



Clay County Free Press

Home of the Clay County Golden Delicious Apple



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Experts urge caution, focus on proven interventions as WV celebrates decrease in fatal overdoses

By Caity Coyne for West Virginia Watch, www.westvirginiawatch.com

As West Virginia records the largest reduction in fatal overdoses across the nation over a 12 month period, substance use disorder experts are urging caution and encouraging the state to continue, while also increasing, the services available to people who use drugs.

According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, West Virginia has seen two months of declines

in the annual rate of fatal overdoses, representing a 41% decrease compared to deaths reported in both preceding 12 month periods.

The drop is decidedly good news for the state, which has for years been referred to as “ground zero” for the nation’s ongoing drug and overdose epidemic.

But even while celebrating, experts say it’s important to ensure the context and circumstances surrounding the decline is taken into account.

INTERVENTIONS cont. on page 7

How the Excess Levy Supports Our Schools



The turf installation at Bradley Field was paid for in part by excess levy funding.



School Resource Officers are paid for by excess levy funding.

By: Superintendent Phil Dobbins

CCHS and CCMS Band Equipment
Cost: \$9,639.73
Funding Source: Excess Levy
Extra and Co-Curricular Activities
FFA, TSA, Athletics, etc.
Funds Allocated: \$43,133.39
Funding Source: Excess Levy
Driver’s Education Car
2025 Toyota Camry
Cost: \$31,000
Funding Sources: Excess Levy & General

1:1 iPads for All Students and Teachers
Total Cost for Lease Purchase Agreement: \$636,839.75
Funding Sources: Excess Levy, Title I, Title V, Tools for Schools
Audiology, Speech & Physical Therapy Services
Total Cost: \$269,492.86
Funding Sources: Excess Levy & General

Event Passes
Total Collected by CCHS & CCMS: \$51,903
Funding Source: Excess Levy
CCHS and CCMS Football Guardian Caps
Total Cost: \$5,114.20
Funding Source: Excess Levy
Turf Installation at Bradley Field
Total Project Cost: \$1,497,780.89
Funding Sources: Excess Levy, Cost Avoidance & General
School Resource Officers
Funds Allocated: \$144,649.45
Funding Source: Excess Levy

Safe Schools Entrance (Man Trap) at CES
Cost: \$260,000
Funding Sources: Excess Levy & School Building Authority
Replacement of Intercom, Intrusion Systems, Panic Buttons, and Phone Systems at All 4 Schools
Total Project Cost: \$300,181.08
Funding Sources: Dept of Justice COPS Grant & Excess Levy
Big Otter Basketball Court
Total Cost: \$18,050.00
Funding Source: Excess Levy
Replacement of Playground Equipment at CES
Total Project Cost: \$61,358.68
Funding Source: Excess Levy
Demolition Projects
Demolition of Buildings Adjacent to CES: \$33,580
Demolition of House Between CES and Playground: <\$10,000
Funding Sources: Excess Levy & Sale of H.E. White
Roof Replacement at CES
Roof Replacement Cost: \$975,000
Funding Sources: Excess Levy, General & School Building Authority
Clay County Pool
Expenditures: \$38,076.86
Funding Source: Excess Levy
In-Kind Donations (Funded by Excess Levy)
WV Extension Office: \$27,500
Clay County Public Library: \$12,000
Grand Total for All Projects Made Possible by the Excess Levy:
Approximately \$4,525,000



Dr. Kevin Smith (left), Program Director, and Dr. Lucas Hamrick.

Dr. Lucas Hamrick completes the CAMC Fellowship program

If you’re not exactly sure what a fellowship is, it’s a professional learning program dedicated to preparing physicians for their respective specialty fields. Dr. Lucas Hamrick finished a three-year fellowship in June 2025, dedicated to advanced skills for his career in pulmonary and critical care medicine. During this three-year fellowship, Hamrick was involved in intensive study and a multitude of cutting-edge hands-on experiences while working in the ICU and at his pulmonology clinics.

