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Marco Island, Florida



By Jim Hunt for the News and Journal

After shoveling what I hoped was my last pile of snow and knocking the final icicles from our garage roof, my wife and I came to a mutual realization—our winter-worn bodies needed a break. A week in a warmer climate sounded like the perfect remedy. Fortunately, my wife’s longtime friend, Connie, owns a house on Marco Island and graciously invited us to spend the week with her. Connie and her late husband, Angelo, built their home on Marco Island back when the area was just beginning to evolve into the sought-after winter retreat it is today. Over the years, my wife visited many times, but I was always tied up with work or tackling a home project. Truth be told, I never considered myself a “beach person.” The idea of baking under the sun and ending up with sand in every imaginable place never quite appealed to me. But as I would soon discover, my beach aversion was about to change. Our journey started with a direct flight



Picture (L-R) Connie Deiriggi, Pam Hunt, “Milton the Manatee” and Jim Hunt.

from Pittsburgh to Fort Myers, Florida, on Spirit Airlines—just a quick two-hour trip on a Sunday afternoon. After landing, we headed to baggage claim, and while waiting for our luggage, my wife nudged me and whispered, “That guy over there looks like Joe Manchin.” I took a closer look and, sure enough, it was West Virginia’s former U.S. Senator. As a familiar face in the Mountain State, he was in town for a speaking engagement, and we chatted for a few

See “Hunt” on Pg 3

The Fading of Winter Means That Spring Delights Are On the Way

The 28 days of February have quietly slipped away and we are now into March. There are so many events to observe in March that we will have much to do. A lot of us will be attending Mardi Gras parties to celebrate the coming of Lent. The first Wednesday of March will be Ash Wednesday and this is



GRAPEVINE

By Rosalyn Queen

the official beginning to usher in Easter. On Ash Wednesday, most of us will go to church to receive ashes which

is a cross drawn on our foreheads by the priest while he recites to us the

prayer ending “and into dust thou shall return.” Lent is a season leading up to Easter when Christian’s do some sort of penance, such as attending mass daily or some sacrifice that prepares them for the “Risen Christ” on Easter Sunday. Many Christians do not eat

See “Grapevine” on Pg 7

New Warner, Still Same Commitment to Excellence in the Secretary of State’s Office

By Stephen Smoot

For two terms, Mac Warner applied his military and other experience guiding

Afghanistan’s elections to make West Virginia contests both more secure and more efficient for those legally allowed to cast

votes.

Mac Warner ran unsuccessfully for Governor in 2024, but

his brother Kris seeks to continue and build on the work of his brother over the next

See “Office” on Pg 7

Certificate of Need Laws Challenged in West Virginia

By Stephen Smoot

Repealing Certificate of Need laws will improve access to care for some of our most vulnerable citizens and provide services that barely exist in some parts of our state,” said Governor Patrick Morrisey in a recent social media post. He went on to add that “New health care facilities in West Virginia should not be required to request a permission slip from the government to set up services. That’s big government activism at its worst.”

While legislation introduced by Senate President Randy Smith failed to advance, the question over certificate of need laws will likely continue to arise.

The West Virginia

Hospital Association succeeded in marshaling initial opposition to the bill in this session, but often reforms gain momentum from one session to the next. In other words, the defeat of the bill was likely the start, not the end, of debates on the issue

Simply put, in general, certificate of need laws require the approval of a State or a health management authority before the establishment of a new health care facility.

Certificate of Need laws emerged first in the Great Depression in the transportation industry. About three decades later, in 1964, New York State passed the first one in reference to health care entities. By 1974, the National Health

See “Laws” on Pg 9



Rosalyn Queen served as Mistress of Ceremonies at the Women of Distinction luncheon and awards ceremony in Clarksburg. The Honorable Jill Upson, invited as keynote speaker, looks on.

Jill Upson Headlines Soulful and Inspiring Women of Distinction Awards Luncheon

By Stephen Smoot

“I love volunteering,, I love community service. I admire these people,” shared Betty Waddy, President of the Progressive Women’s Association of Harrison County.”

Waddy had also expressed that it was a true privilege “to honor

these super amazing women,” but beyond the honor and celebration lay the influence work of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit - as many of the women professed through the entire event. Dozens arrived at the Uptown Events Center operated by the PWA to celebrate the contributions and

See “Luncheon” on Pg 8



Each week copies of the News & Journal are distributed in each hospital to patients compliments of these community-minded sponsors listed:
UNITED HOSPITAL CENTER, LOUIS JOHNSON V.A. HOSPITAL, HIGHLAND CLARKSBURG HOSPITAL & WV VETERANS NURSING FACILITY

“Smoot” From Pg 3.

against the wealthier malefactors will be more often used against those least able to protect themselves. Legal proceedings in CAF cases pit the government against the property, leading to cases such as “United States v. Eight Rhodesian Stone Statues.” CAF makes the property itself the defendant in the legal action. Some restraints on the practice in case law do exist. Cornell Law School used as an example the case of United States v. Bajakajan in which the judge ruled that CAF must not be “grossly proportionate to the gravity of the defendant’s offense.” Perversely, if the government chooses to not charge, they still get to keep the assets and there is no criminal offense for which the seizure must be proportionate. Other federal and state restraints have come into effect, but none really change the fact that as it currently stands, most CAF laws are a bald-faced violation of the Fifth Amendment whether the courts accept it or not. Judge Yoder regarded his work on CAF with dismay instead of pride when enforcement and use of it tended to work against the poor rather than rich criminal bosses. Poor people have almost no recourse to get seized property back from the government. That action requires a lawyer and, unlike a criminal case, a poor person cannot get a court-appointed attorney to help with CAF. In many cases, people on the margins of society get the worst of it. Sometimes, for example, a legal immigrant comes from a country with an untrustworthy banking system and government. They do not trust banks anywhere because their experience in their home country was that no one ought to. Some of these people carry their cash on them rather than put it in the bank. When, for instance, they are in a traffic stop, if the officer, deputy, or trooper see thousands in cash, they first think that it must be tied to criminal activity. Often times, the cash will be seized and never returned. It must be stated that everyone in the United States can carry as much cash as they desire on their person.

No legal limits exist on this, even if the practice looks suspicious to law enforcement. For this reason, Judge Yoder worked over a decade ago to marshal support among Eastern Panhandle legislators to amend or end the practice in West Virginia. He also appeared repeatedly on Fox News to spread his concerns across the nation. This kind, intelligent, and good-hearted public servant succumbed during a routine procedure and that ended his crusade - at least at that point. Law enforcement agencies have tended to oppose eliminating CAF because some departments have come to rely on it for revenues. A new generation of legislators around the state, led by Berkeley

County’s Charles Horst and including former Hardy County Sheriff Bryan Ward, have sponsored a bill to “protect the due process rights of property owners” by stating in State Code that “forfeiture is disfavored as a legal remedy, and this act is to be liberally construed in favor of the person or persons whose property rights are to be affected and strictly construed against forfeiture.” Forfeiture would still be allowed, but along with much more narrowly governed lines and must be tied to a lawful arrest or other specific conditions. On the face of it, CAF would appear to most to be an un-American practice, but it has been a tool in the law enforcement toolkit for over a generation

now. While criminals should have to give up the assets that enable or come from their law breaking enterprises, violating the property rights of those least able to protect themselves is no way for any government agency to act. Judge Yoder would have likely chuckled at the thought of the legislation carrying his name and declined to have it attached to this, or any, law. He was too humble of a man to have embraced that honor. That said, his career and life of public service, as well as the rare act in politics to issue a mea culpa to the entire nation for his own work, have earned this good man recognition for a good cause he joined well before most.

