

# Mountain messenger

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Santa will welcome Christmas 2020 in the Santa Sendoff Parade

## Send Santa off to the North Pole December 19

By Sarah Richardson

As Christmas Day draws closer, the City of Lewisburg wanted to make the holiday season a little more magical. Local firefighters and EMS crews have offered to help Santa get up to the North Pole in time for Christmas, and make sure he has a chance to see every little boy and girl around town before he goes. Jolly old Saint Nick will be escorted all around Lewisburg in a Santa Sendoff Parade so he will be able to wave and say hello to children waiting outside their homes to see him.

Santa will start his route by leaving the Lewisburg Fire Station Number 1 at 1 p.m., and while he won't be coming through downtown, Santa's Sendoff will go along these streets in Lewisburg in the following order:

Echols Lane, Davis Street, Lightner Avenue, Foster Street, Holt Lane, Alderson Street, Highlander Circle, Comstock Street, Ruffner Drive, Lipps Road, Summit Avenue, Teaberry Road, Longview Avenue, Lipps Road, Holt Lane, Jefferson

See "Santa Sendoff" \_\_\_\_\_ Page 5

## Search for Rainelle chief of police continues, sheriff's deputies and state police on patrol

By Bobby Bordelon

Although not on the agenda for the Rainelle Town Council meeting, a number of social media comments on the town's live stream of the meeting raised the question of policing. Since the resignation of Mayor Jason Smith and issues between council and the now-former chief of police, the Rainelle Police Department is on the minds of many in the community.

Acting Mayor Bill Bell explained that although the town is currently without a chief of police, he has been in touch with Greenbrier County Sheriff Bruce Sloan and the State Police, looking to keep officers in town.

"Greenbrier County [Sheriff's deputies] have been patrolling extra to help us until we get our feet put under us, along with the State Police," said Bell. "They have done a marvelous job, what they have done has been phenomenal."

Many on social media have posted about a potential contract between the town and the sheriff's department - Bell stated this was currently not true.

"We haven't come to a term or a con-

tract yet on how many hours - somebody posted online last night [during the meeting] that we had them working 30 hours," Bell said. "That is not true at this moment. That's what I would like to see happen. ... I don't know where that is coming from; what time they're spending here, they're spending here as deputies."

Hoping to get a fully operational department back, Bell or Town Council have not yet found a replacement for former chief Dean Fankell.

"I have reached out to a couple of different people," Bell said. "We want to make sure we get the right person to fill that position, ... but so far I haven't had any luck."

Despite this, Bell is optimistic about Rainelle's future.

"We're going to be successful," Bell said. "This end of the county will be successful. We're made that way, we're resilient, and maybe hard-headed is another word, but we're stubborn enough to be winners. We're gonna win this battle with things going on in small communities everywhere."

## First COVID-19 vaccine doses arrive in Greenbrier County, but we're far from out of the pandemic woods

Justice receiving the vaccine. As of the Wednesday press briefing, he reported no side effects other than a very slight soreness in his arm.

(Photo courtesy of the governor's office)



Among the first doses at the health department included Jackie Nutter (left), Ashley Butler, Katrina Clinebell, Nikki Dolan, and Dr. Bridgett Morrison.

By Bobby Bordelon

The first doses of the first COVID-19 vaccine came to Greenbrier County this week, with the first of two shots given to some of the most exposed healthcare providers at the Health Department and local medical facilities. Even as the vaccine arrives, however, the darkest days of the pandemic in the Greenbrier Valley are still ahead.

"I got it - it was elating and overwhelming and I can't help but say it was a little bit tearful," said Dr. Bridgett Morrison, health officer for the Greenbrier County Health Department. "As exhausted as we are from the health department side, and I work at the hospital too, as tired as we all are, the healthcare workers, it was elating to get it, to have it, to get it administered, and that hope of eventually quiet this pandemic and literally put the pandemic behind us."

This is coming on the heels of both the 1,000 West Virginian COVID-19 deaths and nearly 700 confirmed Greenbrier County cases. As of Thursday, Dec. 17, the Greenbrier County Health Department reports 685 confirmed COVID-19 cases, 26 in the hospital, and 25 deaths. Across the country, the vaccine comes too late for the 308,000 United States COVID-19 deaths, numbers that total the fatalities of 9/11 over 100 times across the entire county.

"People are dying, our systems are overwhelmed and we don't want to lose anybody else," Morrison said. "We don't want to lose our health providers and we don't want to lose anybody we could prevent by getting the vaccine. ... All facilities, in our area and in all other areas, are at or nearing capacity. The problem is that those people who are anti-COVID, it's not just the people with the virus

who will suffer, it's the other people with medical conditions, heart attacks, strokes. There won't be any healthcare providers to care for them."

"It's always been here [in Greenbrier County] but it's even more prevalent now - please buckle down, wear your masks, social distance, be extremely cautious over Christmas, and that's one way you can help your healthcare providers in your community."

As reported by Governor Jim Justice, the states plan to properly utilize the limited number of vaccines to protect the most at risk individuals, healthcare workers and the elderly, is using a tier system to distribute the doses:

- Phase 1-A: Hospital, long-term care facility and staff, and pharmacies.
- Phase 1-B: Community infrastructure and emergency response, public health officials, and first responders.
- Phase 1-C: Other healthcare workers, like home health providers.
- Phase 1-D: Teachers and education staff in higher education and K-12 and other sectors for critical services for our state, such as utility and transportation workers.

The actual number of vaccines sent to Greenbrier County was small, as Morrison explained, "they are allocating to many different organizations based on the tier system by COVID risk. It's being allocated to hospitals, ER, ICU providers and staff that take care of COVID patients. It's being allocated to nursing homes, both the staff and the residents, and of course EMS and health departments. We're getting very small shipments, which is fine because a lot of those are being used throughout the state."

A second shipment of 60,000 doses is See "First Vaccine Doses" \_\_\_\_\_ Page 9

## Acting Ronceverte City Administrator permanently appointed to position by City Council

By Bobby Bordelon

The months-long hunt for a new City Administrator in Ronceverte is finally over - previous accounting manager and acting city administrator Pam Mentz was approved by City Council on Monday, Dec. 7, approving a change to city code in order to formally grant her the position.

"I'm happy to cast my vote in the affirmative on this motion," said Recorder Deena Pack.

"I think we all are," replied Mayor David Smith.

In order to approve Mentz, City Council voted to change city code - previously, Ronceverte's Municipal Ordinances required the City Administrator to have a bachelor's degree from "an accredited college or university," but now "this shall not be an absolute

requirement" as "relevant past experience may be taken into consideration when considering the qualifications of any candidate for this position."

Mentz's past experience is directly relevant - since the departure of former City Administrator Reba Mohler, Mentz has filled in many of these duties, then being appointed acting city administrator in September. Before this, Mentz served as the city's accounting manager.

"I know this has been an interesting six months to get to this, but we appreciate your time as acting [city administrator]," Smith said.

"I'm very honored, thank you all for giving me this opportunity. I've been here 11 years and hopefully many, many more," Mentz said.

See "Pam Mentz" \_\_\_\_\_ Page 5

## Greenbrier County law enforcement and 911 dispatch prepares for massive upgrade in technology

By Bobby Bordelon

Over the course of the next year, Greenbrier County law enforcement agencies and 911 dispatch will be jumping forward into the "future" of emergency response - a new data terminal system from Motorola for police cruisers that will allow officers, dispatchers, and more to better communicate during emergencies both within and without Greenbrier County.

"It's going to be a huge technological advancement and benefit for law enforcement in Greenbrier County," said Greenbrier County Sheriff Bruce Sloan. "It's amazing, really, over the years that law enforcement have been as successful as we have been with the limited use of technology. We've been taking some steps with that in recent years and this is going to be a plus."

The Greenbrier County Commission approved the Motorola Flex CAD (computer-aided dispatch) and records system and services agreement during their Tuesday, Dec. 8, meeting, agreeing to massively upgrade the county's dispatching and policing technology infrastructure. But why is it so important? Greenbrier County 911 Director Mike Honaker explained to the commissioners before the vote.

See "Upgrade" \_\_\_\_\_ Page 9

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## Ronceverte appoints Cherie Davis to fill empty councilmember seat

**By Bobby Bordelon**

After a number of interviews, the Ronceverte City Council has selected Cherie Davis to fill the seat left by former councilmember Adam Rosin on Monday, Dec. 7.

A familiar face to those who frequent the Ronceverte Public Library, Davis hopes to keep the city running smoothly. Joking that she frequently runs into and talks to half the town in her position as librarian, when the council seat opened, she felt she could be another line of communication between the people of Ronceverte and their leaders.

"I've been in the community since 2004 and I bought a house here in 2010," said Davis. "I've on the planning board and Parks and Recreation, and when I found out [a seat came open], I just thought ... it might be something I could do and help."

According to newly-appointed City Administrator Pam Mentz, Rosin's departure was due to a work schedule that often prevented him from attending meetings. After his departure, the council set out to find a replacement, deciding on Davis.

Davis explained she did not have specific policy goals as a councilmember, but looked to keep the city's ongoing projects moving forward. She explained the council "actually asked me that as part of the interview questions and no, I don't. I'm there to support what the city supports." However, she doesn't just plan to be a rubber stamp, saying "I'm not always going to agree with everything, just like they're not always going to agree with my viewpoint, but mostly [I want] to see things run smoothly."

A big source of concern for many Ronceverte residents is the multiple water rate increases passed by City Council in the last few years. Davis expressed support for the project that the rate increases support. The two phase water project comes to a total of approximately \$6.2 million, however, grants from a variety of sources have provided about \$3.3 million, covering all of the phase two improvements and more. Despite this, the city still had to vote to raise rates multiple times to fund the project, once initially and a second increase after a petition against the first increase put Ronceverte behind a Lewisburg rate increase.

"This is off the wall, but I have a she-shed, where I do my sewing, and I wanted electricity to it alone," explained Davis. "They had to dig and do another line or it would have been outrageously expensive. When the guy dug it, nobody realized that the people had installed the [a sewer connection] on my property. They took it from around the house, to that side, then it goes to the road. Basically, we busted my sewer pipe, but it didn't show up for three months [due to backup]. It made me realize

that for a lot of these old houses, nobody knows where those lines are. ... If it's like that [for sewer], what's it like for the water lines, how many water lines?"

The project will replace 20,200 linear feet of water main lines, 4,000 linear feet of service lines, 50 fire hydrants, replacing two storage tanks, 23,500 linear feet of pavement repairs, and more.

"I think [city leadership tries] hard to work within the boundaries, and they understand," Davis said. "I'm on a limited income, I can't have everything going up and up and up. ... When things get old, they have to be fixed.

Same way with your house. I think we forget, as consumers, if this is what it costs to fix my house, think of what it costs to fix things that are going to multiple houses."

Hoping to do her best for the city, Davis looked forward to the work that has to be done.

"I'm probably one of those people that if I don't believe in something, I won't vote for it. I don't go long with a crowd just to get along with a crowd. I try to understand the system. ... I hope I'm good for it and that I'm a positive person."

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## PICK OF THE LITTER

### TIGGER

Tigger is a five-year-old domestic shorthair. This pretty girl is an orange tabby with green eyes.



### PEANUT

Peanut is a female heeler mix and weighs 30 pounds. She has beautiful markings and an infectious, playful smile.



These animals are available at the Greenbrier Humane Society, located at 151 Holiday Lane off of Rt. 90 West in Lewisburg. They are closed Sunday and Monday, and are open from 11 a.m. through 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday.

Their cat adoption fee is \$65 and covers spay/neuter surgery, first kitty vaccinations, rabies vaccine, de-worming, toe nail trim and flea treatment.

Their dog adoption fee is \$85 and covers spay/neuter surgery, first dog vaccinations, rabies vaccine, de-worming, toe nail trim, flea bath and flea treatment.

They also offer donation-based spay/neuter vouchers, and clinics are filled on a first-come, first-served basis. They use a lot of vets in the area but the clinics fill up fast! Fill out an application to help prevent animal overpopulation! Call 304-645-4775 for more information.

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# Briefly

## AA meetings

will now be held Saturdays at 10 a.m. via Zoom. Contact at 304-647-0677 for Zoom details. Find listings for other meetings in West Virginia at aawv.org.

## Addiction Screenings available

Did you know that nearly 38% of adults in the U.S. have battled a substance abuse problem at some point this year? That's over three times the amount that have been exposed to the COVID-19 virus. Be safe this season and keep an eye out for loved ones who might be caught in the grip of addiction. Addiction Screenings: If you or a loved one is struggling with substance abuse, take the first step towards overcoming addiction. Call today for free screenings or referrals: 1-800-431-1754. For more information visit <https://www.narcononnew-liferetreat.org/blog/strange-side-effects-of-covid-19.html>

## Greenbrier Committee On Aging participating in Food Assistance

Go to [governor.wv.gov](http://governor.wv.gov) and click on WV Strong Summer Food Assistance or call 211 for pick up locations. Greenbrier County Committee on Aging is participating for seniors age 60+ and grandchildren under 18 years of age living in the home who are not already receiving meals from senior centers, food pantries, or the Board of Education. Pick-up for the Rupert location is Thursday from 12:30-1:30 p.m. Drive up service only - you will not get out of your vehicle. Please call 304-392-5138 to reserve your box and to schedule pick-up.

## DMV regional offices will be closed for Christmas and New Year's holiday weekend

All West Virginia Division of Motor Vehicles regional offices will be closed for the Christmas and New Year's holiday weekends.

Offices will close from Thursday, Dec. 24 through Saturday, Dec. 26 for the Christmas holiday. Offices will resume normal business hours on Monday, Dec. 28.

Offices will also be closed from Thursday, Dec. 31 through Saturday, Jan. 2 for the New Year's holiday. Offices will resume normal business hours on Monday, Jan. 4.

DMV Commissioner Everett Frazier would like to remind customers that many services will still be available during this time.

"Our online services portal is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week for anyone that wants to take advantage of our many transaction opportunities, such as driver's license and vehicle registration renewal," Commissioner Frazier said.

Additionally, all regional offices, except the Fairmont Exam Center, have a drop box located outside for transactions like titling, registration renewals, and dealer work. Work dropped off at any of the drop box locations will be processed the following week. The DMV also has several kiosks located across the state in various Kroger and Sheetz stores. These kiosks are available when the stores are open.

Please visit [dmv.wv.gov](http://dmv.wv.gov) for more information, including a list of kiosk locations and the online services portal.

## Alderson Town Council applies for multimillion dollar grant for water project

By Bobby Bordelon

A light meeting of the Alderson Town Council on Thursday, Dec. 10, saw a hopeful public hearing for a multimillion dollar grant application and minor updates for both the future of the Community Center and Bridge Trust.

