watching harness racing in the current grandstand, and even when the judge's stand was under a big umbrella across the race track beside the old wooden stage. And in the old days, and between races, the large racing crowd was treated to a jazz band, along with acrobats on stage and high wire acts beside the stage.



George Aid, Joe Black Hayes and Dave Tuckwiller recall in a 1998 video about harness horse, Maplewood Chief. The horse was owned by Col. N.S. Arbuckle, but later sold to Dave Tuckwiller in 1953. The horse was 14 years old at the time, but went on to race for a couple more years, and if I remember correctly, they said the horse was later sold in Canada.

Many great people and businesses sponsored harness racing over the years. Some of late were the George Aide family, the Jack Arbuckle family, the Col. N.S. Arbuckle family, the Clemons family, the Joe Black Hayes family, the Frank McClung family, Simms Exxon, the Carl Smith family, the David E. Tuckwiller family, and the Frank Wilson family.

I have kept racing programs for the past forty years, and here are some results from past decades.

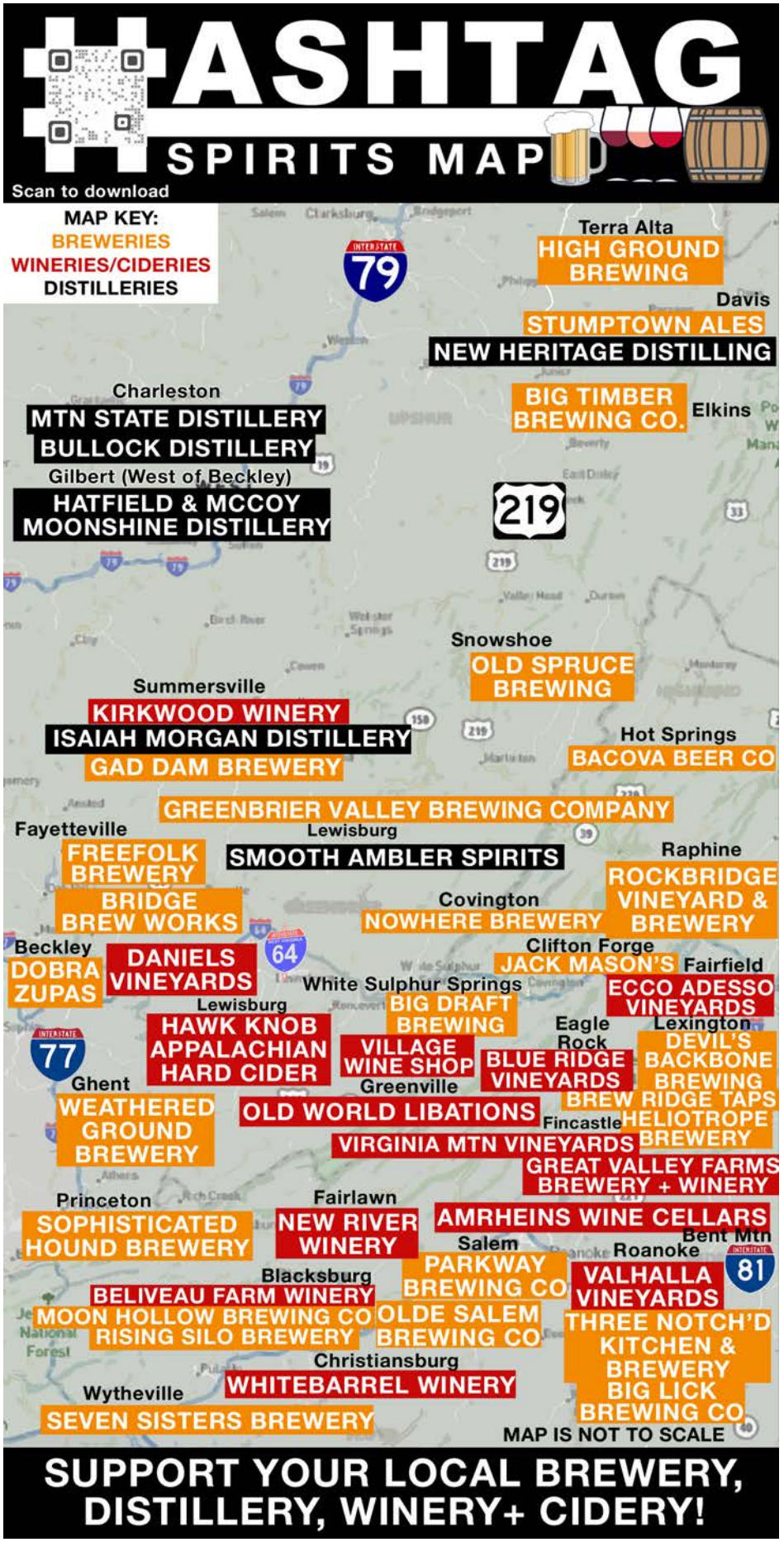
Forty years ago in 1986, *Veto Goldie*, from Vincent OH won the most races with three. The fastest pacer was *Sharp Karema*, a 9 year old from North Vernon, IN, who paced the mile in 202.1