Dr. Hamrick will begin as an Attending Physician at CAMC in September and will begin seeing patients in Summersville as part of CAMC’s satellite clinics in October. According to the fellowship program staff, “Dr. Lucas Hamrick will be a great addition to the hospital and clinics he will be involved with, and his skill as a pulmonologist

and quick thinking in the ICU plus devotion to his patients makes him an extreme asset to the program.”

During his three years of fellowship, Hamrick was chosen as the Chief Fellow and earned acclaim with his research in medicine as well as travelling the country presenting at conferences on the heart and lungs. Hamrick stated that being a pulmonary and critical care fellow at CAMC was a great experience. He feels that the nursing staff and the faculty are excellent and because of them you can become one of the best doctors.

Congratulations to you, Dr. Lucas Hamrick. It has been a 15-year journey but definitely a road worth taking. Thankfully there are dedicated people like yourself that run the extra mile and commit to providing the best care a doctor can give.

Bigfoot is being re-armed



CTE Summer Camp wood working students from left to right are Sadie Cliver, Isaiah Deems (holding new arm), Michael Jarrett and Acelyn Tanner.

See story on Page 8

BOOKED

Nicholas Reese Coale
Booked 7/8/25
Probation violation

Kevin Duwayne Detamore
Booked 7/7/25
Possession of controlled substance, conspiracy

Joshua Alan Stephenson
Booked 7/9/25
Capias

Trevor Lanham Humphreys
Booked 7/12/25
Possession of controlled substance with intent to deliver, prohibited person with firearm

Steven Brandon Divita
Booked 7/9/25
Warrant

Anthony Quinn Loyd
Booked 7/9/25
Unlawful taking of a vehicle, no license

BRAXTON CTY. —

CLAY COUNTY —



Seth Michael Jackson
Booked 7/11/25
Bailpiece



Jerry Paul Lee
Booked 7/13/25
Domestic assault domestic battery

OBITUARY



Wayne Burdette

Wayne Ray Burdette 82, of Prociuous, Clay Co. passed away June 23, 2025 at Morgantown, WV of serious health problems. He was born

Oct. 16, 1942 to the late Ted and Hallie Samples Burdette. He was an Army Veteran and a retired employee of Hope GAs at Corton, WV. He is survived by two sisters Sharon Burdette Samples, Linda Burdette Bird, and numerous nieces and nephews. We would like to give a special thanks to his neighbor who was always there to help and support him. There will be no special services or public viewing. In lieu of flowers please donate to: VFW, Wounded Warriors Project and Hospice Care.

PUBLIC NOTICES

The Clay County WIC office located at 452 Main Street in Clay is open to serve the public every Monday and Wednesday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Puzzle Answers

Weekly SUDOKU

Answer

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

Super Crossword

Answers

P	A	S	T	O	R	A	L		S	E	C	E	D	E		L	O	A	F	S	
O	N	P	A	R	O	L	E		I	S	O	M	I	L		O	M	N	I	A	
W	O	R	K	A	T	I	T		D	O	R	I	S	L	E	S	S	I	N	G	
E	D	I	E			G	L	U	E		I	R	K	I	N	G		M	A	G	
R	E	G	I	S	P	H	I	L	B	I	N		S	E	D	A	T	E	L	Y	
				H	O	T	E	L		N	T	H			U	T	A				
M	A	R	T	Y	R	S		M	I	C	H	E	L	L	E	O	B	A	M	A	
I	C	A	N					N	A	D	A		W	E	E	D	S		S	A	P
F	A	I	T	H	E	V	A	N	S		B	I	A	S		T	I	R	E		
F	I	N		E	R	I	N			B	A	N	S		T	J	M	A	X	X	
			S	O	L	O	M	O	N	G	U	G	G	E	N	H	E	I	M		
P	E	T	A	L	S		T	E	A	M		O	P	E	D		I	M	A		
A	S	O	F			S	E	X	Y		L	A	U	R	A	I	N	N	E	S	
C	A	R		S	T	A	C	I		S	E	N	T			B	O	T	H		
T	I	M	O	T	H	Y	H	U	T	T	O	N		B	E	T	A	R	A	Y	
			D	I	R			M	A	L		U	S	A	G	E					
K	A	T	E	M	O	S	S		D	O	N	A	L	D	G	L	O	V	E	R	
A	R	B		U	N	L	O	O	P		E	L	O	N			R	E	L	O	
P	E	O	P	L	E	O	F	N	O	T	E		P	A	R	O	D	I	E		
P	A	L	A	U		T	I	T	L	E	D		E	M	I	N	E	N	C	E	
A	L	T	O	S		H	A	V	E	N	S		D	E	F	E	R	S	T	O	