“Hunt” From Pg 1.

minutes. It’s funny how often I run into fellow West Virginians while traveling. The pool sparkled under the Florida sun, and despite a brief rain shower, the skies soon cleared. That evening, we enjoyed a delicious homemade spaghetti and meatball dinner, complete with wine and a cheese tray. We spent the rest of the night laughing over Family Feud and testing

our knowledge with Jeopardy, all while mapping out our plans for the week ahead. Monday brought cooler temperatures and occasional rain showers, making it the perfect day for a driving tour of Marco Island. Connie, a seasoned local, took us to her favorite spots, showcasing the island’s transformation over the years. Towering palm trees lined the streets, and we marveled at

the elegant waterfront homes, each one more meticulously landscaped than the last. At one point, we witnessed a woman pull her car over to help a large turtle that had wandered onto the road. Armed with a towel, she gently encouraged it back toward the water—a small but heartwarming moment of kindness. By Tuesday, the weather had improved,

and I decided to mix a little business with pleasure. I met up with my friend Sam Toles, a previous guest on my Amazing Cities and Towns Podcast, who made the two hour trip from Fort Lauderdale to have lunch with me at The Sunset Grille, a laid-back beachside restaurant. Over a delicious meal, we discussed his company, CiviSocial, which helps cities navigate social

media more effectively. When I returned to the house, I noticed a few extra shopping bags—evidence that Connie and my wife, Pam, had taken advantage of the local sales while I was out. Stay tuned for next week’s column, where we visit the planned community of Ave Maria, Florida, home to Connie’s daughter, Kristie.

We The Kingdom Set for Sunday August 17, 2025

Concert at the Clarksburg Amphitheater

CLARKSBURG, Parks of Clarksburg WV – The City Amphitheater is

thrilled to welcome two-time Grammy-nominated group We The Kingdom for a special one-night performance on Sunday, August 17,

2025. Blending pop, country, folk, and rock influences, the renowned worship band will bring their high-energy live show and uplifting message to the Mountain State.

Formed in 2018, We The Kingdom has captivated audiences with their anthemic sound and heartfelt lyrics, producing multiple hit songs, including two #1 singles from their debut album, Holy Water. Their latest single, You Blessed Me (Thank You), released in January, serves as a powerful reminder of God’s provision. Additionally, their live EP 33, launched in July 2024, highlights the band’s dynamic and passionate performances. Their hit song Jesus Does have amassed over 70 million streams since

April 2023. “We’ve been looking for the right opportunity to bring in a band like this for a couple of seasons,” said Superintendent Doug Comer. “Their music is full of energy, and their message will make this an unforgettable and deeply spiritual evening for everyone in attendance.” **Ticket Information** Tickets for We The Kingdom go on sale Monday, March 3, at 10:00 AM at www.clarksburgamp.com under the EVENTS tab.

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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

Thursday, March 20, 2025

American Legion Auxiliary Unit 31 monthly meetings. Juniors meet at 6 pm, Seniors meet at 7 pm. American Legion Post 31, Shinnston.

You’re invited to a free indoor meet and greet event with Turtleman, Ernie Brown, Jr., from Harrison County Parks & Recreation on March 8, 2025, from noon to 5pm, where you can purchase Turtleman merchandise and have him autograph photo.

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Riley Paces Glenville In Narrow Final Game Defeat

ATHENS, W.Va. – The Glenville State Women’s Basketball team fell on the road at Concord earlier today, 99-75, to conclude the regular season. The Lady Pioneers now await their seeding and opponent for the 2025 MEC Basketball Tournament next week. A back-and-forth opening quarter was full of offense, ending in a quick 6-0 run by the Lady Pioneers with three-pointers by

Ashlyn Riley and Stevi Yancy to make it 31-27 GSU. In the second quarter, Glenville State grew their lead to as much as eight but a 17-4 run in the final 4:36 of the half allowed the Mountain Lions to take a 57-49 lead into the locker room. The third quarter was also tightly contested but Concord outscored the Lady Pioneers by four in the quarter to extend their advantage to 12 at 75-63. CU

pulled away in the fourth quarter as the GSU offense stayed stagnant, eventually ending at 99-75 in favor of the Mountain Lions. **Final Stats** Concord Three Mountain Lions finished with 20 or more points, led by Abbie Smith’s 23 points and 15 rebounds. Former Lady Pioneers Skylar Davidson and Sanaiya Morris both dropped 20 points as Davidson grabbed

seven boards and Morris had nine rebounds and six assists. **Glenville State** Ashlyn Riley led the way for the Lady Pioneers, scoring 18 points with eight boards. Stevi Yancy (13 points) and Tynasia Bunting (10 points) were also in double figures. Nwando Okigbo flirted with a double-double, notching nine points and 14 rebounds in the defeat.



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’s Athlete of the Week award is an avenue to promote the youth of our county while bringing attention to their athletic accomplishments.

Harrison County Athlete Spotlight

Sometimes the spotlight should fall not on an individual, but on a team. A great team is more than the sum of its parts. It takes the contributions of all, elevates them, and produces incredible results. A great team comes from the determination, discipline, and effort of players, the wisdom and decisions of coaches, and a culture that emphasizes team over all. So far in this season, the Bridgeport High School basketball team has recorded a single blemish, an eight point setback to Nitro three days before Christmas. Since then, they have fought through every team they faced, including quad A schools. They have gone 20 and one overall with a perfect 12 and zero record in conference. As they roll from the regular season into the second season, they will surely bring the confidence that comes from maintaining motivation and momentum through three difficult months facing the best in North Central West Virginia and beyond. Congratulations to the Bridgeport boys basketball squad for shining bright in the SN and HCJ spotlight!

Riley Hits Three Treys as Lady Pioneers Record Key Road Victory at Charleston

CHARLESTON, W.Va. - The Glenville State Women’s Basketball team took home a win in an away contest at the University of Charleston by a score of 81-72 earlier tonight. The result puts the Lady Pioneers at (17-10, 11-8 MEC) and in sole possession of fifth place heading into the regular season finale, while the loss puts the Golden Eagles at (15-12, 10-9 MEC). The majority of the first quarter was a close battle with seven lead changes in the first eight minutes. Charleston eventually found their offensive groove in the game, going on a 9-3 run to hold a 23-14 lead at the end of the period. The Lady Pioneers continued to grind and would fight back to

tie things at 39 with less than two minutes remaining in the second quarter. They would take the lead back not long after and were able to shut down the opposition to take a 43-41 lead into the locker room. Both teams engaged in a back-and-forth battle out of the break with the Golden Eagles trying their best to hack away at the Glenville State lead. The Lady Pioneers continued to respond, and would not relinquish their lead, never trailing in the quarter and taking a 67-61 edge into the final stanza. Charleston wouldn’t be held down forever, storming back to retake the lead at 68-67 just before the seven-minute mark. The Lady Pioneers did

not let them take the momentum, retaking the lead and smothering the Golden Eagles on defense, allowing only four points the rest of the way, Glenville State held strong the rest of the way to secure the 81-72 victory. **Final Stats** Charleston The Golden Eagles had five players score in double digits with Paris Stokes and Jamia Nesmith leading the way with 12 apiece. Kiley Graham, Sydney Bolles and Harper Annarino all turned in 11 to round out the double-digit scorers. Annarino led with 12 rebounds, with Graham also snagging 10 boards. Stokes led in assists with six, **Glenville State** The Lady Pioneers

had five in double digits themselves as senior Tynasia Bunting topped the stat sheet with 16. Freshman Ashlyn Riley dropped 15, splashing three triples on the night. Freshman Nwando Okigbo had 11 and nabbed nine rebounds to lead the squad. Seniors Dream Cherry and Dejaan Schuler had 10 apiece to round out the double-figure scorers for Glenville State. **Up Next For The Lady Pioneers** Glenville State Women’s Basketball takes the floor this Saturday (Mar. 1) for their last game of the regular season, traveling to the Carter Center in Athens to take on Concord. Tip-off is lined up for 2 p.m.