Thirty years ago in 1996, *Lumber Jackie*, a 7 year old from Marietta, OH, won the most races with four. The fastest pacer was *Aber Nuke*, a 3 year old from Lewisburg, WV, who paced the mile in 159.0.

Twenty years ago in 2006, *Chill It*, a 9 year old from Chillicothe, OH won the most races with four. The fastest pace in 2006 was *Ethical Hanover*, a 5 year old from Maurtown, VA, who paced the mile in 200.1.

Ten years ago in 2016, *Party at Your Place,* an 8 year old from Millersburg, KY, won the most races with, three. The fastest trotter that year was also *Party at Your Place*, who trotted the mile in 203.3, and the fastest pacer was *Bourbon Street Hanover,* an 8 year old from New Philadelphia, OH. who paced the mile in 159.2

Harness racing at the State Fair of West Virginia was one of the most exciting attractions for nearly 100 years. There are currently over 100 harness racing tracks in the USA. MGM Northfield Park in Ohio races year around. The Meadows in PA, the Meadowlands in NJ race spring, summer and fall. Shenandoah Downs in Woodstock, VA race April, May, September and October. As of 2026, twenty six states still enjoy the sport of harness racing.



A Twist on Tradition: How "The Pretzelroni Roll" Won Over WV

By Megan Miller

For folks across the Greenbrier Valley and beyond, gathering at the State Fair is a cherished late-summer ritual and a time to reconnect with old friends, celebrate mountain heritage, and indulge in the iconic flavors that define the season.

While traditional favorites have dominated the concession scene for decades, last season saw a fresh contender step onto the fairgrounds and spark a state-wide sensation: a soft, golden pretzel stuffed with the Mountain State's favorite staple ingredients.

To trace the roots of this viral creation, you have to look about eight years back, when Ivan and Rachel Allgyer relocated from Pennsylvania to Union in Monroe County.

"Where we grew up in Pennsylvania, soft pretzels are everywhere," Rachel recalls. "When we moved to West Virginia, we noticed hard pretzels on grocery shelves, but nothing like the fresh soft pretzels we loved back home. Ivan is a true pretzel connoisseur, so we started making them at home for family and friends."

What began as a weekend passion project quickly gathered momentum. By May 2024, the couple launched their mobile bakery trailer, The Twist. Ivan, who worked in construction for over two decades, recently left his job to focus on running the business full-time, building out a baking setup inside the trailer to prepare everything from scratch on-site.

"I was in construction for a little over 20 years," Ivan shared with a smile. "But I quit my construction job at the end of last year. It's all pretzels from here!"

While Ivan perfected the dough, the duo set their sights on creating something tailored specifically for their new mountain community. Though Ivan had never even tried a pepperoni roll before moving to the Mountain State, Rachel saw the potential in marrying Pennsylvania's soft pretzels with West Virginia's official state food.

To make it work, quality was non-negotiable. They partnered locally with The Cheese 'n' More Store in Gap Mills, filling their hand-twisted dough with freshly sliced pepperoni and top-shelf mozzarella. Skipping deep-fryers and heavy oils and baking the rolls instead, they stick strictly to wholesome ingredients: flour, sugar, water, real butter, and salt.

"They work so hard for us!" Rachel says of the Gap Mills shop. "They slice so much pepperoni and cheese for us, but they have the best mozzarella and they're very picky with their quality. That actually helps our product be over the top, because their product is such high quality."