A public hearing was held, allowing the town to apply for an approximately \$2 million Community Development Block grant to fund the upcoming \$6 million water infrastructure project in the works.

Leslie Taylor and Jamie Baker with Region 4 Planning and Development Council were available for questions, but the only two community members who spoke up only spoke in favor of the project. Taylor explained the original, and current, outlook of the project.

"In January 2020, this project came before the Infrastructure and Jobs Development Council (IJDC) and established a funding recommendation of an 875,000 IJDC District 3 grant, 125,000 Infrastructure Council Soft Cost grant, and a IJDC District 3 loan with a 1 percent interest rate for 40 years on \$5,637,000, for a total project cost of \$6,637,000," Taylor explained.

If this grant application is successful, it would drastically reduce the amount of the loan.

"With this funding revision, with the request to seek a \$2 million community development block grant, our funding has now changed to \$1 million IJDC grant, a \$2 million community development block grant, and then an IJDC District loan of \$3,637,000 [with the same interest rate]," Taylor said. "The project cost is unchanged."

Taylor complimented the quickness of the city in getting needed data for the application. In September, Todd Riggs, also known as Hoss, went door-to-door in town, surveying 431 water customers in the city, asking for income information, a critical, but often difficult step in the application.

"You and your staff did an excellent job of getting the income surveys," Taylor said. "You got them very expeditiously and you got them to us, so we were able to calculate your low to moderate income percent, and we appreciate you doing that so quick."

"That was Hoss, he took care of getting those surveys door-to-door," replied Copenhaver. "The question is, what was our percent once you got that back?"

See "Alderson Town Council" Page 5

## FAA requests further information from airport, letter reveals closed B I investigation

By Bobby Bordelon

The Greenbrier Valley Airport is preparing to respond to another round of inquiries from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) about former administration. The questions are a follow-up after the airport previously submitted responses to FAA inquires in May, detailing concerns from former airport director Stephen Snyder about the administration before him and the airport being in "violation of their Federal Grant Obligations as it relates to operations of the Airport."

"The airport is continuing to cooperate with the inquiries the Federal Aviation Administration poses to us," explained Airport Authority Chair Deborah Phillips. "We will do that to the best of our ability."

After Snyder took over as airport director, he began to investigate previous activities at the airport, ultimately contacting federal authorities. A case was opened by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) before June 2016, when Snyder was deemed the contact on behalf of the airport. However, the investigation does not continue at the federal level - in a letter to Snyder dated Sept. 1, 2017, a victim specialist with the FBI confirmed their role in the investigation was over.

"This letter is to provide you with an update about the case for which you were previously referred to the FBI's Victim Assistance Program," reads the letter. "At this time, the FBI has closed its investigation in the above referenced case (Case Number 194B-PG-6752308). The decision to close the case does not lessen the important contribution you made to the investigation. Your assistance and cooperation were greatly appreciated. The investigation has been closed because the United States Attorney's Office (USAO) has declined to prosecute."

According to Greenbrier County Commissioner Mike McClung in 2019, the alleged case was passed down to a county-level special prosecutor. In addition, a criminal injunction filed against McClung also stems from his taking of files from the airport. According to McClung, the files were not viewed by him, but copied and sent to a special prosecutor. At the time of writing, no further information has been made available about the case alleged airport case since January.

Phillips explained personnel would continue to provide the FAA with as much information as possible and needed for their investigation.

"To our knowledge, we have not done anything that we believe has violated any state or federal law," Phillips said. "Until such time that we find something to

## Rainelle Town Council discusses visitor's center, DOH sidewalks, storm drainage projects, and potential projects

By Bobby Bordelon

Although the Monday, Dec. 14, meeting of Rainelle Town Council brought bad news about a potential location for the future visitor's center, a number of positive emerging projects, such as storm drainage projects, memorial parks, a potential four-wheeler trail, and more were discussed.

After discussion last month around an alternate location for the future Rainelle Visitors Center, Councilmember Danny Milam brought back bad news. The potential location, known as the Rich Station, is located past Town Hall across the railroad tracks on the left, and has been abandoned for some time. Although council hoped the property would become available for the visitors center, communications with the owner have not been successful.

"The only way that they'll even talk to us is through emails," Milam said. "To be honest with you, they don't want to sell the property. I guess that's why they've got properties across the state that are abandoned and look like c\*\*\*. They're not interested in helping us out at all, so as far as I'm concerned, the Rich Station spot, unless someone can come up with something better, we just forget that idea. It's a shame they don't want to work with us."

The main reason for a potential change is location is to keep the building out of a potential flooding area. Instead, the original location will now be used, but the building might be raised.

"I'm sure we're going to have to raise that building quite a bit in order to keep it from having flood problems," Milam said. "Maybe with our new flood control, if we get it going well, that'll take care of some of that problem. I wish we could've got it [at the Rich Station location] because it's in a really good location, but it is what it is."

In addition, problems with funding are on the horizon for the project.

"The idea was to try to ... proceed with building," Milam explained. "I reported last time that the cost of building materials went up ten percent. The materials now have doubled from six months ago. There's nowhere in sight that they're going to stop raising. It's almost to the point where we're not going to be able to build it. We surely can't buy the materials now for the money we've got."

Acting Mayor Bill Bell noted he would reach out to donors before the next meeting to "see if they will give us a little leeway." He said it is "just a difficult situation we're in - lumber prices, due to COVID or whatever the situation is, we have no control of it. We'll come back to this and see if we can get some clarity from the donors. ... I think that's fair, they need to know what's going on."

...

Although Council approved an additional \$3,900 to a sidewalk project on Second Street through the Department of Highways, Milam noted he was "not happy"

See "Rainelle Town Council" Page 7

that effect, we will continue, but keep in mind that the Internal Revenue Service, the FBI, multiple state auditors have reviewed the records of the Greenbrier Valley Airport and have come to the conclusion that there is nothing there. Our audits have stated we need to do some things to improve our accounting practices, and we have compiled with that request to the best of our ability since 2016."

The audit findings, as previously reported by the Mountain Messenger's coverage of Airport Authority meetings, showed the airport did not split their accounting practices as they typically are done. As a result, an outside firm was brought in.

"We don't have the staff to separate the accounting process, so we have gone out and hired a certified public accounting firm to come in on a monthly basis and review our financial records," Phillips explained.

In the new request for information, the FAA asked 24 overview follow-up questions, many of which were split into subsections. These questions include if former airport direction Jerry O'Sullivan and employee Linda Yoak were terminated or if they quit, and what the circumstances of their departure were, and sought information on money transfers to "Oppenheimer" in June 2014, details around reimbursement payments to O'Sullivan, the location of files, identified payments to former employees, lease agreements and payments, and more.

For example, question 24 asks if the termination of O'Sullivan and Yoak had to do with an independent auditor's 2014 findings.

"Among these findings the independent auditor found that 'it was determined during this examination that the management of the Authority authorized expenditures that may have been for personal expenses and reimbursements for meals and incidentals above amounts allowed by the Internal Revenue Service.' Additionally, in the Audit Report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2014 it was stated that 'it was determined during our examination that management of the Authority authorized expenditures that may have been for personal expenses.'"

The request also asks three new questions to get the airport authority's "response to Mr. Snyder's new allegations and additional information." Citing a reply to the airport Authority's response to the previous letter,

"One of these allegations is that the building utilized for GCAA's FBO was paid for with AIP funding as an Airport Rescue and Fire Fighting structure. With regards to the structure and/or building currently used by the GCAA FBO please indicate whether:

- the FBO is co-located within a structure that is also used for ARFF at LWB;
- AIP funds were used to construct this structure;
- GCAA received approval from the FAA to use part of this structure to host FBO operations. If such approval was received please provide documentary evidence of such approval. Please provide the information and documentation requested under A and B above by no later than January 25, 2021."

For now, airport staff will continue to provide any information the FAA requests to the best of their ability.

"What the public needs to understand is that anytime any person makes a complaint to an agency, not just to FAA, that agency is required to pursue information that would answer what that complaint would be and the agency with the complaint filed against them, in this case the airport, we also have an obligation to respond to that inquiry," Phillips said. "This can go on and on and on."

## Mountain Messenger

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# OPINION

## Commentary

### 2020 - A year for the record books in WV

By Mac Warner, West Virginia Secretary of State  
While 2020 will be remembered for its challenges, my office will always recall this year with pride in our accomplishments. When West Virginia voters blessed me four years ago to become Secretary of State (SOS), I employed top-notch managers energized to transform the office. For three years, we turned over rocks, reorganized the office, and made infrastructure investments. While we did not envision a pandemic, we made vast improvements that leveraged technology and stayed laser-focused on customer service. Because of the intense preparation, we did not miss a beat when the pandemic struck.

I highlight three functions to make my point: maintaining confidence in our elections; smooth transactions for business and licensing; and maintaining official records.

First, the best-known events under the scope of the Secretary of State's Office of 2020 were the elections held under an emergency pandemic declaration. We are extremely proud that in the General Election more than 802,000 West Virginians voted - the second-highest in state history. West Virginia pulled off one of the most successful elections in the country, with high confidence in our results being accurately counted and reported on election night. Our success was due to the collective effort of every poll worker, staff member, county clerk, and voter who stepped up and participated in the process.

As to our office specifically, we were more prepared than ever. Well ahead of this year's elections, we compiled and trained clerks on a Continuity of Operations Plan covering natural disasters, unintentional threats, and intentional threats. When the pandemic hit, we were ready; the pandemic was akin to a scenario for which we had trained. In fact, our success gave West Virginia national attention when I was invited to testify in front of the U.S. Senate about election preparations.

Other factors that led to such successful elections include recruiting thousands of poll workers, securing personal protective equipment, timely distribution of pandemic funding, creating an online system to request absentee ballots, and education campaigns about these changes. I am proud of how our county clerks, poll workers, the Governor's Office, DHHR, the National Guard, and other state and federal partners worked together to provide safe options for West Virginians to participate.

Second, our office made it easier than ever to conduct business and licensing transactions with the government. To complement our Business One-Stop Center, we invested \$1 million in a state-of-the-art online licensing system. This system allows for 24-hour online access to register, update and file for Notaries, Charitable Organizations, Professional Fundraisers, Private Investigators, Marriage Celebrants, Athlete Agents, Scrap Metal Dealers, Trademarks, and Apostilles. This system allows business owners to operate on their time, not just during office hours. The public also has greater access than ever before to view these filings online.

This year we added to our national recognition with our WV One-Stop Business Portal by winning "IT Innovation of the Year" from StateScoop, recognizing it

## Commentary

### Justice announces aggressive vaccination plan for long-term care facilities; provides details on Phase 2 of allocation plan

Gov. Jim Justice joined West Virginia health leaders and other officials on Wednesday for his latest daily press briefing regarding the State's COVID-19 response.

During the briefing, Gov. Justice provided a personal update after he and members of the state's pandemic leadership team received the COVID-19 vaccine Monday.


"Lots of people are wondering how I'm feeling," Gov. Justice said. "It didn't hurt me a bit in the world. I've felt great. If this vaccine becomes available to you, please get vaccinated. It was painless, there was nothing to it."

"We're pushing the vaccines out the door as fast as we possibly can," Gov. Justice continued. "We're distributing them all across our state. Our National Guard and all our health experts are doing a phenomenal job. But I'm going to push them and push them and push them. To be perfectly honest, if they got out 93.9 percent, that would be great, I'd pat them on the back, and I'd say it's not good enough. We've got to get them all out."

Also on Wednesday, Gov. Justice announced that West Virginia has already vaccinated 2,000 residents and staff members at various long-term care facilities across the state.

"CVS and Walgreens have an agreement with the federal government to vaccinate nursing home residents across the country through a voluntary program. They have said they expect to administer the first Pfizer vaccines on December 21st. That's five days from now. But I know that our nursing home community in West Virginia is moving ahead even quicker than this," Gov. Justice said. "We decided to use a different approach for our program, because over 40 percent of our pharmacies are not chain-affiliated. We have instead partnered with all the pharmacies in West Virginia. We felt that, from a state perspective, we would be limiting our ability to rapidly distribute and administer the vaccine to the population in need if we had gone with the federal program."

"Where our data indicates nearly 50 percent of deaths in West Virginia come from an assisted living or nursing home, our intent is to within the next 30 days - and we're going to beat this, because 30 days is too long - we will have vaccinated all the nursing home and as-



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as an innovative approach to cross-agency cooperation.

Third, a very significant section of the SOS office is our Administrative Law Division. Some of the Division's work is purposely low-key as it administers the Address Confidentiality Program. But, the Division's main work is to maintain records of all of the governor's executive actions and to provide public access to those records. This has been an especially important responsibility during the pandemic, as the Governor declared a State of Emergency in mid-March, allowing state agencies to suspend rules when necessary. Our staff has worked diligently to keep track of these changes and ensure public access.

Truly, the advancements we made have positioned West Virginia to lead in the post-COVID world. We successfully navigated 2020, and in doing so, made it easier than ever to start and build a business in WV. We have demonstrated our ability to not just operate under pandemic situations but to thrive. Our recent launch in licensing is just one tangible example of this, allowing access to customers 24/7/365, and for our staff to complete all tasks regardless of where they are located.

When we look back on 2020, I invite all of West Virginia to join my office in a sense of pride as to how we attacked the year of the pandemic. By working together, we brought this challenging year to a successful conclusion, we preserved and maintained confidence in our democratic process, and we positioned our Mountain State for even greater success in the future. Bring on 2021!

sisted living facility staff and their residents," Gov. Justice continued.

"We were the first state in the nation to step up and test all of the people in our nursing home, the first in the nation to test all the assisted living facilities, we want to stay right on top of that curve and we want to be the first again."

The Governor was also joined virtually Wednesday by Todd Jones, President of AMFM Nursing and Rehabilitation Centers in West Virginia, who provided insight as to the progress that has been made so far delivering vaccines to long-term care facilities.

"The speed with which this is happening is amazing. We are hoping to be done before most other states even start," Jones said. "Yesterday, we vaccinated 1,830 people in 16 of our 19 AMFM facilities."

"I have to admit that yesterday was the best day that I've had at work in nine months, to see the residents and the employees so happy to see the end of this in sight," Jones continued. "But people have to get the vaccine. It is a safe vaccine. We need to urge people to take it at the first opportunity that you have to take it."

"I just want to thank Governor Justice, Secretary Crouch, Dr. Amjad, Dr. Marsh, and General Hoyer. They've been excellent to work with throughout this pandemic. They realized, really early on, that this is a very contagious virus that has a disproportionately high death rate for elderly with underlying medical conditions, and that is the exact profile of folks that are in our skilled nursing facilities and assisted living facilities."