REGIONAL JAIL MUGSHOTS

BRAXTON COUNTY

Resolution rates on informal complaints are 98 percent

By PSC Chair Charlotte Lane

The statistic that astounds me yearly at the Public Service Commission of West Virginia is our ability to settle thousands of cases on an informal basis and without resorting to lawyers or litigation of any kind. Our most recent report shows that we received more than nine-thousand-five-hundred informal complaints last year. These types of complaints happen when you have experienced a service interruption, when the service you have is poor, when you can't get service, or if you have a billing issue that you cannot get resolved. You want to talk with somebody about it. You have attempted to resolve your issue directly with the company and received no resolution. And then you call us. Our agency's telephone number is located on your utility bills and notices. You want to air your grievance, but you're not sure you want to go through what can be a long, and possibly pricy, process through our formal case procedure. We have a much faster and much simpler system set up, and that is the informal complaints process. We have two highly dedicated groups of consumer affairs specialists to help you. They are called CAS for short. You begin by filing your informal complaint with the CAS. You share your problem by telephone, letter, or on-line filing, and what you would like as a resolution. We take it from there. The specialist contacts the utility involved, shares your complaint issues, and works towards a positive resolution if one can be reached between the parties. These people are very good at their work. How do I know? Well, of the 9,506 informal complaints filed with us last year, they resolved 98 percent. That is an astounding resolution rate and a true credit to their abilities. These specialists dealt with complaints involving wa-



PSC Chair Charlotte Lane

ter, electric, telephones, sewer, cable and gas. And let me give you an idea of the number of individual complaints. More than 3,200 came last year in electric power complaints. Another 2,700 came in water cases. Telephones accounted for 1,400. The rest were at smaller levels, but I think you get the idea. So, as always, if you have a complaint, I, and the Commission, are here to help. But on the way to the PSC, you may want to save all of us a little time by seeing if one of the consumer affairs-specialists might be able to help make life easier for you.

Treasurer Pack announces nearly 15,000 students to receive 100% Hope Scholarship Funding for 2025-2026 school year Families can still apply for some funding throughout the year

State Treasurer Larry Pack, who serves as Chairman of the Hope Scholarship Board, today announced nearly 15,000 students will receive full funding for the Hope Scholarship for the 2025-2026 academic year. This is an increase from the 10,750 students who received some level of funding from the previous year. The Hope Scholarship will open to all school-age children residing in West Virginia beginning in the 2026-2027 academic year. "It is tremendous that we continue to see exponential growth year after year with more parents taking full advantage of the Hope Scholarship program," Treasurer Pack said. "We believe this growth will continue as the program goes fully universal in the 2026-2027 school year. My Office stands by to ensure we meet the needs of those families by running an efficient program. At the end of the day, this is all about empowering parents and students to find the education that fits their unique needs." A student application submitted within the following dates will receive the associated level of Hope Scholarship funding:

June 16-Sept. 15: 75% of Hope Scholarship annual award amount.
Sept. 16-Nov. 30: 50% of Hope Scholarship annual award amount.
Dec. 1-Feb. 28: 25% of Hope Scholarship annual award amount.
"If you missed the June 15 deadline, we encourage parents or families to still apply for associated levels of funding. We will continue to take applications year-round to meet the needs of our Hope families," Treasurer Pack said. The Hope Scholarship award amount varies each school year depending on the amount of state aid funding per pupil provided to county boards of education for public school students. The scholarship amount for the 2025-2026 school year is \$5,267.38. Program participation grew from 2,333 students during the 2022-2023 school year to and now over 10,000 students in the 2024-2025 school year. The Treasurer's Office expects nearly 19,000 students will take part this upcoming school year. To qualify for the Hope Scholarship, a student must be a West Virginia resident and be either: Eligible to be enrolled in a kindergarten program. Enrolled full-time in a public elementary or secondary school program in this state for the entire instructional term during the current academic year immediately preceding the academic year for which the student is applying to participate in the Hope Scholarship Program. Or, enrolled full-time and attending a public elementary or secondary school program in this state for at least 45 calendar days during an instructional term at the time of application and remain enrolled and attending public school until a decision is reached on the student's Hope Scholarship application. In addition to filling out the application, state law also requires participating families to fill out a notice of intent to participate in the program with their local county superintendent. A sample template for that notice as well as Frequently Asked Questions regarding the notice are also available online at the program's website. Families are reminded to notify the Hope Scholarship Board via email at hopescholarshipwv@wvsto.gov if they are awarded the Hope Scholarship for 2025-2026 but ultimately decide to remain in public school. For more information on the Hope Scholarship, visit www.HopeScholarshipWV.com.

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Till You Give It Away

By Joe Mazzella

I have a unique collection. Some of it is on the wall above my computer desk. Some of it is on the kitchen counter. And most of it is tacked to the walls of my bedroom. It is a collection of pictures, of the children I have sponsored overseas, through the organization Children International, for the last 40 years. Each picture shows them growing taller, healthier, stronger, and happier. Often I can see the sadness and despair in their eyes during their first picture turn to joy and peace in the later ones. It always gives me a feeling of gratitude when I look at these pictures. I am thankful to God for guiding me to sponsor my first child all of those years ago and I am thankful that I have been able to help so many of them with food, education, job training, love, and encouragement, to make their lives better and lift themselves out of the terrible poverty they face in the third world countries they live in.

Over the years I have sponsored seven different children through the program. Some of them have grown up and aged out of the program while others’ families have moved away seeking work and better opportunities. Each time it happens, though, I always agree to sponsor another child and do my best to help another life.

Some of my more frugal friends have asked me why I send money overseas to help a child I will never meet even though it is only a little more than a dollar a day. They seem to think I am wasting my money and love, but I know they are wrong. Because in God’s eyes no act of charity, no act of love is ever wasted. Each one is precious. Each one is priceless.

In his last days the great lyricist Oscar Hammerstein wrote: “A bell’s not a bell till you ring it. A song’s not a song till you sing it. Love in your heart is not put there to stay. Love isn’t love till you give it away.” May you always give your love away to all who need it.

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This is your Last and Final Warning

Dr. James L. Snyder

As a child, I remember my parents saying to me, “I’m not going to tell you this again.” The only problem with that was they did tell me again. And again. And again.

It was hard for me to trust my parents along this line. They always gave me warnings, and then when I would do it again, they would give me another warning. I began to realize that they weren’t taking these warnings seriously.

The only thing I can think of is that they may not have remembered telling me that in the first place. I can understand that.

Now that I’m an adult, I’m the one giving this last and final warning. And, of course, my children responded to it the same way I responded to my parents. I think it might be an inherited attitude.

However, I’m now in a different situation. I receive letters at least once a week, warning me that this is their last and final notice about my car or home warranty. If I had all the postage that accumulated over the years from these letters, I could retire in style.

Usually, I ignore these letters, except when they contain a prepaid postage envelope. I usually take those envelopes, put a track in them, seal the envelope, and then put it in the mailbox.

I never know if these tracks work because I never hear back from them.

Over the last several years, a new level of inquiry has emerged. It is a wonderful invention by Alexander Graham Bell called the telephone. Every day, I receive a phone call warning me that this is their last and final warning concerning my expiring car warranty.