Salem Sweeps Regional Roundup at The Bridge

BRIDGEPORT, West Virginia - Although blustery conditions blanketed north central West Virginia all weekend, the Salem Tigers softball team under the direction of Steve Potts braved the frigid temperatures to host their annual Regional Roundup event at The Bridge Sports Complex. It was a banner event for the Tigers as they secured wins over Bluefield State, Lincoln, and Indiana (PA). Each contest played out as follows:

Salem 12, Bluefield State 1 In the first contest of the event on Friday, Salem uncorked a huge offensive performance. The star performance in the contest was Kaydee Anderson’s 2 triples that resulted in a total of 4 runs batted in. Jazmyn Moetului was not far behind her as she went three for three on the day with a double, 2 singles, and a stolen base. In the circle, Kendall Lemley had a strong season debut with 5 strikeouts in 5 innings of work while allowing just 4 hits. **Salem 10, Lincoln 1** On Saturday, Salem took on another CIAA foe in the Lincoln Lions. Much like Game 1, it was another strong day of offense for the Tigers. Salem took control in the first when three straight opening singles allowed Kylie Zinn to bring Bella Ortiz and Kaydee Anderson home to make

it 2-0. Lincoln responded with a run of their own later in the 4th. Then, Salem put the pedal to the metal with 8 runs in the 5th and 6th innings. Offensively, the leader for Salem was Karmen Hogan who went 2 for 3 on the day and brought in 3 runs batted in. Kylie Zinn also added 3 RBIs on 2 hits in the contest. In the pitcher’s circle, Brooke Wise earned the win on 6 innings of work where she struck out 5 Lions’ batters. **Salem 3, Indiana (PA) 0** After dropping temperatures caused the cancelation of Salem’s third game of the event against Malone on Saturday night, Salem got back on the field on Sunday afternoon against the Crimson Hawks of Indiana (PA). It was a tight game throughout, but the Tigers got things going in the second when Jazmyn Moetului singled to open the inning. Brooke Wise then homered to bring her home to make the score 2-0. Salem added to the slim lead in the 3rd when a Bella Ortiz single brought home Kaydee Anderson. From there, Salem leaned on their pitching and defense to seal the 3-0 shutout win. In the pitching circle, Kendall Lemley added her second win of the season and the weekend with her complete game shutout performance that included punching out 3 Crimson Hawk batters.



Local Swimmers Advance

The GVAC Sea Dragons swim team competed in the TYR Top 10 Invite in Bridgeport, WV on Feb. 22 nd and 23rd. All of the swimmers had personal best times

in multiple events, resulting in a team medal count of 4 gold, 11 silver, and 10 bronze. The swimmers are now preparing for the WV Short Course State Championship meet, which will be

and three silver medals. Twenty-six new team records were set. The swimmers are now preparing for the WV Short Course State Championship meet, which will be

held at Mylan Park in Morgantown March 14-16. The Sea Dragons are making quite a big splash in the competitive swimming community and having fun doing it!



The Progressive Women’s Association’s Decade of Service Earns the Title of Organization of the Month

By Stephen Smoot

For over a decade, the Progressive Women’s Association has labored to bring inspiration to the community, support to the most vulnerable, honor to those working the hardest to help, and a strong dose of spirit to continually reinvigorate efforts all over Harrison County.

The organization originated as the Young Women’s Christian Association of Harrison County and changed its name finally to PWA in 2013, according to the West Virginia Secretary of State’s Office.

Their most public events center around honoring Women of Distinction three times per year. This includes a special presentation each February that specifically honors the contributions, lives, and examples of women of color.

Other Women of Distinction Awards ceremonies in June and October celebrate contributions of all types of American women and those of Italian-American women, respectively.

In 2017, when the current Treasurer Rosalyn Queen was serving as president, she said of the awards that “this highly successful program recognizes women from Harrison County who have made a difference in their lives and the lives of residents by their continued caring and sharing.”

She added that “it is our way of thanking them for their commitment and continued support.”

The organization started its work a decade ago and has dedicated its efforts to community support. During COVID, volunteers worked tirelessly to gather resources for those confined to their home or experiencing economic struggles. They helped as many as they could to overcome troubles imposed by



The PWA operates the Uptown Events Center and runs community support and education programs all year long.

the pandemic, from veterans to pet owners. Support from the community came right back to PWA as generous donors helped to keep cleaning supplies, the food pantry, and other necessities stocked.

All year long, the PWA launches food drives, fundraisers, and more. They have also partnered with the Clarksburg Farmers’ Market and others for special events.

Their efforts do not stop at making sure that those struggling to make ends meet get support. PWA members also spearhead educational and cultural work as well. Last August, the PWA shared that they were “excited to announce a new opportunity for the community” in holding adult sign language classes.

Queen said last August that businesses were invited to send up to two representatives to learn as part of

“We have some wonderful people that came through here, people who are just thrilled to be able to sit down, be safe enough to lay their heads down and relax and get a bunch of warm food in their belly.”

Executive Director Elinda

helping them to expand customer service skills.

Earlier last year, they also held sign classes for children between the ages of 10 and 17.

PWA has also hosted entertaining music events at their Uptown Events Center as part of Clarksburg’s First Fridays program.

During the Christmas season, PWA teamed up with other entities, including the West Virginia Italian Heritage Festival organizational group to give residents a hot meal and a warm place to stay and socialize for a few hours. Executive Director Elinda Carson told WBOY at the time that “we do it all year long . . . the holidays are a good time to

share whatever love you have in your heart for everybody.”

“We have some wonderful people that came through here, people who are just thrilled to be able to sit down, be safe enough to lay their heads down and relax and get a bunch of warm food in their belly,” Carson added.

Part of the work of PWA includes inspiring the next generation of young volunteers and community leaders. This takes place through the Young Progressive Women’s Association.

As their former adult advisor, Betty Felts, explained last April when she handed the mentoring and

advising role to Nicole Osbourn, the adjunct organization welcomes girls “who believed that could make a big impact on their community.”

The PWA currently supports a food pantry, Peppy’s Pet Pantry, and the Women of Distinction program while partnering with other groups and holding community events throughout the year. The food and pet pantries serve the public on Thursdays and Fridays each week.

What rarely comes through with social media posts, news coverage, or even seeing their volunteers in action in short snippets is what matters most with

PWA.

Current president Betty Waddy serves as a prime example of the mission of PWA to work with and through other individuals and organizations to make Clarksburg and Harrison County a better place. Waddy also serves with the United Way of Harrison and Doddridge counties, the West Virginia Italian Heritage Festival, the Harrison County Chamber of Commerce, and more.

PWA is an organization that relies on the tireless work of volunteers, many of whom are driven by the example of Christ and others who have served or led by that. Until one experiences an event like the Women of Distinction honors, a person may miss the foundation of spirituality and love in their work that fosters a sense of joy when people are helped.



