

City officials: sidewalks not ADA compliant

Problem prevents help with streets

By Erin Beck

West Virginia Division of Highways officials told city officials they will not install crosswalks for the city because sidewalks are not Americans with Disabilities Act compliant, City Manager Chad Edwards said.

“So, they’re not going to touch it because they’re afraid they’re going to get sued,” Edwards said, during the Dec. 12 City Council meeting.

He said city officials had met with Division of Highway officials earlier in the month.

The Division of Highways said it would install crosswalks on Pike Street and lighting if the side-

walks are brought into compliance.

City Council member Amanda Sayers, who also went to the meeting with highways officials, said she responded, “I’ll hold you to that.”

“If we want to install a flashing light at the school, we have to purchase it ourselves and maintain it ourselves, but they have no problem with us doing that,” Edwards said.

He said that would cost approximately \$25,000 and members discussed approaching the school board and county to split costs.

Division of Highways officials did say they will replace old, faded street signs, Edwards said.

“That’s the one positive as of now,” he said.

See “Sidewalks” on Pg 3



BUILDING AMAZING CITIES

By JIM HUNT
author, speaker, consultant



From left, Franco Harris, Pam Hunt, and Jim Hunt pose after the couple met the famous Pittsburgh Steeler at the Italian American Sports Hall of Fame event that was held many years ago at the old Sheraton Hotel in downtown Clarksburg.

Our evening with Franco Harris

As we go through life, we often have encounters with some famous people, and it gives us a memory that lasts a lifetime. It might be seeing a famous actor or actress in an airport or maybe we are dining in a restaurant in a large city, and we glance over and see someone that everyone would recognize. What do you do? Do you rush up and ask for an autograph or pull out your phone and snap a picture? Sometimes, they may hold up their hand, like they are too busy to be bothered or maybe invite you to take a selfie. There are also times when we are disappointed by someone we hold in high regard. We realize that it must be hard to have a quiet dinner or stroll along a street if you are famous and even the most accommodating celebrity would prefer a few minutes of peace, after signing autographs for dozens of fans.

Many years ago, I was asked to be the Master of Ceremonies for an awards dinner for the Italian American Sports Hall of Fame that was held at the old Sheraton Hotel in downtown Clarksburg. My good friend, Ron Fragale was one of the organizers for the dinner and we were both excited that the keynote speaker would be the famous Pittsburgh Steeler, Franco Harris. At the time, Franco was probably one of the most recognizable people in the country and his career included multiple Super Bowls and one of the most famous plays in the history of sports, “The Immaculate Reception,” which recently celebrated its 50th anniversary. To say I was excited is a huge understatement. My future wife, Pam was my date for the evening, and we looked forward to rubbing elbows

See “Hunt” on Pg 3.



Franco Harris, former Pittsburgh Steeler, left, reunites with Pam Hunt about two years ago at the Harrison County school board office.

Club helps kids see more clearly



Lions Club volunteers offered eye screenings for local students twice in December. From left are Dave Minor, Victor George, Becky Minor, Enith Wright, Doyle Cowger, Ashley Dytzel, Lou Delrio, and Mathew Keith.



Ashley Dytzel, left, screens a child for vision problems, with school nurse Kim Cunningham at right.



Randy Minor screens a child for vision problems while Becky Minor records the results.

By Erin Beck

The Shinnston Lions Club offered its annual eye screenings to students in Shinnston at two events in December, according to Lions Club President Dave Minor.

According to the Lions Club International website, Helen Keller inspired the group to advocate for the blind and those with other visual impairments in 1925.

The Shinnston Lions Club has brought that focus to fruition in multiple ways, including through eye screenings for kids and the recycling of eyeglasses.

On Dec. 1, the Shinnston Lions Club gave sight screenings to the sixth graders at Lincoln Middle school. The club tested 120 students and referred 18 students to see an optometrist.

Members use an electronic device that quickly scans for potential vision problems, then an optometrist can do further testing to confirm.

On Dec. 15, the club screened around 80 students at Big Elm elementary. They referred about eight for further check-ups.

“It’s a great day for the club to interact with the school nurses and the students,” Minor said. “It’s a quick test to see if a child might need glasses to help them in their studies. We do these tests every year in Shinnston and other Lion Clubs do the other schools in the county.”

County school nurse Jody Sperry provided supervision, he said.

Early detection is important because kids with vision problems must work harder to learn and participate in other activities, and may experience eyestrain, headaches and fatigue, the American Optometric Association states.

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OPINION

By Erin Beck
Editor

West Virginians with disabilities deserve better

You might have seen stories in the news lately about the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, also known as DHHR, and a group called Disability Rights of West Virginia. I don't want to speculate about things like political allies and opponents, behind-closed-doors decisions, or what influences any of the major players involved. But what I can do is speak to the heart of the issue, because I've been researching the problem for a while, and that's the indefinite confinement of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, or IDD, such as Down syndrome, autism, or cerebral palsy, at state-owned hospitals in West Virginia.

Disability Rights of West Virginia, a nonprofit that is federally required to advocate for people with disabilities, has accused DHHR of "warehousing" people with IDD at state-owned psychiatric hospitals, including Sharpe Hospital in Weston and Mildred-Mitchell Bateman Hospital in Huntington, and private hospitals the state diverts patients to when it has too many patients (such as Highland Hospital in Clarksburg). The disability rights group has also accused other companies that run group homes (some of the big names are REM and ResCare) of "dumping" those patients at hospitals.

Mike Folio, a lawyer for DRWV, said in a December legislative interim meeting that 88 people with IDD are being "institutionalized and almost warehoused at psychiatric facilities."

During the last legislative session, when I was first poking around about this, a Legal Aid advocate told me that of 46 patients with IDD at Sharpe Hospital, about ten had been institutionalized most of their adult lives.

Psychiatric hospitals are for people with mental illness – hence the word "psychiatric." Mental illnesses are treatable. Once you get better, the state has no right to confine you indefinitely.

The hospitals are not for people with disabilities. If someone has a lower-than-average IQ, then they just have a lower-than-average IQ. And that's that. And if someone has autism, there's no need to try to cure that.

Sharpe Hospital CEO Pat Ryan has countered, in December legislative meetings, that the IDD patients are also mentally ill and are court-ordered there, because they are dangers to themselves or others. But he used the example of the mental illness "mood disorder not otherwise specified," which is often used for short-term emergency help and for billing purposes when another diagnosis can't be determined.

And yes, courts order patients to the hospitals if they are deemed a danger to themselves or others. Sometimes mental illnesses and certain disabilities are associated with violence, although they are also associated with vulnerability to being targeted for assault, abuse and exploitation. But treatment professionals are supposed to help them get better, and long-term stays tend to make emotional outbursts worse. And according to state law, you can't hold a person with IDD in a hospital indefinitely for the sole reason of disability.