Additionally Wednesday, Gov. Justice went into more detail on the state's plan for Phase 2 distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine.

As previously announced, Phase 1 of vaccine distribution includes those at the highest risk of serious complications from COVID-19, as well as individuals who are essential frontline workers fighting this pandemic. Phase 1 is broken down into four subsections:

Phase 1-A: Hospital, long-term care facility and staff, and pharmacies.

Phase 1-B: Community infrastructure and emergency response, public health officials, and first responders.

## Commentary

### Manchin: Exclusion of WV Veterans from initial COVID-19 vaccination plan is unacceptable

This Thursday, U.S. Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV) called on the Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary Robert Wilkie to provide an explanation for the exclusion of many rural Veterans, including West Virginia Veterans, from the VA's initial COVID-19 vaccine distribution and implementation plan. Last week, during a Senate Veterans Affairs Committee hearing Senator Manchin also asked the VA about the plans to assist rural areas with distributing the COVID-19 vaccine.

Dear Secretary Wilkie,

The distribution of the first doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, which is both safe and effective, is a decisive moment in the fight against this horrible virus. On December 15th, 2020 the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) released the VA COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Plan, outlining the order in which Veterans and VA employees would receive coronavirus vaccines as doses become available. As expected, the plan initially prioritizes frontline Healthcare Workers (HCWs) and the highest-risk Veterans. However, the plan does not outline when and how rural states like West Virginia will be incorporated into the prioritization.

The VA has now received its first 73,000 doses of the Pfizer vaccine to be distributed to 37 hospitals within the VA. Not a single one of those first 37 hospitals are located in West Virginia, and I worry that the VA is not taking into account the unique health challenges West Virginia Veterans face. My office has learned that the while the four Veterans Affairs Medical Centers (VAMCs) in West Virginia have been training, conducting exercises, and preparing to receive the vaccine, they have not been briefed by the VA Central Office (VACO) on a specific timeline for when to expect delivery. How will the VA ensure Veterans living in rural areas receive equitable access to a vaccine? I urge the Secretary to immediately make public any plans to prioritize rural Veterans and publish a specific timeline for when West Virginia Veterans can expect to see the first doses delivered to VAMCs in my state.

While it may make logistical sense to prioritize VA hospitals with high population density, we have the most vulnerable population in the country. Our more than 140,000 Veterans are older and have higher levels of pre-existing conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and lung disease that make them especially susceptible to developing a severe illness if they become infected with the virus. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, West Virginia has the most at-risk population in the United States, with 49% of all adults over the age 18 at-risk of serious illness if infected. Additionally, West Virginia has one of the oldest Veteran populations in the country with 60% of our Veterans older than the age of 60. Only 15% of West Virginia Veterans have served post- 9/11, the rest have served in WWII, Korea, Vietnam, and Gulf War eras.

I understand that cold temperature storage for the vaccines are a key issue and contribute to your logistics challenges. For example, the Pfizer vaccine must be stored at -94 °F and the Moderna vaccine at -4 °F. How will VA secure the refrigeration and transport equipment needed to safely ship and stock potential COVID-19 vaccine doses at rural locations? West Virginia Veterans should not be placed lower on the priority list simply because the VA has not yet invested in cold storage units in rural areas.

West Virginia is one of the most patriotic states in the country with a long history of answering the call to defend our nation. That unique service, however, also makes West Virginia Veterans especially vulnerable to the global pandemic we are now battling. The safety and well-being of every West Virginian must remain our top priority. Veterans across West Virginia have raised their hand to defend and protect our nation again and again and are no strangers to thriving during difficult times. However, the fact is that West Virginia Veterans' age and the physical nature of military service make them uniquely vulnerable to this threat. We must do everything we can to vaccinate and protect these Veterans, who have already given so much.

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Phase 1-C: Other healthcare workers, like home health providers (Initial emphasis on individuals age 50 and above).

Phase 1-D: Teachers and education staff in higher education and K-12 and other sectors for critical services for our state, such as utility and transportation workers (Initial emphasis on individuals age 50 and above).

Phase 2 of vaccine distribution includes the general populace. Current estimates indicate that Phase 2 may begin as early as March 2021. Phase 2 is broken down into three subsections:

Phase 2-A will include those who are most vulnerable in the general population. An initial emphasis will be placed on individuals over age 60, beginning with the oldest and working backward. From there priority will then be given to those over age 50 with pre-existing health problems with a note from a physician.

Phase 2-B will focus on those who did not receive a vaccine in Phase 1-C and Phase 1-D, again prioritizing those age 50 and above.

Phase 2-C will be the point in time where all West Virginians who want a vaccine will be able to receive one.



## For the Record

### Deeds

Allison S. Cox and Stephen Zachary Cox to David R. Moles and Ashley Moles, Lot 28, Caldwell Addition, White Sulphur Corporation  
 Janine E. Johnson to Mike Finno and Melissa Coffman Finno, 0.121 acre, Ronceverte Corporation  
 Alex Hensley, Linda Hensley, et al, to Brian Potts and Abbey Potts, 1 acre, Anthony Creek District  
 Johnson and Johnson Investments LLC to Justin Scott Deeds and Claudia Elaine McDaniel, Lots 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, Dickson Blue Heaven Subdivision, Lewisburg District  
 Joy Ann Butcher to Gregory S. Hovey, 17.17 acres, Blue Sulphur District  
 Verlin Butcher to Gregory Hovey, 2.56 acres, Blue Sulphur District  
 Richard J. Bantel to Amber Ray Tuckwiller and Philip Eugene Tuckwiller, 2 lots, Frankford District  
 David Jens Haworth to Martin L. Tarbox and Brenda L. Tarbox, lots 9 and 10, White Sulphur District  
 David Jens Haworth to Martin L. Tarbox and Brenda L. Tarbox, 2 tracts, White Sulphur District  
 Cecelia J. Pruitt to Robert Rowe and Karen Rowe, lot 19, Blue Sulphur District  
 Michael P. Shelton to Christina R. Adkins, 2 tracts, Blue Sulphur District  
 Christina R. Adkins to Christina R. Adkins and Michael D. Griffith, Jr., 2 tracts, Blue Sulphur District  
 Mark Ford to DSW Properties, LLC, 0.047 acres, Ronceverte Corporate District

## Building Trails to a Bright Future: Meadow River Valley Association releases Strategic Plan 2020-2025

*The Meadow River Valley Association's Top, Near-Term Priority: Bringing New Life to the Former Rupert Elementary School Campus*

The Meadow River Valley Association, Inc. (MRVA) is releasing its Strategic Plan 2020-2025 for the Meadow River Valley region. This strategic plan focuses on community revitalization and includes a future vision for the community and an action plan to realize the vision. The plan is intended to move forward critical community and economic development areas of work for the Meadow River Valley as well as serve as a resource to encourage coordinated investments by public and private funders.

The plan was created through a community engagement process, including a series of community gatherings in 2018 and 2019 focused on canvassing residents for input, priorities and need. A cross-section of local businesses, organizations and government entities vested in the Meadow River Valley were also encouraged to provide input and make recommendations for the region's future.

In support of long-term needs identified in these feedback meetings and the opportunity presented by a vacant school property, transforming the former Rupert Elementary campus to the Meadow River Valley Community Center is the strategic plan's top, near-term priority. Local residents will work with a MRVA leadership team to achieve this goal and other objectives outlined in the plan.

Key initiatives included in the strategic plan are:

Objective 1: to pull together a network of partners who support and can aid in the revitalization of the Meadow River Valley.

Objective 2: to build a project team for the Meadow River Valley Community Center that will join with planning experts to repurpose the former Rupert Elementary School campus.

Objective 3: to design and implement a plan for the Meadow River Valley Community Center that services the needs of area residents.

Objective 4: to assemble a coordinated Meadow River Valley volunteer program, matching need with those who want to get involved.

The entire plan is publicly available at: [https://meadowriver.org/files.wordpress.com/2020/12/vvh040-blueprint-strategic-plan\\_mrv.pdf](https://meadowriver.org/files.wordpress.com/2020/12/vvh040-blueprint-strategic-plan_mrv.pdf)

The MRVA is currently seeking the support of community members who are interested in helping to realize this new direction for the Meadow River Valley. Those interested may contact David Lumsden, [lumsdenwv@hotmail.com](mailto:lumsdenwv@hotmail.com), 304-646-0798 to get involved.

The Meadow River Valley is one of six selected communities in the 2019-2020 Blueprint Communities Program, and this strategic plan was the primary outcome of a full year of volunteer service that twenty-four residents and local stakeholders invested into this program. Blueprint Communities is a collaboration between the Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburgh and the West Virginia Community Development Hub. Fifteen communities across West Virginia have participated since the start of the program in 2007.

## Santa Sendoff

Street, Dorsey Street, Echols Lane, Austin Street, Lafayette Street, Jefferson Street, Frazier Street, Second Avenue, Lafayette Street, Foster Street, Jefferson Street, Bell Drive, Second Avenue, Court Street, Laing Street, Church Street, First Avenue, Bell Drive, Graham Avenue, Court Street, Feamster Road, Walnut Street, Randolph Street, Oak Street, Feamster Street, Maple Street, Washington Street, Lee Street, GMS Drive, Matthew Street, McQueen Street, Dwyer Lane, Judyville Road, Old White Drive around Greenbrier Pines, Judyville Road, Mackle Point around Dogwood Heights, Judyville Road, Dwyer Lane, Washington Street, Jefferson Street, Chestnut Street, Lee Street Silo Lane, Blackbird Way, Cardinal Way, Blackbird Way, Blackbird Village, Raven View Lane, Crowfield Circle, Blackbird Way, Lamplighter, Crowfield Circle, Blackbird Way, Silo Lane, Jefferson Street, Underwood Estates to Coleman Drive, Jefferson Street, Montvue Drive, Wildwood Av-

## During the season of giving, Red Cross urges blood donation

December may be the season of giving - but it's typically a challenging time to collect enough blood donations. Add in a pandemic, and this year could be even tougher than usual. That's why the American Red Cross is urging those who are feeling well to give the gift of life by donating blood or platelets this holiday season.

The need for blood doesn't stop for holidays. Between Thanksgiving and Christmas, more than 1 million blood transfusions will be given in the United States. Donations of all blood types are needed to ensure hospital shelves remain stocked to meet patient blood needs.

Make your appointment to give blood, platelets or plasma with the Red Cross by downloading the Red Cross Blood Donor App, visiting [RedCrossBlood.org](http://RedCrossBlood.org), calling 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or enabling the Blood Donor Skill on any Alexa Echo device.

To encourage donations this holiday season, those who come to donate blood, platelets or plasma with the Red Cross Dec. 18 - Jan. 4 will receive a long-sleeved Red Cross T-shirt, while supplies last.

Local donation opportunities include:

- Lewisburg: Dec. 28: 12 noon - 6 p.m., Lewisburg United Methodist Church, 214 E. Washington Street

- Union: Jan. 4: 11 a.m. - 4 p.m., Monroe County Public Library, 303 South Main Street

Important COVID-19 information for donors:

As COVID-19 hospitalizations increase, hospital demand for convalescent plasma has also grown. COVID-19 convalescent plasma is a type of blood donation given by those who've recovered from this coronavirus. Their plasma contains antibodies that may help patients actively fighting the virus. Learn more about convalescent plasma and sign up to give at [RedCrossBlood.org/Plasma4COVID](http://RedCrossBlood.org/Plasma4COVID).

The Red Cross is testing blood, platelet and plasma donations for COVID-19 antibodies. The test may indicate if the donor's immune system has produced antibodies to this coronavirus, regardless of whether an individual developed COVID-19 symptoms. Red Cross antibody tests will be helpful to identify individuals who have COVID-19 antibodies and may now help current coronavirus patients in need of convalescent plasma transfusions. Convalescent plasma is a type of blood donation collected from COVID-19 survivors that have antibodies that may help patients who are actively fighting the virus.

COVID-19 antibody test results will be available within one to two weeks in the Red Cross Blood Donor App or donor portal at [RedCrossBlood.org](http://RedCrossBlood.org). A positive antibody test result does not confirm infection or immunity. The Red Cross is not testing donors to diagnose illness, referred to as a diagnostic test. To protect the health and safety of Red Cross staff and donors, it is important that individuals who do not feel well or believe they may be ill with COVID-19 postpone donation.

Each Red Cross blood drive and donation center follows the highest standards of safety and infection control, and additional precautions - including temperature checks, social distancing and face coverings for donors and staff - have been implemented to help protect the health of all those in attendance. Donors are asked to schedule an appointment prior to arriving at the drive and are required to wear a face covering or mask while at the drive, in alignment with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention public guidance.

## Pam Mentz

Continued from Front Page

Interviews to fill Mentz's previous position are ongoing.

In other business:

Smith celebrated the memorial parade for Gary "P Nut" Bland, saying he would "be missed." For more about the life of the well known EMT, local volunteer, DJ, and more, see the story in last week's *Mountain Messenger* - "Judith Bland, ER nurse and wife of Gary "P Nut" Bland, remembers her husband after fatal battle with COVID-19."

Although unhappy with the cancellation of the annual Christmas parade due to COVID-19, Smith hopes the upcoming vaccine will allow for events in 2021.

The city's annual holiday dinner will not be held during the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, a boxed, grab-and-go breakfast or lunch is currently in the works.

"I hope you all have a safe, safe, safe, Christmas and a happy New Year," Smith said.

## Greenbrier County Magistrate Court Convictions

Adam C. Fuller, Lewisburg, unlawful taking of vehicle, NCP, fine \$150

Jason W. Copenhaver II, Lewisburg, driving suspended, NCP, fine \$100

Jerod W. Workman, Alderson, illegal possession of wildlife - 8 pt. buck, NCP, fine \$75

Matthew R. Curry, Lewisburg, loaded firearm in motor vehicle, fine \$40

Continued from Front Page

enue, Montvue Drive, Jefferson Road, Jefferson Street, Circle Drive, May Apple Trail, Hickory Lane, Circle Drive, Wake Robin Trail, Commanche Lane, May Apple Trail, Circle Drive, Jefferson Street, and afterwards he will pass by the Lewis Terrace Apartments and Spruce Cove Apartments.

With such a widespread parade route, the city encourages everyone to maintain a safe social distance from each other and avoid gathering downtown, as his route doesn't pass through the main intersections. Visit the City of Lewisburg's Facebook page for a complete turn-by-turn set of directions to make sure you don't miss him!

The Green Space downtown is still set up with Santa's Mailbox so everyone can mail their Christmas Lists to the North Pole. It's not too late to mail your letters! There is also Christmas music playing in the square, and lights on all the lampposts and storefronts.