Rachel and Ivan Allgyer at The Twist. Photo by Derrick Poage.

Initially dubbed the mouthful "Pretzel Pepperoni Roll," it quickly found its iconic name: The Pretzelroni Roll.

When The Twist set up at the State Fair of West Virginia, they were fair-food newcomers, surrounded by veteran vendors. Last year, their Pretzelroni Roll was included in the annual Best New Fair Food Contest where they quickly ran into an unexpected snag.

Due to judging delays, their submission sat on the evaluation table longer than planned, losing its signature fresh-from-the-oven warmth before judges took their first bite.

"Ours was lukewarm at best by the time they got to it," Rachel laughs. "And it still got 3rd place in Judges' Choice!"

If the judges missed the full, piping-hot experience, fairgoers certainly did not.

As word spread across the Fair, hungry crowds lined up around The Twist to grab a fresh Pretzelroni Roll straight from the oven. Fairgoers enthusiastically rallied behind the Twist's new creation, launching a groundswell of support that swept the Allgyers into 1st Place for "People's Choice" in the contest.

"The people went to bat for us!" Rachel says. "They came in hot on the People's Choice and we got 1st place."

The overwhelming backing did more than just bring home a trophy. It cemented a deep connection between the new business and the community.

"The support around here has been unreal," Rachel reflects. "The way people will go out of their way to support us, tell people about us, and share our posts... it's been incredible. It's made me realize what a very special area we live in, with very, very special people."

In a region where culinary traditions run deep, introducing a fresh spin on a mountain classic requires care, craft, and authentic connection. By blending their Pennsylvania roots with a classic West Virginia staple, Ivan and Rachel didn't just win over the fairgrounds. They baked their way right into the local food story.

Catch The Twist on the Road!

- Where to find them: Look for The Twist at festivals and events throughout Southern West Virginia, including their featured spot at the State Fairgrounds in Lewisburg this August.
- Must-Try: The award-winning Pretzelroni Roll, baked fresh on-site and brushed with real butter.
- Stay Connected: Follow their latest stops and seasonal menu additions on Facebook at The Twist. New schedule drops on Mondays.

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ASTROLOGY

Your Horoscope According to AI

How each sign experiences the magic, mayhem, and memories of the WV State Fair!



Aries (March 21 – April 19)
You arrive with a plan to "just look around" and somehow end the day with three ribbons, a giant stuffed bear, and a story that begins, "So I challenged this guy..." The fair reminds you that life is best lived a little louder than necessary. Just don't mistake every game for a competition this month. Some of the best moments happen when you simply wander.



Taurus (April 20 – May 20)
The fair finds you through your senses. Fresh lemonade. Warm kettle corn. Bluegrass drifting through humid evening air. You know exactly where the shade is, which vendor has the best fries, and how long to linger. August asks you to savor what can't be bought: conversations that stretch past sunset and traditions that taste better every year.



Gemini (May 21 – June 20)
You somehow know everyone. You came for one concert and ended up chatting with a beekeeper, watching a sheep show, and making plans you'll probably keep. The fair feeds your curiosity more than your calendar. This month, the right conversation could open an unexpected door.



Cancer (June 21 – July 22)
The fair is a scrapbook in motion. Every corner holds a memory—sticky fingers, grandparents waiting by the livestock barns, music echoing across the grounds after dark. August reminds you that nostalgia isn't an invitation to live in the past, but to carry its best parts with you.



Leo (July 23 – August 22)
It's impossible not to notice when you're having a good time, and luckily, joy is contagious! Whether you're dancing near the stage or convincing your whole group to stay for one more ride, you make memories feel a little bigger. This month, let yourself be celebrated without feeling like you have to perform for it.



Virgo (August 23 – September 22)
While everyone else rushes from one attraction to the next, you notice the craftsmanship—the prize-winning quilt stitched by hand, the perfectly grown tomato, the intricately carved potato faces, the care behind every exhibit. The fair reminds you that excellence is often quiet. August invites you to appreciate your own progress before moving on to the next improvement.