You also can't look at this problem and see the full picture without considering the role of companies that run group homes. Some companies in the state run group homes for people with disabilities who can't live on their own to receive some supervision while living with a handful of other people, so they're more likely to feel connected to a community instead of confined to a hospital. And ideally, our state's goal should be to assist them in living independently.

But the West Virginia Behavioral Healthcare Providers Association has told me that staffing issues have kept them from keeping people in group homes that are harder to help, they say. Maybe the client throws things when they're frustrated. But advocates for people with disabilities say if staffers were paid and supported adequately so that they stayed and really got to know their clients, they'd know how to identify triggers that would prevent those emotional outbursts from happening in the first place. For example, one advocate told me to imagine one patient has outbursts when he hears loud alarms. If a worker has worked with them for a while, they'd know to keep their phone on silent.

And guidelines for providers that serve IDD patients say they're supposed to be prepared to take that patient back or have another agreed-upon plan, not indefinite hospitalization.

This issue isn't a new problem. While there seems to be a lot of outrage now from West

- ACROSS**
- 1 Suddenly blazing star
 - 5 Put stress on
 - 11 Volcano in Sicily
 - 15 Meadow songbird
 - 19 Supreme Norse deity
 - 20 Net-tending player
 - 21 Donahue of TV
 - 22 Genesis garden
 - 23 Very ornate designs of the 1700s
 - 25 Be mindful of
 - 26 Bill with Lincoln
 - 27 Sports site
 - 28 Apr. and Dec.
 - 29 Longtime metal alloy manufacturer
 - 31 M.Sgt., e.g.
 - 33 Friz Freleng's real first name
 - 36 Mean-spirited sort
 - 37 Fill-up sites with star logos
 - 42 Crows
 - 43 Oscar winner Brody
 - 44 Like a straight line, in brief
 - 45 Work to get
 - 46 Mimicking an angry dog
 - 48 1993 event at Mount Carmel Center
 - 55 Comic actor Danny
 - 56 Spill the info, with "up"
 - 58 Region
 - 59 Raines of old Hollywood
 - 60 Active person
 - 62 Spring forth
 - 65 Thingamajig
 - 67 "Please help!"
 - 70 Venue of the 2002 Humanitarian Bowl
 - 73 Log chopper
 - 74 Brief summary
 - 76 Sprung forth
 - 77 Trail
 - 79 Prefix with dynamic
 - 80 Henna applier
 - 81 Read hastily
 - 83 Gibbons, e.g.
 - 87 Something Plus White toothpaste claims to remove
 - 92 Water, humorously
 - 94 Sports side
 - 95 Potting stuff
 - 97 TV journalist Chung
 - 98 Mimicked Daffy Duck
 - 101 A cut from the short loin
 - 105 Playwright Fugard
 - 106 Vocalists
 - 107 Simile middle
 - 108 University in northern California
 - 110 McKellen of "X-Men"
 - 112 Mosul native
 - 117 Aquarium
 - 118 One of 18 on a golf course
 - 119 They're in eight answers in this puzzle
 - 122 Slushy drink
 - 123 Superior to
 - 124 Works the rudder
 - 125 Dimple site
 - 126 Play roster
 - 127 Joins in matrimony
 - 128 Cherished "Mother"
 - 129 Held on to
- DOWN**
- 1 With 11-Down, "Sleepless in Seattle" director
 - 2 Aroma
 - 3 Destructive habit
 - 4 After a while
 - 5 In days past
 - 6 Carl Sagan book
 - 7 Roman censor
 - 8 Blissful
 - 9 Nothing at all
 - 10 One of 18 on a golf course
 - 11 See 1-Down
 - 12 One's wife
 - 13 Nephew's sister
 - 14 Gucci of fashion
 - 15 Unlike righties
 - 16 Farewells
 - 17 Go back to the way it was
 - 18 Belfry sounds
 - 24 Call off
 - 29 Foofaraw
 - 30 Jeer at
 - 32 Christmas trees, usually
 - 34 Single-pot meal
 - 35 Verdi heroine
 - 37 Job to do
 - 38 Pulitzer winner Ferber
 - 39 Diagnostic pic
 - 40 Ran on TV
 - 41 Clothes, colloquially
 - 42 Ewe's call
 - 45 LGA guess
 - 47 Emperor before Galba
 - 49 A la — (menu words)
 - 50 Hammond instruments
 - 51 Potential plant
 - 52 "Three Sisters"
 - 53 Tighten up a muscle
 - 54 Destiny
 - 57 Under wraps
 - 61 Kyoto sash
 - 63 Actress Kelly or Shearer
 - 64 Suffix with prophet
 - 65 Andean llamas
 - 66 Quantity: Abbr.
 - 67 Little quarrel
 - 68 Classic cookie
 - 69 Kosovo native
 - 71 "No" votes
 - 72 Apple device
 - 75 Opening in a parka, say
 - 78 Lacks
 - 80 DeLuise of "Hot Stuff"
 - 82 Large city in Colombia
 - 84 Window unit
 - 85 Kazan of film
 - 86 Search for
 - 88 Green with Grammys
 - 89 Ill-bred man
 - 90 "Oh, woe —!"
 - 91 Jordanian queen dowager
 - 93 Tile artwork
 - 96 Like some trading
 - 98 Milk-related
 - 99 Cornell University city
 - 100 Gives off light
 - 101 Used a rotary telephone
 - 102 Puts in
 - 103 Big T-shirt size: Abbr.
 - 104 Some chair craftspeople
 - 106 Hot pot spot
 - 109 Movie or play
 - 111 "Zip- — -Doo-Dah"
 - 113 Pebble, e.g.
 - 114 Tennis' Arthur
 - 115 Ear swab
 - 116 "— that special!"
 - 119 1940s pres.
 - 120 Suffix with Israel
 - 121 Hush-hush govt. gp.

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FIND THE SUPER CROSSWORD ANSWERS ON PAGE 8!

Virginia officials, I've been seeking information from multiple players in this for at least a year, after advocates told me IDD patients were being inappropriately sent to state-owned hospitals then essentially stuck there. Frankly, I probably should have just released information as it came in, but I was looking for more hard data, and DHHR is notoriously tight-lipped. But I do still have a more in-depth story with more detail that illustrates the human cost of this warehousing, which I pitched as a freelance journalist to the nonprofit online news outlet 100 Days in Appalachia some time ago, to be released very soon.

So, what would a West Virginia that truly supported people with IDD be like? Well, people with IDD would be treated like everyone else, in such a way that they can have social support and human connection. Those are basic needs. We would also support kids before they got to the point that group homes would say they're too "difficult."

For instance, according to a November MetroNews story, a teacher's aide at Berkeley Heights Elementary School was charged with two felony counts of battery and assault of a disabled child. Billy Jean Wyatt of Martinsburg was charged with the two counts after two pre-K teacher's aides reported seeing Wyatt pull the hair of a four-year-old non-verbal autistic boy on the playground of the school in October.

So is it fair if people said the child, once he became an adult, was too difficult to help if no one helped him process that trauma, and he lashed out if he felt a tug at his hair?