If only that were true.

The trouble with these “stupid” phone calls is that there’s no real person on the other end. I don’t mean me; I mean their end. It’s all recorded, and how they do that is above my pay scale.

I can’t do anything with these recorded messages, so I hang up. After all, what else can I do? Indeed, I would like the opportunity to give them a piece of my mind and tell them to stop calling me. But that is not on the agenda.

Then, beginning in December with the annual Medicare renewal time, I have some actual people call me.

The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage refuses to answer these calls, and often, will take the phone off the hook for the whole day.

But I have a different perspective. After all, I am retired and do have some free time to mess around. When I get one of these calls from a live person, I dive into it with all the nonsense I have, which is quite a lot.

After all, they called me, I did not call them.

The calls I like are those in which I’m asked personal questions.

“Do you have diabetes?”

I always respond to them, ‘No, I don’t have diabetes, but I am a very sweet guy.’ Usually, when I say that on the other end of the phone, there’s an amazing “click.”

There are times when I answer using the voice of Daffy Duck. I’ve done this so often that I’m becoming quite skilled at it. Several times, when I respond to them on my end of the phone, they respond with a long list of vulgarities. And they asked me to do things to myself that are physically not possible.

One question I enjoy is when people ask me how old I am. I usually respond, “I don’t know how old I am because my age changes every year and I don’t know what it’s going to change to this year.”

I can’t tell how many were so confused by my answer that they said nothing and just hung up on me.

If someone calls me on the phone and offers me a product they think I would want, I wouldn’t take it from them. I will never trust anybody who randomly calls me with a product that I would really want.

Recently, I’ve been winning money from a PCH contest. I don’t recall signing up for this contest, but I was grateful to have won it. The one prize was \$8.5 million and a brand-new Porsche. I couldn’t tell you how excited I was to win all of this. It certainly was my lucky day.

In processing this, all I had to do was send them \$14,000 for the processing fee, and then I would receive all that money, along with the brand-new car.

I’m a Pennsylvania Dutchman, and we are rather frugal with our money. You touch my money, and I may say something nice at your funeral.

These phone calls are not going to stop. But no matter how many call me, they’re not getting one dime from me. I only wish it were true when they say, “This is your last and final warning.” It’s amazing how many people lie for a living. Thinking on this I was reminded what Solomon said, and he was spark on. “Lying lips are abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are his delight” (Proverbs 12:22).

Whenever a person lies it has a way of coming back to them. I remember my father use to say that if I didn’t lie I wouldn’t need a good memory. I have lived long enough to understand what he meant.

Dr. James L. Snyder lives in Ocala, FL with the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. Telephone 1-352-216-3025, e-mail jameessnyder51@gmail.com, website www.jameessnyderministries.com

Home Country

Slim Randles

We all know that someone will find Jenkins’s cabin. Someday. Oh, it’s up there in those hills somewhere. We all know that.

It’s become a friendly object of conjecture and speculation. No one living has seen it, as far as we know. Jenkins himself died quietly when he was on one of his infrequent trips to town for supplies. Funny guy, that Jenkins.

He worked in the city for years, mostly as a night watchman in a factory that made diapers. Didn’t really enjoy people much, and told us many times how nice it was to just be in the huge factory when it was quiet. Then one day he decided to move to the mountains and make pretty things out of leather. Once in a while he’d have his coffee at the counter at the Mule Barn, but often as not, he’d camp out on the edge of town for the two or three days it took him to sell his crafts and buy supplies. He’d smile and wave from his campsite, then he’d be gone one morning. We wouldn’t see him again for months.

Now and then someone would ask him where his cabin was, and he’d just point toward the mountains and say, “Up there.” How far up there? “A ways.” What

was his cabin like? “Not too big.”

