

Mountain messenger

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The Weekend Newspaper for the Greenbrier Valley - Lewisburg, West Virginia

Greenbrier Valley businesses win in WV Living 'Best Of' competition

By Bobby Bordelon

Assorted businesses throughout the Greenbrier Valley have taken home top placements in the annual West Virginia Living Magazine contest. This statewide competition lets people compare and contrast businesses in order to ask the annual question - which ones are the best?

"We're so excited, ... it's amazing, it goes to show just how truly blessed we are here in this area to have so many great attractions and dining and places to shop and our towns in general," said Greenbrier County Convention and Visitor's Bureau Executive Director Kara Dense.

But what is the competition? The Best of West Virginia contest is put on by West Virginia Living Magazine, and allows voters to determine which businesses offer the best experiences.

"Looking for the best wings in the state? How about the best place for a family vacation, or the state's best ski resort? We have those answers and more in this year's Best of West Virginia," wrote West Virginia Living. "Each year our readers cast ballots and this year they cast more than ever before. Nearly 200,000 votes rolled in between September 21 and October 11, 2020 selecting the very best in more than 70 categories."

Around October, local businesses

and organizations were nominated to various prize categories, such as the Best Bookstore and Best Women's Apparel. The wins highlight not only what draws people to the area, but what keeps many here.

"To me, that's just the true testament of how awesome our destination is, not just as a tourism destination but as a wonderful place to live. All of these things really improve our quality of life, to be able to have all of these wonderful things in our backyard for those of us who are lucky enough to live here."

The Greenbrier Valley winners include:

- General Lewis Inn - Best Bed and Breakfast/Inn - Lewisburg
- The Greenbrier - Best Casino - White Sulphur Springs
- The Greenbrier - Best Golf Course - White Sulphur Springs
- The Greenbrier - Best Resort - White Sulphur Springs
- The Salt Cave Spa - Best Spa - White Sulphur Springs
- The Greenbrier - Second Runner Up Best Spa - White Sulphur Springs
- Swift Level Fine Meats - Best Butcher Shop - Lewisburg
- Ben-Ellen Donuts - Best Donut Shop - Lewisburg
- Jim's Drive In - Best Drive-In - Lewisburg

See "Best Of" — Page 3

Concerns expressed over new fire station site by neighboring land representative

By Sarah Richardson

Better accessibility at the Lewisburg Fire Department's new station and the person who owns the strip of land that would enable it were the center of a discussion at Lewisburg City Council. The property, which is located next to the site of the upcoming Lewisburg Fire Station, brought Sharon Hayes to Lewisburg City Council, expressing dissatisfaction with the plan and asking questions about the future of the station.

The city has been planning to relocate Fire Station No. 1 for some time

due to space constraints with their current location and maintenance issues with old structure. The building has been a Lewisburg City Council concern for years and has kept the department from expanding alongside the larger workforce and fleet. The new parcel of land acquired for the fire station is located near the Lewisburg Cinema 8 movie theater off of Grand Avenue, and Hayes represents the property adjacent to this parcel that runs along Carpenter Drive.

After a lengthy executive session held during the November city council meeting, it was unanimously voted

See "New Fire Station" — Page 3

County Commission wishes all a Merry Christmas, approves grants and hires

By Bobby Bordelon

Wishing everyone a Merry Christmas, the Greenbrier County Commission held a brief meeting on Tuesday, Dec. 22, in order to approve grants and hires.

The commission voted to accept several Homeland Security grants - Deputy Director of Homeland Security & Emergency Management Paula Brown explained Greenbrier County Emergency Management "were very fortunate this year [to receive] \$121,307. There were significant state cuts so we were very fortunate to get four of the five we submitted."

As explained by Brown, the project list includes:

- A Digital Vehicle Repeater System - "The digital

repeater system was based on trainings we'd had with the sheriff and other departments in schools, we needed extended communication systems, so that will provide that. as a portable unit."

- Emergency generator and light tower - "Unfortunately we had a motor vehicle accident that destroyed one of our light towers and generators. ... Those are the lights that are used to check vehicles for the state fair at night for any events."

- Greenbrier RRT HazMat unit - an upgrade for the regional emergency response trailer, is needed due to the "self-contained breathing apparatus on there [being] more than 15 years old." Brown explained that "they are noncompliant, so they were not usable, which made the whole trailer basically not us-

able for the most serious accidents we could have had. This will replace [all the breathing apparatus]." This grant is the largest, totaling around \$80,000.

- Technical Rescue SAR equipment:

The final grant would provide a containment area to support air and rescue squads "to where they have adequate breathing supplies" during potential rescues.

Brown and Greenbrier County Emergency Response will be handling the first two grants, while Lewisburg Fire Chief Joe Thomas will help administer the second two rescue grants.

In other business:

Consideration of the adoption of a COVID-19 policy for county employees was delayed in order to more closely follow guidelines soon expected from the state and federal government. Commissioner Tammy Shifflett-

See "Co. Commission" — Page 3



The stocking give-a-way in 2019 (Photo courtesy of Karen Campbell)

Ronceverte VFD finds a way to present Christmas Eve stocking giveaway

By Bobby Bordelon

The Christmas Eve Ronceverte stocking giveaway was carried out in spite of COVID-19!

The stocking tradition is an annual event that provides children with a free stocking stuffed with presents and snacks for Christmas. The Ronceverte Volunteer Fire Department coordinates the giveaway, from fundraising and stuffing stockings to giving them out each year. Thanks to COVID-19 safety guidelines, changes had to come to the tradition, switching the regular event into a drive through.

"Normally [the kids] get out, get in line, come down, meet Santa, and get stockings, but this year we had to do it as a drive through," explained Karen Campbell, a member of the stocking committee. "Of course, they were not able to sit on Santa's lap. But, they did have Santa giving out some of the stockings, so the kids got to see him through the car."

At first, the fire department hoped to hold the event with social distancing, trying to keep the give-away as close to tradition as possible. Ultimately, as cases spiked, this was cancelled and a new plan formed.

"We had already kicked around the

idea of doing a drive through, and the health department told us that would be a good idea," Campbell said. "We thought, with it being outside, that we wouldn't have any problems, but then when we found out that [the infection rate] is getting worse, Greenbrier County is getting more cases, then they started talking to the health department."

As a result of ample work from the fire department and the stocking committee, over 1,000 stockings were ready to go out to Ronceverte children. Each one contained a can of soda, oranges or apples, cracker jacks, a popcorn ball, a large candy bar, and a toy.

"The majority of [the stocking fillers] we bought [already], so we're going to have to do something with it," Campbell joked. "We normally do a bingo [game night to fundraise], but this year we couldn't do that because of COVID. Instead we did a knife order, it did really well. ... Rada, they do fundraisers, sell the knives and you get so much of a percent of what you sell. We did really well on that. ... We had donations from the community also."

The stockings were handed out at Island Park in Ronceverte on Dec. 24, Christmas Eve.

Happy New Year!