DHHR has said there are opportunities for programs at the hospitals like art classes or anger management classes. But would that be enough of a life for you?

According to federal law, people should live in the least restrictive setting possible, like group homes, or homes of their own, where they have

the most opportunity possible to interact with other people.

One more thing of note to think about: I read Senate President Craig Blair's letter about child welfare recommendations to DHHR on Jan. 2: it suggests diverting funds meant for adult group homes to child mental health facilities in response to the child welfare crisis. That's taking money from one crisis and diverting it to another.

And while Governor Jim Justice calls for a flat budget and tax cuts, Disability Rights of West Virginia says helping people with IDD live in communities instead of hospitals is going to require an "infusion of capital," in the words of Disability Rights of West Virginia's Mike Folio.

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N&J Briefs

FROM AROUND HARRISON COUNTY
The Shinnston News provides a calendar of events free of charge to churches and nonprofit organizations. Please submit your listing two weeks prior to the event. Send via email to newsandjournal@yahoo.com

American Legion Auxiliary Unit 31

Monthly meeting
Thursday, Jan. 19, 7 p.m.
Post 31, Shinnston
All members welcome



“Sidewalks” From Pg 1.

During a previous Shinnston Development Authority meeting, SDA President James Coulter had encouraged creating a walking tour through town, with new crosswalks offering more accessibility, especially for those with disabilities, and signs letting pedestrians know how far they’d walked. Promoting walking would encourage support of local businesses, he said.

In related business, Edwards reported on the closure of Silly Boys comic book store and the opening of The Press, a recording studio at 223 Pike Street. According to a Silly Boys Facebook post, inventory would be

sold online, and a “limited storefront opening” was anticipated by April 1, although the post did not say where.

Edwards said there are two vacant storefronts.

He also said a mechanic was opening a shop across from the green space and an established landscaping company was moving into city limits next to B3 boutique.

He also said Mayor Rodney Strait and he are looking into finding a local veterinarian.

“That’s one of the good things about doing business in Shinnston,” Edwards said. “The rent is much cheaper in the third city.”

“Hunt” From Pg 1.

with Franco.

The dinner was a huge success and Franco did a great job in entertaining the packed crowd with stories about his teammates and what it felt like to win the Super Bowl. He told a few funny stories about Steeler quarterback Terry Bradshaw and the crowd roared with laughter. During the dinner, we were sitting at the head table and Franco was sitting next to me and I was so nervous trying to think of something interesting to say that wouldn’t make me look like a starstruck teenager.

It was a wonderful evening and as the dinner wrapped up, the crowd descended on Franco to get him to sign autographs and take pictures, to which he kindly agreed. It was nearing 10 p.m. and I was sure that Franco was looking forward to getting back on the road to Pittsburgh. As the crowd dispersed, Franco was standing with Pam and Ron’s wife Christine, and he asked me if there were somewhere we could sit down and get a drink. I mentioned that there was a small bar on the second floor of the hotel, and he said, “Let’s go.”

For the next two hours, we sat with the Hall of Fame running back and just relaxed and made small talk. He laughed and seemed interested in learning about our

city and what we did for a living. The small crowd in the bar would occasionally look over and I’m sure they couldn’t believe that “The” Franco Harris was sitting in the bar, just relaxing and having a drink. As it neared midnight, Franco looked at his watch and casually said, “Well, I probably ought to be getting on the road!” We walked with him to the parking lot and thanked him for coming and watched as he got in his car and headed out. As his car disappeared in the distance, we looked at each other and realized that this was a night we would remember for the rest of our lives.

About two years ago, Franco was visiting the Harrison County school board offices to promote some bakery items his company was selling to schools and my wife got to see him and remind him of that wonderful evening we spent years before. As usual, he was so gracious and spent some time talking to Pam and signed a copy of the picture that we had taken that evening, so many years before. He was a legend for more than his football exploits and will always have a prominent place in our memories for the gentle, kind human being that he was. Rest in Peace!

THIS WEEK IN West Virginia History

The following events happened on these dates in West Virginia history. To read more, go to e-WV: The West Virginia Encyclopedia at www.wvencyclopedia.org.

Jan. 12, 1869: Newspaperman Herschel Coombs Ogden was born near Fairmont. In 1888, he relocated to Wheeling and entered the newspaper business.

Jan. 13, 1905: Joseph H. Diss Debar died in Philadelphia. A supporter of the movement to create West Virginia, Diss Debar was commissioned in 1863 to design the Great Seal of West Virginia.

Jan. 14, 1842: Marion County was established and named after Revolutionary War hero Francis Marion. Middletown was chosen as the county seat, but the name was changed to Fairmont the following year.

Jan. 14, 1873: The first session of the Glenville Branch of the State Normal School began in the old Gilmer County courthouse. The legislature changed the name to Glenville State College in 1943 and to a university in 2022.

Jan. 15, 1864: Frances Benjamin Johnston was born in Grafton. Johnston gained national renown as the first female press photographer, and enjoyed a long and remarkable career as one of the nation’s leading documentary, portrait, and artistic photographers.

Jan. 16, 1850: Lawman Dan Cunningham was born in Jackson County. His remarkable career

involved him in the Hatfield-McCoy Feud, the West Virginia Mine Wars, and the destruction of moonshine stills.

Jan. 16, 1869: Ephraim Franklin Morgan was born in Marion County. Morgan, a Republican, was governor during the tumultuous West Virginia Mine Wars.

Jan. 17, 1918: The War Department hired a New York engineering firm to build the DuPont munitions plant in Nitro. Within 11 months, the powder plant and a complete town with houses, a civic center and a hospital were completed.

Jan. 17, 1956: Musician Blind Alfred Reed died. He was a street singer, fiddler, and songwriter from Pipestem, Summers County, and is a member of the West Virginia Music Hall of Fame.

Jan. 18, 1842: Wayne County was established from part of Cabell County. It was named for General “Mad Anthony” Wayne, a Revolutionary War hero who later defeated Ohio Indian tribes at the 1794 Battle of Fallen Timbers.

e-WV: The West Virginia Encyclopedia is a project of the West Virginia Humanities Council. For more information contact the West Virginia Humanities Council, 1310 Kanawha Blvd. E., Charleston, WV 25301; 304-346-8500; or visit e-WV at www.wvencyclopedia.org.

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Optimistic, “Last Comic Standing” finalist coming to Clarksburg

The Robinson Grand Performing Arts Center is bringing the national touring stand-up comedian Michael Palascak to downtown Clarksburg on Saturday, Feb. 18, at the historic Robinson Grand Performing Arts Center located at 444 W. Pike St. in Clarksburg.

Michael Palascak, a well-loved comedian who grew up in Wabash, Indiana, has performed on both “The Late Late Show with James Corden” and “The Late Show with Stephen Colbert” in the same year. In addition, his résumé includes “A Little Late with Lilly Singh,” “Letterman,” “The Tonight Show with Jay Leno,” “The Late Late Show with Craig Ferguson,” “Conan,” and his own Comedy Central Half-Hour special. Palascak was also a Top 5 Finalist on “Last Comic Standing.”