And so we came to regard the little cabin as an intriguing mystery, an object of local legend. After he died, several of the fellows tried to backtrack him to find the place, but Jenkins evidently didn’t take the same trail each time, as though he wanted his quiet times protected from even a friendly visit from one of us. During his lifetime, we respected his wishes. In this country, a man has a perfect right to be a little strange. And, truth be known, we hold a certain admiration for those of us who hear different instructions. But there is something in the human spirit, also, that begs to have its mysteries solved. So now, several times each year, one or two of us will use the mystery of the lost cabin as an excuse to poke our noses into the nuances and seclusions of these hills. We play off our curiosity against our wishes to respect a man’s privacy, even when he’s gone.

We have yet to discover Jenkins’s lost cabin. Maybe we never will. Maybe that wouldn’t be such a bad thing, either.

- - - - -

Brought to you by Whimsy Castle, a love story about a boy and a roof. It’s on Amazon and most of the others.

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FINANCING AVAILABLE WITH APPROVED CREDIT

THIS WEEK IN West Virginia History

July 16, 1791: Adam Stephen, a physician and Revolutionary War general often credited as the founder of Martinsburg, died at his home in that city.



July 16, 1869: Philanthropist Michael Late Benedum was born in Bridgeport. He made a fortune in the oil and gas business but is best remembered for establishing the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation.

July 17, 1861: The Battle of Scary Creek took place in Putnam County. It was one of the earliest battles of the war and one of the first Confederate victories.

July 17, 1914: Singer Eleanor Steber was born in Wheeling. She made her debut with the Metropolitan Opera in 1940.

July 17, 1921: Marce-

nia “Toni” Stone was born in Bluefield. She would become the first woman to play professional baseball for a previously all-male team. In 1953, she joined the Indianapolis Clowns of the old Negro American League, replacing the team’s second baseman, Hank Aaron, who had just joined the National League’s Milwaukee Braves.



July 17, 1922: The Cliftonville Mine Battle took place east of Wellsburg, Brooke County. The gun battle between striking miners and sheriff’s forces left at least nine people dead.

July 18, 1776: Methodist bishop Francis Asbury first set foot in present West Virginia outside of Berkeley Springs. He worked extensively in what is now the Eastern Panhandle, preaching and

lecturing almost every day, before continuing farther into western Virginia.

July 18, 1865: Samuel Cabell was murdered at his Institute plantation by either pro-Union or pro-Confederate sympathizers, depending on the source. His widow and mother of his children, Mary Barnes Cabell, who had previously been one of his slaves, inherited all his land, on which West Virginia State University would be founded in 1892.



July 18, 1893: Spencer State Hospital opened. With its connected brick buildings, a quarter-mile in length, the hospital was sometimes referred to as the longest continuous brick building in America. It remained in operation until June 1989.

July 19, 1850: Pope Pius IX established the Diocese of Wheeling, naming Richard V. Whel-

an as its first bishop.



July 19, 1863: A Confederate raid led by Gen. John Morgan came to an end on Buffington Island, near Ravenswood. The Confederates were overtaken by federal troops, local militia and three U.S. Navy gunboats.

July 19, 1877: Federal troops arrived in Martinsburg, where the Railroad Strike of 1877 had begun days earlier. The troops ended the violence in Martinsburg, but the deadly strike continued across the country into September. It was the first work stoppage in U.S. history to spread nationally.

July 19, 1946: Author Stephen Coonts was born in Morgantown. After graduating from West Virginia University and serving in the navy during the

Vietnam War, Coonts became a best-selling action and adventure novelist with the 1986 publication of *Flight of the Intruder*.

July 19, 1952: Novelist Jayne Anne Phillips was born in Buckhannon. After graduating from West Virginia University, her short stories and novels began receiving wide recognition. In 2024, she was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for her 2023 novel *Night Watch*, about a mother and daughter in West Virginia after the Civil War.

July 20, 2010: Carte Goodwin became the nation’s youngest sitting senator. Goodwin was appointed to fill Robert C. Byrd’s seat in the U.S. Senate following Byrd’s death.

July 21, 1924: Don Knotts was born in Morgantown. The comedy legend will be forever remembered for portraying Barney Fife on *The Andy Griffith Show*.