New River Gorge National River re-designated at New River Gorge National Park and Preserve

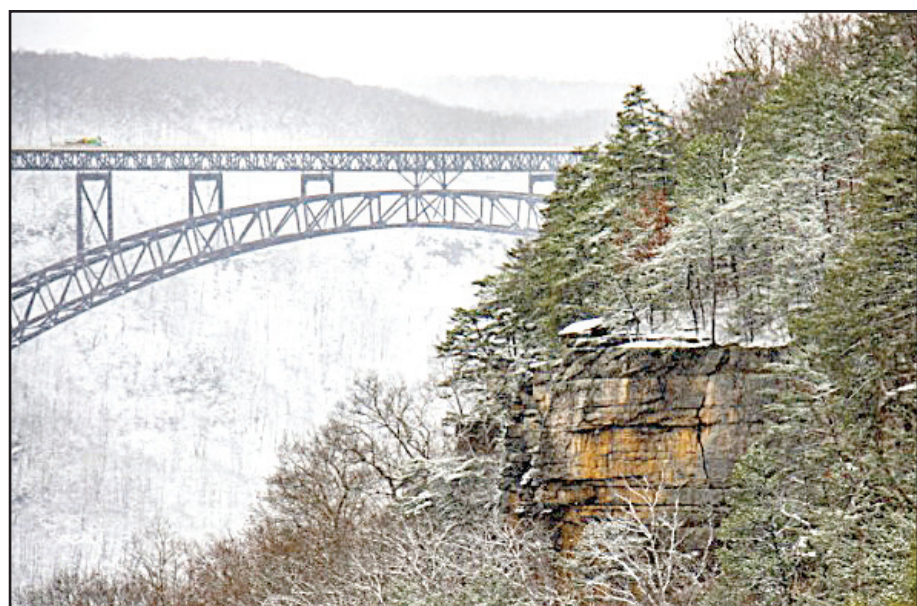
From New River Gorge Regional Development Authority

Decades of unwavering advocacy led to the recent re-designation of the New River Gorge National River to the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve, the 63rd national park to be managed by the National Park Service.

The New River Gorge National Park and Preserve Designation Act was added by the West Virginia Congressional delegation to Fiscal Year 2021 Omnibus Appropriations Bill and pandemic relief measure passed by the U.S. Congress this week.

"The road to the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve has been plowed and paved by over 60 years of vision and hard work," said Dave Arnold. "There are many people - a number of them who never lived long enough to see this day - who were a big part of this legislative victory. There are just too many people to thank;

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Today's HOT Country!



Your Classic Hits Station



Today's Rock

WVDOH keeps snowplows running while following COVID-19 guidelines

As many West Virginians were caught in the path of Winter Storm Gail last week, the West Virginia Division of Highways snowplow drivers were working around an extra set of difficulties. With community spread of COVID-19 across the state, transportation workers are among the quarantined. At an already tough time of year, their co-workers are rising to the occasion to fill in. Workers, who in many cases are taking on 12-hour shifts, appreciate the public for giving them space as they clear the icy roadways.

"In District 4, that's Doddridge, Harrison, Marion, Monongalia, Preston, and Taylor counties, we began shuffling personnel around to help with the worse areas," said Mike Cronin, P.E., District 4 Engineer. "All equipment was readied before the storm and we had plans in place. We concentrate on the primary roads first and then to go the secondary, as always. With this storm, we reminded the public to be cautious, as it was a mix of snow and then ice, making a very hazardous situation."

In District 9, which includes Fayette, Greenbrier, Monroe, Nicholas, and Summers counties, Maintenance Engineer, Jim Moore, P.E., made similar plans.

"We staged person-

nel and equipment on the roadway before the storm. Salt, or salt/cinder mix, was applied directly in advance of the storm as soon as the road became wet for the material to stick. The drivers followed their assigned routes, focusing to clear high-speed, high-traffic corridors first, and then moved to lower traffic routes. They continued to work in two 12-hour shifts around the clock until all the roads were cleared and the shoulders pushed back."

Snowplow drivers across the state remind the public to keep their distance from the plows, to avoid salt as it exits the plow. The plows are heavy, and difficult to maneuver, especially when visibility is low. Management works to arrange schedules for employees to cover routes in cases where employees are currently quarantined.

"Currently we have some transportation workers off due to COVID quarantines," said Moore. "However, our human resources staff is diligently working to clear those who have fulfilled the requirements of our stringent return-to-work policy, and we have shifted disforce and former maintenance employees from other organizations to cover the remaining plow-truck vacancies. We keep our people safe and follow Governor Justice's

COVID-19 guidelines, while keeping the public safe on the roads. Heavy snowfalls or extremely cold temperatures below 20 degrees create hazardous conditions, so we ask that the public allow extra time for travel."

See "WVDOH" — Page 3




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PICK OF THE LITTER

NOVA

Nova is an 8-month-old domestic shorthair. Visitors say this pretty lady is a sweetheart!



DEE DEE

Dee Dee is a one-and-a-half year old domestic short-hair and weighs 6 pounds. The calico girl has a stunning coat and beautiful eyes!



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. If you or a loved one is struggling with substance abuse, take the first step towards overcoming addiction. Call today for free addiction screenings or referrals: 1-800-431-1754. For more information visit <https://www.narcononnewliferetreat.org/blog/strange-side-effects-of-covid-19.html>

New Fire Station Continued from Front Page

to approve the purchase of the 2.5 acre tract for up to \$600,000 from Barnette Development.

Hayes said she was approached by Lewisburg Fire Chief Joey Thomas about potentially selling a 50-foot wide strip of property bordering the fire station site, which would help provide width needed to turn the fire trucks around.

"I have been approached by the fire chief back last summer as to whether or not I would be interested in selling a strip [of land], and I never gave him a yes or no," said Haynes. "He has provided some information as to what they wanted. My understanding as to what his description was is that they wanted more room to turn the fire trucks around in front of the fire station, and somehow having a strip next to the property they were buying from Barnette would provide that."

Unhappy with what she's heard so far, she asked the city to clarify the site's future plans.

"I have questions about what the intentions are going forward with the property for the fire station," Hayes said. "Part of what I learned sitting in on planning commission meetings disturbed me a little bit and I just wanted to hear more about what the intention was of city council and the planning commission going forward."

Thomas explained that "the design is not complete for the fire house," and they are just working to make sure the station "flows correctly," which can be essential when responding to an emergency. "The property is approximately 200 feet across is all, and that's why the whole time I've had discussions with her [Mrs. Hayes]. I thought we had discussions with city council in the past. ... The property has been an 11-year search, and to stay somewhere reasonable close to our downtown station that was currently have, there is almost no open property left that we can move to. ... The station itself will all be built on the Barnette property, there is no doubt that we can fit the station itself there, just if we can get out of the station without having everything face forward."

Chief Thomas also noted that when they were asked by the planning commission if the structure could fit on the property, the answer was yes.

"The problem we have with the property, and we weren't able to purchase any additional Barnette property that would help, is that our trucks have a 42-foot turn radius," he explained. "When do you a 50-foot setback from the theatre road, which is required, it doesn't really give us enough access out of the back side to be able to turn our large trucks in order to get back around to the front of the theater road. So what we are needing, and what I spoke to Mrs. Hayes in previous conversations with, is just a strip of land that we can basically put an access road back out onto Grand Avenue, beside the retention pond, kind of coming out of the back of what we're purchasing back onto Grand Avenue."