“Michael Palascak is a comedian who has arrived but is also still on the rise,” said Jason A. Young, the Robinson Grand’s program manager,” according to a news release.

Drew Hunt of The Chicago

Reader wrote about Michael, “In a lot of ways, he represents the ideal antidote to the sort of unbridled cynicism that pervades much of contemporary stand-up.” Michael’s optimism continues in the new National Lampoon YouTube series “The Bright Side” where he takes a positive stand on a negative topic.

“The bottom line for me is Michael Palascak makes me laugh, and I guarantee he will make our audience laugh,” said Young. “We had the opportunity to book him, we took it, and I am really glad we did.”

Michael’s likability allows him to relate to his audiences in a real way, which sets up the huge laughs he gets from his sharp, personal material. Consistently writing and performing, Palascak recently released both a new album, “The Internet Live” through 800 Pound Gorilla, and a new stand-up special on the Dry Bar app, 1984.

Tickets for Michael Palascak start at \$13. Tickets can be purchased at tickets.therobinsongran.com or at by calling 855-773-6283.



Stand-up comedian Michael Palascak has a massive online presence through Dry Bar Comedy, a family-friendly, stand-up show based in Provo, Utah, which also distributes performer material through a smartphone app. Others fans know him from YouTube and Instagram.

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Bridgeport and Robert C. Byrd duel in Clarksburg



The Bottom Line

By Bill Nestor
Sports Editor

Last Saturday, Robert C. Byrd hosted cross-town rival, Bridgeport, in a classic boys' basketball showdown. The Indians came from behind and held off a fierce Flying Eagle rally for a 50-48 victory.

Robert C. Byrd opened play in Clarksburg in impressive fashion while utilizing the offensive efforts of Quinten Cooley. The senior scored six points to help his team to a 12-11 lead at the end of the first segment.

Bridgeport went to their leading scorer, Anthony Spatafore, for a spark. The senior responded with seven points in eight minutes of play. Spatafore received supplemental support in a pair of three pointers (one from Zach Ayoob and one from Ashton Curry) to carry a 24-23 lead heading into the halftime break.

Cooley continued his strong play when he put in another six points. Charles Hawkins had a pair of field goals to help keep it close heading into the third quarter.

After intermission, Spatafore went from hot to "unguardable" as he knocked down a pair of three pointers and a total of 10 of his team's 16 points to double up Robert C. Byrd and take a nine-point lead. Cooley scored five points and recorded his teams two third period field goals.

The Tribe had a comfortable nine-point lead when leading scorer Brayden Thomason picked up the pace. Thomason had scored in double figures in every game this season but had only produced one field goal in the first three quarters to go with a pair of free throws. He netted six points while Hawkins

contributed a bucket to draw the Flying Eagles into striking distance. Defensively, RCB slapped on some full court pressure and netted some key turnovers. The frantic comeback effort cut Indian lead to three points with 40 seconds remaining.

Bridgeport needed a bucket to regain momentum, and they got it from Phoenix Sickles. He produced a layup to extend the lead to five points. The field goal also put Sickles in double figures in the affair.

Thomason connected on a late three pointer, but the Flying Eagles were out of time outs and the remaining seconds ran off of the clock without the Tribe attempting an inbound pass.

The win was Bridgeport's fourth in a row and pushed their record to 6-3. They were led by Spatafore's game-high 23 points. Sickles was the only other Indian to find double figures. He had 10 points in the lockup on 5 of 8 shooting.

The Indians were 21 of 43 from the field including 5 of 12 from three-point land. It was the Tribe's bench that proved to be a difference maker, and they outscored RCB's bench 14-1.

Cooley led the Flying Eagles with 22 points while Thomason chipped in with 13. The setback snapped RCB's two-game win streak and moved their record to 3-4.

The Indians hit the road for a pair of Big 10 matchups this week. They are at North Marion tonight, and then they will travel to Lewis County on Jan. 17.

The Flying Eagles visit Elkins this evening, followed by a home tilt with North Marion. Liberty and Lincoln will also provide big tests for RCB later this month.

The return matchup between Bridgeport and Robert C. Byrd is set for Feb. 16 in Tribe Territory. If it is anything like the previous battle, area fans will once again be treated to a great night of hoops.

That will do it for now. Until next week...take care and God Bless!

Harrison County EMS



Athletes of the Week

It's that time once again to acknowledge the efforts of Harrison County's student-athletes. Each week we review the performances of the athletes from the six schools (Bridgeport, Liberty, Lincoln, Notre Dame, Robert C. Byrd, and South Harrison) in our county.

The Shinnston News & Harrison County Journal Athlete of the Week award is an avenue to promote the youth of our county while bringing attention to their athletic accomplishments.

The winners of the Shinnston News and Harrison County Journal Athletes of the Week award are Robert C. Byrd's Martina Howe and Bridgeport's Anthony Spatafore.

Flying Eagle basketball standout, Martina Howe, had an impressive week. Howe had game highs in points (16) and rebounds (8) in a huge win over highly ranked East Fairmont last Wednesday. Howe added 10 points in Friday's win over Lincoln county at the King Coal Classic. The third game of the week was a win over Chapmanville in the King Coal Classic. Howe netted 16 points including a game-high four three pointers.

Indian hoopster, Anthony Spatafore, came up big in his team's win over cross-town rival Robert C. Byrd. Spatafore led all scorers with 23 points, including a pair of three pointers in the showdown in Clarksburg.

Congratulations to Robert C. Byrd's Martina Howe and Bridgeport's Anthony Spatafore for being named the Shinnston News and Harrison County Journal Athletes of the Week!



From The World of Parks & Recreation

By Doug Comer

Preliminaries in the works for March Dinosaur Exhibit

The wheels are in motion for the final leg of enrichments this school calendar year as the parks department prepares for another visit from the dinosaurs at the Recreation Complex here in Clarksburg. Director Mike Book plans to open the doors early March for weekly field day visits and open house hours on the weekends.

"Our department works very hard making sure that everything is in place from preparing the budget to closing the last box to be shipped back to the original owners," Book said. "The long hours dedicated to the program is well worth it as we provide a top-tiered program directed to teaching kids a piece of history with hands-on activities that beats a book any day."

Year after year, the biggest challenge is how to be better than the previous and the only way is to get the most current information about our prehistoric friends. The internet, as well as current books, feeds us new information that helps keep our program fresh. Stories change all the time about the habits of dinosaurs and the staff has been working diligently in order to have the most current information available. In discussions with Book, he has already enlightened us on some things that may not have happened.

"Here recently, we learned that velociraptors may not have had the same habits that of wolves or coyotes. We have always said that the raptors ran in packs and would flank the outsides when hunting prey, and in recent information, that may not be all the way true. It is our job to be on top of this information as you may see similar items from previous exhibits, but these fossils will tell us a different story now," Book explained.