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OBITUARIES



Mildred Roberts Belcastro

Mildred Roberts Belcastro, 94, of Shinnston died peacefully at United Hospital Center in Clarksburg on February 26, 2025. She was born on March 20, 1930 in Galloway, West Virginia to the late Joseph and Jettie Nicholson Roberts. She was preceded in death by her husband of 69 years, Nick Belcastro. Also preceding her in death were her sisters Velma Hawkins, Nancy Fazio, and Wanda Spadafore as well as her brothers Joe, Henry, Aubert “Pete”, and infant brother Ray Roberts.

Mildred is survived by her two daughters and sons-in-law, Chrissy Arco and her husband, Sammy, and Debbie Benedetti and her husband, Mark ; four grandchildren: Andrea Arco-Mastromichalis and her husband, Michael ; Lee Arco and his wife, Elizabeth; Allison Benedetti; Lauren Hager and her husband, Josh. Mildred was also blessed with six great-grandchildren who have wonderful memories to cherish: Max and Mason Mastromichalis, Cecilia Arco, and Emma, Olivia, and Luke Hager.

She is also survived by her sister-in-law, Ladoris “Tee” Roberts and her beloved sister, Joyce Myers. Mildred also had several nieces and nephews from both sides of her family who were dear to her and she to them.

Mildred graduated from Shinnston High School in 1949. During her junior high and high school years, she participated in the band as a percussionist and sang in the chorus. She was captain of the girls’ basketball team and a member of the Progressive Club. She always took pride in her studies ; she was a winner of the West Virginia Golden Horseshoe Award and was a member of the National Honor Society.

Mildred worked briefly in retail prior to her employment as a telephone operator at the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company. She resigned from there when she and her husband decided to start their family.

Mildred was a life-long member of the Bethlehem Presbyterian Church where she served in several capacities. She was the treasurer for many years, she directed a taught Sunday School and Vacation Bible School, and led the UNICEF collection drive for the church. Her church family was very important to her.

She was an excellent cook and baker and treasured hosting family gatherings. Mildred was talented in sewing and crafting and enjoyed making Barbie and Ken

clothes for her daughters, Christmas ornaments for her daughters and grandchildren, and seasonal wreaths for her home. She enjoyed her flowers and flower garden, feeding and watching birds and collecting small bird figurines. She also enjoyed the outdoors including family walks in the woods and fishing with her husband.

Mildred and Nick took pleasure in traveling; notable among their travels was a Canadian fishing trip. They also traveled to Dollywood and Branson where they enjoyed musical theater. Trips to Myrtle Beach, Niagara Falls, the Everglades, and New England including the White Mountains of New Hampshire and Cape Cod were also among their favorites.

Mildred was an avid reader of many genres of literature, and she continued her reading until her passing. She also enjoyed many types of music , and she and her siblings often sang songs in harmony; her favorite was “This World is Not My Home.”

She valued education and was very proud of her family’s accomplishments and activities. She maintained a vital interest in updates about her family members.

Mildred was a caring, strong, and independent woman who reflected a positive outlook throughout her lifetime. Family and faith were always foremost .

For the last few years, she resided at Harmony at White Oaks where

she made several dear friends and enjoyed participating in activities with them. While there, she also looked forward to her Wednesday lunches with her sister Joyce, and then, more recently, with her sister and sister-in-law , “Tee”. Toward the end of her time, she often remarked, “ I’ve had an abundant life”.

We couldn’t have loved her more.

The family would like to extend appreciation to the staff at Harmony at White Oaks and at United Hospital Center for their contributions.

Family and friends will be received at Perine Funeral Home on Saturday, March 8th from 11:00am to 1:00pm. A graveside ceremony will immediately follow at Shinnston Memorial Cemetery with Pastor Clifford Powell officiating. In lieu of flowers, contributions can be made to Bethlehem Presbyterian Church, 1201 East Pike Street, Shinnston, WV 26431. Online memories and condolences can be shared with the family at www.perinefunerals.com.

Loretta Jean Harris

Loretta Jean Harris, 87, of Clarksburg passed away peacefully on February 22, 2025. Born on January 15, 1938, to the late Frank and Hazel Russell of Shinnston, WV. She graduated from Shinnston High School and was employed by the Harrison County Board of Education and later Emmanuel Christian academy. She enjoyed her time crafting, doing



puzzle books, and coloring, along with watching WVU and Steelers football games.

Loretta is survived by one son, Robert Harris of Clarksburg and daughters Kimberly Regester and Husband Ronnie of Clarksburg, Carrie Harris and Partner Jerry Rexroad of Clarksburg, and Michelle Kramer and Husband Jeff of Clarksburg. She is also survived by five grandchildren, Meghan Peterman of Wheeling, WV, Aaron Regester and Fiancé Katie Faris of Taylor County, Cady Crawford and Husband Mike of Clarksburg, Rebecca Duarte and Husband Kris of Taylor County, and Cara Arbogast and Partner Andrew Moore of Clarksburg. Six Great-grandchildren, Isabella Riley of Morgantown, Cooper Peterman of Shinnston, Arlo Regester of Salem, Emma Crawford of Clarksburg, and Ripley and Tyssen Duarte of Taylor County. She is also survived by three brothers, Arnett Russell and wife Peggy of Morgantown, Paul Russell of Clarksburg, and Charles Russell and wife Tammy of Lumberport. Two sisters,

Ester Rauer and husband Ronnie of Florida, and Becky Minor and husband David of Shinnston. Sister-in-law Janice Russell and cousin Carolyn Ayers of Shinnston, and friend Brandon Rexroad. Brother-in-law Randy Harris and wife Beth of Shinnston, and Sisters-in-law Jennifer Wright and husband Ron of Shinnston, and Eilene Harris of Clarksburg.

In addition to her parents, Loretta was preceded in death by her husband Claude “Sonny” Harris, In-laws Claude and Dorthy Harris, grandson Doug Peterman, Great-Grandson Devin Peterman, Brother Marion Russell, Sister-in-law Sheila Russell, and brother-in-law Russell “Bubby” Harris.

A celebration of Life will be announced at a later date.



Robert “Bob” Lee Pratt

Robert “Bob” Lee Pratt, 65, of Clarksburg, passed away on March 1, 2025. He was born in Clarksburg, on July 11, 1959, a son to the late Roy and Aileen (Selmon) Pratt. Along with his parents, he is

See “Obits” on Pg 7

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Out of the Past

Memorable photographs from around Harrison County



In the days when travelers primarily used the railroad, every town along the line of any importance boasted local accomodations. This was Shinnston’s Oak Hotel, sometime between 1890 and 1920. Photo courtesy of WVU Libraries.

“Obits” From Pg 6.

preceded in death by his grandparents, Wayne and Mildred (Midge) Swiger.

He is survived by his wife, Leisa Pratt, whom he married on Sept. 21, 1991; brother Danny Pratt (Debbie); daughter Tara Lee Pratt; father-in-law and special buddy David Mihaliak; grandchildren Alivia Pratt, Christian Pratt, and

Trinity Eldrige; nephews and nieces Daniel Pratt (Melissa), Adam Pratt (Corie), Christopher Pratt (Shannon), TJ Dawson (Lexie), Heather Ehrhart (Michael), David Turner, Amanda Elder, Jessica Martinez, Matthew Martinez, Alex Clay (Amber), Allison Clay (Justin), Abby Smith, Emma Smith; and several great-nieces and

nephews.