City Administrator Misty Hill added that Chief Thomas did "more than his share" in trying to receive a response from Mrs. Hayes to discuss the property. "He reached out to Mrs. Hayes so much that our city attorney Tom White expressed to him with Mayor and I that he could stop reaching out because we weren't getting any response. ... I don't feel like this was a bombshell that was just dropped a couple weeks ago."

Councilmember Joshua Edwards noted that the reason he personally voted in favor of purchasing the Barnette property is that, "fire stations are restricted to certain geographic areas called the First Due Area. Frankly, very few suitable areas are left undeveloped in our First Due Area. So that was my rationale, this was one of few pieces of property that was undeveloped. The price was reasonable based on our research, and that 's why I voted to purchase it."

He emphasized that, "In my head, and in this body, no one has finalized a plan for the fire station or the parking lot of the fire station, for lack of a better term, so I think all those issues frankly remain to be discussed."

Hayes voiced concerns that in later discussion with city administrators there she felt there was "an inkling, but not that it was said directly" of the city taking imminent domain of the strip of land. She then raised the question, "If that is adequate property to build the fire station, why is it that we are even discussing the strip of land that is owned by Airfields LLC, and I'm the managing member of that LLC?"

Councilmember Aron Seams responded that discussions of imminent domain were "putting the cart before the horse," and Councilmember Mark Etten added that, "When we made the decision to purchase the property I was unaware that the overall plan, in any way, needed any of Mrs. Hayes property."

Seams went on to say that, "from our understanding, and the information that council was given, is that the building itself of the new fire station would fit entirely on that piece of property that was purchased. I think any other considerations aren't something that this body has even had a chance to see for turning the trucks around, etc."

Mayor White ended the discussion in saying they will be "in further conversation" about this matter.

New River Gorge Continued from Front Page

however, our county commissioners, especially those on the New River Gorge Regional Development Authority (NRGRDA) and our representatives in Washington, DC, both past and present, worked together in a bipartisan endeavor to do something very special for the people of West Virginia."

Arnold, a board member of the NRGRDA and founding partner of Adventures on the Gorge, added, "We have now gone from the minor leagues to the majors. We have joined the best of the best of America's public lands."

Arnold reflects that state elected officials had the vision for the national park and preserve nearly six decades ago. He cited the Jan. 29, 1963, House Concurrent Resolution No. 9, entitled "Encouraging the speedy development of the New River Gorge Area into a national playground by the federal and state governments and the citizens of West Virginia," which was under consideration by the House Committee on Forestry and Conservation of the W.Va. House of Delegates.

Initial success came to the New River Gorge region in 1978 when the federal government designated the New River as a "national river." Arnold said the grassroots leadership of the New River Gorge Regional Development Authority and its four counties - Fayette, Nicholas, Raleigh, and Summers counties, plus that of nearby Mercer County - was instrumental in building local, state and federal support for the national park and preserve designation.

Jina Belcher, NRGRDA executive director, said "Our two U.S. Senators, Joe Manchin and Shelley Moore Capito; U.S. Rep. Carol Miller; and Gov. Jim Justice never wavered from our ultimate goal, and now it is up to this region to take bold steps to capitalize on this immense opportunity." Arnold specifically praised former U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall II, who chaired the House Natural Resources Committee, for his early support and encouragement.

While there are 19 national preserves in the NPS system, there are only six combination national parks and preserves, all in Alaska. There is one national monument and preserve - Oregon Caves National Monument and Preserve, in Southern Oregon.

The New River Gorge National Park and Preserve Designation Act would designate between 5,000 and 6,000 acres of the 72,808-acre tract of federal land as a national park component.

Arnold emphasized the importance of hunting being permitted in new public areas of the "preserve" property, offering another important benefit to West Virginians and others interested in visiting the New River Gorge region, as well as businesses catering to consumers seeking additional hunting venues.

The national park component also would include a portion of the lower Gorge, extending northward from Keeneys Creek, past the New River Gorge Bridge and Canyon Rim Visitor Center to the park's northern boundary, adjacent to Hawks Nest State Park.

WVDOH Continued from Page 2

"If it was easy, everyone would do it," said Jimmy Wriston, P.E., Deputy Secretary of Transportation. "Our people at the West Virginia Department of Transportation are the best in the country. When it's time to rise to the occasion and get the job done, they always come through."

"I couldn't be prouder to be working for this agency right now," said Byrd White, Secretary of Transportation. "It's been a difficult, burdensome year, but they've been flexible and creative, diligent and careful, all at the same time, to get done what we needed them to do."

Co. Commission Continued from Front Page

Tincher noted, "We are still following health department guidelines" for "any employees that may have been exposed to, or have, COVID."

An invoice totaling \$40,200 to E.L. Robinson for design work on a Tax Increment Financing project working on the sanitary sewer system in Caldwell was approved.

The commission approved Curtis Crookshanks to the board of the Public Service District #2 following the resignation of Gene Wiseman due to health issues.

A former victim's advocate in the Greenbrier County Prosecutor's Office was hired to serve as a part-time assistant within the office's budget.

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

Clinton Edward Walker II, Rupert, 1) driving suspended, NC, fine \$100; 2) no seatbelt, fine \$25

Nathan Allen Hubbard, Ronceverte, driving left of center, fine \$15

Bruce Allen Lilly, Rupert, hunting / trapping or fishing on lands of another, NC, fine \$30

Todd Winebrenner, Ronceverte, no seatbelt, fine \$25

Jonathan A. Bennett, Rainelle, 1) failure to field tag deer, NCP, fine \$40; 2) hunting without permission, fine \$25

Charles W. Osborne, Rainelle, 1) loaded firearm in motor vehicle, NCP, fine \$40; 2) hunting from motor vehicle, fine \$25

Shawn D. Zapalac, Pearland, TX, non-resident hunting deer without license, NCP, fine \$50

Joseph David Herndon, Jr., Ronceverte, 1) driving suspended, NCP, fine \$100; 2) no proof of insurance, fine \$200; 3) driving suspended, fine \$100

Billy Jay Plourde, Denver, NC, loaded firearm in vehicle, fine \$40

Christopher Ryan Britt, Sherrills Ford, NC, loaded firearm in vehicle, fine \$40

Best Of Continued from Front Page

- The Stardust Cafe - Best Farm-To-Table - Lewisburg
- The French Goat - Best Fine Dining - Lewisburg
- Jim's Drive In - Second Runner Up Best Burger - Lewisburg
- Jim's Drive In - Second Runner Up Best Hot Dog - Lewisburg
- The French Goat - Best Brunch - Lewisburg
- Greenbrier Valley Brewing Company - Second Runner Up Best Brewery - Maxwelton
- Hawk Knob Hard Cider and Mead - Best Cidery/Mazery - Lewisburg
- Smooth Ambler - Best Distillery - Maxwelton
- Alderson's Store - Best Antique/Vintage Store - Alderson
- A New Chapter - First Runner Up Best Independent Bookstore - Lewisburg
- Alderson's Store - Second Runner Up Best Independent Bookstore - Alderson
- Wolf Creek - First Runner Up Best Local Place to Buy Women's Apparel - Lewisburg
- Greenbrier Valley Theatre - Best Theater Company - Lewisburg