Class field day registration began early December and dates filled up quickly, as expected, and while there are a few days left, parks anticipates that those will be closed out before we start assemblage in February. In fact, one room at the rec complex has been a storage area for pieces that are already going to be used for this year.

"We are looking at a smorgasbord of things to present this year for the kids," Book added. "We do have a few new items that will be on display this year, and as advertised, there will be hundreds of replica and real fossils for the kids to see and touch. It is really hard to believe that over ten years ago, we had a t-rex femur bone as the feature of the exhibit and now we have full-sized complete fossils of prehistoric creatures. We have come a long way with this enrichment."

The two-month exhibit begins in March and will run through April before closure of the program. Weekends and special evening events will be offered to the public when available, and as usual, the exhibit is free of charge to those who come.



Pictured above is this year's Lincoln High girls' basketball team consisting of Gracey Fortney (2), Sylvie Salerno (3), Aliyah Elder (10), Sadie Adams (11), Brooklyn Davisson (14), Megan Tucker (15), Hope Blackwell (22), Alexis Williams (23), Ashlyn Riley (24), Myah Riley (25), and Phoenix Gauldin (42) coached by Rob Hawkins and Mike Darway.



Pictured above is this year's Lincoln High boys' basketball team consisting of David Burdette (0), Antwan Hilliard (1), Brayden Edgell (2), Noah Sears (3), Riley Lanham (4), Nick Kellar (5), Jayce Brooks (10), Lance Hostuttler (11), Landon Swiger (12), Levi Belcastro (14), Maddox Perine (20), Aidan Rice (22), Jason Cawthon (23), Nathan Swiger (24), Wyatt Finch (30), Kaden Carder (32), Klayton Cummings (34), and Zachary Cottrill (42) coached by Jordan Toth and Andy Sorine.

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HCSCC SPOTLIGHT

Featuring news from the Harrison County Senior Citizen Center

Senior center food program receives statewide recognition

By Erin Beck

When Connie Roberts, of Mountaineer Food Bank, told the Harrison County Senior Citizens Center's Barbara Oldaker that Roberts planned to stop by late last month, Oldaker figured it was about paperwork.

As the food programs manager, Oldaker spends much of her time on paperwork to be turned in to groups like Mountaineer Food Bank.

But instead, Oldaker was surprised and honored when she realized Roberts was there to recognize her senior nutrition program as the first recipient of a new award for impressive efforts in food distribution.

Roberts arrived with a plaque and flowers to offer Oldaker the award for, among other efforts,

regularly distributing the most food boxes, 355, per month.

Connie Roberts, who works in agency relations as the food bank's senior hunger coordinator, runs the commodity supplemental food program, also known as the senior box program.

Roberts said her organization provides 5,000 food boxes to senior centers, apartment complexes and food pantries across the state. The boxes are meant to serve as extra nutrition supplementing regular meals helping seniors stretch their income.

"She just does a very good job," Roberts said. "Her paperwork is just immaculate, and she gets her reports in on time. She calls us if she has a question. And getting that many boxes

See "Recognition" on Pg 6.

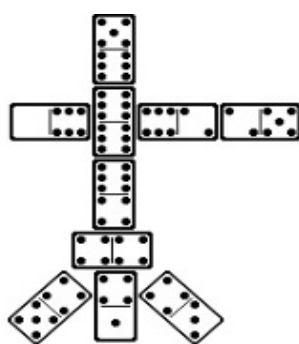


Antero Resources makes a \$2,000 donation to the senior center food pantry. From left to right are Bill O'Field, senior center board president; Beth Fitzgerald, senior center executive director; Kevin Ellis, regional senior vice president of Antero Resources; Barbara Oldaker, senior center food programs manager; and Joseph Caruso, senior center chief financial officer.

Notice

Harrison County Senior Center will be closed on Jan. 16 for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

Card & Game Group seeking more players



Need a mid-week activity to fight the winter blues? The Wednesday Card & Game Group is seeking new players for Skip-Bo, Phase 10, and Dominos - Chickenfoot games.

No experience is necessary. Group members will teach the games.

Games take place in the Kinley Café. Those interested may call Sandy at 304-672-0903.

Board meetings scheduled for 2023

Those wanting to stay up-to-date in 2023 on Harrison County Senior Citizens Center board meetings can mark their calendars because the board has scheduled meetings for the year.

Board meeting dates scheduled for 2023 are Jan. 26, March 23, April 27, June 22, Sept. 28, and Oct. 26. Board meetings are generally scheduled at 9:30 a.m. in person and on Zoom, and senior center members may tune in.

The next board meeting will be on Thursday, Jan. 26 at 9:30 a.m. in person and on Zoom.

Board Members

Bill O'Field, president; Ryan Kennedy, vice president; Donna Stuart, secretary; Donald Burton, treasurer; Janet Dotson; Franklin Hairston; Sharon Hamilton; Will Hyman; Harley Jeffries; Sandra Mossor; Bill Phillips; Susan Thomas; and Betty Waddy.

2023 Book Talks to kick off with tech author



Michael Gorzka, who goes by "Tech Wizard Mike," will present a Book Talk at the senior center on Wednesday, Jan. 18. He has been teaching adults how to use computers, mobile phones and other devices, as well as the Internet, since 1995.

Seniors who want to better keep up with family and friends, make other connections, and explore the vast amount of information on the Internet through electronic devices will have the chance to hear from a Clarksburg expert and author on that subject.

Michael Gorzka, Clarksburg author, will present a Book Talk at the senior center on Wednesday, Jan. 18, at 11 a.m.

He is the author of a series of books written in an easy-to-read, lighthearted, and whimsical style to help the technology shy.

Following his talk,

"Tech Wizard Mike" will be available to answer questions and help with technological devices for those attending, as time permits.

Gorzka works at the senior center helping seniors and others with their smartphones, tablets, and computers.

The Book Talk is being hosted by the senior center's Book Club and co-sponsored by the Harrison County Senior Citizens Center and the Cultural Foundation of Harrison County.

For more information contact Book Club facilitator Bill O'Field at 304-623-6795.



Dozens gather for a Harrison County Senior Citizens Center holiday luncheon on Dec. 15.

Seniors bring children Christmas cheer



From front to back are Mike Gorzka, Bill O'Field, Margaret Russell, Sandy Mossor and Terry Lynch, seniors who enjoyed riding in the center's van during the 2022 Winterfest in Clarksburg.



Winterfest Parade 3: From front to back, participating in the Winterfest parade were Glenn Burr, Donna Burr, Julie Cobb and Kathryn Michalik.

Holiday luncheon returns with success

After a two-year absence due to the pandemic, seniors enjoyed a well-attended holiday luncheon served by board members, staff, and volunteers on Dec. 15, 2022, with books by West Virginia

authors, door prizes, 50/50 and free bingo with gift card prizes.