## Alderson Town Council

Continued from Page 3

After finding the number, Baker said it "looks like 61.92 percent ... that are below the low to moderate income."

"We needed to be [51 percent], so we were 10 percent over where we needed to be," Copenhaver said jokingly. "That's good. It's good to be poor, it helps us get grants. ... I really believe, because Hoss is the most honest person I could put out to do it, the information is very factual. People were very honest with him, I was impressed with the response to the survey."

If the grant application is successful, Copenhaver noted, "essentially we would cut that in half with grant funding. Roughly."

In other business:

The potential future of the Alderson Community Center as the new Alderson Elementary School was not ready for council action, but Copenhaver reported that the engineers have met and there are no red flags for the proceeding. The Greenbrier County Board of Education would like a memorandum of understanding from the town so they prepare for the project, but the draft was not yet complete.

Potential action on the Alderson Bridge Trust was tabled after Copenhaver and City Attorney Grady Ford were unable to meet.

## Public Meetings

### Gbr. Co. Farmland Protection Board

meets on the third Thursday of each month at 10:30 a.m. at 804 Industrial Drive, Suite 5, in Maxwelton. The public is invited to attend. Call 304-520-3221 for more information.

### Rainelle Town Council

meetings are held every second and fourth Monday of each month at 7 p.m. at Rainelle City Hall. The public is invited to attend.

### Greenbrier Co. Health Department

will meet Monday, Dec. 14, at 12 noon at the Health Dept. in Fairlea. On the agenda:

- Staff / Volunteer / Board training

### Historic Landmarks Commission

will meet Monday, Dec. 14, at 5 p.m. via teleconference to hear the following applications. For Information on how to join the Zoom meeting call 304-645-2080 before 4 p.m. on Dec. 14. On the agenda:

- Approval of Minutes - Nov. 9, 2020
- Comments from the public
- **Public Hearing:** Martha Graham, 1923 East Washington Street - replace roof with new architectural shingles in onyx black and install new seamless gutters and repair the fascia to original style
- **Public Hearing:** Montwell Commons, 970-990 Jefferson Street North - install metal entrance sign posts on 219 (Montwell Commons see design page, and wooden posts on Lafayette streets entrances - these posts will be to display signs that will display business names
- **Public Hearing:** Montwell Commons - sign application for Amy's Market to be placed on the front and side of the building and also out on the post at each entrance (see attached designs)
- **Public Hearing:** Ream Interest, 422 Lafayette Street - replace existing windows and paint exterior of house with installation of possible siding
- **Public Hearing:** Robert B. and Julia D. King - 1702 Washington Street East - install small new front porch at front entrance of house, and paint to match the house with SW 7006 Extra White
- **Public Hearing:** Cheryl Dobbs, 186 Lee Street - tear down shed-lean to and construct new 8x12 shed with pad in cedar in its place - existing chicken coop will not be touched
- Comments from the Commission
- Comments from the Zoning Officer

The next scheduled meeting of the Lewisburg Historic Landmarks Commission will be held Monday, Jan. 11, at 5 p.m. with a deadline of Wednesday, Dec. 23.

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# MOUNTAIN STATE SPOTLIGHT

## When a WV county eliminated its needle exchange, experts warned of HIV crisis. Now it's here.

*A grassroots program is responding to Charleston's substance use epidemic, but stigma and an open police investigation are keeping people from getting help.*

**By Lauren Peace  
for Mountain State Spotlight**

*This story was originally published by Mountain State Spotlight. For more stories from Mountain State Spotlight, visit [www.mountainstatespotlight.org](http://www.mountainstatespotlight.org).*

On a Wednesday evening in mid-October, people gathered in a parking lot off of Kanawha Boulevard in Charleston. A man played guitar; a woman talked about the perils of virtual schooling during the pandemic. Blue and green canopy tents covered folding tables that were set up with snacks and bags of fluffy sandwich rolls.

A makeshift wound-treatment center stood under one of the tents. The ground to its right, coated in layers of pastel-colored chalk, read "HIV TESTING" and directed people to a van that served as a temporary medical lab.

It was the atmosphere of a carnival and a refuge wrapped into one; free and welcoming to some of Charleston's most stigmatized people - drug users and those who loved them. But HIV in Kanawha County was spreading at an unprecedented rate, and people were scared.

"I'm sorry, I'm just so nervous," said a woman named Stephanie, standing near the mobile testing clinic. Her eyes scrunched closed as a nurse squeezed a pin-sized drop of blood from her middle finger. She held a cigarette in her other hand, which she drew to her lips and finished off with a long inhale.

"I don't normally like to smoke around other people," she apologized. "But right now, I can't help it. I'm just so nervous. Oh God."

Like most of the people in line, Stephanie - tall, with sandy hair piled high into a messy bun - is an intravenous drug user. She injects. And she asked that her last name not be published for fear of retribution, because in addition to getting tested for HIV, she had come out to the parking lot to pick up a supply of clean, sterile syringes.

For decades, supplying people who inject drugs with clean needles has been proven a necessary practice in preventive medicine. Science has shown that syringe access programs, commonly called needle exchanges, prevent the spread of infectious diseases like Hepatitis C and HIV, can reduce the amount of syringe litter in a community and do not increase drug use. Needs-based programs, or those with low barriers to entry, such as not requiring people to bring a needle back to get another one, have been shown to be the most effective at preventing the spread of disease.

But as the overdose epidemic raged on in Kanawha County and experts warned an HIV outbreak was on the horizon, Stephanie and others like her faced a related crisis: one of logistics. Clean needles were increasingly difficult to come by. People were reusing and sharing out of desperation.

In March 2018, Charleston suspended its health-department run needle exchange. The move left the state capital providing far fewer sterile needles - through a separate program - than much smaller communities across the state according to previously unreported data obtained by Mountain State Spotlight.

Despite being the biggest city in the state, Charleston's program is third from the bottom in terms of syringes distributed per 100,000 residents, according to the data, comparing certified harm reduction programs statewide.

"People can't get needles," Stephanie said as she waited for her test result. "I've watched them dig used ones out of the dirt and inject because they're that desperate. I've seen needles break in people's arms."

By Spring 2020, nonprofit Solutions Oriented Addiction Response, WV - known as SOAR - began holding these biweekly gatherings in order to try and fill that void. Local residents came to these hushed parking lot meet-ups to get access to free, sterile sharps and life-saving medications - as well as food, water, first aid and HIV testing.

Stephanie stood in the lot and finished her second cigarette. Around 25 minutes after she was tested, she was called back to the tent.

"Negative," the nurse told her.

She brought her hand up to her heart and collapsed forward in a deep exhale. Another person wasn't as lucky. They were taken behind a thick, tarp-like curtain. Positive.

Stephanie gathered her things. "Thank you, guys. You guys save us. Every week you save us," she shouted back towards the tents as she took her bag of needles and naloxone and exited the parking lot. "I'll see you all next [time]."

But Stephanie, like 95% of the clients SOAR served, wouldn't be back.

In the following week, after a local TV segment aired on the underground exchange, Charleston Police opened an investigation into the nonprofit on the grounds that it may have violated a city ordinance requiring harm reduction programs be either approved by the police chief or licensed by the state.

In response to questions sent via email, Charleston Mayor Amy Goodwin wrote the decision about whether SOAR should operate in Charleston should be made by public health and medical professionals.

"If they determine the need is there, then [they] should determine the next step forward," wrote Goodwin. "However, any harm reduction program that operates in Charleston must follow the best practices of federal and state health officials."

SOAR maintains that its distribution of syringes did not violate Charleston city law, which does not explicitly forbid the distribution of syringes without consent. There's also no state law that makes distributing syringes illegal. Even so, in response, the organization temporarily suspended its needle exchange.

Again, some of Charleston's most vulnerable have been left without safe injection supplies, and HIV continues to spread.

"Historically, in a year's time in Kanawha, we would have less than five new cases of HIV associated with injected drug use," said Christine Teague, who has served as the director for the HIV Intervention Program at Charleston Area Medical Center since 2001.

This year, Teague says they've identified 32 - more than double the number of HIV cases linked to drug use that were reported in 2019 - with still two weeks to go in the year. And that increase came despite a substantial drop in testing: statewide HIV testing dropped by more than 30% from previous years, largely due to COVID-19.

"If that doesn't open your eyes, I don't know what would," Teague said.

The image attached to addiction is often one of dark, scary outcasts - delinquents who lurk in the shadows and choose lives on the streets.

The fact of the matter is this: many of the people SOAR serves are experiencing homelessness and struggling with substance use disorders. But nobody chooses to live this way.

Some were born into addiction. Many grew up in middle



**Brooke Parker (left) and Rachel Rubin organize inventory at a SOAR gathering in late-November. After they stopped distributing clean needles, the number of people who came dropped by around 95%. (Photo by F. Brian Ferguson)**

class families, were prescribed painkillers after an accident, got hooked and ended up losing their homes. Others hold down jobs, take care of kids, have hobbies, coach soccer, get by undetected and struggle in silence until they enter recovery or die.

"These are people. They're just plain people like you and I and everybody else. And they have this horrible disease. I wouldn't wish it on anybody," said Dr. Josiah Rich, a professor of epidemiology and medicine at Brown University.

"That's why these syringe access programs are so wonderful. Because people show up and instead of being told that they're abusers, that they're weak, that they're noncompliant, they're treated like people. They're shown respect."

That, said Rich, is what gets people into recovery. Syringe access programs - often called harm reduction programs - provide a point of contact, an introduction to resources without fear of beratement, cruelty or stigma. People who have access to them are three times more likely to enter long-term recovery when the time is right, he said.

But not all programs are created equal.

West Virginia has 14 certified harm reduction programs currently operating across the state. Since the end of the health-department run program in 2018, the only certified option in Kanawha County is West Virginia Health Right, which operates out of a clinic in the city's East End.

For the past three years, the program has provided a pass for county officials who, when asked to address the needle shortage in the city, point to Health Right as an example of a harm reduction program already in place.

"There is a place for accountable, well-run, harm reduction programs with wrap-around services," wrote Kanawha-Charleston Health Department Executive Director Dr. Sherri Young, when asked via email whether there was a need for increased harm reduction services in Charleston, including syringe access services.

"West Virginia Health Right's harm reduction program provides syringe access as well as important linkage to PrEP therapy, naloxone training, drug treatment, and health care, including HIV and hepatitis testing, and family planning services," Young wrote.

But experts in epidemiology and the transmission of HIV say West Virginia Health Right's program has requirements in place that contradict best-practices and reduces participation by, for example, requiring identification, marking syringes with serial numbers and implementing a strict one-for-one exchange.

Although half of the certified programs in the state currently

list that they operate as one-for-one exchanges, West Virginia Health Right distributes thousands fewer syringes each year.

"The program in Charleston is unusually high-barrier," said Robin Pollini, a substance abuse and infectious disease epidemiologist at West Virginia University, who has spent the last 20 years studying injection drug use. "I've worked with programs around the country and I've never seen another one like it before."

West Virginia Health Right CEO Angie Settle did not return multiple interview requests made over a three week period, but in response to questions sent via email, she wrote that harm reduction programs in West Virginia face frequent threat of elimination, and that groups that call for unrestricted distribution are endangering other programs in the state.

"We know that an unaccountable syringe distribution model will not gain acceptance in our community or state, whether some like it or not," Settle wrote.

Still, she added, "I'd like to think different treatment models may coexist with community support."

Settle did not answer questions about how her program operates, the number of people it serves, or the low syringe distribution numbers. In a recent Facebook post, however, Settle rejected the criticism that her program has too many restrictions that reduce participation.

But in 2018, she laid out a stricter mindset in an interview with WSAZ. "If you come back without every needle, you will not get any more needles," Settle said. "There are no second chances."

That's in contrast to programs in Morgantown and Huntington, which are also certified by the state but don't include the same stringent requirements.

In Morgantown, the program is entirely needs-based. The program in Cabell County operates on a one-for-one plus model, which "offers flexibility when participants do not have enough - or possibly any - non-sterile syringes to exchange," according to the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources.

And the efficacy of the different approaches is clear in needle distribution data obtained by Mountain State Spotlight.

Although Monongalia County and Cabell County are both significantly smaller than Kanawha County, the program in Morgantown distributed 462,820 sterile syringes since the beginning of the year, while the program in Huntington distributed 320,050.

The program in Charleston distributed just 13,470.

That means in the past year, Charleston's program distributed 2.9% of the safe injection supplies that residents living near Morgantown received.

The different approaches are

also reflected in HIV rates. In Monongalia County, fewer than five cases of HIV linked to injection drug use are reported a year. From 2013 to 2016, there wasn't a single case.

In Cabell County, after a spike in HIV rates in 2018 led to federal intervention and a relaxing of the county's syringe exchange requirements, new HIV cases linked to drug use are declining.

In Charleston, however, HIV rates are rising and needles remain an unrelentingly stigmatized and misunderstood tool. To date, despite decades of academic research, government reports and dozens of articles projecting the very crisis the city's now facing, no consequential government action has been taken to increase accessibility to sterile syringes and protect the community from the spread of HIV. Mountain State Spotlight contacted 21 experts across the country working in fields including epidemiology, public health and specializing in substance use disorder. Not one said the current certified program in Kanawha County is meeting the need for clean syringes.

"Until you can show me that every single person who is at risk and would benefit from a syringe exchange program has access to one, you don't have enough programs," said Rich, the Brown University professor. "If HIV rates are going up like that, whatever program is in place isn't doing the job."

Before SOAR became the largest provider of sterile syringes and safe injection supplies in the county, and later the subject of a Charleston Police investigation, it was just Joe Solomon and his ever-expanding group of friends and acquaintances coming together for food and conversation.

"Pizza and ice cream. That's all it takes," said Solomon, shrugging his shoulders and eyebrows in unison. "The pizza comes out and everybody wants to hang!"

Solomon, who co-founded SOAR with Sarah Stone in 2018 and holds a master's in social work from Marshall University, carries an ever-present air of playful wit. But the thing about the pizza holds some truth. SOAR's guiding philosophy is that if you make resources available to people, they will come. Whether it's pizza or needles, getting people in the same room is always the first step.

What started with community conversations, evolved into naloxone distribution services. And by spring of 2020, SOAR was offering grassroots syringe access services, too. As the Wednesday night clinics evolved, the services expanded.

Local nursing students came out. People from the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy, a nonpartisan policy research organization, helped folks get their stimulus checks. Commu-

See "Spotlight" \_\_\_\_\_ P. 10



**Rainelle Town Council** cont. from Page 3

about the situation. The total cost change to the project was \$18,000, with the town on the hook for a 20 percent price match.