Towns:

- Lewisburg - Best Town for Foodies
- Lewisburg - First Runner Up Best Town for History
- Lewisburg - First Runner Up Best Town for the Arts
- White Sulphur Springs - Best Town to Experience the Winter
- Lewisburg - First Runner Up Best Town for a Weekend Getaway
- Lewisburg - Best Downtown
- Lewisburg - Beverly White - Second Runner Up Best Mayor

Pacify App free to WIC participants

Are you a West Virginia WIC participant who's pregnant or breastfeeding? If so, you are eligible for free access to Pacify! The Pacify app connects you with breastfeeding experts right from your smartphone. It can also connect you directly to your local WIC clinic, right through the app!

Pacify offers an unlimited amount of calls available in English and Spanish to provide you with support that never sleeps. Signing up is easy! Activate your account today by downloading Pacify in the Apple Store or Google Play Store. Once you have downloaded the app, call your local WIC clinic and they will give you your special sign-up code which is what makes it free to you. They can also answer any questions you may have about Pacify and navigating the app. To take advantage of this on demand, video-enabled service that is available 24/7 with no appointment necessary, contact your local Greenbrier County WIC office at 304-647-7430 on Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. through 4 p.m. Clinics are experiencing an increased amount of calls during this time. If you receive an answering machine message, please leave your name and phone number and someone will return your call as soon as possible.

WIC lobbies are closed to participants, but staff remains on site to provide essential WIC services such as benefit issuance, remote certifications, and new participant enrollment over the phone. You can also receive breastfeeding support, nutrition counseling, referrals, and other WIC services, remotely. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Like us on Facebook at "Greenbrier/Pocahontas County WIC" for clinic updates and healthy recipe ideas!

Mountain Messenger

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OPINION

Commentary

Gov. Justice congratulates and thanks Chief of Staff Mike Hall for his service

Gov. Jim Justice announced last week that his Chief of Staff, William Michael “Mike” Hall, will retire effective Dec. 31, 2020.

“Mike has been an absolutely exceptional leader in my administration for the last three years. He has served the people of West Virginia incredibly well for almost 30 years and I sincerely thank him for all the goodness he has done for our state,” Gov. Justice said. “I wish him all the best in his retirement, and I have asked him to continue working for my office on a contract basis so that we can continue to draw upon his wisdom.”

Mr. Hall was appointed to the position in August 2017 by Gov. Justice.

“It has truly been an honor to serve the people of West Virginia under the leadership of Gov. Justice, Mr. Hall said. “I sincerely thank him for his confidence in me to help implement his vision, and while I will miss the excitement of working in the Governor’s Office, I intend to spend more time in my retirement with my family and my grandkids.”

Prior to his time as Chief of Staff, Hall represented the State’s 4th Senatorial District. Prior to that, he was elected to six terms in the House of Delegates. He served as the chair of the Senate Finance Committee and as vice chair of the Education, Banking and Insurance, Pensions, and Rules committees.

Gov. Justice will name his next Chief of Staff at a later date.

Commentary

Sen. Capito votes in favor of FY2021 government funding, relief package

U.S. Senator Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, tonight issued the following statements after voting in favor of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 omnibus appropriations bill, which includes all 12 appropriations measures and legislation to provide targeted coronavirus relief.

ON THE OMNIBUS FUNDING PACKAGE: “These funding bills are full of provisions beneficial to West Virginia, including support for broadband expansion, transportation and water infrastructure, and opioid recovery. Also included in this package - and something I am incredibly proud of - is my legislation to redesignate the New River Gorge National River as a National Park and Preserve, which will bring significant economic benefits to our state. Congress was able to pass all 12 appropriations bills last year, and I am very pleased we are able to do so again. Funding of the federal government needs to return to regular order. I will continue working with my colleagues on the committee and in the full Senate to ensure this necessary Congressional duty is no longer used as a partisan tool and delivers for the American people,” Senator Capito said.

ON COVID RELIEF: “Earlier this year, we came together and responded to this crisis by passing the CARES Act. I’m pleased today we could finally deliver additional relief to those that need it the most like our small businesses, health care workers, communities, and individuals and families across the country as we continue battling this pandemic. But, let’s be clear: this relief should have and could have been delivered months ago. Many of the provisions that passed today were included in the targeted relief Senate Republicans offered up in the HEALS Act in July,” Senator Capito said. “Speaker Pelosi herself admitted to holding out on this relief because she thought it would benefit her politically in the election. Millions of Americans were pawns, struggling to make ends meet. Countless small businesses have shut their doors in the meantime. Though long past due, we are now able to provide some relief to the American people that hopefully can provide optimism and support to our fellow citizens this Christmas.

West Virginia wins included in the Omnibus Package:

The FY2021 government funding bill includes resources to support many West Virginia priorities that Senator Capito supported, including:

- A \$300 million increase was included for Alzheimer’s research through the National Institutes of Health (NIH), along with an additional increase for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) through the BOLD Infrastructure for Alzheimer’s Act, and language diversifying the depth and focuses of research.


- Full funding for the Office of Fossil Energy Research, supporting clean and efficient energy creation at the National Energy Technology Lab (NETL) in Morgantown through their engineering and supercomputing efforts. Furthermore, within the office, \$15 million is included for research of commercial-scale front-end carbon capture technologies, which Senator Capito has championed with bipartisan support in the Senate. Language is also included to address maintenance backlog.

- \$635 million for the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Rural Development Broadband ReConnect program, which Senator Capito helped create and has now secured over \$2 billion for the program over four budget cycles.


- Continued funding for the extremely competitive Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grants through the U.S. Department of Transportation, which West Virginia has received \$80 million through since 2018.

- \$346 million for the Economic Development Administration (EDA), an inactive program in West Virginia up until Senator Capito was elected to the Senate that now continues to invest in the state.

- \$180 million was included for the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), a constant driver of eco-



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nomics and infrastructure development in the region, and \$100 million for the Appalachian Highway Development System (ADHS). Senator Capito pushed for dedicated funding for incomplete corridors in FY20 and the amount has been maintained.

Support for the Leetown Science Center in Kearneysville and the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, along with continued funding for the Allegany Ballistics Lab at Rocket Center and the Biometric Technology Center in Clarksburg. The legislation also supports the men and woman of the FBI at the Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Division in Clarksburg, NASA’s Katherine Johnson IV&V Facility, and the National Atmospheric and Oceanic Administration (NOAA) National Environmental Security Computing Center in Fairmont.

A three percent pay raise for our service members, language instructing the study of security infrastructure at U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities, and continued support for the veteran’s Agritherapy pilot program Senator Capito created that is implemented at the Huntington VA, are also all included.

Increases are included for university research programs, diversifying educational opportunities for students and faculty across the state.