Libra (September 23 – October 22)
The fair is one of the few places where everyone belongs. Farmers, artists, musicians, kids on carnival rides, neighbors catching up after a year apart, and you love the harmony of it all. This month, choose the people who leave you feeling more like yourself instead of trying to make everyone happy.



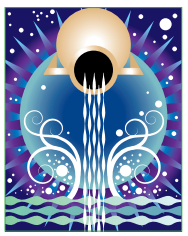
Scorpio (October 23 – November 21)
You see beyond the spectacle. While everyone else watches the fireworks, you're fascinated by the stories behind them—the family that has shown livestock for generations, the vendor who's been returning for decades. August reminds you that the deepest connections are built slowly, one season at a time.



Sagittarius (November 22 – December 21)
You treat the fair like an expedition. One minute you're watching blacksmithing, the next you're trying something you've never eaten before. Every path leads to another discovery. August rewards your willingness to say yes, but remember that not every meaningful adventure requires going somewhere new.



Capricorn (December 22 – January 19)
You admire the work most people overlook. The farmers up before sunrise. The volunteers making everything run. The years of practice behind every blue ribbon. The fair reminds you that lasting success is rarely flashy. This month, your consistency is your quiet superpower.



Aquarius (January 20 – February 18)
You love the fair because it's delightfully unpredictable. Where else can you find cutting-edge agriculture beside century-old traditions? August encourages you to honor the old while imagining what comes next. Your most unconventional idea might be exactly what someone else needed to hear.



Pisces (February 19 – March 20)
The fair feels almost dreamlike after dark. The Ferris wheel glowing against the sky, music floating on the breeze, laughter carrying farther than it should, all remind you that wonder isn't reserved for childhood. August invites you to protect your sense of enchantment, even after the lights go out.

the agenda

LISTINGS, HASHTAGWV.COM AGENDA | **Aug. 1, 2026 - Aug. 31, 2026**

Aug. 1

Saturday, August 1

8:00 AM – 9:30 AM: Birding Talk and Walk with Emily Williams @ Wood Thrush Park

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM: Watercolor Class with Jeanne Brenneman @ 365ART

1:00 PM – 2:00 PM: Watercolor Class with Jeanne Brenneman @ 365ART

1:30 PM: NY Giants Training Camp Practice @ The Greenbrier Sports Performance Center

6:00 PM: Free Community Sound Bath with Dr. Rob Meyer-Kukan @ Plants, Etc. Hidden Garden

Note: Individual tickets go on sale today for the Carnegie Classics Series.

Aug. 4

Tuesday, August 4

2:00 PM – 4:00 PM: Watercolor Class with Jeanne Brenneman @ 365ART

Aug. 5

Wednesday, August 5

1:30 PM: NY Giants Training Camp Practice @ The Greenbrier Sports Performance Center

Aug. 6

Thursday, August 6

1:30 PM: NY Giants Training Camp Practice @ The Greenbrier Sports Performance Center

Aug. 7

Friday, August 7

All Day Event: Lewisburg Literary Festival @ Downtown Lewisburg & Greenbrier Valley Visitors Center

1:30 PM: NY Giants Training Camp Practice @ The Greenbrier Sports Performance Center

4:00 PM – 7:00 PM: Plants, Etc. 49th Anniversary Celebration & Ribbon Cutting @ Downtown Lewisburg

5:00 PM: First Fridays After 5 (Theme: Lewisburg Literary Festival) @ Downtown Lewisburg

5:00 PM: Cruise In Car Show @ Organ Cave Community Center

7:00 PM: "The Piano Jar: Live with John Maddy" (Al Jeter Music Series) @ Greenbrier Valley Theatre

7:00 PM – 8:00 PM: Community Sound Bath: Chakra Balancing @ Bodies in Motion / 7 Notes Natural Health

Aug. 8

Saturday, August 8

All Day Event: Lewisburg Literary Festival @ Downtown Lewisburg & Greenbrier Valley Visitors Center

9:00 AM – 8:00 PM: Watermelon-Themed Family Fun Day

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM: Watercolor Class with Jeanne Brenneman @ 365ART

1:00 PM – 2:00 PM: Watercolor Class with Jeanne Brenneman @ 365ART

Aug. 11

Tuesday, August 11

2:00 PM – 4:00 PM: Watercolor Class with Jeanne Brenneman @ 365ART

6:00 PM – 7:15 PM: Tuesday Teachings: NADA Auricular Acupuncture @ 7 Notes Natural Health