"We've got a lot of problems because of the project - where the street lights go, how they go up, [Americans with Disabilities Act compliance], where our park benches go, it's going to create a lot of problems. It was just things that were thought out. ... We've got problems with ... our brand new walking trail that we can't use."

Bell sought to have "somebody in the future to oversee this project" that will represent the town to "make sure" the project does not encounter further issues. "The engineer is who messed this up, not the contractor. This happened eight years ago."

Councilmember Martha Livesay also noted a lawyer to dispute the 20 percent match would cost more than the match.

In other business:

- The future of storm drainage channels throughout Rainelle is coming along - Thrasher Engineering provided an update to Town Council explaining that not only could the engineering plans be complete around the end of January, but FEMA could be helping the town pay for needed land acquisitions for the project. Bell emphasized the project as "one of the most important projects the town has had in years. It's moving forward." An

invoice to Thrasher was also approved, totaling \$84,180.87.

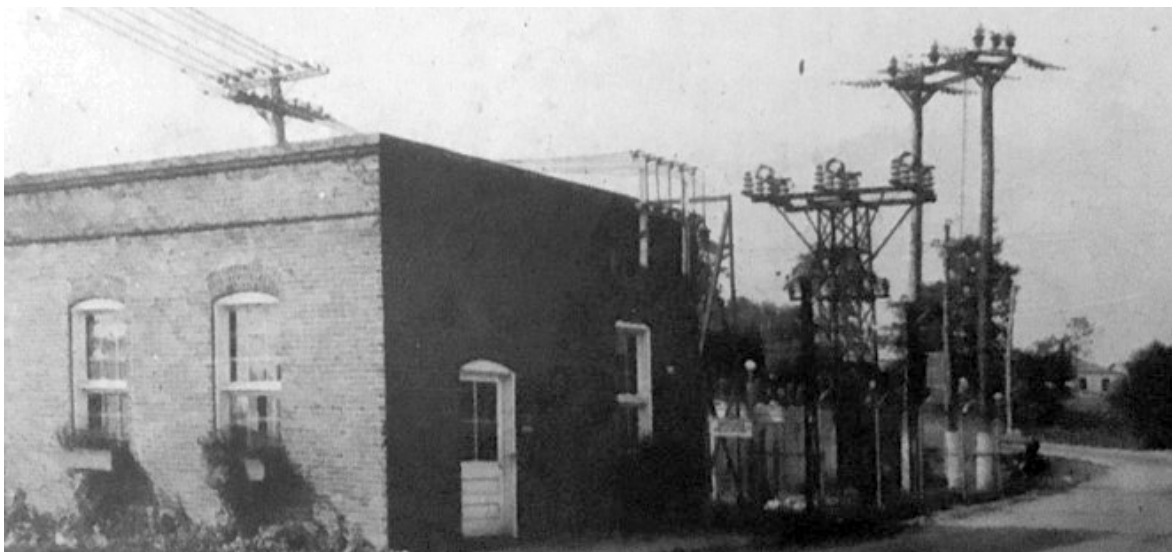
- Newly elected House of Delegates member Todd Lognanacre visited the Town Council, looking to be available to help with projects when the town needs them.

- Councilmember John Wyatt encouraged Rainelle residents to enter the Christmas Decoration contest lasting through Dec. 20. With \$500 to first place, \$200 to second, and \$100 to third, funded by Alfredo's Pizza, Wyatt said the contest looked to make our town look "more cheerful and brighter. It is Christmas Time."

- Providing an update from the Planning Commission, Milam noted a park in honor of Pat Church could be in the works. Property owned by the town, set aside to remember those lost in the 2016 flood, could be complimented by funds found by Church before her passing, could be used for the park. Milam noted he would "like Pat's name put on that park somewhere, as a memorial park for her along with the ... people we lost in the flood."

- In addition, the Planning Commission and Milam have been speaking to land owners and four-wheeling enthusiasts to potentially develop a four-wheeling trial for visitors and residents. He encouraged Town Council to review the town code to allow for the trial, while also properly restricting four-wheelers in town.

# A Look Back



**By William "Skip" Deegans**

Across U.S. 219 from Kroger's parking lot in Fairlea there is a small, obviously old, brick building. If you have ever wondered why it is there, this week's photo from the 1920s may help. In 1892, Ronceverte had what is purported to be the first coal-fired electric generating plant in West Virginia. Located at the lower end of Monroe Avenue, it was the forerunner of Virginia Electric Power Co. (VEPCO). In 1917-1918, the plant erected one of the first reinforced concrete smokestacks in America. The steam turbines generated 17,000 kilowatts. In 1922, larger generators were installed. An additional smokestack was erected that was reported to be the highest in the world. According to the National Park Service, the height of this new smokestack was 382.5 feet. For reference, the West Virginia state capitol - the highest building in the state - stands 292 feet tall.

By 1922, the Ronceverte plant was the largest steam generating plant for the Virginia Western Power Co. that included another steam plant in Clifton Forge, Virginia, and hydro-electric plants in Lexington, Buena Vista, and Balcony Falls, Virginia. Together these plants provided electricity for an area stretching from Hinton, West Virginia, to the eastern shore of Virginia. Through mergers, Virginia Western Power Co., became Virginia Public Service Co. and finally Virginia Electric and Power Co. (now Dominion Virginia Power). The brick building in Fairlea was a substation for the Ronceverte plant and delivered electricity to Fairlea and Lewisburg. The Ronceverte plant closed

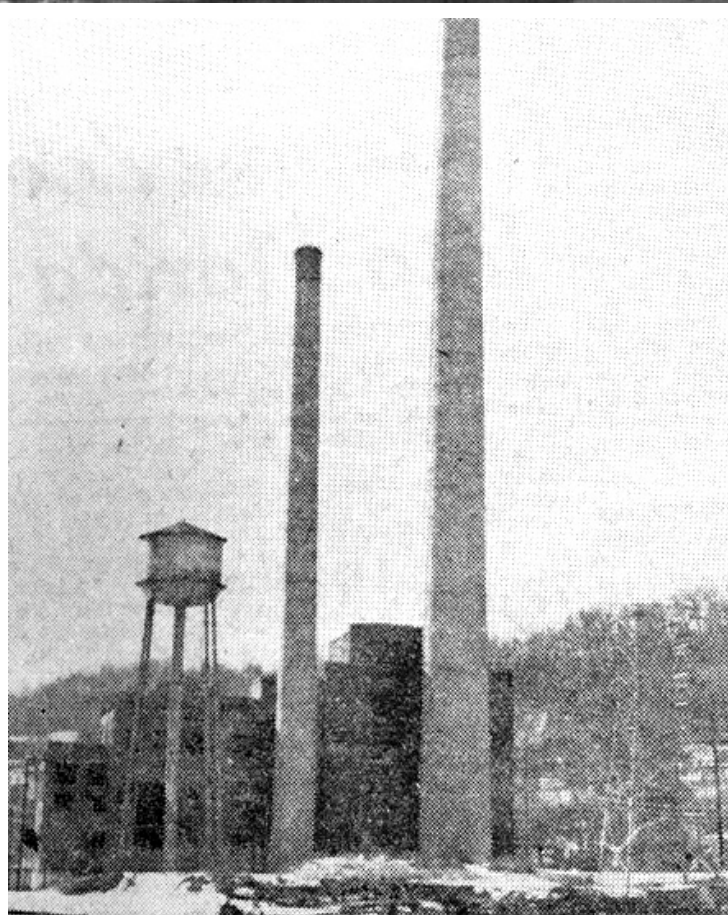


Photo courtesy of Greenbrier Historical Society

in 1951, and the large smokestack was demolished in 1966. Also lost, according to Willard Church of Ronceverte, was a favorite swimming hole where warm water from the steam plant was discharged into the Greenbrier River.

Sources: *Charleston Daily Mail, Mountain Messenger, National Park Service, University of Virginia Journal of Engineering, The Greenbrier Independent.*

# OBITUARIES

**Edward Stephen Hicks**

**Ronceverte**-Edward Stephen Hicks, 76, formerly of White Sulphur Springs passed away Friday, Dec. 11, 2020, at Peyton Hospice House following a courageous battle with cancer.

Steve was born Mar. 26, 1944, in White Sulphur Springs, the son of the late Edward N. and Cora Ethel Dunbar Hicks.

He was a retired investigator with the State of West Virginia, retired Magistrate having served 12 years and a former member of White Sulphur Springs Fire and Rescue Departments. Although he didn't attend church regularly he did enjoy listening to Old Stone Presbyterian Church services on the radio every Sunday.

Other than his parents, Steve was preceded in death by his sister, Vivian Alderman and his brother, Clayton Hicks.

Those left to cherish his memory are his wife, Darlene Snider Hicks; daughter, Stephanie Williams and her husband Todd of Lewisburg; grandchildren, Olivia Plybon and Emily Plybon; and nephews, Bruce Alderman and Clayton Alderman.

Per Steve's request he is to be cremated with no services.

Wallace & Wallace Funeral Home in Ronceverte is in charge of arrangements. Please send online condolences by visiting [www.WallaceandWallaceFH.com](http://www.WallaceandWallaceFH.com)

**Inge Kizer**

**Asbury**-Inge Kizer, 80, of Asbury, passed away Tuesday, Dec. 8, 2020, at her residence of natural causes related to her heart.

Inge was born May 18, 1940, in Simmern/Hunsrück, Germany, a daughter of the late Wilhelm and Karoline Finzel Kastner.

Most of her childhood was spent in the town of Kirchberg, Germany,

where her family was successful cobblers. Their business has survived many generations and exists still today. This led to her 39-year career at Yarid's Department Store in Lewisburg where she loved the many different styles of shoes.

She later attended Grace Bible Church when she was able and loved being around the water and lakes in America. She especially enjoyed spending time at Summersville Lake with her grandchildren.

In addition to her parents she was preceded in death by her husband, John Kizer.

Survivors include two sons, Willie Hoke and James Hoke both of Frankford; three grandchildren, Lina Hoke and Austin Hoke, both of Frankford and Raven Clutter of Dawson. She is survived by a sister, Doris Bechtoldt and husband Ludwig of Kirchberg, Germany.

The family will receive friends from 6 to 8 p.m. Monday, Dec. 21, at Wallace & Wallace Funeral Home in Lewisburg.

Graveside rites will be at 1 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 22, at Asbury Community Cemetery, Asbury.

Covid-19 guidelines will be followed and masks will be required and social distancing is encouraged.

Wallace & Wallace Funeral Home in Lewisburg is in charge of arrangements. Please send online condolences by visiting [www.WallaceandWallaceFH.com](http://www.WallaceandWallaceFH.com)

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## LEGAL

(2019-S-00000114 - Greenbrier County - WV TL LLC TESCO CUSTODIAN)

To: INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE, WV STATE TAX DEPARTMENT THE REVENUE CENTER, WV STATE TAX DEPARTMENT THE REVENUE CENTER, GREENBRIER COUNTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY, GREENBRIER COUNTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY, CITY OF LEWISBURG, ULRICH LENNARTZ, ANJA LENNARTZ, or heirs at law, devisees, creditors, representatives, successors, assigns, all known heirs, guardians, conservators, fiduciaries, administrators, lienholders, co-owners, other parties having an undivided interest in the delinquent property, and other parties that may have any interest in the subject property.

You will take notice that WV TL LLC TESCO CUSTODIAN, the purchaser of the tax lien(s) on the following real estate, Certificate of Sale: 2019-S-00000114, 114 CHESTNUT STREET 6755 SQ FT OR 0.156 AC FROM DAWES, located in LEWISBURG CORP, which was returned delinquent in the name of LENNARTZ ULRICH & ANJA, and for which the tax lien(s) thereon was sold by the sheriff of Greenbrier County at the sale for the delinquent taxes made on the 20th day of November, 2019, has requested that you be notified that a deed for such real estate will be made to him or her on or after April 1, 2021, as provided by law, unless before that day you redeem such real estate. The amount you will have to pay on the last day, March 31, 2021, will be as follows:

Amount equal to the taxes and charges due on the date of the sale, with interest, to March 31, 2021.	\$ 1,056.62
Amount of subsequent years' taxes paid on the property, since the sale, with interest to March 31, 2021.	\$ 1,778.37
Amount paid for the Title Examination and preparation of the list to be served and for preparation and service of notice with interest from January 1, 2020, following the sheriff's sale to March 31, 2021.	\$ 1,112.16
Amount paid for other statutory costs with interest from following the sheriff's sale to March 31, 2021.	\$ 462.16
Total Amount Payable to Sheriff - cashier check, money order or certified check must be made payable to the <b>The Honorable Bruce Sloan, Sheriff and Treasurer of Greenbrier County.</b>	\$ 4,409.15
Cost of Certification of Redemption - cashier check, money order or certified check must be made payable to the <b>The Honorable John B. McCuskey, State Auditor.</b>	\$ 35.00

**You may redeem at any time before March 31, 2021, by paying the above total less any unearned interest.**

**Return this letter and both certified funds to the  
WV State Auditor's Office,  
County Collections Division  
1900 Kanawha Boulevard East, Building 1, Room W-114  
Charleston, West Virginia 25305  
Questions please call 1-888-509-6568 option 2**

## LEGAL

(2019-S-00000117 - Greenbrier County - WV TL LLC TESCO CUSTODIAN)

To: INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE, WV STATE TAX DEPARTMENT THE REVENUE CENTER, WV STATE TAX DEPARTMENT THE REVENUE CENTER, GREENBRIER COUNTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY, GREENBRIER COUNTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY, TOWN OF RAINELLE, OCCUPANT, MICHAEL A. MCCLUNG, CITY NATIONAL BANK SUCCESSOR TO GREENBRIER VALLEY NATIONAL BANK BRACER MULLETT, ESQUIRE, APPALACHIAN POWER COMPANY, CT CORPORATION SYSTEM, RED STAR HARDWARE, WV STATE TAX DEPARTMENT ACCOUNTS MONITORING UNIT THE REVENUE CENTER, WV STATE TAX DEPARTMENT ACCOUNTS MONITORING UNIT THE REVENUE CENTER, GREENBRIER COUNTY PUBLIC SERVICE DISTRICT #2,, or heirs at law, devisees, creditors, representatives, successors, assigns, all known heirs, guardians, conservators, fiduciaries, administrators, lienholders, co-owners, other parties having an undivided interest in the delinquent property, and other parties that may have any interest in the subject property.