Bob was previously employed by Harvey Industry, Hortis Glass, Adamston Flat, Boron Gas Station, where he met the love of his life, his baby doll, his wife Leisa, Standard Advertising, AFG “Fourco” Glass Factory, and he retired from the DOH. He was a member of the Elks Club. Bob

enjoyed hunting, fishing, playing cards and taking everyone’s money at the hunting camp. He loved camping and fishing with his Fourco buddies up on the Gandy. He also loved the Pittsburgh Steelers and West Virginia Mountaineers, and watching Lincoln High School Sports. He was an avid #3 Dale Earnhardt Sr. fan. He never wanted

to miss any of his nieces, nephews, and grandkids playing sports. He looked forward to going to the beach every year, and trips to Atlantic City with the Elder family, and friends from the factory. He enjoyed his special time hunting and fishing with his brother Danny. He loved spending time with his family and friends, and

with his longtime friend, Timmy Elder.

Friends will be received at Harmer Funeral Home on Thursday, March 6, 2025 from 2:00PM-8:00PM. A funeral service will be held at 11:00AM on Friday, March 7, 2025. Interment will follow at Floral Hills Memorial Gardens.

“Grapevine” From Pg 1.

meat on Wednesday or Friday during Lent. Each individual will choose their own form of penance,

Getting ready for Easter means the baking of Easter Bread. This is definitely an Italian custom and most members of the family participate in this

custom.Muchallatta is Italian for Easter Bread. I am going to include my family recipe for Easter Bread. 2 packs of dry yeast, 5 pounds flour, 1 1/2 cups sugar, 6 eggs beaten, 2 tsp salt, 2 sticks butter, 1pint warm milk, 2 cups warm water, 2 tablespoons anise seed.

Mix water and warm milk together and sprinkle yeast over the mixture and stir so that yeast will start to work, Place dry ingredients in large mixing bowl and mix well. Make a well in mixture and add milk mixture, eggs and melted butter. Before starting to

knead mixture, make a sign of the cross over bowl. Knead mixture vigorously until it becomes elastic and pulls away from bowl. Rub top of dough with oil, cover, place in a warm spot and let rise until it doubles in size. Place dough in loaf pans and let it rise again. Pre

heat oven to 350 degrees and bake for about twenty minutes until bread is golden brown. Easter bread is delicious toasted and buttered. it freezes well.

Just one of many Easter customs.

Another holiday to celebrate is St. Patrick’s Day with Irish stew and

other Irish specialties.

Surely March means the beginning of Spring with March 9 marking the beginning of Daylight

Saving Time.

Stay optimistic, stay healthy and until next week “Now You Have Heard It Through The Grapevine.”

“Office” From Pg 1.

four years.

In the government of the State of West Virginia, the Secretary of State’s office is a member of the Constitutional Board of Public Works. These are the elected Cabinet positions of the State, which include Commissioner of Agriculture, Attorney General, State Treasurer, and State Auditor.

Two main responsibilities serve as the core mission of the Secretary of State’s office, chief elections officer and chief

business registrar.

Kris Warner approaches both responsibilities as two of the most critical functions in State government.

He started off by sharing what truly makes his office effective, saying “the staff that Mac has built as Secretary of State is a tremendous staff. They work well together. It makes it easier.”

Although an old hand in government in West Virginia, including a stint leading the United States Department of Agriculture’s Rural

Development office in President Donald Trump’s first term, Warner kicked off his tenure with an intention of traveling to each county to work one on one with the county clerks.

“Braxton County is the 16th county I’ve been to so far,” he shared. The goal lies in strengthening connections and relations between the State and local elections officers and learn the “things county clerks are concerned about.”

“It’s a wonderful opportunity to learn and help,” Warner added.

An immediate priority lies in shepherding through 12 bills that Warner states will strengthen election security and make business registration and assistance an even more effective and efficient process. Those bills first went into

the Senate Judiciary and Government Organization committees.

One of the top legislative priorities lies in improving West Virginia’s election security through tighter and easier to enforce voter identification laws by making identification easier to get and more secure at the same time.

An unrelated bill introduced by State Senator Rupie Phillips will address the concerns about the difficulties faced by some experiencing economic challenges in getting photo identification. SB 59 would require that food stamp cards, also known as SNAP, will also function as state photo identification that will help them to vote and also reduce waste, fraud, and abuse in the food stamp program.

Registering to vote, if the Secretary of State’s favored bill passes, will do away with the need to bring different forms of paperwork that have a name and address. It will replace them with most state issued photo identifications, possibly excluding student identification issued at secondary schools or colleges and universities.

Another bill seeks to nip a potential problem in the bud before it comes to full flower and affects election integrity. Warner said that, if passed, “if AI (artificial intelligence programs) is used in an attack on a candidate, or by a PAC on an opponent, there has to be a disclaimer.”

He used the hypothetical example of a candidate using AI to create a fake image

of Hillary Clinton with her arm around the shoulders of a candidate to disparage his or her image. Warner emphasized that the process would not be outlawed, but must have a clear disclaimer along the lines of the law requiring a candidate to state that he or she supports this message.

With AI generation producing very realistic photographs and videos, this will soon grow into a national problem if left unaddressed.

Dark money concerns will also be addressed in one of the proposed bills. According to Open Secrets, an election monitoring site, dark money is “spending meant to influence political outcomes where the source of the money is not disclosed.”

See “Office” on Pg 8

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WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Division of Highways

NOTICE TO CONTRACTORS

Bids will be received electronically by the West Virginia Department of Transportation, Division of Highways through the Bid Express Bidding Service (www.bidx.com) and by sealed proposals (only when prequalification is waived) being received at its office in Building 5, Room 843, 1900 Kanawha Boulevard East, Charleston, West Virginia until March 13, 2025 at 10:00 AM (Eastern Standard Time). The bids will be downloaded and/or opened and read publicly thereafter for the constructions of the following project(s):

Call	Contract	State Project	Federal Project	Description
006	2020000689	S317-5/7-0.30 00	STP-0507(013)D	STRUCTURE REPLACEMENT Coon Hunters Arch Begin: 0.03 Mi W CR 5 End: 0.05 Mi W CR 5 COUNTY: HARRISON

BRIDGE:	11843	CONCRETE SLAB ON FABRICATED STEEL GIRDER
SPAN(S):	1	STRUCTURE STEEL:

DBE GOAL: 7 % OF CONTRACT BID AMOUNT. BIDDER MUST PROVIDE WRITTEN ASSURANCE OF MEETING GOAL ON FORM IN PROPOSAL.

REMARKS:

Proposals will be received from prequalified and West Virginia licensed contractors only except that on Federal-Aid Projects a contractors' licence is not required at time of bid, but will be required before work can begin. Registration is required with the Department of Administration, Division of Purchasing, in accordance with Chapter 5A, Article 3, Section 12 of the West Virginia Code. All contractors submitting bids on project(s) must include one of the following forms properly executed with each proposal: Proposal Guaranty Bond, Cashier's Check, or Certified Check for \$500.00 or 5% of the total bid, whichever is greater.

The West Virginia Department of Transportation, Division of Highways reserves the right to defer, delay or postpone the date for receiving and publicly opening proposals for any project designated in this advertisement, without the necessity of renewing such advertisement. The deferment, delay, postponement, and the date that proposals will be received and publicly opened will be available on www.bidx.com.

The West Virginia Department of Transportation, Division of Highways hereby notifies all bidders that it will affirmatively ensure that in any contract entered into pursuant to this advertisement, minority business enterprises will be afforded full opportunity to submit bids in response to this invitation and will not be discriminated against on the grounds of race, color, religion, sex or national origin in consideration for an award.