6:00 PM – 8:00 PM: Small Journal Making Class with Ali Montgomery @ 365ART

Aug. 13

Thursday, August 13 (State Fair Opening Day)

All Day: State Fair of West Virginia Opens

6:30 PM – 8:00 PM: Ivy Terrace Concert Series: Mindy Murray & The Lobelians @ WVSOM Student Center Outdoor Amphitheatre

7:00 PM: State Fair Concert: Buckin' B Bull Ride @ State Fair Grandstand

Aug. 14

Friday, August 14

6:00 PM: Community Potluck and Open Mic @ Yew Mountain Center

8:00 PM: State Fair Concert: Vincent Mason and Avery Anna @ State Fair Grandstand

Aug. 15

Saturday, August 15

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM: Watercolor Class with Jeanne Brenneman @ 365ART

1:00 PM – 2:00 PM: Watercolor Class with Jeanne Brenneman @ 365ART

8:00 PM: State Fair Concert: Trace Adkins 30th Anniversary Tour with special guest Aaron Tippin @ State Fair Grandstand

Aug. 16

Sunday, August 16

5:00 PM – 7:00 PM: Annual "Tribute to Bricktop" Concert @ Alumni Park Gazebo, Alderson

8:00 PM: State Fair Concert: Sierra Ferrell: Heavy Petal Tour w/ Support from The Brudi Brothers @ State Fair Grandstand

Aug. 17

Monday, August 17

8:00 PM: State Fair Concert: CAIN & Leanna Crawford @ State Fair Grandstand

Aug. 18

Tuesday, August 18

2:00 PM – 4:00 PM: Watercolor Class with Jeanne Brenneman @ 365ART

7:00 PM: State Fair Concert: Shenandoah @ State Fair Grandstand

Aug. 19

Wednesday, August 19

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM: Luminosity Morning Sound Bath: Light of the Chakras @ 7 Notes Natural Health

1:00 PM – 3:30 PM: How to Make Fused Glass Panels @ 365ART

8:00 PM: State Fair Concert: Ying Yang Twins and Paul Wall @ State Fair Grandstand

Aug. 20

Thursday, August 20

All Day Event: WV Day

8:00 PM: State Fair Concert: Dierks Bentley @ State Fair Grandstand

Aug. 21

Friday, August 21

All Day Event: 10th Annual Dorothy Draper Decorating Weekend Begins @ The Greenbrier

9:00 AM: State Fair Event: Draft Horse Pull @ Harness Racing Track

8:00 PM: State Fair Concert: Gavin Adcock @ State Fair Grandstand

Deadline: Final day to purchase tickets for Carnegie Hall's Fantasy Gala.

Aug. 22

Saturday, August 22 (State Fair Final Day)

All Day Event: 10th Annual Dorothy Draper Decorating Weekend @ The Greenbrier

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM: Watercolor Class with Jeanne Brenneman @ 365ART

1:00 PM – 2:00 PM: Watercolor Class with Jeanne Brenneman @ 365ART

8:00 PM: State Fair Concert: Stone Temple Pilots @ State Fair Grandstand

Aug. 23

Sunday, August 23

All Day Event: 10th Annual Dorothy Draper Decorating Weekend Concludes @ The Greenbrier

Aug. 25

Tuesday, August 25

2:00 PM – 4:00 PM: Watercolor Class with Jeanne Brenneman @ 365ART

Aug. 26

Wednesday, August 26

4:00 PM – 6:00 PM: Linocut Printmaking on Fabric @ 365ART

Aug. 27

Thursday, August 27

1:00 PM – 2:00 PM: Resonant Relaxation Sound Bath: Resonance of the Chakras @ 7 Notes Natural Health

6:30 PM – 8:00 PM: Ivy Terrace Concert Series: Bing Brothers Band (Location TBA)

Aug. 28

Friday, August 28

7:30 PM: Opening Night: *Tuesdays with Morrie* @ Greenbrier Valley Theatre

Aug. 29

Saturday, August 29

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM: Watercolor Class with Jeanne Brenneman @ 365ART