You will take notice that WV TL LLC TESCO CUSTODIAN, the purchaser of the tax lien(s) on the following real estate, Certificate of Sale: 2019-S-00000117, LOT 77 RIVERSIDE ADD. MCROSS 168X324X409X110XIRR F, located in MEADOW BLUFF, which was returned delinquent in the name of MCCLUNG MICHAEL A (SURV), and for which the tax lien(s) thereon was sold by the sheriff of Greenbrier County at the sale for the delinquent taxes made on the 20th day of November, 2019, has requested that you be notified that a deed for such real estate will be made to him or her on or after April 1, 2021, as provided by law, unless before that day you redeem such real estate. The amount you will have to pay on the last day, March 31, 2021, will be as follows:

Amount equal to the taxes and charges due on the date of the sale, with interest, to March 31, 2021.	\$ 1,194.22
Amount of subsequent years' taxes paid on the property, since the sale, with interest to March 31, 2021.	\$ 1,028.03
Amount paid for the Title Examination and preparation of the list to be served and for preparation and service of notice with interest from January 1, 2020, following the sheriff's sale to March 31, 2021.	\$ 1,215.90
Amount paid for other statutory costs with interest from following the sheriff's sale to March 31, 2021.	\$ 641.25
Total Amount Payable to Sheriff - cashier check, money order or certified check must be made payable to the <b>The Honorable Bruce Sloan, Sheriff and Treasurer of Greenbrier County.</b>	\$ 4,079.40
Cost of Certification of Redemption - cashier check, money order or certified check must be made payable to the <b>The Honorable John B. McCuskey, State Auditor.</b>	\$ 35.00

**You may redeem at any time before March 31, 2021, by paying the above total less any unearned interest.**

**Return this letter and both certified funds to the  
WV State Auditor's Office,  
County Collections Division  
1900 Kanawha Boulevard East, Building 1, Room W-114  
Charleston, West Virginia 25305  
Questions please call 1-888-509-6568 option 2**

## LEGAL

(2019-S-00000116 - Greenbrier County - WV TL LLC TESCO CUSTODIAN)

To: INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE, WV STATE TAX DEPARTMENT THE REVENUE CENTER, WV STATE TAX DEPARTMENT THE REVENUE CENTER, GREENBRIER COUNTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY, GREENBRIER COUNTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY, TOWN OF QUINWOOD, OCCUPANT, SHERRY GUILLIAMS C/O SHERRI TURNER, APPALACHIAN POWER COMPANY CT CORPORATION SYSTEM, or heirs at law, devisees, creditors, representatives, successors, assigns, all known heirs, guardians, conservators, fiduciaries, administrators, lienholders, co-owners, other parties having an undivided interest in the delinquent property, and other parties that may have any interest in the subject property.

You will take notice that WV TL LLC TESCO CUSTODIAN, the purchaser of the tax lien(s) on the following real estate, Certificate of Sale: 2019-S-00000116, .98A (D) W OF BIG MTN. RD. GUILLIAMS, located in MEADOW BLUFF, which was returned delinquent in the name of GUILLIAMS SHERRY, and for which the tax lien(s) thereon was sold by the sheriff of Greenbrier County at the sale for the delinquent taxes made on the 20th day of November, 2019, has requested that you be notified that a deed for such real estate will be made to him or her on or after April 1, 2021, as provided by law, unless before that day you redeem such real estate. The amount you will have to pay on the last day, March 31, 2021, will be as follows:

Amount equal to the taxes and charges due on the date of the sale, with interest, to March 31, 2021.	\$ 906.52
Amount of subsequent years' taxes paid on the property, since the sale, with interest to March 31, 2021.	\$ 757.43
Amount paid for the Title Examination and preparation of the list to be served and for preparation and service of notice with interest from January 1, 2020, following the sheriff's sale to March 31, 2021.	\$ 1,156.62
Amount paid for other statutory costs with interest from following the sheriff's sale to March 31, 2021.	\$ 470.25
Total Amount Payable to Sheriff - cashier check, money order or certified check must be made payable to the <b>The Honorable Bruce Sloan, Sheriff and Treasurer of Greenbrier County.</b>	\$ 3,290.82
Cost of Certification of Redemption - cashier check, money order or certified check must be made payable to the <b>The Honorable John B. McCuskey, State Auditor.</b>	\$ 35.00

**You may redeem at any time before March 31, 2021, by paying the above total less any unearned interest.**

**Return this letter and both certified funds to the  
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## Upgrade

cont. from Page 1

"This is something we've been pursuing for a little over a year now, attempting to upgrade the dispatch system toward it's better interfaced with our law enforcement agencies," said Honaker. "To put it simply, this would upgrade the 911 center and bring it into the age in which we live now. Part of the program builds out and puts terminals in all of the law enforcement vehicles in the county."

This means that officers will be able to "run drivers licenses checks, criminal histories, see if [someone is] wanted." Honaker also explained it also allows the 911 dispatchers to send a map and directions of where a call is allocated "directly to the terminal for what emergency they're responding to."

"It obviously enhances the response of all public safety departments, that includes fire departments and emergency medical services," Honaker said. "They will all be interfaced to this new 911 center computer aided dispatch system."

Sloan also celebrated the improved capabilities.

"For example, [right now, when] officers pull over a car, the dispatchers may be tied up with two or three other calls, ... they've got people on the phone, and they're trying to run this query for [the officer], it's just a lot going on," Sloan explained. With the new system, "the officer just types it in and runs it, boom, there it is. ... A lot of that is currently being done through dispatch, so [the officers] could do it on their own through their cruiser, which obviously frees up dispatch for other duties as well."

The new system won't be cheap - Honaker explained to the commission that the project has been negotiated over between the county and Motorola for some time.

"Over a year ago, this project had a price tag of half a million dollars," Honaker said. "Over the last year, through meetings and demonstrations, we negotiated this project down to \$384,313. As you can read in the contract, the Greenbrier County 911's share of that cost is \$159,229, [the sheriff department's] share is \$120,817."

Part of the reason for the price is that the system is not a simple install - Motorola workers would have to live and operate in Greenbrier County for weeks during the nearly year-long installation, training, and officer certification process.

"They would actually have to be here for a couple of weeks, come to live here, ... spend a lot of time installing the soft-

ware and equipment," Honaker said. "They would have training sessions with dispatchers, sheriff's deputies, police officers from the municipalities, then it would be tested over time as it's built out ... we would probably go live with this, to flip the switch on this, so to speak, around the first of November. It takes that long."

The system won't be limited to the sheriff's department and 911 Center alone - law enforcement throughout the entire county will be part of the project.

"It involves the Lewisburg Police Department, ... Ronceverte Police Department, White Sulphur Springs Police Department, Alderson Police Department," Honaker explained. "Those jurisdictions also share some of the cost.... The final price is based on the number of sworn employees who will actually be operating mobile data terminals in their vehicles. ... All law enforcement agencies, except Rainelle Police Department, have signed onto this. They've agreed to pay their portion. They're eager to get this done."

The Rainelle Police Department is currently without a chief of police and has a massively diminished staff.

"The only reason the Rainelle department isn't part of this right now is because they don't have a police department," Honaker said. "I had communication with elected officials over there and they want to do it, they just need me to come over there and explain exactly what this system is. ... They are very much interested in this. ... If they don't do this now, they can do it later, but if they do it later, it's going to cost three times as much."

Rainelle Acting Mayor Bill Bell explained that he had not yet been formally in communication with Honaker as of Tuesday, December 15, but that the now-former chief of police, Dean Fankell had. Although the search for a new chief continues for Bell, action could be required sooner - although the town could sign onto the project later, Honaker explained, it would cost closer to \$20,000 rather than the current \$7,000.

Now with the commission's approval, the project is ready to move forward.

"We're so far behind in the county with technology, and this is going to put us up where we need to be," Sloan said. "Officers will be more efficient, more effective, better response times because [the system] provides a map and directions to where officers are going, it's going to be huge."

## Vaccine Doses

cont. from Page 1

expected to come to the state in the next several weeks, not including the potential authorization and distribution of the Moderna vaccine.

"When you look at the tier system, based on risk of exposure to COVID, and then our highest risk population, like our nursing home patients, it's going to take a couple of months between getting the first vaccine and working our way through the staff based on the amount of vaccines that we receive," Morrison said. "Then you have a second vaccine you have to get 21 days later. It's going to take a little bit of time, a month and a half, two months, and that might be a little overreaching."

These first rounds of vaccine won't bring life back to normal, but will go a considerable way to preventing illness or death in those most exposed.

"It's predicted that we're going to have a rough time until April regardless," Morrison said. "The couple of months [figured] for the tiered [vaccination is] not for the general public. It's thought that it will be late spring before it's readily available to anyone that wants it that's not a part of the tiered system. And we're just starting to get hit hard in our communities."

Leadership on the state level was also vaccinated on Monday, Dec. 14, including Justice, WVNG Maj. Gen. James Hoyer, State Coronavirus Czar Dr. Clay Marsh, DHHR Secretary Bill Crouch, State Health Officer Dr. Ayne Amjad.

"This is a historic day in our country," said Justice. "This is an accomplishment that's unbelievable to be able to get out a vaccine, and get it out this quickly, get it through the FDA, with all the fine print approval to be able to start administering these vaccines."

After the Pfizer vaccine received Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) from the FDA on Friday, Dec. 11, the company began to ship doses to states. Over 10,000 doses arrived at two hub locations in West Virginia, including Kanawha and Monongalia counties. Coming in two doses separated by a few weeks, the Pfizer vaccine is the first of hopefully two vaccines approved by the FDA.

"The light at the end of the tunnel is much brighter than it has been in months with the vaccine here," explained Marsh. "It's not about delivering vaccines, it's about vaccinating people. The people of

West Virginia should feel safe that this is effective and a very safe vaccine. It has undergone a very thorough examination by a number of scientific panels, including the FDA, CDC. People should feel comfortable taking the vaccine - it does not cause sterility, it can not cause you to get COVID, no possible way, but it does have an impact; 95 percent of the people who take this vaccine are protected from getting COVID."

In addition, five staff members of the Greenbrier Valley Medical Center (GVMC), were given the first set of doses, according to a social media post by the healthcare center. This included Dr. Zainab Shamma in Pulmonology, Dr. Chris White the ENT, Dr. Pat Ryan the Internal Medicine Hospitalist, Dr. Amy Fought in the Emergency Department, and Dr. Joe Moshy of Urology.

"This week history is being made at GVMC," said GVMC CEO Tim Bess. "Our front-line staff have been working selflessly for many months to treat patients affected by the pandemic. Today we were fortunate to roll out a life-saving vaccine to our employees and medical personnel. Soon our community will have an opportunity to receive this vaccine as we all look forward to getting back to a normal life."

If someone wants to help healthcare providers, what can they do?

"Anybody that's in the healthcare profession, reach out, see if they need anything," Morrison said. "Sometimes we're working double shifts and overtime and you don't even have time to go to the store. A card, thank you for what you do. All of our healthcare providers are working so hard and those are little nice things you can show appreciation, but number one is be safe so we can stop the spread."

And what can individuals do to keep the death and infection rate down in Greenbrier County?

"Prayer," Morrison said. "I don't say that lightly. Continue to buckle down, even if you don't want to. Please be considerate of family and loved ones during Christmas time and continue to wear your masks and be safe until we can develop herd immunity, until we can get a large portion of [people] with the vaccine. It's a dangerous time - we are red and the infection rate is just awful."



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# Spotlight

cont. from Page 6

nity members packed donor-funded supplies. There was a recovery coach present for those who wanted one. Local clinics and a retired doctor offered medical services on the spot.

“We come here and we feel welcomed,” said a woman who goes by TiTi (tee-tee) during a Wednesday earlier this year. “You think I’m going to go to the hospital for help? No ma’am. Not unless I’m bleeding out. There’s so much judgment. But here I can get what I need. We feel good, safe.”

Of course, at the center of it all, were the needles.

The science and research behind needle exchanges and harm reduction isn’t new; public health agencies including the CDC have been advocating for their use since the early 1990s. Research found that providing people who inject drugs with access to clean needles drastically reduced the transmission of infectious disease, like HIV and Hepatitis C. Despite widespread misconception, the programs did not increase the likelihood of drug use.

“Instead of ignoring the fact that risks are going to be taken, let’s acknowledge that they will be, and give people the tools and the information necessary to keep them as safe as possible when engaging in those risky behaviors,” said Julia Marcus, an epidemiologist and professor at Harvard Medical School.

And harm reduction strategies can be used to mitigate other behaviors that are risky to public health, too. Most recently, some experts have said those lessons could be applied to fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

Wear a mask. Stand 6 feet apart. If you’re going to gather, do it outdoors instead of in.

It’s a similar principle applied to syringe access programs. The difference is stigma.

“I mean it’s crazy,” Rich said. “[Substance use disorder] is a disease and yet we treat it like a crime. We treat people with the disease as criminals.”

And this criminalization of addiction is what sowed the seeds for Charleston’s current HIV outbreak.

At its peak in 2018, the Kanawha-Charleston Health Department’s needle exchange program served 483 people in a single day, providing access to testing for Hepatitis C and HIV, emergency contraceptives and referrals to recovery services and primary health care. Of the almost 25,000 unique individuals who used services at least once over the course of its brief tenure, nearly 2,000 said they lived within the City of Charleston.

If that data is accurate, then approximately 4% of the city’s residents used the syringe services program at least once during the two years it operated.

But in his fourth and final term in office, amidst a contentious election for his replacement, then-Charleston Mayor Danny Jones thrust the program into the spotlight, calling it a “needle mill” and pushing for its elimination.

Despite the warnings of experts, the Kanawha-Charleston Health Department suspended the program in March 2018. In May of that year, the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources released a report on the health department-run program, largely critiquing

it for not placing a greater emphasis on getting people into treatment. But experts from around the country condemned that report for failing to understand the science behind needle exchanges and a harm reduction approach.

The result was a drought of sterile injection supplies.

That’s when SOAR stepped in. “The idea was never to disparage anyone else working in harm reduction in the county,” said SOAR leader Brooke Parker. “It’s just we see a huge gap. And we’re doing our best to fill it. And it feels good to be a part of our community.”

Parker, petite, with blonde choppy hair, is originally from the Eastern Panhandle. She got involved with HIV prevention work as a teenager in Martinsburg, and since moving to Charleston in 2019, she’s been a driving force behind SOAR’s street outreach.

As time went on and the program grew, volunteers from other counties and states were coming to Charleston to take notes, in hope of adapting a grassroots model to take back to their own communities or share their knowledge.

“I don’t think any of us ever saw this getting as big as it did,” Parker said.

In August, Christine Teague and her team from Charleston Area Medical Center started coming out with SOAR. The partnership expanded the ability and effectiveness of HIV testing and prevention in Kanawha County by taking it directly to a population at highest risk.