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WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Division of Highways

NOTICE TO CONTRACTORS

Bids will be received electronically by the West Virginia Department of Transportation, Division of Highways through the Bid Express Bidding Service (www.bidx.com) and by sealed proposals (only when prequalification is waived) being received at its office in Building 5, Room 843, 1900 Kanawha Boulevard East, Charleston, West Virginia until April 08, 2025 at 10:00 AM (Eastern Standard Time). The bids will be downloaded and/or opened and read publicly thereafter for the constructions of the following project(s):

Call	Contract	State Project	Federal Project	Description
010	2020000606	U321-79-106.32 00	NHPP-0792(293)D	STRUCTURE REPLACEMENT HARRISON CO LINE N & S 1.27 M N CR 7 - 1.35 M N CR 7 COUNTY: HARRISON, LEWIS
BRIDGE:	11774	CONCRETE SLAB ON FABRICATED STEEL GIRDER		
SPAN(S):	3	STRUCTURE STEEL: 299,909.00		
BRIDGE:	11775	CONCRETE SLAB ON FABRICATED STEEL GIRDER		
SPAN(S):	3	STRUCTURE STEEL: 299,909.00		
DBE GOAL:	10 % OF CONTRACT BID AMOUNT. BIDDER MUST PROVIDE WRITTEN ASSURANCE OF MEETING GOAL ON FORM IN PROPOSAL.			
REMARKS:				

Proposals will be received from prequalified and West Virginia licensed contractors only except that on Federal-Aid Projects a contractors' licence is not required at time of bid, but will be required before work can begin. Registration is required with the Department of Administration, Division of Purchasing, in accordance with Chapter 5A, Article 3, Section 12 of the West Virginia Code. All contractors submitting bids on project(s) must include one of the following forms properly executed with each proposal: Proposal Guaranty Bond, Cashier's Check, or Certified Check for \$500.00 or 5% of the total bid, whichever is greater.

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“Office” From Pg 7.

Sometimes this comes from 501 (c) 4 organizations that can advocate in elections while not disclosing their donors. It could also come from shell companies or similar fronts.

The bill, if passed, will establish much lower reporting thresholds for dark money support of campaigns to add transparency to campaign finance.

Proposed legislation will also “tighten up the definition of engineering,” add clarity and restrictions to what can and cannot be done in the vicinity of a polling place and also governing use of cell phones in precincts or voting booths.

The business side will see changes as well. One will somewhat mimic the action of the Department of Government Efficiency’s work on the federal side by eliminating a significant yearly cost. Warner described how the previous procedure mandated three certified letters from the Secretary of State’s office on the dissolution of an LLC or a non profit. He has decided to reduce the certified mailing to a single letter and establish approved digital and telephone paths to contact.

This will save the office approximately \$30,000 per year.

Warner has several

plans to help the West Virginia One Stop Business Center serve state entrepreneurs even better. For eight years, an in person office has served Charleston. A second opened in Martinsburg two years later. More recently Clarksburg saw a facility open. Each facility, Warner says, “is strategically located” to be no more than two hours from anyone in West Virginia.

The physical locations and online portal link entrepreneurs in the Secretary of State’s office, West Virginia WorkForce, West Virginia State Tax Department and the Division of Labor.

A d d i t i o n a l l y , entrepreneurs can find help with the Small Business Development Center. Statewide, 18 business development coaches offer their experience. They can help those starting a business, trying to decide whether or not to expand, or encountering economic headwinds.

Only 20 percent of businesses, Warner estimates, seek help. Business coaches can help connect owners to resources such as the West Virginia Grant Resource Center, operated through a partnership with West Virginia University and Marshall University. Other resources include opportunities to obtain

capital through USDA, the Appalachian Regional Commission, and other entities.

Warner has worked to bring expanded services, but not an expanded staff. “We have a very extremely tight budget,” he shared, saying they get \$7.8 million yearly and less than 50 employees, both significantly smaller than other primary state agencies.

“Others have hundreds of employees and huge budgets,” he noted.

Warner expressed proudly some of the work done in recent years to fulfill the agency’s purpose and responsibilities. That includes 440,000 names of ineligible names removed from the voter rolls. He took care to explain that they had removed no voters, but the names of deceased, people who move out of state, and others.

This gets more efficient when the Secretary of State’s office partners up with the Division of Motor Vehicles and United States Postal Service, acquiring names of those who get licenses in other states or filed change of address forms to send mail outside of West Virginia.

Whatever service the office offers, Warner states that the goal is to continually offer and provide much more than what it is required to do.



The luncheon also recognized Black History month in the speeches and also in this special display.

“Luncheon” From Pg 1.

lives of a special set of women who made a vital impact on their community, Harrison County, and, in some cases, the entire state.

Honoring Women of Distinction included inviting a special guest speaker in the Honorable Jill Upson. The former member of the House of Delegates representing Jefferson County was a appointed to the Cabinet position of executive director of the Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs, as well as the West Virginia Women’s Commission, member of the HOPE Scholarship Board, and other important roles.

In her role as director of HHOMA, Upson has worked to be a model of social engagement between State government, local governments, and the people. Her office took on COVID head on when it did important work educating and vaccinating minority communities and has since engaged on a number of different projects statewide.

Volunteers filled drinks and passed out first a garden salad with homemade Italian dressing (because store-bought in Harrison County would come close to a sin), then a main course of smothered chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy, green beans, and sliced Italian bread.

Those still famished after the feast could have their choice of types of freshly baked cake.

Other notables in attendance included West Virginia Secretary of State Kris Warner, Deputy Secretary of State Michael Queen (son of Rosalyn Queen, organizational Treasurer and Mistress of Ceremonies), Harrison County Commission President Susan Thomas, County Commissioner Patsy Trecost, Harrison County Administrator Laura Pysz-Laulis, and a number of officials representing the City of Clarksburg.

Waddy expressed appreciation for the continual and significant support from Davis Funeral Home, represented by David Bolyard. Davis

Funeral Home sponsors the quarterly Women of Distinction Awards. She said later that their “dedication . . . means so much.”

Catherine Burley, who was honored herself in 2017, asked the blessing. When introducing her, Queen described how Burley’s work helped to launch the black movement in Harrison County. She asked for a blessing on the hands that prepared the food and the “bounty” provided by God.

Queen then thanked all of the volunteers who made the event possible and shared “a few words about the PWA.” She stated that in holding the luncheons “we’re trying to fulfill our mission. Part of our mission is honoring Women of Distinction.”

The PWA is in its 10th year of organizing and holding these luncheons.

Upson’s keynote address focused on a topic near and dear to her heart as chair of the Martin Luther King Jr. State Holiday Commission. Through honoring Rosalyn Queen as one of the award recipients for 2025, Upson was in turn invited to speak at the PWA.

“I’m humbled to be a part of this event,” related Upson, who then shared her appreciation with the PWA “for allowing me to be a part of this event.”

Upson focused on the topics of Black History and Martin Luther King Jr. and said it is “incumbent on all of us to seize the opportunity to promote the story of black history.”

She then punctuated her message with a message from Dr. King, sharing that he challenged people by asking “what are you doing for others?” and reminding all there that he said “history is not just something that we observe, but what we create.”

The awards issued in his name represent one of the major tasks of the HHOMA.

Upson then discussed the State awards related to Martin Luther King Jr, saying that those who earned the award

fall under several categories. These include advocates for peaceful social change, the sharing of self to help others, work in human and civil rights, scholarship, and also those whose lives and efforts best represent the entire spectrum.

Second, the HHOMA works to inspire the young to remember, study, and examine the impact of Martin Luther King Jr and his ideals. Upson shared that West Virginia youth in any format of schooling from home to traditional can participate in poster, essay, film, and musical contests.