1:00 PM – 2:00 PM: Watercolor Class with Jeanne Brenneman @ 365ART

1:00 PM – 5:00 PM: Native Seed Collection Walk @ Yew Mountain Center

2:30 PM: *Tuesdays with Morrie* (Matinee) @ Greenbrier Valley Theatre

7:30 PM: *Tuesdays with Morrie* (Evening) @ Greenbrier Valley Theatre

Aug. 30

Sunday, August 30

2:30 PM: *Tuesdays with Morrie* (Matinee) @ Greenbrier Valley Theatre

THROUGHOUT THE MONTH / ONGOING

July 1 – August 31: Two Karen's Art Exhibit @ Mountain Table (Open Tuesdays 3:00 PM–8:00 PM; Thursdays & Fridays 10:00 AM–2:00 PM)

August 28 – September 12: "Tuesdays with Morrie" @ Greenbrier Valley Theatre

Monday – Friday (All Month): Carnegie Hall Box Office, Galleries & Permanent Exhibit ("Arts from the Ashes") (Open 10:00 AM–4:00 PM)

DAILY RECURRING EVENTS DURING THE STATE FAIR (AUG 13 – 22)

10:00 AM, 11:30 AM, 1:30 PM, 3:00 PM, 5:00 PM: Hot Glass Academy Demonstrations @ Gate 5 / Large Stock Arena

10:30 AM, 1:00 PM, 4:00 PM: The Moogician (Dairy-Themed Magic & Juggling)

11:00 AM, 2:00 PM, 6:00 PM: Flores Circus Thrill Show (Globe of Death)

11:00 AM, 2:00 PM, 6:30 PM: DockDogs Canine Competition

12:00 PM, 3:00 PM, 5:00 PM: Granpa Cratchet Show

IT'S NOT JUST ONE THING, WITH CADEN GLOVER

By Hashtag Staff

This year, Caden Glover returns to The West Virginia State Fair Thursday, August 13, at 3 PM and 5 PM, with a new band and a musical identity that refuses to fit neatly into one genre.

For Glover, the State Fair has always been more than a place to play music. He grew up nearby, so going to the Fair was simply a part of the summer. Now, he is preparing for his fourth year as part of the official lineup.

"I can remember when I was younger watching some of the people playing music and watching the shows," Glover said. "And now it's pretty cool that I'm going on my fourth year playing that same stage."

This year, however, the sound will be a little different.

Glover has spent much of his performing career either playing solo or in smaller acoustic configurations. This year, he is bringing a full band onto the stage, adding drums and a fiddler to enhance the sound his audience already knows.

"It'll be similar, but this year we'll have drums backing me, and we're going to have a fiddler," Glover said. "So, we want that same sound, except now it's going to have a fuller sound."

The change brings its own challenges.

"There's definitely a cool aspect to the acoustic-style stuff where it's just me and my guitar, and I love playing that stuff," he said. "It's a whole lot harder when you introduce several new members to do a full-band type of deal. But it's worth it. I think it's going to be really good."

Growing his career from a young homegrown musician is part of a larger evolution Glover has navigated throughout his career. He has played for audiences of all sizes, ranging from intimate gatherings at home, to the national stage at American Idol. But, the State Fair audience is different from a traditional concert. People are moving. They are looking for food, rides, friends, and the next thing to do. Some arrive specifically to hear a performer. Others may simply happen to walk past the stage at the right moment.

For Glover, that moment of discovery is part of the job.

"Ultimately, that's the whole goal. It is to draw a new audience in when you're playing live at any show," he said. "You want something that's going to catch their ear… its like they know what it is, but also, they stop for a second and they're like, 'I haven't heard it like that before.'"

That balance, bringing something familiar, but also offering something more in the process, is central to how Glover approaches a performance. His goal is not to get listeners hooked on a single song, but to make them stop and listen for what happens next.

"A new audience is always good," he said. "But with that being said, it's always good for people who have heard you before to come back out to support you again."

Glover grew up in Monroe and Greenbrier counties, surrounded by the sounds and traditions of West Virginia. That background is what he believes creates a certain familiarity between him and the people who come to hear him play.

"A lot of people that go to the Fair, they more or less have somewhat of the same back history and backstory as I do, growing up in West Virginia in general," he said. "And I think that it's relatable."