Teague says in the three months they went out with the group, her team tested 91 individuals they hadn’t seen before. Eight were positive for HIV.

“It’s a staggering percentage,” she said. “People I’m talking to all say, well, there’s a lot more where that came from because we’re all together and we’re all sharing needles, so I’m concerned there are more that we just haven’t accessed yet.”

By mid-November, the SOAR Wednesday gatherings were nearly unrecognizable.

In the days, now weeks, following the TV reports, the launching of the police investigation, and the suspension of SOAR’s syringe access services, there had been city council meetings and angry Facebook posts. Threats made by strangers and fear about what the future might hold.

“I’m a social worker,” Parker said. “I’ve heard a lot of crazy shit, but nothing has felt like this before. It’s intense.”

In the time since SOAR stopped its syringe services, Parker has lost a lot of sleep. She can’t stop worrying about the clients, the people she’s cared for and developed relationships with. For Parker, this work is personal: she’s in long-term recovery, too.

It started with alcohol when she was a college student at Shepherd University. That led to pills and opioid use. She lost weight and friends and jobs. At the height of her battle, she was 85 pounds and really sick.

“I had a family to come home to, you know, and I had a family that loved me through it,” Parker said.

It’s something her dad always says: we love people through things.

By the time she moved to Charleston, Parker had been in recovery for more than a decade. Now, she has rock-climb-

er arms. She runs ultra-marathons. Still, it wasn’t until a SOAR community meeting, back when she first met Joe Solomon, that she felt comfortable opening up publicly.

“I remember walking into this space, and it was the first time I had ever seen so many people stand up and introduce themselves and say, you know ‘I have two years in recovery,’” Parker said. “I’ve been sober since 2007, and I had never publicly identified as a person in long-term recovery until I moved here, largely because of stigma.”

Back in the parking lot, no more than 10 people made their way in and out over the course of the hour, leaving the typical tailgate-like energy a memory of Wednesdays past.

Of the few who did come through, most were looking for sharps.

“Sorry, man. Not this week,” Solomon said to a guy with a green backpack. “But we have flu shots?”

The mood was grim. The sky had gotten the memo. It was dark out - pitch-black - and pouring down rain.

The volunteers huddled under a tent. Time passed. Nobody came.

“We’ve lost like 90% of our people since we stopped giving out sharps,” Solomon said. He talked with his hands, which were concealed inside his raincoat - it was just two yellow sleeves waving in the air. “I mean this is what happens. You take away the sharps and now you can’t move naloxone. Or get people in front of a doctor. And there’s a fear that the cops are going to be hanging around, too.”

From the beginning, a major part of SOAR’s efforts has been its naloxone distribution and training, and data collection on overdose reversals or “saves”. On the last night they went out, before syringe distribution was suspended, they passed their 500th save. That’s more than 500 overdose reversals with naloxone distributed by SOAR since April.

The rain continued. The wind whistled. Eventually, two more people rolled in.

A thin man named Chris, who had come out in previous weeks, was looking for clean syringes. A woman named Krista came with him to get naloxone and snacks. She stood in the corner of the parking lot, smoking, while Chris and Solomon talked.

“I don’t use needles. I do use drugs, but I don’t use needles, thank God. But I know a lot of people that do and I’ve seen a lot of people [die] because of it,” Krista said. Rain droplets were rolling off of her black leather jacket, her thin-framed glasses fogged as she spoke. “I figured if I could help I would, so I’m here to support [Chris] and to get some of the Narcan.”

Chris walked across the lot. His hoodie was tied so tightly around his face, you could barely see his hazel-colored eyes. He was shaking.

“Corridor G Walmart, that’s the only one that sells needles and you don’t have to have a prescription,” he said to Krista, wringing his hands as he talked. “But I

don’t have a ride, or the money, or the ID.

“All the city is doing is setting us up for failure. That’s all they’re doing,” Chris continued. “I watched somebody pick up out of a sharps container the other day. Get in there and find them one that would work. I just shook my head. I’m not going there... but I’m to the point to where that’s my only option.”

And that, said Teague, is why HIV is spreading.

“We need to have continued conversations about how we move forward with harm reduction,” said Teague, referring to syringe access programs. “That’s such a politically toxic issue, but we’ve got to talk about it: how can we do it and do it in a way that’s evidence-based and as palatable as possible for all.”

While SOAR waits for the police investigation to move forward, and to hear from the city - the group says it has reached out to the Mayor’s Office but hasn’t heard back - Parker, Solomon and others are planning their next steps. The nonprofit has submitted a request to become a certified harm reduction program in West Virginia and applied for grant money to help fund continued work.

Sitting at a table within reach of the capitol complex on a cold Tuesday night in late-November, Parker sipped at a mug of steaming chai. The sun had set and the air was still.

“This just feels like a really big moment for our state,” Parker said, clinging to the cup of tea. “Eyes are always on Charleston, and not just in the state, but nationally when it comes to drugs and addiction. Like we’re ground zero. And this could put us on the board for doing something right.”

Last legislative session, a bill was introduced that, if passed, would have banned the distribution of needles in West Virginia. The bill failed, but many expect it will be reintroduced this year.

Although the fate of syringe access in Charleston and across the state is currently up in the air, Parker said long-term, services aren’t going anywhere.

She leaned back in her chair.

“I think there’s a part of me that understands, when I sit and talk with someone, why they want people who use drugs to leave,” Parker said. “But the reality is that this population isn’t going anywhere. This problem isn’t going anywhere. And by ignoring it, we’re just making it worse.”

SOAR anticipates it will receive word on its certification status from the state sometime this month. Until then, the group said they will continue to go out. They’re making plans to return full syringe services to the people who rely on them as soon as possible.

“Doing nothing is unconscionable,” Parker said. “As hard as this work is, I see so much potential for good. This is a conversation about better policy and legislation that’s driven by people’s needs - not, you know, whatever it’s driven by now.”

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- Grassroots Church • Greenbrier Bowling & Rec. Center • Greenbrier Recycling Center
- Greenbrier Valley Brewing Company • Greenbrier Chevrolet Buick
- Greenbrier Chiropractic Center-Dr. Timothy Pence • Greenbrier Medical Arts Pharmacy
- Greenbrier Valley Medical Center • Greenbrier Valley Theatre
- Greenbrier Valley Veterinary Hospital • The Heart Center-Thomas W. vonDohlen, M.D.
- Knight Henderson-American National Insurance
- Lawrence J. Ickes, CPA, A.C. • Lewisburg United Methodist Church
- Lewisburg Veterinary Hospital, Inc.-Dr. Mary Ann Mann
- Mary Kay Cosmetics-Erica Buzzard • Mountain Messenger
- Olive + Shea Natural Nail Studio • Post Net • Premier Bank • Robert C. Byrd Clinic
- Sandy Epling-State Farm Insurance • Seneca Trail Animal Hospital
- Shuck Memorial Baptist Church • S.J. Neathawk Lumber •
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# Dear Recycle Lady,

**Dear Recycle Lady,**

With Christmas rapidly approaching my mailbox is full of requests for charitable donations. Many of the organizations include a pink, yellow, or blue return envelope. Are these envelopes recycled as magazines or office paper?

*Can't Contribute to All of Them*

**Dear Can't Contribute to All of Them,**  
Most colored envelopes will be recycled with magazines. To be sure, look inside the envelope. If the inside of the envelope is the same color as the outside, the envelope will recycle with magazines. If the inside of the envelope is white, the envelope will recycle with office paper. As with all colored paper, you can determine which way to recycle the paper by making a small tear. If the torn strip shows that the paper is colored throughout, the paper recycles with magazines. If the tear reveals white paper inside, it recycles with office paper.

**Dear Recycle Lady,**

I love to reuse empty peanut butter jars by using them to hold food gifts, such as cookies and candy. When filled with treats, the smaller jars can also be used for stocking stuffers. The jars that I use have a festive red lid, so Christmas and Valentine's Day are good times to use these jars. But anytime is a good time to reuse. When someone gives me a food gift in a nice container, I put some of my home baked food treats in the container and return it to the giver. Another way I reuse empty jars is to store my family's reusable cloth masks after they are clean and dry. This way I can quickly tell which masks are clean. Happy Holidays, Recycle Lady and Everyone.

*Safe Santa*

**Dear Safe Santa,**

Thanks for the excellent suggestions. Recycling, reusing, reducing and repurposing items helps saves our environment and reduces waste. They will all help reduce the amount of waste sent to the Greenbrier County Landfill. Last month, 3,455 tons (1,880,000 pounds) of trash were brought to the landfill. During this same time period, 92 tons (144,000 pounds) of recycled items were shipped out by the Recycling Center. Although 92

tons sounds like a lot of recycling, it is less than 3% of the total amount of trash generated. (Recycled items would go to the trash if recycling were not available.) My new Year's challenge to all of you is to find one new way to recycle, reduce, repurpose or reuse items in the coming year. I would love to hear your ideas. Please send them to me and I will pass them on. Let's raise the county recycled percentage to at least 10%! If everyone makes even a small change the accumulative effect will be large.

**Dear Recycle Lady,**

What products are made from recyclables? Is there really any value in recycling?

*Need Some Proof*

**Dear Need Some Proof,**

In researching the net, I found many organizations and businesses that are now making products out of recyclables. For example, activewear, swimwear, backpacks, building materials and outdoor furniture are all made from recycled plastic water bottles, as are rugs and mats of all kinds. Allbirds Shoes makes shoes from recycled plastic bottles, sustainable wool, and cardboard - one recycled plastic bottle equals one pair of shoelaces! Yoga mats are made from recycled wet-suits and eco-friendly blankets are made in Tasmania from 70% recycled Australian merino wool and 30% recycled alpaca and mohair. The tower game, Jenga, is made from 100% recycled fishing nets and sustainable hosiery and is made in Sweden from fishing nets abandoned, lost or discarded at sea, also called ghost nets. Here's some good news. Western Australia has just announced it will ban plastic plates, cutlery, stirrers, polystyrene food containers, and thick plastic bags by 2023. Produce bags, microbeads and cotton buds (Q-tips) will be phased out by 2026. Well done Western Australia!

Have questions about recycling, or interesting information about recycling? Send questions or requests to recyclelady@greenbrier-swa.com. Dear Recycle Lady is sponsored jointly by the Greenbrier Recycling Center and Greenworks Recycling.

## Dutch Haus Restaurant

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**WEEKEND SLOW ROASTED PORK LOIN SPECIAL**

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Served with salad, vegetable, potato and bread..

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**SCRAMBLERS**

Unscramble the letters within each rectangle to form four ordinary words. Then rearrange the boxed letters to form the mystery word, which will complete the gag.

Bent WEAKS

Pop TRUBS

Defied DELISH

Bottom NDURE

TODAY'S WORD

"I can't cook, but my husband says I'm the best little \_\_\_\_\_ in the world."

## Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

		7		6			8	1
5			4				3	
	1				5		4	
	2			8		4		
	7	9			3			6
4			5					9
2					4	7		
		1		9	7		3	
3			8					6

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

**DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK:** ◆◆◆

◆ Moderate    ◆◆ Challenging  
◆◆◆ HOO BOY!

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## Super Crossword

**ACROSS**

1 Dreamworld

9 Pa

12 Incline

16 Big — whale

19 Person copying another

20 Straight-ahead view

22 Dandy sort

23 "That raving guy is lying!" [1958, 1999, 1983]

25 Regret a lot

26 Mythical ship

27 Plane-related

28 Compass dir.

29 Growing field

30 Franklin brought a certain continent's nations back together? [1972, 1979, 1983]

36 Very reactive element

40 Actor Ely

41 Inflexible

42 Assist an unwise fugitive? [1965, 2002, 1961]

49 Like cold fish

50 Muscular jerk

51 Organic compound

52 Castle encirclers

56 Join others in the attack

59 Poetic foot

61 — long way

62 Effortless progress with zero snags? [2017, 1999, 1980]

69 Certain scroll key on PC

70 — Dhabi (emirate)

71 Mr. — ("Fantasy Island" host)

72 Kings and queens hold agave liquor dear? [2013, 1966, 1958]

79 High peak

80 Reversed sort

81 Directs

82 Cantata kin

85 Dirt clump

87 Ph.D. or MBA

88 Allergic reaction?

93 City's main business section during a tornado? [1982, 1967, 1965]

98 The Everly Brothers' "Clown"

101 Bovine cry

102 Old Fords

103 Rigg made Rooney go "Wow!"? [1957, 2000, 1982]

110 Many a seized car

111 Honest prez

112 Reversed sort

113 Messy stack

117 Bitter brew

118 This puzzle's long answers each consist of three of these

124 Actor Gulager

125 Extolling

126 Analgesics

127 "Keystone" lawman

128 Move upward

129 Heckling cry

130 Fresh beginning

**DOWN**

1 Mother of Helen of Troy

2 Love deity

3 Chest organ

4 Choir voice

5 Test facility

6 Gobbled up

7 Actor Lloyd

8 Less sweet, as wine

9 Gobbles up

10 In-favor vote

11 JFK, e.g.

12 High-strung

13 Vine-covered

14 Grassy area

15 Mom's skill, in brief

16 Fright-filled

17 Wellspring

18 Epithet for Tarzan

21 Most recent

24 Before

29 Sorbet alternative, for short

30 Shine up

31 Broody rock genre

32 Japanese dance-drama

33 Concerning

34 "So cute!"

35 Beer bubbles

36 "— ching!"

37 Slim fish

38 — Blo fuse

39 NYSE debut

43 Of ears

44 Jaunty tune

45 Frosts

46 Modular part

47 Ark-itect?

48 Charity

53 Katy Perry's "I Kissed —"

54 Toy truck maker

55 Wise guy

56 Cola biggie

57 Actor Epps of "Shooter"

58 "Ora pro —" ("Pray for us")

60 Root beer brand

62 Filmmaker Pier — Pasolini

63 Nile's home

64 Stephen of "Ondine"

65 Suffix with play or faith

66 Kick out

67 Debt slip

68 Chou En- —

69 Soho stroller

73 Roman 350

74 Consecrated

75 Sufficient, in poetry

76 Lamarr of "Comrade X"

77 Ticked (off)

78 Accordingly

83 Prefix with botany or biology

84 "— Little Tenderness"

86 Lightest coin

88 Actor Griffith

89 Dol. parts

90 Farming tool

91 Barn percher

92 Slip- (mules, e.g.)

94 D.C.'s land

95 Silent "OK"

96 Santo —

97 Diminutive

98 Audiophile's storage item

99 Danny of "Ruby"

100 Wrap, as a weak wrist

104 Papas'

105 Activist Hoffman

106 Final letters

107 Chemical suffix

108 "Over There" composer

109 Kevin of "Silverado"

113 Pilcher — Wilhelm

114 Central Sicilian city

115 Golden — (senior)

116 "Hey ... over this way!"