Finally, she shared that the HHOMA remains dedicated to inspiring those of all ages to take up Dr. King’s call for volunteers.

“Everybody can be great because everybody can serve.” Upson used this quotation from Dr. King to illustrate HHOMA’s emphasis on volunteering. She shared how she recently spoke to Capital High School students, some of whom come from very challenged neighborhoods.

She expressed surprise that “students o v e r w h e l m i n g l y expressed a desire to volunteer” and that society needed to tap into that desire and energy in young people before it dissipates as the responsibilities of adult life start to settle in and multiply.

Upson then said that women of distinction are called upon to be “leaders in the workplace, leaders in your neighborhood, leaders in your home.”

That provided an excellent bridge into the impacts made by this year’s list of women who earned awards of distinction.

Queen retook the podium after the conclusion of Upson’s talk. She shared stories from her childhood of a Harrison County divided on their opinion of the Italian and Roman Catholic community of immigrants and their children. Queen recalled land deeds with encumbrances against selling to people of Italian descent, Italian schoolgirls

UHC and Bridgeport Announce Farmers and Wellness Market

Collaborative effort between the two entities will begin early Spring

BRIDGEPORT, WV – The City of Bridgeport, along with their partner, WVU Medicine United Hospital Center (UHC) is excited to announce the Bridgeport Farmers & Wellness Market to the UHC Campus, launching Spring 2025.

There will be a meet and greet for any vendor interested in participating in the Bridgeport Farmers and Wellness Market. The meet and greet will take place at the Benedum Civic Center, located at 164 W. Main Street, Bridgeport, on March 3 rd and Bridgeport City Hall Council Chambers, 515 W. Main Street, Bridgeport, on March 11 th , 2025, both from 6-7pm. The purpose of the meet and greet will be for informational purposes and to discuss the day and time of the market.

“The location at the campus of UHC will have many amenities that will greatly

benefit both vendors and patrons,” said UHC President and CEO Dr. David Hess. “There will be shaded areas, picnic tables, restrooms, plenty of parking, to include ADA parking, electric, and water.”

The Bridgeport Farmers & Wellness Market will be held in the parking lot of Mountaineer Medical Office Building.

“We want the Farmers & Wellness Market to be

a community event,” said Bridgeport Council Member John Wilson. “This weekly event will bring people and families together to experience the many benefits the market will have to offer: a wellness component, community connection, fresh food, friendly farmers, and so much more.”

“Bridgeport City Council is excited to kick off this event and showcase our location,” said Bridgeport Council Member Clayton Rice. “We have had tremendous support from the community, and we can’t wait to watch it come to life this Spring.”

The Bridgeport Farmers & Wellness Market will offer health and wellness information, and programming for kids of all ages. It will be a regular destination event that caters to the challenging schedules of families. Unique

items and home-grown produce will also be available.

The goal of the Bridgeport Farmers and Wellness Market is to create a vibrant community gathering place to create a weekly event where individuals and families can come together to learn about health, wellness, and connect with vendors. Together, UHC and the City of Bridgeport will build a sustainable program for the community.

Duckworth Testifies Before U.S. Senate on Opioid Epidemic

WEST VIRGINIA (February 27, 2025) - West Virginia First Foundation (WVFF) proudly recognizes the leadership of Board Member and Raleigh County Commissioner Gregory Duckworth, who testified before the U.S. Senate Aging Committee on the devastating impact of the opioid crisis on West Virginia families, particularly its aging

population. His testimony emphasized the critical role of WVFF in combatting the opioid epidemic and supporting affected communities.

“I am honored to have represented West Virginia and West Virginia First Foundation (WVFF) in yesterday’s hearing, highlighting the devastating impact of the opioid crisis—

especially on our aging population. Seniors are too often the overlooked victims of this epidemic, facing the burdens of caring for loved ones affected by addiction. The statistics we face are daunting, but with strong leadership and collaboration, we can turn the tide. I sincerely thank Senator Justice for his leadership, both as our former Governor and now as our Senator.

We are very excited about his role on this committee and look forward to the important work we will do together in the future,” said Commissioner Greg Duckworth.

Senator Jim Justice introduced Commissioner Greg Duckworth and questioned him about the devastating impact of the opioid epidemic on West Virginia

families, prompting an open discussion on the ongoing challenges in combating addiction and the next steps for a healthier, stronger future.

“Greg Duckworth is an incredible man, and we’ve worked hard together in the state to combat the opioid crisis that has devastated West Virginia families. I’m proud to have him here representing

“Luncheon” From Pg 8.

forced to enter their places of education by the backdoor and numerous other indignities that serve as the face and product of discrimination.

She shared that her goal with PWA and her community work was to bring about a day when “no child, like I did, would ever feel discriminated against in our county.”

Queen then thanked Antero for pledging to cover the cost of special plaques for awardees over the next several years before starting the Awards section of the program.

As awardees came to the fore to describe the work done to earn the PWA’s honor, they more shared their personal testimony than they spoke of personal accomplishments.

One could hear a repeated, and at times almost rambunctious, refrain through the entirety of the program, but especially from those honored.

Almost everyone who came forward showed that they lived the words of Matthew 19:26, where he assured his 12 disciples that “With men, this is impossible; but with God, all things are possible.”

PWA honored first from a list created in no specified order a “passionate healthcare professional” in Dr. Myra Crouch. While volunteering with the West Virginia Black Heritage Festival, Harrison County NAACP, and Friends Feeding Friends, she has worked extensively

to expand health care access to those who need it most.

She shared that those from her home state often ask “what’s so special about West Virginia?” Dr. Couch then pointed into the audience and said “YOU are what’s so special about West Virginia.” She added that West Virginians “care so much about each other because they’ve gone through so much.”

Sherice Holland next took the podium and jokingly said “don’t take my food away! The food is excellent!”

She then opened her talk by stating that “I give it all to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” and thanked Erica Perry for nominating her. Holland earned her award for helping to organize and deploy the “West Virginia University RADX Team” that engaged communities across the state to educate and encourage COVID testing during the pandemic.

Holland shared the names of several congregants and leaders from Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church who worked tirelessly to serve the community - and also “my Mama. You won’t find her in Google or in history books,” but “she made sure everyone had a meal,” even if that meant 20 to 30 neighborhood kids came to her home to eat.

Her mother, she remembered, “always kept her love of God.”

Brandi Nicole Payne Johnson’s award showed that the PWA recognizes both efforts in the community and at home with one’s family. Johnson balances work duties with the West Virginia Department of Human Services with family responsibilities that include caring for two parents afflicted with Alzheimers, babysitting and serving as a role model for 12 grandchildren, and doing all she can for those who rely on her the most.

Johnson said of caring for those stricken with Alzheimers that “it’s not an easy job . . . it tears you up a lot” and shared that “I literally babysat every cousin who is 42 and under.”

Niki Riley told attendees that “I’m humbled and honored to even be nominated,” then added that “the work that I do is not for myself . . . (it is a) testament of love that I have for the community.”

Riley expresses her love for the community through working with various organizations to provide meals to those who otherwise would go without. She said of other honorees and attendees around the room that “the love I feel here today pushes me to go further . . . it pushes me to love God.”

Riley then went on to share that “without God, I would not be giving like I am.”

Expressions of “Amen!” followed her most poignant points

“Laws” From Pg 1.

Planning and Resources Development Act. The bill cited as justification that “massive infusion of Federal funds into the existing health care system [that] has contributed to inflationary increases in the cost of health care and failed to produce an adequate supply or distribution of health resources, and consequently has not made possible equal access for everyone to such resources.”