West Virginia authors had books available for purchase and each author donated a book for a door prize.

The center's

Book Club provided complimentary gift wrapping for all book purchases.

A special thank you to Parks & Recreation employees for their assistance.

Winterfest 2022 lined up on either side of the street to watch the parade while seniors riding in the decorated van waved to onlookers. Several staff members are active members of the Winterfest and First Fridays Planning Committee to support downtown Clarksburg.

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500 W. Main St., Clarksburg WV 26301
(304) 623-6795
Email: director@harrisoncountyseniorcenter.org

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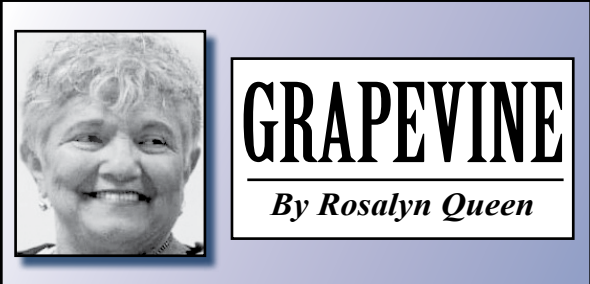
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A column by a proud grandmother



Approximately 100 people gathered in the courtroom of the Honorable Judge Tom Bedell to witness the swearing-in of Bennett Queen as the state senator of our district.

Queen has completed serving six years as a delegate and looks forward to starting his work as a senator. He graduated from Bridgeport High School and West Virginia University. He is the owner of his own business, Ben Queen Photography. He is an active member of the Simpson Creek Baptist Church.

Queen follows a long tradition of public service by members of his family. His grandfather, Fray Queen was elected to serve as a magistrate of Harrison County. He first was elected as a constable in Clark District and then went on to be elected magistrate. Originally, his office was located in Shinnston and then he moved into the courthouse where he served until retiring.

Ben's father, Mike Queen served as a member of the West Virginia House of Delegates. He later was elected as a member of the Harrison County Board of Education. He served this board as president. This makes three generations of Queens to serve Harrison County.

We would be remiss if we did not mention that Ben's great aunt, the late Ruby Queen Keister was elected to serve as a Harrison County commissioner.



Three generations of Queens, who have served Harrison County in elected positions are from left, Michael L. Queen, Ben Queen and Fray G. Queen. They are pictured at the swearing-in of State Senator Ben Queen, R- Harrison.

This would make four proud generations of Queens to serve the citizens of Harrison County.

Queen invites the citizens of his district to visit him in Charleston while the legislature is in session.

A proud grandmother is happy to bring this article to you and until next week "Now You Have Heard It Through The Grapevine."

"Recognition"

From Pg 5.



Barbara Oldaker, senior center food programs manager, at left, was surprised when Connie Roberts of Mountaineer Food Bank honored Oldaker and the senior food box program for its accomplishments in distribution.

out per month is really a big job. And she does it very well. And she's just been a real asset in that community."

Oldaker said she had started the program because of the need. She works full-time at the center, but much of the nutrition program work is done on a volunteer basis, including evening and Saturday work.

"There are seniors out there that make \$400 and some dollars, sometimes less than that a month," she said. "They fall through the cracks with the government. They pay their utility bills or if they live in a high rise, they pay the rent and utility bills and then they have nothing left. They have to decide which is more important, medicine, eating or paying the utility bill and I don't think anybody should have to choose."

Roberts came up with the idea to recognize distributors "either because of the quantity of boxes that they distribute, or how well they do their paperwork, (or) how well they handle the public and Barb just fit all of those categories."

She expects it to be an annual honor. But Roberts, who started her job in July, was so impressed by Harrison County's operations that she wanted to honor Oldaker first.

Oldaker acknowledged that she does try to be meticulous, and that her work involves long hours, including the time spent looking for deals and interviewing volunteers. They deliver to high-rises, while some seniors pick their food up at the center.

But she also credited a group of five to eight volunteers.

"They have to have

the compassion and the heart to do this kind of work," she said. "Because you don't get paid for it. And I have one heck of a good crew."

The food box program is for those over 60 who meet income limits. The U.S. Department of Agriculture distributes both food and administrative funds to participating states and tribal organizations to operate the program. The boxes also include recipes and nutritional information.

Oldaker also runs several other senior center food programs, including a food pantry, a five-meal-pack feeding program state officials started because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and bags of food for the homeless. They also partner with area businesses that donate fresh produce and sometimes other food.

In addition, Antero Resources recently provided the senior center with a \$2,000 check for the food pantry.

"\$2,000 does go quite a bit," Oldaker said. "You wouldn't think it does. But it does. You just have to manage your money. It's like when you go shopping for yourself at home. You've got to be wise with your money and get what you can."

When asked why Harrison County does such a good job at distribution, Oldaker didn't point to her own skills but instead to the demand, even though Harrison County has a smaller population than several other counties in the state.

"There's a need out in the community," she said, simply. "It's not just Clarksburg; it's everywhere."

Disability advocacy events planned

The Fair Shake Network (FSN), a statewide advocacy group for people with disabilities, will host a two-day event in the state capital for those who want to learn about advocating for people with disabilities, according to a news release.

On Jan. 17, the Fair Shake Network will host its David Stewart Legislative Training at the Blessed John XXIII Pastoral Center in Charleston from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. The training is for people with disabilities, their family members, and organizational

representatives. The training will cover topics such as working with legislators, FSN's disability agenda, and an update on legislation. The keynote speakers for the event are Ricardo and Donna Thornton. The Thorntons survived the notorious Forest Haven institution (outside of Washington, D.C.), a place Ricardo Thornton described as a prison for people with intellectual disabilities. The residents were routinely hosed down, drugged and dressed only in diapers or sheets. Through the courage and skills that Ricardo

Thornton developed through being a Special Olympics athlete, he helped shut down Forest Haven and went on to prove that people with intellectual disabilities can live lives full of love and leadership. The Thorntons were the inspiration behind the 2003 television movie "Profoundly Normal," starring Kirstie Alley and Delroy Lindo.

On Jan. 18, the FSN will host its Jan Lilly-Stewart Disability Advocacy Day at the state Capitol. The day will begin with a rally. During the rally, the FSN will release its 2023 Disability Agenda,

and a proclamation will be read by someone from the governor's office. The FSN will be recognized by the West Virginia House of Delegates, and the Senate will read a resolution naming the day Jan Lilly-Stewart Disability Advocacy Day. Attendees will also hear a message from State Treasurer Riley Moore. The rally will also feature words from Charlotte Roth of People First of West Virginia. There will also be vendors set up at the upper rotunda.

Stipend funds are being made available to people with developmental disabilities and family members of people with developmental disabilities through funds from the WV Developmental Disabilities Council.

Stipend funds are also available to people with disabilities and their family members through donations and program income of the Fair Shake Network.

Anyone wanting more information can contact the Fair Shake Network office at 304-766-0061 or 1-800-497-4746 or by email at fsn@fairshake.org.