118 "Car Talk" network

119 "Mystifier" Geller

120 Chest bone

121 Artist Yoko

122 Job for AAA

123 1960s univ. radicals

**POP TRIOS**

**HOCUS-FOCUS** BY HENRY BOLTINOFF

Find at least six differences in details between panels.

Differences: 1. Mom's hair is different. 2. Doll on left has been moved. 3. "Sale" sign is added. 4. Girl's skirt has ruffles. 5. Doll is different. 6. Girl has hair bow.

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**PUZZLE ANSWERS PAGE 7**



# THE GETTIN' PLACE



## OPEN FOR HOLIDAY SHOPPING

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## WVSO announces ZMM's Holiday Brass with the WV Symphony

The West Virginia Symphony Orchestra (WVSO) is excited to announce a holiday concert featuring brass set to be televised on Tuesday, Dec. 22 at 9 p.m., with online stream available as well.

Thanks to a partnership with WV Public Broadcasting, the WVSO will present ZMM's Holiday Brass with the WV Symphony on WV Public Television on Tuesday, Dec. 22 at 9 p.m. An online stream is also available on [wvsymphony.org](http://wvsymphony.org) as of Wednesday, Dec. 16.

"We are so excited to be able to continue to bring musical programs to our WVSO patrons throughout the state," said Music Director Larry Loh. "During these uncertain times, we must rely on technology to help us to continue to share the gift of music, and we are thankful for our friends at WV Public Broadcasting for helping to make this a reality once more."



President of the WVSO, Joe Tackett had this to say; "We are excited to be sharing music with our community. We

are so glad Santa could join us during this busy time in his schedule!"

The concert features a brass quintet

and horn quartet performing holiday classics such as Joy to the World, Let It Snow, It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year, and many others.

The concert is made possible through the generous support of ZMM Architects and Engineers, Steptoe & Johnson, PLLC, and Morgan Stanley. The WVSO thanks its loyal patrons for their continued support and engagement during this time.

The West Virginia Symphony Orchestra is West Virginia's premier performing arts organization, presenting classical, pops, and chamber-music concerts annually throughout the Mountain State. Currently entering its 82nd season, the WVSO is a proud member of the community and enriches the region by providing affordable, high-quality concerts, collaborations with West Virginia arts organizations and a nationally award-winning education program.

## Virginia couple to receive 800 Christmas Gifts for Kids from Greenbrier Resort

Delores and Ralph Rhyne, founders of God's Final Call and Warning Ministries of Chatham, Virginia headed to the fabulous Greenbrier Resort on Tuesday to pick up 800 wrapped toys for kids impacted by pandemic. These gifts will be distributed between Clarksville, Danville, and South Boston, VA.

In early November, the Rhyne's went to West Virginia to volunteer to wrap gifts for eight hours. As a result of their volunteerism, the Greenbrier awarded them these quality presents that will be given to kids impacted by the pandemic.

The ministry is calling on the public to support its efforts with tax deductible donations. They are in desperate need of larger storage space, a forklift and larger truck for transporting food. For further information visit their website at [www.godsfinalcallandwarning.com](http://www.godsfinalcallandwarning.com)

## Carnegie Hall hosts free virtual readings of Beatrix Potter's The Tailor of Gloucester

Carnegie Hall is hosting Linda Zimmer, a volunteer reader for The Beatrix Potter Society of North America, for a free virtual reading of The Tailor of Gloucester at 4 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 19. Participants can register for either event at [carnegiehallwv.org](http://carnegiehallwv.org). A Hall staff member will send a link to join the online reading.

Beatrix Potter wrote and illustrated beloved children's books, including The Tale of Peter Rabbit and The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck. The Tailor of Gloucester is a holiday story first published in 1901 that Potter claimed was her favorite of her

many books. The story is about a tailor whose work on a waistcoat is completed by grateful mice he rescued from his cat. Zimmer calls the book "a lovely holiday story."

Zimmer is a writer, puppeteer, and teaching artist. She lives on an organic blueberry and maple syrup farm in the central mountains of West Virginia where she creates marionettes in her puppet studio while wrangling cats and poodles. Her memoir, Playing with Memory, Lighting Up Dementia Care with Music, Nature, and a Very Special Poodle, was released on audible.

com in November. Zimmer has appeared as Beatrix Potter in "Puppet Tales from Beatrix Potter." She is delighted to be a volunteer reader for The Beatrix Potter Society of North America. She has read Beatrix Potter in venues ranging from a library and a bookshop to a tearoom.

Carnegie Hall is a nonprofit organization supported by individual contributions, grants, and fundraising efforts such as TOOT and its annual gala. The Hall is located at 611 Church Street, Lewisburg, WV. For more information, please visit [www.carnegiehallwv.org](http://www.carnegiehallwv.org).

## WVSOM students, employees provide holiday gifts to children in need

The COVID-19 pandemic may have prevented the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine (WVSOM) from hosting a non-campus celebration as part of its annual Heart of the Holidays event, but the school still found a way to help local children have a joyful and gift-filled holiday season.

Students in the WVSOM chapter of the national osteopathic service fraternity Sigma Sigma Phi placed two "angel

trees" on campus, each adorned with wish lists of foster children in Greenbrier County. Members of the WVSOM community were invited to select a child and purchase gifts for them.

Through this year's version of Heart of the Holidays, WVSOM students were able to provide more than 130 gifts to 28 local families, including 50 foster children and 30 biological children. Diapers for young foster children were also collected as part of the event.

WVSOM students and staff members presented the gifts to representatives of the Lewisburg branch of the Children's Home Society of West Virginia on Dec. 8. Additionally, the school provided 100 meals to the Family Refuge Center, a community-based domestic violence center serving West Virginia's Greenbrier, Monroe, and Pocahontas counties, on Dec. 14.

Mark Haft, president of the school's Sigma Sigma Phi chapter, said students at WVSOM appreciate the chance to serve the community in which they live.

"The town of Lewisburg does so much for WVSOM, and, as medical students, we believe it's important to give back to the community when possible," Haft said. "Through the generosity of WVSOM staff and students, we were able to brighten the holidays for these deserving kids and their families. Sigma Sigma Phi was excited to be able to carry on this wonderful tradition during a time when safety guidelines have



forced us all to change the way we conduct our lives."

In past years, Heart of the Holidays brought area foster children and their families to the WVSOM campus for a day of holiday festivities, including a meal and activities such as face painting, a cookie-decorating table and a visit from Santa Claus.

Belinda Evans, WVSOM's director of student life, said that despite the absence of those activities, she was

pleased that the school was able to give back to the community even during a public health crisis.

"Thanks to our compassionate students and employees, Heart of the Holidays was not a casualty of COVID-19 as many other events were," Evans said. "We weren't able to provide families hot meals, but we were able to give gifts to all the children. We hope we are able to host this event on campus next year."

## LAST CHANCE TO VISIT CHRISTMAS AT THE FAIR

There are only a few more days to enjoy the State Fair of West Virginia's Christmas at the Fair as it is set to end on Dec. 27 and will be closed on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. The drive-thru light show will be open this Thursday, Dec. 17 through Sunday, Dec. 20, and will return on Dec. 26 and 27 from 6 to 9 p.m.

"We have been absolutely blown away by the support we've received for Christmas at the Fair," State Fair CEO Kelly Collins stated. "We started this event to provide a little joy for the community, and now it's looking to become an annual event that we cannot wait to grow even bigger."

Christmas at the Fair is a safe, family-friendly drive-thru light display synchronized to music on your radio. Patrons are asked to enter the State Fairgrounds at the Livestock Gate on 219 north. This event is open to the public for donations only!

The State Fair of West Virginia, with a \$13.8 million statewide economic impact, is a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation committed to the traditions of agriculture, family entertainment, and education. The 96th annual State Fair of West Virginia is a 10-day event scheduled for Aug. 12-21, 2021. For more information, please visit [www.statefairfwp.com](http://www.statefairfwp.com).

MERRY

# Christmas







# MERRY CHRISTMAS

**HAPPY NEW YEAR**



*Merry Christmas!*  
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*Happy Holidays*  
*From The Staff Of*  
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*Merry Christmas & Many Happy Returns!*

*Wishing you a holiday season rich in joy, friendship, peace and prosperity.*

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*Happy Holidays!*

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*Hope Your Christmas Is the Height of Happiness*

We're grateful to have such an uplifting group of friends and customers by our side at the holidays and all year. Thank you for making our progress possible!

**Merry Christmas & Happy New Year**  
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*From Our Home To Yours Sending You Wishes For A Happy Holiday*

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*Wishing You A Happy & Healthy Holiday Season! From All Of Us At*

As another Christmas draws near, we'd like to thank all of our dear patients for choosing us.

Your support and trust in us are gifts we treasure.

We hope this holiday season fills your heart with happiness. Merry Christmas!

**MHC Monroe Health Center**  
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 Union, WV 24983  
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*Coming Your Way: Our Best Wishes!*

**Hope this holiday season delivers a rush of happiness!** May it find you surrounded by love, friendship, goodwill and good times.

Thank you for making our year run so smoothly. **We wouldn't be here without good friends and customers like all of you.**

**Greenbrier Motor Company**  
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 Lewisburg, WV  
 304.645.1010  
[www.greenbriermotors.com](http://www.greenbriermotors.com)

*Happy Holidays*

May the spirit of Christmas reside in your heart wherever you spend the holiday season.

For the time you've spent with us this year, we are sincerely grateful.

**Lewisburg Manor Apartments**  
 344 Court Street, Lewisburg, WV 24901



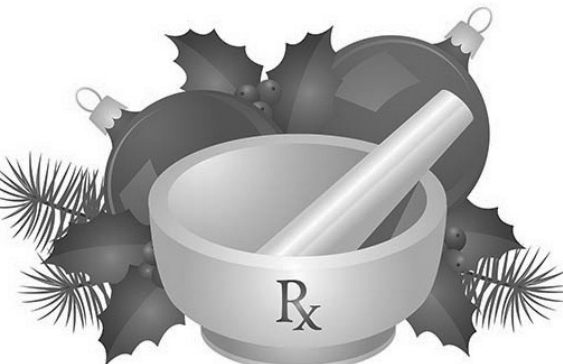
# Thanks for Your Business & Merry Christmas!



It's hardworking customers like you who make our progress possible, and we thank you for choosing us! At the holidays and all year, we wish you much success and happiness.

A very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!  
From everyone here at...

**COMPTON**  
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www.comptonoffice.com



## Filled With Our Gratitude


We're hoping your holiday season is an equal mix of harmony and joy. For your goodwill and trust, please accept a generous measure of our sincere gratitude.

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## With Thanks For Your Friendship!



And warm wishes to our many best friends at this joyous time of year. Have a happy holiday!



# LEWISBURG VETERINARY HOSPITAL

30790 Midland Trail East, (US Rt. 60 West) Lewisburg, WV 24901  
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Mary Ann Mann DVM,MS

## Wishing You Good Fortune



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Happy Holidays to all of our customers, friends and neighbors here!




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## With Glad Tidings At The Holidays

With warm wishes to our neighbors, friends and associates this holiday season. For your trust and goodwill we are sincerely grateful.



# Pritt Law Firm, PLLC

246 Main Street, Union, WV 24983  
304-772-4700  
www.prittlawfirm.com

# Merry Christmas

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Candy canes and boughs of holly,  
Festive scenes that make us jolly.  
The Christmas season is finally here,  
Bringing with it joy and cheer;  
And on that note, the time is due,  
to share best wishes with all of you.  
**May Your Season Be Blessed and Happy!**


*Merry Christmas from*  
**Quick Essentials MINI STORAGE**  
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# We wanted to wish you a Happy Holiday Season





**Robert C. Byrd Clinic**  
Quality Healthcare... Close to Home  
304-645-3220

## Wishing You a Storybook Christmas



Before we start the next chapter with a new year, we'd like to express our sincere thanks to our wonderful customers for your loyal support. Merry Christmas and best wishes to all of you!



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12 Noon-4 Sunday  
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## Wishing You All the Ingredients of a Merry Christmas!

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for your patronage. At the holidays and all year, it's a pleasure serving folks like you!

*From All of US!*



# CORNERSTONE

**HOMETOWN PROUD.**

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# GREETINGS of the Season



With a song in our hearts, we thank you for a wonderful year and wish you a blessed holiday. May the season deliver all the joys, large and small, that make life so special.

Customers like you bring us joy all year, and we truly appreciate your friendship and support. Merry Christmas and best wishes from our entire team!

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# Christmas has a different meaning to everyone,

and that meaning can change from year to year, depending on what fate has brought your way. For some, it has been a year of prosperity... for others, it has been a year of loss. Fortunately, time has a way of healing, and letting us go forward—to celebrate again. Whatever the year has brought your way, we want you to know our family's thoughts are with you.




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J.L. "Rusty" Arnold, Owner Licensee in Charge  
William L. Wallace, Owner



# Happy Holidays



Wishing you as much joy as you've brought to us all year!  
**Thanks for your visits. We look forward to serving you again soon.**



## FROM OUR FAMILY TO YOURS, HAPPY HOLIDAYS



The **American Beer COMPANY**  
**THE RUNYON FAMILY**

*Budweiser* | **ENJOY RESPONSIBLY. DRINK WISER.**

## Behold the Miracle

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*  
 Isaiah 9:6



May the miracle of His birth fill your heart with light at Christmastime and all year. Rejoice!

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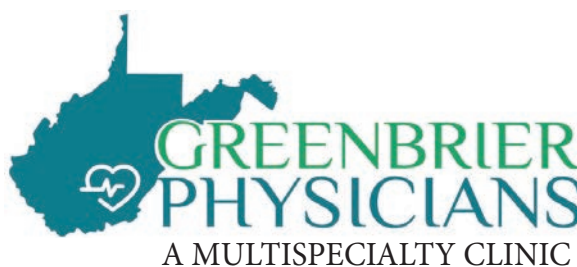
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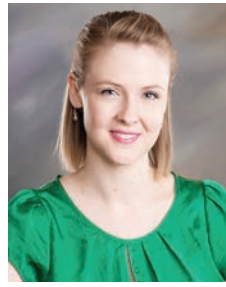
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# merry christmas



*Merry Christmas!*



*Resounding thanks to everyone who helped make our year so special!*

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*Merry Christmas*  
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*Merry Christmas!*

*Our sincere thanks for your goodwill and loyalty throughout this past year!*

*For Unto Us A Child Is Born,  
And To Us A Son Is Given,  
Which Is Jesus Christ The Lord*



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