Funding and Senator Capito-authored language is maintained for the State Opioid Response (SOR) grants, enabling West Virginia to receive over \$100 million since the establishment of the program in 2018.

Authorized under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), funding is included for both the Sexual Assault Services Program and the Sexual Assault Kit Initiative.

Covid Relief Bill Highlights:

- Direct payment of \$600 for individuals making up to \$75,000 per year and \$1200 for couples making up to \$150,000 per year, plus an additional \$600 per child.
- Enhanced unemployment benefits of \$300 per week for 11 weeks.
- \$319 billion for small businesses, including \$284 billion through the Paycheck Protection Program, \$20 billion for EIDL loans, and \$15 billion for live venues.
- \$25 billion in rental assistance with an extension of the eviction moratorium.
- \$82 billion for schools and universities, with \$10 billion dedicated to childcare.
- \$7 billion for increased access to broadband.
- Funding to support coronavirus vaccine distribution.
- CARES Act spending extension for state and local governments.

Letter to the Editor

Swastika in Greenbrier Co.

Dear Editor:

I am a jogger and my favorite running place is the Greenbrier River Trail. It is one of the top 10 trails in the USA.

Recently, I started running on the trail near its trail head near Caldwell. Soon I observed a swastika etched into part of the trail. There were other symbols that I didn’t recognize. Seeing the swastika upset me and I determined to eradicate it on my return part of the run. When I got back to the area of the swastika it was gone, someone had erased it. Good for them!

The purpose of this letter is to say how disturbing this is to me. I don’t believe the people of Greenbrier County promote the use of swastikas or other anti-Semitic symbols; they are symbols of hate. I believe people outside this county etched the swastika on the trail. So said, what does it say about our society that people still believe in Nazism, etc? This is the symbol Hitler used in WWII and it identified with the murder of 6 million people.

Jeff Jeffus
Maxwelton

Commentary

Congresswoman Miller statement on passage of stimulus package

Congresswoman Carol Miller (R-WV) this week released the following statement regarding the passage of the bipartisan Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 in the House of Representatives:

“After months of negotiations, I am glad that Congress could come together to pass much needed COVID-19 relief and critical government funding,” said Congresswoman Miller. “This package provides critical resources for increased access to vaccinations, small business loans, and direct payments to Americans. The legislation goes further to end surprise medical billing, provides permanent tax relief for families, and allows for more access and flexibility in rural hospitals and clinics. It is shameful that Washington Democrats stalled this package for months, but I am encouraged that we could finally provide this crucial funding to our communities.”

Commentary

COVID relief offers hope, but more action needed

In response to the passage of a bipartisan COVID relief package by Congress, Gary Zuckett, Executive Director of WV Citizen Action released the following statement:

“After eight months of on-again, mostly off-again negotiations, Congress has approved a bipartisan relief package that will begin to protect millions of Americans from the worst economic consequences of the pandemic. It extends deadlines for unemployment benefits, the renter’s eviction moratorium, student loan forbearance, and increases funding for other key programs that people need to make it through COVID. “

“The COVID-19 relief bill passed just in time by the House and Senate offers a glimmer of hope to the millions of Americans who are still unemployed, have lost their health care coverage, are struggling to pay rent or put enough food on the table. The long overdue relief package is a sound down payment on the more comprehensive relief and stimulus package Americans will need in early 2021 to get back on the road to economic recovery and finally get the pandemic under control. “

“While this modest package was an achievement given the contentious negotiations, it excludes some key provisions that are central to getting the nation back on track. Republican Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Senator Capito refused to include funding for strapped cities and states that will be needed next year to stop layoffs, and fund essential services, including education, transportation, and public safety services like fire departments and emergency medical response. “

“WV Representative Alex Mooney voted no on the package securing his position as a Scrooge. We sincerely hope he has a change of heart. If Congress is really worried about the deficit, they can start by repealing the Trillion Dollar 2017 tax giveaway to Wall Street and then begin to make Billionaires and wealthy multinationals, who pay no to little income tax, pay their fair share.”

“West Virginia’s counties and cities are facing shortfalls next year that will devastate jobs and services without additional federal relief dollars. With skyrocketing infections and over 317,000 COVID casualties, Congress must provide increased funding for Medicaid to states in order to shore up ailing hospitals, ensure that health services are not cut and increase access to health care for millions who have lost employer-sponsored coverage or can’t afford other coverage.”

When the newly elected Congress and President-Elect Biden return to Washington in January, they must immediately get to work on comprehensive relief that addresses the full scope of today’s crisis and puts the economy on track to build back better.”

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Deadline for Letters to the Editor is noon Wednesday

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To submit an OPED piece to the *Mountain Messenger* it must comply with the following rules:

- 1) OPED pieces may contain constructive criticisms, thoughts, or observations, which we publish on an individually approved basis.
- 2) No name-calling, hate speech, or other derogatory language is permitted. We do not publish letters containing “bashing,” personal attacks, and the like. However, we do appreciate mindful concerns, assessments, and thoughts.
- 3) All letters must be signed by the author and include the city in which they reside.

Please note all submissions are subject to individual editorial approval. Please do not mail or hand-deliver letters, email news@mountainmessenger.com.

MOUNTAIN STATE SPOTLIGHT

Trails, textbooks and towers: Here are the 'broadband' expenses WV Gov. Justice charged to the CARES Act

Barely any of the money, earmarked for pandemic relief, will actually connect homes and businesses to the internet.

By Lucas Manfield for Mountain State Spotlight

This story was originally published by Mountain State Spotlight. For more stories from Mountain State Spotlight, visit www.mountainstatespotlight.org.

For Gov. Jim Justice, the announcement was the easy part. In September, he promised to spend \$50 million of the state's federal coronavirus response fund to bring internet to underserved areas of West Virginia.

He held multiple press conferences to flesh out his goal of "covering up West Virginia in broadband," and even floated a way to do it: give companies \$1,000 for every household they hook up.

Making that happen by the end-of-the-year deadline, however, proved much harder.

By December, Justice admitted he would only spend around \$33 million. And documents obtained by Mountain State Spotlight show that almost none of that money will actually go to the governor's stated goal: delivering better internet to homes and businesses as the pandemic forces West Virginians to adapt to working and learning from home.

Instead, among other things, the money will go to new school textbooks and a resurfaced wilderness trail.

Only one grant - the sole one publicly announced by the governor - went to internet service. Justice gave that \$2.3 million grant to a newly-formed nonprofit, run by a state senator, that promises to build 11 miles of fiber around Huntington. The rest, amounting to the vast majority of the money, was allocated to three different state agencies for purposes barely related, if at all, to the governor's goal.

Back in September, at the press conference announcing the \$50 million fund, the governor sketched out where he planned to spend it. He showed a map of West Virginia, which included red areas that supposedly already had internet, and blue areas, where the Federal Communications Commission planned to install broadband using hundreds of millions of dollars in federal incentives.

And then there were white areas - covered by neither.