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OBITUARIES**Nila Isabel Miller**

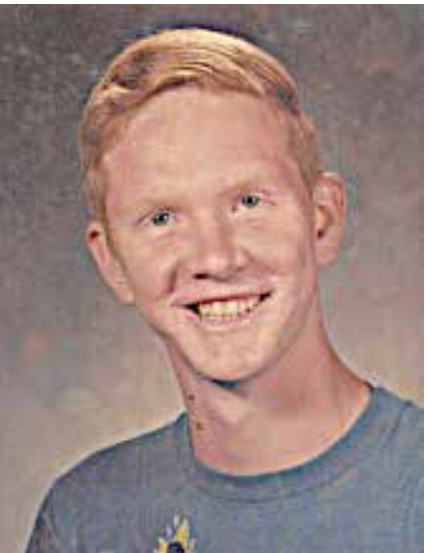
Nila Isabel Miller, 83, of Clarksburg, passed away on Tuesday, Dec. 27, 2022, at the United Hospital Center in Bridgeport. She was born in Balboa, Panama, Sept. 26, 1939, a daughter of the late Cristobal and Rosario Ortega Rios. On May 31, 1969, she married Robert D. Miller, Sr. who preceded her in death on May 26, 2008.

Surviving are three children, Robert Miller and his companion, Beth Harward of Philippi; Maria Miller of Clarksburg; and James Miller of Clarksburg; seven grandchildren: Michael Miller, Jeremiah Mason and his companion Brittany, Noah Mason, Jade Miller, James Gemono and his companion Samantha, Christopher Gemono, and Antonio Gemono; two great-grandchildren, Jasmine Oulai and Myles Miller; one sister, Marcelina Rios of Panama; and several nieces and nephews.

Nila was a homemaker, mother, grandmother, and friend. She was a devout Roman Catholic and was very loved by her family.

A graveside service was held at the WV National Cemetery, Pruntytown, Monday, Jan. 9, 2023, at 10 a.m.

The Perine Funeral Home is honored to serve the Miller family.

**James Coleman Yeager**

James Coleman Yeager, 53, of Lumberport, passed away on Tuesday, Jan. 3, 2023, at United Hospital Center. He was born Jan. 16, 1969, in Clarksburg a son of Dora Ann Pumphrey Yeager, who survives in Salem, and the late Roger Freeland Yeager Sr.

James is survived by his brother, Roger F. Yeager Jr. and his wife Marlene of Salem; his twin brother, Arthur Yeager and his wife Michelle of Lumberport; his sister, Ida Katherine Moore and her husband Mark of Orville, OH; and brother, Edward Yeager of Lumberport;

several nieces and nephews; his long-time companion, Charlene Cochran; his stepson, Clarence Hart and his companion Jessie Jones; as well as his grandchildren, Claire and Trayden Hart, all of Clarksburg.

He loved tinkering on the farm at his old homeplace. James also enjoyed hunting and fishing.

In keeping with his wishes, cremation services were provided by Perine Funeral Home. Friends will be received at Perine Funeral Home, 1348 S. Pike St. Shinnston, on Saturday, Jan. 28 from noon until the time of the memorial service at 1 p.m.

The Perine Funeral Home is honored to serve the Yeager family.

**Russell Steele Broadwater, Jr.**

Russell Steele Broadwater, Jr., 70, of Jones Run, Lumberport, passed away on Friday, Jan. 6, 2023, at his home surrounded by his family. He was born Nov. 1, 1952, in Clarksburg a son of the late Russell Steele Broadwater, Sr. and Marguerite Adams Broadwater.

Russell is survived by his loving wife, Cynthia K. Rice Broadwater, whom he married on Dec. 7, 1972; his children: Jennifer D. Broadwater; Russell C. Broadwater and his wife Christie; and Timothy W. Broadwater and his companion Brian Moats; his grandchildren: Cynthia McLean; Hayden McLean; Clayton Broadwater; and Kaylyn Wiseman; as well as his great grandchild, Jamison Puddister.

As Paul Harvey used to say, "Now here's the rest of the story": Russell was a faithful, spiritual, supporting, firm, strong, protective, kind, compassionate, and loving man when it came to his family. His word was his bond. There wasn't any project he couldn't accomplish. He could do plumbing, welding, and construction. From his own plans, he could create utility trailers, wood burning stoves, gun vaults, and reconstruct damaged vehicles. All of these things were done for

extra funds for his family. The Broadwaters always went on family vacations, usually with a few extras, and camped from Canada to Florida. His passions were camping, fishing, hunting, and his family. Russell retired from the Harrison Power Station with 41 years of service.

You will never see his photographs in a magazine or on the television, and he was neither rich nor famous. However, he accomplished the most difficult job that you can do: his legacy and life were devoted to raising a respectful, decent, and loving family. He accomplished this goal.

In keeping with Russell's personal request, there will be no services or memorials at this time. Cremation services were provided by Perine Funeral Home.

The Perine Funeral Home is honored to serve the Broadwater family.

**Charles "Chuck" Edward Stire, Sr.**

Charles "Chuck" Edward Stire, Sr., 72, of Meadowbrook, passed away on Saturday, Dec. 31, 2022, at the Genesis Pierpont Center in Fairmont. He was the son of the late Kester Blake Stire and Lucille (White) Stire. He was born Nov. 27, 1950.

Chuck was a graduate of Victory High School in Adamston, Class of 1969. He went to Toccoa Falls Bible College in Stephens County, GA, and he was there in 1977 when the dam broke. Chuck had many occupations throughout the years, one of which was a selector/packer at Anchor Hocking in Clarksburg, where he met and married Joyce Davis. They married on July 10, 1987.

Chuck is survived by his wife, Joyce (Davis) Stire; six children: Leah Stire of Irvington, KY; Charles Stire Jr., of Guston, KY; Hubert Blake Stire and wife Keri of Morgantown;

Jessica Stire of Shinnston; Jordan Stire of Shinnston; and Jarrod Stire and wife Tosha of Central Point, OR; one brother, Kester Stire, Jr. of Worthington; two sisters: Patty McIntyre of Lost Creek and Charlotte Goontz of Pine Grove; as well as many grandchildren, nieces, and nephews.

In addition to his parents, he is preceded in death by one sister, Mildred JoAnne (Stire) Stalnaker.

Chuck was a caring man who would give you his last dollar if you needed it. He was a creative man who had written a series of stories called "The Adventures of Toby" and several songs. He was also a member of Stealey Assembly of God, and later Jones Run Independent Church.

A Celebration of Life service will be held at Family Life Fellowship Church, 124 Chestnut St., Enterprise, on Saturday, Jan. 21, 2023, from 11 a.m. until 1 p.m., time of service, with Pastor Aaron Thomas officiating. Inurnment will be at Shinnston Memorial Cemetery at a later date.

Dorsey Funeral Home is honored to be handling the arrangements for the Stire family.