However, that connection is not necessarily the result of a carefully constructed musical identity. When it comes to his sound, Glover says much of what listeners hear as "country" or "bluegrass" happens naturally. While many hear a rising country star, some of the music he plays, he says, is not country at all.

"I wouldn't personally even consider it country," he said. "The style of music that I'm actually playing, I wouldn't consider it country or bluegrass or anything like that. Some of it is honestly pretty far off from that."

But then he sings.

"I've got an accent," Glover said. "I just tend to sound more country. It's not intentional. It's just the way that it comes out."

The same thing happens with the guitar. He grew up playing bluegrass music, and that style has naturally defined the way he plays the guitar.

"Whenever I play, I'm kind of embedded with a heavy hand on the guitar," he said. "I grew up playing bluegrass. So whenever I play guitar and I strum, it always comes out more bluegrass-style guitar, country-style. Even if I'm not playing a country or bluegrass song, that's how it sounds almost."



Caden Glover

So what is Caden Glover's music? The answer depends on who you ask. Some people hear classic country. Others hear blues. Some hear bluegrass. Others have told him he sounds just like John Mayer. He's cool with all of it.

"It's kind of however you decide to listen to it," he said. "It definitely doesn't fit the mold of today's mainstream country music. It's kind of folky, kind of country, kind of bluegrass, blues. There's some jazzy-style stuff in there. It can be all over the place."

For a musician from West Virginia, that can create some assumptions on the national stage. Glover says audiences outside our region sometimes hear where he is from, before they hear what he is actually playing.

"You can be put into a country genre even though you're not, just because of where you're from, a lot of times," he said. The label can arrive before the music has had a chance to explain itself.

When Glover returns home, something changes. No explanation is needed.

"I always like coming back to play, especially in Monroe or Greenbrier County," he said. "It's always kind of a refresher, because a lot of people know me back home. My cup of tea, if you will, is bluegrass stuff, because that's what I grew up on," he said. "A lot of people in West Virginia appreciate that type of stuff. So whenever I come back, and I do the bluegrass stuff, and whatnot, it's more or less a refresher."

A hometown stage is simple. The audience has a deeper connection to the music.

"If I were to play somewhere else that's not familiar with bluegrass-style, that doesn't have that tradition, they look at you a little sideways or really don't understand it," Glover said. "Whereas here, they understand."

Sometimes the industry, or even fans in general, have a particular view of an artist, they think they can be pinned down and labeled, but for Caden Glover, that may be the most important thing to understand about his music.

He is shaped by where he comes from, but he is not limited to it.

He can sound country without making country music. He can bring the influence of bluegrass to a song that is not bluegrass. He can move between styles without choosing one as the official answer.

At the State Fair, that musical identity will arrive in a fuller form than it has before. The hometown acoustic musician will have a full band behind him. The familiar sound will be expanded, and somewhere among the people moving through the Fair, there will likely be someone who has never heard Caden Glover before.

Maybe they will stop for a song or two. Maybe they will recognize something familiar, or maybe they will hear something they cannot immediately name but leave with a deeper connection to the music.

Either way, Glover hopes they leave with the same understanding he has of his own music. "I'm not a one-trick pony," he said. "Whether or not they like country, bluegrass, blues, whatever the case may be, I have multiple songs that they would enjoy."

He paused, then summed it up more simply.

"I'm not pinned into one genre. I would hope that they hear something they like and understand, that there's a lot going on here."

"It's not just one thing."

Check out Caden Glover, Center Stage at the West Virginia State Fair Thursday, August 13, at 3 PM and 5 PM and visit cadenglover.com, @cadenglovermusic, caden.glover on Instagram, cadenglover on TikTok, and Caden Glover on YouTube to further support his work.

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HASHTAG WEST VIRGINIA

CARNEGIE HALL

IVY TERRACE OUTDOOR CONCERT SERIES





THURSDAY, AUGUST 13, at 6:30 P.M.

MINDY MURRAY & THE LOBELIANS

WVSOM STUDENT CENTER OUTDOOR AMPHITHEATER

THURSDAY, AUGUST 27, at 6:30 P.M.

THE BING BROTHERS BAND

OUTSIDE OF CARNEGIE HALL

CARNEGIE HALL
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