In these places - and many others across the state - new necessities of modern life, from telemedicine to Zoom, are impossible because there's no decent internet. This is at least partly because, for the past decade, West Virginia has been reliant on Frontier Communications, a bankrupt telecommunications company with an appalling track record, to serve rural areas of the state. But it's also the fault of West Virginia leaders, who have failed to provide substantial state funding to address the problem.

"We want to target those areas," Justice said.

Here's where the money actually went:

Trail remediation - Mountain State Spotlight obtained the original requests for CARES Act funding submitted to the governor. Four were categorized as broadband-related, each with Justice's signature of approval. They totaled just over \$32 million.

The strangest was the one from the Department of Natural Resources, requesting \$1.4 million to rebuild a 72-mile trail

through the wilderness outside Parkersburg.

To justify the use of CARES Act funding, the department's director, Stephen McDaniel, argued that the North Bend Rail Trail's "proximity" to a new interstate fiber-optic telecommunications cable required its "remediation."

But Zayo, the Colorado telecommunications company that was installing the fiber, had already promised to fix any damage done by the heavy equipment it had brought in to do the job.

They "have to put it back the way it was, or better," trail superintendent Paul Elliott told the Parkersburg News and Sentinel back in September.

According to a spokeswoman for the company, they did. "Zayo restored the trail to its current condition and even made some minor fixes," Rebecca Whalen wrote in an email.

But the trail is still closed due to damage. It is unclear why the state is now footing the bill to fix it, and why it's using funds earmarked for the coronavirus response to do so.

"I would love to talk to you about that, but I cannot," Elliott said, sounding genuinely apologetic, when reached by Mountain State Spotlight over the phone.

A spokesman for the department offered little clarification.

"As you are aware, this project provides an opportunity to expand much needed high-speed internet services to rural parts of West Virginia," Andy Malinoski wrote in an emailed statement.

Textbooks for virtual learners - Another \$8 million is going to the West Virginia Department of Education to fill a hole in its budget produced by the expansion of the state's virtual school program. The free program expanded ten-fold this year as students - primarily in more populated counties - opted to forgo the classroom entirely during the pandemic.

Classifying this as a broadband-related expense is odd, since kids who voluntarily enrolled in the state's virtual school program are nearly certain to already have reliable internet access.

In some counties, they even had to sign a contract asserting such before they could apply.

And now they will get the benefit of millions in federal coronavirus relief funds, to be spent on the teachers, textbooks and curriculums that are necessary for them to learn safely while at home.

Students in rural areas of the state where the internet is unreliable or nonexistent will not.

In some counties, including Mineral and Summers, not a single kid signed up to the state's program, according to data released by the state's Department of Education in November.

Barely 1% of students in Roane County ended up in the program. The superintendent, Richard Duncan, explained one reason why.

"People hear 'virtual school' here, and they just gloss over: well, we can't do that - we live in Roane County, we don't



A CARES Act money pit? Tunnel #12 on the North Bend Rail Trail (Photo: Mike Tewkesbury via Flickr)

have ... [a] high speed internet connection" he said.

The "inequities" caused by the state's poor internet caught state superintendent Clayton Burch by surprise, he told West Virginia Public Broadcasting in July.

"We just didn't know how wide the gap was when it comes to broadband," he said.

Although the governor categorized Burch's \$8 million funding request as broadband-related, the money will do nothing to close that gap.

Upgraded public safety radio - Another \$20.5 million was allocated to the Department of Homeland Security, for upgrades to the state's public safety radio network.

It is designed specifically for first responders and can be accessed only by government agencies.

"The bandwidth... needs to be upgraded... to carry the additional amount of communication the pandemic has caused," reads the justification for the expenditure submitted to the governor by Jeff Sandy, head of the state's Department of Homeland Security.

But if the network is overloaded, no one seems to have noticed.

After a reporter reached out to the network's coordinator at the Division of Emergency Management, a spokesman issued a statement.

"There has been no significant effect on the State Interoperable Radio Network resulting from the pandemic response," wrote Lawrence Messina, referring to SIRN, the public safety communications network.

Other inconsistencies in Sandy's justification to the governor raise further questions about the necessity of the expenditures.

He claims that "much of the equipment" in the network "is at end of life, with limited to no additional parts available." This issue is so pressing, he wrote, that it could lead to "loss of life."

In that same paragraph he claims that the money will be used to install over 51 microwave repeaters that the department has kept "in storage" - and then requests to purchase 61 more.

Sandy also claims the upgrade will increase "network capacity" to 1 gigabit per second while acknowledging that, under normal use, the network transports a similar amount of data, in addition to standard voice service, over an entire day.

The no-bid contract to build and install the new microwave equipment will go to Texas-based Aviat Networks.

That name might sound familiar. Both SIRN and Aviat have a scandal-ridden history in West Virginia involving the misuse of federal funds earmarked for broadband expansion.

In 2010, the state used \$33 million of federal stimulus funds to upgrade SIRN with equipment purchased from Aviat. Auditors later found that officials circumvented state purchasing laws.

At the time, state officials promised it would help bring internet to hard-to-reach hollows in West Virginia. Many of the towers are located in rural areas that are underserved - or not served at all - by Frontier.

To do that, Gale Given, the state's Chief Technology Officer at the time, said that up to a third of the network's bandwidth would be devoted to commercial use.

That didn't happen.

"No," Messina replied when asked if SIRN was currently used for any commercial purposes.

"Make it happen"

Other states are trying something different.

At least six states have created new broadband infrastructure grant programs using the CARES Act money, according to an analysis by Pew Charitable Trusts. Mississippi is giving away \$75 million to rural utility cooperatives.

West Virginia has its own cooperatives, including Hardy Telecommunications, which has been remarkably successful at bringing high-speed internet to rural communities. The company recently was denied subsidies from the Federal Communications Commission to expand its network in the state - the co-op was likely outbid by Frontier.

Other ideas have been thrown around inside the governor's mansion.

In early October, a small group of government officials and telecommunications executives met there to brainstorm ways to spend the \$50 million.

Various ideas were presented, including building out the state's internet backbone and rewiring SIRN to service homes and businesses in rural communities.

At the end, a source familiar with the meeting, who was not authorized to discuss it publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity, said Justice was receptive.

He turned to Bray Cary, a former broadcast media executive who earns minimum wage as an advisor to the governor.

Make it happen, Justice told him.

Why it hasn't is unclear. The governor's office did not respond to a request for comment.