According to Jim Kaufman, repealing certificate of need laws will invite health care companies to “enter West Virginia and cherry pick by developing only profitable lines of service at the expense of rural health care in West Virginia.”

He added the speculation that these same companies would establish “feeder facilities” that would channel West Virginia patients to out of state providers. He said “these dollars should remain in West Virginia and flow back into health programs and services for West Virginians.”

Jessica Dobrinsky, executive director of the Mountain State-based Cardinal Institute, agrees with Governor Morrisey on the negative impact of certificate of need.

First, she stated that the expected benefits of the laws never materialized. Starting with President Ronald Reagan, Dobrinsky explained, every president, including those as opposite as Barrack Obama and Donald Trump, have suggested that states would improve health

care by eliminating certificate of need laws.

She added that West Virginians end up going across state lines already to seek care often not as available in state in counties near state boundaries.

Another difficulty that has arisen in recent years is the decline in the availability of pediatric care in parts of West Virginia. Parents in many areas, including State Senator Patricia Rucker of Jefferson County, have had to seek care outside the state.

The rationale behind ending certificate of need laws lies in the notion that more access, more opportunities, and more organic growth will improve health care quality overall.

Dobrinsky cited the example of a health care facility in Mineral County that served approximately 30 patients per day and served the Short Gap community for almost three decades. Hunt Club, operated by Western Maryland Health, seemed to serve a need in the market, but lacked the official certificate of need to operate.

Even worse, Dobrinsky shared, the certificate of need keeps needed facilities from being built in the first place.

“One great thing about the certificate of need issue,” she went on to say “is that all the data is on the side of repeal.”

Indeed, many states have dropped the statutes and none have recently added them. Twelve states that had passed them eliminated them by Jan 1, 2024.

Financial Education Experience Coming to Lincoln Middle School

SHINNSTON – The West Virginia State Treasurer’s Office will be bringing the Get a Life personal finance simulation to all the 8th grade students at Lincoln Middle School Wednesday, March 5, 2025, from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. Students will be assigned a job with an income and a life situation such as married with two children, or single and taking care of an aging mother, etc.

The first round, students will have a minimum wage income and purchase the things they need to live, like housing, transportation, utilities, groceries, gas, insurance, etc.

In the second round, students do the same thing, but with a higher income after they would have received higher education, which could be any of a community college certificate, 2-or 4- year college degree, or an industry or technical certification. This round motivates students to realize the differences in the standard of living between a minimum wage job and one with a required skill set, industry certification, or degree requirement.

The Harrison County Chamber of Commerce and the WVU Extension Service are providing local business volunteers to act as vendors to sell students the things they need to live as well as the things they want.

This activity is one of the best opportunities our students have to gain insight and perspective on what their parents are required to do to provide a home for them with the things they need and want. Each child will get a Fickle Finger of Fate card which has them paying for something unexpected like a broken leg or car transmission. It can also be a good thing like an inheritance or tax refund.

Harrison County Man Admits to Methamphetamine Charge

CLARKSBURG, WEST VIRGINIA – Frederick Blaine Rinehart, Jr., age 54, of Clarksburg West Virginia, has admitted to conspiring to possess with the intent to distribute and distribute methamphetamine.

According to court documents, Rinehart was selling methamphetamine in Harrison County. Investigators linked more than 100 grams of methamphetamine to Rinehart, some distributed and some found in his home.

Rinehart is facing up to 20 years in prison. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Brandon Flower is prosecuting the case on behalf of the government.

The Greater Harrison Drug Task Force, a HIDTA-funded initiative, investigated.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Michael John Aloï presided.

Mister Bee Potato Chips Continues Offering Snacks Reflecting West Virginia Flavors and Icons

Parkersburg, W.Va. (February 28, 2025) – Mary Anne Ketelsen, co-owner of Mister Bee Potato Chips, in honor of the legend of the Mothman and popular Festival in Point Pleasant, has unveiled a “Mothman Style Mysterious Spice Blend Chip.” The chips are rolling out on local store shelves now and will be available statewide soon.

Ketelsen said she and the leadership team at Mister Bee – the only manufacturer of potato chips in the state – are continuing to showcase the best of West Virginia with special chip bags and exciting new flavors.

Some of the special chips Mister Bee has produced in recent years – with Ketelsen’s stewardship – include:

- A bag saluting Veterans and military personnel to benefit the USO;
- A bag promoting the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve launched at Bridge Day;
- A “304” chip to honor the Mountain State area code;
- A “1951” chip to take customers back to the original flavor of Mister Bee’s founding chips;
- A Pepperoni Roll flavored chip to honor the coal miners who introduced the treat to our state;
- A Sausage and Biscuit flavored chip in partnership with iconic partner, Tudor’s Biscuit World, to benefit the Make-A-Wish Foundation in West Virginia.

The Mothman is a legendary, winged, humanoid creature that has been reported in West Virginia since 1966. The Mothman is said to have glowing red eyes and to live in the area near Point Pleasant.

How the legend began

- In November 1966, two couples reported seeing a terrifying creature in the woods near Point Pleasant. The couples told the sheriff that the creature looked human, but had 10-foot wings and glowing red eyes.
- News reports of the Mothman spread throughout West Virginia and the nation.

The Mothman Festival is an annual gathering in Point Pleasant (September 20 and 21, 2025 this year) that commemorates the mysterious visit of the “Mothman.” It is held in downtown Point Pleasant and features live music, merchandise from various vendors, food trucks, cosplay, and guest speakers. The Mothman Statue and Mothman Museum are there year-round.

“What flavors, places, events and traditions of the Mountain State will be next?” teased Ketelsen. “At Mister Bee, we are all about making quality snacks for our loyal customers, having fun and doing good for the state in the process.”

WorkForce WV announces March 5 Statewide Virtual Job Fair

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — WorkForce West Virginia today announced the next date in a series of Statewide Virtual Job Fairs. Both employers and job seekers are invited to participate in the virtual event on Wednesday, March 5, from 1:00 to 3:30 p.m.

“The Statewide Virtual Job Fairs are a testament to WorkForce West Virginia’s commitment to innovation, offering the job seekers a practical and effective method to advance their careers from anywhere with an internet connection,” said Scott Adkins, Acting Commissioner of WorkForce West Virginia. “Since they began in 2022, 12,590 West Virginians connected with more than 3,140 companies to explore nearly 18,000 open positions across the state.”

Registration is required for both interested employers and job seekers. Register as a job seeker for the March 5 Statewide Virtual Job Fair.

When attending the event, job seekers are encouraged to dress professionally and have a calm, clutter-free background. The said Scott Adkins, Virtual Statewide Job Fair portal features a Job Seeker Training video, a list of participating employers and channels for attendees to register and log in.

After registering for the first time, new employers will create a “Virtual Booth” to connect with job seekers. After completion, this booth will be available during subsequent job fairs. Register as an employer for the March 5 event.

For more information about WorkForce West Virginia and the Statewide Virtual Job Fairs, visit www.workforcewv.org or contact wfwvvjf@wv.gov.

Next Week at the Palette

By Bethany Nuzum

The current exhibit, “Childhood Memories and Wondrous Trees” features watercolors by Judy Matton Reed and paintings and drawings by Georgette B. Griffith.

The Shop at The Palette has unique handmade gifts and cards.

Winter hours are Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays 1:00-3:00pm.

To register for a class and to see what we will be painting go to thepalettewv.com.

- Calming Art**
Friday, March 7, 1-3:00, \$20
- Watercolor**
Wednesday, March 12, 1:00-3:00, \$20.



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