**Twila M. "Nikki" Vincent**

Twila M. "Nikki" Vincent, 70, of Clarksburg, passed away Jan. 4, 2023. She was born in Clarksburg on Sept. 11, 1952, to the late Lonnie Vincent and Dorothy Shelhammer. Along with her parents, she is preceded in death by her niece, Brooklyn Pode, and brother-in-law, Thomas Matthews.

She is survived by her niece, Laryssa Pode (Shane) of Michigan; nephew Ryan Pode of Michigan; and sister Donna Matthews of Clarksburg.

Nikki enjoyed watching Nascar, football, and playing Solitaire.

Friends were received at Harmer Funeral Home on Monday, Jan. 9, 2023, from 10 a.m. to noon. A funeral service followed at noon with Pastor Duane Bartrug officiating. Interment was at Shinnston Memorial Cemetery.

Out of the Past

Memorable photographs from around Harrison County



An early 1900s image shows the 100 block of Pike Street. Charles Street Christian Church appears in the distance. Submitted by Bobby Bice.

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Legislative Lookahead: 'Education is an economic-development tool' in state of West Virginia

By Matt Young, WV Press Association

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — "Education is an economic development tool."

When the West Virginia Legislature opens its 2023 session, legislators can expect to hear that message from their leadership.

Members of leadership participated in a panel discussion with members of the media on Friday, as part of the WV Press Association's annual "Legislative Lookahead." Held at the Culture Center in Charleston, the Lookahead offered reporters an opportunity to hear from legislators and interested lobbyists just days ahead of the 2023 Regular Session.

The morning's first panel - aptly named "Legislative Leadership" - consisted of Senate President Craig Blair, R-Berkeley; House Speaker Roger Hanshaw, R-Clay; and House Minority Leader Doug Skaff, D-Kanawha.

Blair began by first thanking the media "for all you do for the State of West Virginia," before moving right into education, saying, "Education is an economic development tool."

"I, and the West Virginia Senate, are very interested in improving the economic conditions in the State for the people of West Virginia," Blair said. "We've put a lot of effort into that over the last eight years, and we're going to continue to do that."

Blair praised Sen. Amy Grady, R-Mason, as first Education Committee Chair in more than a half-century to be employed as an educator.

"I believe that she is going to be one of the greatest assets in being able to get education correct for our students," Blair said.

Blair said, "we have done just about everything we can do" for alternative education options, including home and charter schools, the legislature will "keep its eyes on that. ... If anything needs to be tuned up to be able to address that, we will."

After citing the state's

acquisition of several new businesses as proof that "We're getting it right - we're attractive," Blair reiterated the need for education reform by saying, "We need to be able to make it so our teachers can do exactly what they were hired to do - teach."

Blair then shifted topics, and spoke briefly about the recent developments affecting the Public Employees Insurance Agency (PEIA). On Thursday, a Wheeling-area medical facility announced that it will discontinue accepting PEIA-insured patients as of July 1.

"Who didn't see this coming?" Blair asked. "We did in the Senate. We passed a bill last year to do 110% of Medicaid payments - we passed that out of the Senate unanimously. And it sure looks like we're going to launch the PEIA bill that we did last year that had the funding, so you don't have the Wheeling Hospital up there doing what they're doing."

"If we don't do something it is going to be contagious, mark my words," Blair added. "That cannot happen. We have a duty to make sure that our state employees have quality healthcare."

From there, Blair moved on to the Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR), explaining that the Senate is prepared to immediately introduce a bill which will seek to divide the department into "three more manageable components."

"We're going to get DHHR right," Blair said, before adding that the

DHHR's current operating budget is nearly twice the size of the state's general revenue fund.

"Last but not least," Blair said, moving on to his final talking point, "is the flatline budget. When there's a pile of money out there, there's a feeding frenzy."

"The money is not going to be spent willy-nilly anywhere," Blair continued. "The reason why I say it like this is because human nature dictates otherwise."

Blair further explained that the Senate plans to invest the state's \$1.9 billion surplus into areas that will benefit "our future," noting that, "We've got a ton of one-time expenses." After referencing "deferred maintenance" as immediate financial needs, Blair added, "We need to put money back into the pockets of West Virginians also - there needs to be a tax reduction. But that tax reduction can't be to the point where we're not sure that we'll be able to pay for it."

Next to the podium was Speaker Hanshaw, who told those in attendance, "The 60-day legislative session is an incredibly long two months if you're trying to keep something from happening, but it passes by incredibly fast if you're trying to actually get something to happen."

According to Hanshaw, the 2022 legislative session saw West Virginia transition into a more diversified economy. Hanshaw explained that, "We are no longer a single-focused economy that's driven exclusively by severance taxes, driven by natural resources."



House Speaker Roger Hanshaw, R-Clay, speaks at the WV Press Association's annual "Legislative Lookahead," held at the Culture Center in Charleston Friday, while Senate President Craig Blair, R-Berkeley, listens. State leaders said tax reform and education will be priorities for the legislative session, which began this week.

"My personal priority - both for 2023 and my entire tenure of service in this legislature for as long as I'm here - will be continuing to diversify our economy, to create more opportunity for men and women who live in West Virginia, to create job opportunities for themselves and their families, and for those who've left our state to come back," Hanshaw added.

Hanshaw expressed his belief that energy production and distribution must remain a priority in West Virginia. According to Hanshaw, however, the state must also embrace the idea of sourcing energy from non-carbon sources.

"We certainly want to continue to support our fossil industries here in our state," Hanshaw noted. "But we want to play nationally and internationally in the economy. That's our objective and our goal, and that's my priority as

a leader of a legislative branch. And to many players, that means sourcing non-carbon sources."

Skaff, the panel's final speaker, echoed many of the sentiments expressed by Blair and Hanshaw. As one of only 12 remaining Democrats in the 100-member House of Representatives, Skaff told reporters that his party is "ready to roll up our sleeves, put party politics aside, and work together for a common endeavor."

"We might have a different way to get to the end result," Skaff added. "But that's the beauty of our state. Our job is to represent, and make sure that all voices are heard. We need leaders who are going to work together."

After explaining the Democrat's shared priorities regarding education and the budget surplus, Skaff spoke of the state's foster care system as being an area of concern, saying, "Foster care legislation

is a priority. Not only on our (Democrat) side, but on their (Republican) side too. We must stop kicking this down the road - we've got to fix this."

According to Skaff, tax reform will be "the next topic to come up on day one" of the new session.

"We need to come together as one unified legislative body, regardless of whether you're a Democrat or Republican, and figure out how we can give the most bang for the buck back to the people of West Virginia," Skaff added. "The Democratic party is on board."

The Legislative Lookahead was made possible through the sponsorship of AARP West Virginia, WVU University Relations, and the WV Press Association Foundation.

The 2023 Regular Session of the West Virginia Legislature is scheduled to begin on Wednesday, Jan. 11.

Super Crossword

Answers

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