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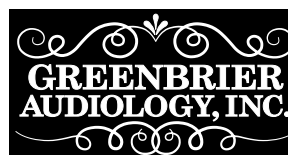
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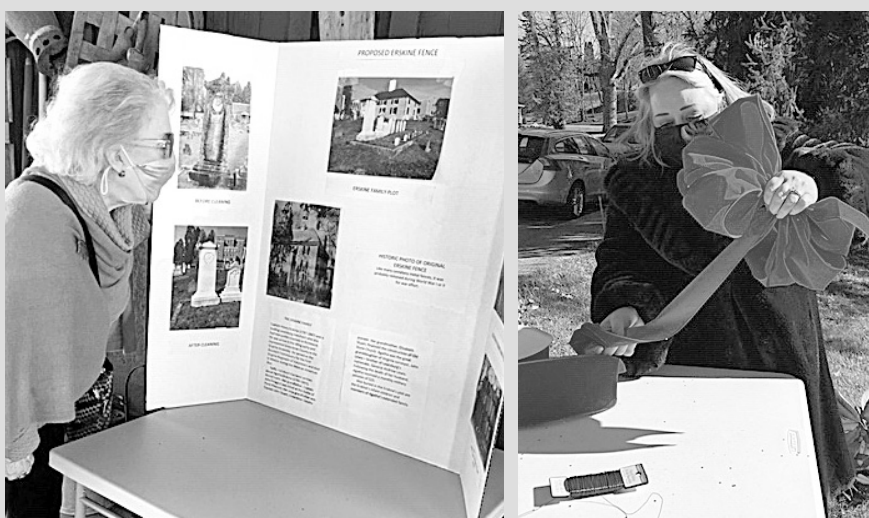


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House and Garden Club meets, makes holiday decor



Members of the Lewisburg House and Garden Club gathered in the carport and driveway of Joan Montgomery's home for an exchange of Christmas greenery on Dec. 2. Each member brought greenery from their homes, laid them out on Montgomery's lawn, and then chose what they could use.

In addition to the exchange of greenery, club member Joan Montgomery gave a demonstration on wreath making. Jeri Via's first attempt at making a wreath is pictured here. Via also used a

picture frame belonging to her grandmother to make a lovely wall hanging.

Member Rebekah Foster taught us to make bows which brought it all together. The bow on Via's wreath was made by Foster. Foster also made a giant bow as a topper to the Christmas tree for member, Mimi deOlloqui.

Skip Deegans made a story board describing the iron fence that is to be placed around the Erskine plot at Old Stone Cemetery. The story board gives the history of the Erskine family, and shows before and after pictures on the cleaning of the tombstones. The fence was purchased in Alderson by Morgan Bunn of Raleigh, NC. It once graced a Victorian home in Alderson. It was taken to a blacksmith to be refurbished and made into a gate. The Lewisburg House and Garden Club is being asked to pay for the installation.

A delicious hot punch was served, and the members all agreed it was a lovely way to get together at a socially safe distance. Everyone enjoyed being outside and in the company of fellow gardeners.



Local DAR members deliver goods to veterans



Committee members: Carol Olson (left), Suzanne Cronquist, and Judy Deegans

On Dec. 4, the members of the General Andrew Lewis Chapter of the National Society of the American Revolution delivered \$400 of new clothing and toiletries to the patients and the homeless veterans served by the VA

Medical Center in Beckley. Members purchased clothing or made a monetary donation toward the purchase of the clothing and toiletries.

Marley Sizemore of the VA Services Center received the items from

member Judy Deegans and her husband, Skip. Marley explained that the VA serves a sizeable homeless population in addition to the patients at the hospital. There is a clinic for female veterans at the hospital and items were included for them.

The National Society Daughters of the American Revolution is a non-profit, non-political women's service organization whose main objectives are historic preservation, education and patriotism. Members are all lineal descendants of those who supported the cause of independence in the Revolutionary War back in 1776.

If you are interested in the Daughters of the American Revolution, call Regent Sandra Cowan at 304-497-3553.



Marley Sizemore (left) and Judy Deegans



Call for nominations

The West Virginia Press Association is now accepting nominations for the **WVPA's Hall of Fame, Class of 2021**

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Dear Recycle Lady,

Dear Recycle Lady,
Is Christmas wrapping paper recyclable?

Ready for Christmas
Dear Ready for Christmas,
Unfortunately, wrapping paper is not recyclable. Most wrapping paper is thin and made of very short fibers, thus not a candidate to be recycled again. Some wrapping paper contains plastic coating, dyes or glitter which also makes it non-recyclable. Tissue paper has already been recycled, so its fibers are also too short to go through recycle process again. Recyclable wrapping paper is on the market today, but it is recyclable only if there is a recycling center that accepts it. Each Christmas the Recycling Center finds a large amount of wrapping paper in the office paper bin, all of which must be removed as it is a contaminant for office paper and our buyers will reject it. Have you considered using brown paper bags, comics or old maps as wrapping paper? They make attractive packages and all are recyclable. Reusable gift bags are another way to keep all the Christmas package wrappings out of the trash.

Dear Recycle Lady,
Most wrapping paper comes on a long roll. Can the roll be recycled with cardboard?

Wrapper
Dear Wrapper,
Yes, the wrapping paper tube can be recycled with cardboard. And, all those gift boxes you find under the tree after opening packages can also be recycled with cardboard. Just be sure they are clean and empty. Besides recycling, the empty tube can be reused to wrap used wrapping paper on for safe keeping.

Dear Recycle Lady,
After all packages are opened Christmas day there is always a pile of ribbons and bows left. Are ribbons and bows recyclable?

Love Christmas

Dear Love Christmas,
Ribbons and bows make packages festive and pretty, but they are a definitely a no-no for recycling. If ribbons get into any of the baling equipment they can bring everything to a halt. Bows are less hazardous to equipment than ribbons, but they usually have a plastic component and a glue that sticks the bows to the packages. Both of these components make bows non-recyclable. Please do not take any ribbons, bows, twine, or anything long and stringy to a recycling center. Whenever you are opening packages, keep a bag handy for the bows and ribbons. They will then be ready for use the next time you wrap a package.

Dear Readers,
For safety reasons, aluminum can and scrap buy-back at the Recycling Center is closed until further notice. However, all the bins in the back are open and will remain open as usual.
Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, and Best wishes one and all. I greatly appreciate all your questions, encouragement and comments. Be safe and have a wonderful day.

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.



Happy New Year!

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!

Respect: GRADER

Seek: RIVETS

Bestow: OWNED

Waive: FREED

TODAY'S WORD ,

"About this dish called 'Chef's Delight'... is there anything on the menu called 'Delight'?"

Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

8			2					6
	2		7	1	8			
		6		9				3
4	9		1					2
	1		8					9
		5		3	7			
5				7	3			2
	8		5		1			
		7			2			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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HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF

Find at least six differences in details between panels.

Henry Boltinoff

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Super Crossword

EMCEE RIVALRY

ACROSS	1 Moves like a dog's tail	5 Sicilian	9 Not too swift	16 Slack-jawed feeling	19 Question to an unknown caller	21 Portable grill	22 See 38-Down	23 Start of a riddle	25 In favor of	26 Downhillers, e.g.	27 "— haw!" (rodeo yell)	28 Magazine agent's success	30 Total failure	32 Riddle, part 2	41 Riddle, part 3	49 Cab	50 Lovingly, to a musician	51 Common folks	55 Similar to	57 Actor Kilmer	58 Peppery	59 Boxer Clay, later	60 Riddle, part 4	69 PC combo key	70 Water, in Vichy	71 A, in Italy	72 "Zip— -Doo-Dah"	73 Riddle, part 5	81 Author	82 Fall Classic mo.	83 12, on a sundial	84 Small kid	85 Clorox, e.g.	87 Having no 131-Across	91 Sarajevo locale	96 Riddle, part 6	99 Some vipers	102 — pah-pah	103 Gen. Lee's side: Abbr.	104 Half-pint	105 End of the riddle	111 — Stone (hieroglyphic discovery)	114 Gretel's brother	115 Metal source	116 Painter's undercoat	117 A Gershwin brother	118 Riddle's answer	125 Sci-fi author Stanislaw	126 Email, e.g.	127 Some overcrowded houses	128 Historic span	129 Smiled	130 See 74-Down	131 Top of a car	11 Shikoku sash	12 Is no longer	13 Here, in Le Havre	14 Sandbar	15 Indian language	16 Public scandal	17 Like Afghans	18 Act of exiting	20 Clic — (Bic brand)	24 Drain-clearing stuff	29 Shocks	30 Quick race	31 Sewing case	32 Baby buggy, to Brits	33 Tolkien meanies	34 Fish in a Pixar title	35 Doctors' gp.	38 With	22-Across, spaced out	42 "If — a Hammer"	43 Mouselike animal	44 1970s Chevy	45 "Curses!"	46 Shed skin or feathers	47 Doctors' gps.	48 Curse	52 Resident of Riyadh	53 Page of "Juno"	54 Album's first half	56 Make — in (begin working on)	58 "Grand" hotel	60 1983 comedy with Mr. T	61 Gasoline additive	62 Wading bird	63 Sickly	64 Label	65 Color shade	66 "Say again?"	67 Rock's Brian	68 Boat mover	74 With	130-Across, home of a Scottish "monster"	75 Say again	76 Old lovers	77 "Say it — so!"	78 — Field (Mets' home)	79 Drifting sort	80 English prep school	86 Aides: Abbr.	87 "Hmm, I guess so"	88 Grandiosity	89 In the past	90 Magazine or book divs.	92 Wall — (financial district employee)	93 Nearly massless particle	94 Lacks entity	95 "— boy!"	97 Vie for the love of	98 Lurches from side to side	99 For a spell	100 Generous type	101 It's west of Colombia	106 Bursts (with)	107 Of the past	108 Ski cottage	109 Like	pop flies	110 Co.'s top dog	112 Hall's pop partner	113 Slightly built	116 Admiral Graf — (German warship)	119 Mao — -tung	120 Sugar-name suffix	121 Big rabbit feature	122 Peak: Abbr.	123 Siouan tribe member	124 Abbr. on a bounced check
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First Lady Cathy Justice announces winners of student ornament competition



The First Lady Student Ornament Competition winners were announced earlier this month and can be seen in the Great Hall of the State Culture Center.

The First Lady Student Ornament Competition had 64 participants this year; 29 of the ornaments were submitted by classes and 35 of

the ornaments were submitted by individual students.

Local third grade teacher Brittany Cleghon of Lewisburg Elementary School was among the winners who received a \$100 gift card for art supplies.

"I am touched by the response for our Student Ornament

Competition this year," First Lady Justice said. "I know this year has been very different for our teachers and students, but I am glad to see so many still participated. I can see the creativity and hard work that was put into these beautiful ornaments from students and classrooms across our state."

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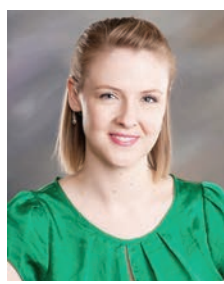
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Deadline for 2021 Youth Congressional Art Competition submissions February 1

The deadline to turn in submissions for the 2021 Youth Congressional Art competition is Monday, Feb. 1, 2021. The competition is open to high school students only. Exceptions will be made for schools that have 7th through 12th grades on one campus. Artwork submissions can be mailed, or hand delivered to the Culture Center between Dec. 4 and Feb. 1. Proper COVID-19 procedures will be in place for dropping off artwork.

The West Virginia Department of Arts, Culture and History (WVDACH) is scheduled to open the exhibit on Friday, Feb. 19, 2021, at the Culture Center, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the opening date of the exhibit is subject to change.

Submitted artwork can be in any one of the following categories: paintings, drawings, collages, prints, mixed media, computer generated and photography. Each entry must be original in concept, design and execution and may not violate U.S. copyright laws. Each student can submit up to two entries.

Artwork must be two-dimensional. Each piece of artwork can be no larger than 26 inches high, 26 inches wide and 4 inches deep. Even when framed, it must still measure no larger than the above maximum dimensions. No framed piece should weigh more than 15 pounds.

The winner from each congressional district will have their artwork displayed at the United States Capitol for an entire year in the Congressional Art Competition, as well as receive a \$100 Blick Art Materials gift card. The three first place winners also will have their artwork framed by the WVDACH. A \$50 Blick Art Materials gift card is also awarded to five second place winners.

Each entrant must submit a student information and release form with a teacher's signature. Students can get entry forms with a complete list of rules and guidelines from their school's art teacher(s), or by contacting Cailin Howe, WVDACH exhibits coordinator, at 304-558-0220 or Cailin.AHowe@wv.gov.

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As we all look forward to ending this incomprehensible year and starting fresh in 2021, I want to express my gratitude to the extraordinary group of healthcare professionals at Robert C. Byrd Clinic. The COVID pandemic has turned our world upside down. No one could have ever predicted, nor planned for the turmoil this year has caused to the delivery of healthcare services.

In my almost thirty years of being a healthcare executive, I've been lucky to work with some amazing people along the way. But I have to say that I've been blessed to be a part of such a wonderful team at RCBC. The pandemic has caused this to be the most difficult year for healthcare providers, our patients, and the community in general. It hasn't been easy or pretty, but the RCBC team has risen to the challenge and has not wavered from providing the highest quality healthcare, in the safest way possible, to the citizens of the Greenbrier Valley.

I want to ask the community to take a moment and put themselves in the shoes of the staff at RCBC. We interact with several hundred patients every day, either in person or via telephone. COVID has made almost every one of them afraid and they look to us for guidance. They feel vulnerable and usually have more questions than we may have answers for. Our staff is afraid as well. They don't know if the person standing in front of them has COVID, but they still do everything in their power to meet their medical needs in a compassionate and reassuring way.

Like all of the healthcare workers in this country, the staff here at RCBC are truly heroes in this pandemic! They tirelessly put their own lives at risk to protect yours. They are dedicated and advocate for every patient we see. The remarkable qualities of our staff are what set RCBC apart from other organizations. The frenzied environment we find ourselves in makes it too easy to take for granted the sacrifices that the professionals at RCBC make every day. I am so proud that we have the most wonderful people working here, just to make sure our community gets the healthcare services it needs, even in a worldwide pandemic.

The next couple of months will be critical to overcoming the COVID virus, and you can rest assured that the staff at RCBC will be leading the efforts to get us back to normal as soon as possible. We will continue to overcome all the obstacles in our way while putting the needs of our patients first.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, Medical Staff, and Employees of RCBC, we thank you for entrusting your healthcare needs to us and we wish everyone a safe and Happy Holiday Season!

Sincerely,

Scot Mitchell, FACHE
Chief Executive Officer