July 22, 1859: Athlete “Jack” Glasscock was

born in Wheeling. Glasscock, who played bare-handed, was one of baseball’s premier shortstops of the 19th century.

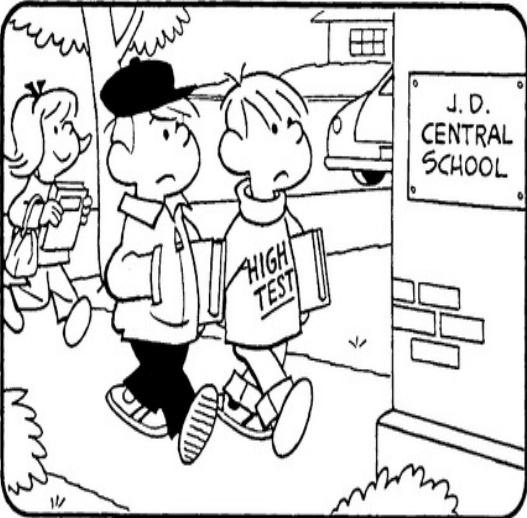


July 22, 1930: The rollicking Dunglen Hotel, located across the New River from Thurmond, was destroyed by arsonists. A hubbub of illegal activity during the Prohibition era, it supposedly hosted a poker game that lasted 14 years.

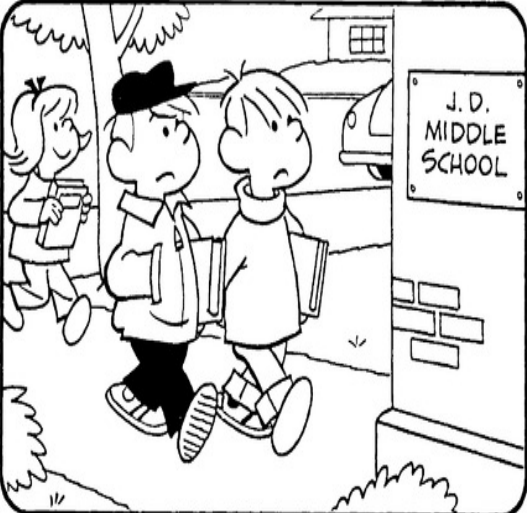
July 22, 1937: Musician Tommy Thompson was born in St. Albans, Kanawha County. Through his group, the Red Clay Ramblers, and a career that spanned four decades, Thompson played a major role in spreading the popularity of old-time music.

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY
HENRY BOLTIHOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



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Differences: 1. Purse is missing. 2. Cap is different. 3. Sweater words are missing. 4. Book is moved. 5. Car is moved. 6. School name is different.

Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

9				8		2	
		7	3			8	6
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Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦♦

♦ Moderate ♦♦ Challenging
♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

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Super Crossword

SCALE MODELS

ACROSS

1 Bucolic
9 Break away formally
15 Lazies about
20 Out of prison conditionally
21 Brand of infant formula
22 “— vincit amor” (“Love conquers all”)
23 Try to get the job done
24 “The Grass Is Singing” novelist
26 Falco of “Oz”
27 Bonding stuff
29 Peevish
30 O or Elle, e.g.
31 Original host of “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire”
35 In a calm way
37 Bellhop’s employer
38 Ultimate
40 Actress Hagen
41 They suffer for what they believe in
45 First lady who wrote “American Grown”
52 Self-confident declaration

53 Zilch
54 Ugly plants
55 Stuff oozing down a trunk
56 She sang “I’ll Be Missing You” with Puff Daddy
60 Skewed view
61 Unicycle part
62 Trout feature
63 “— go brag”
64 Makes taboo
65 Sister chain of Marshalls
67 Art collector who founded a Manhattan museum
72 Daisy parts
74 Nets or Nats
75 Daily opinion page
76 The Monkees’ “— Believer”
79 Since
80 Like lingerie
81 She played Kerry Weaver on “ER”
84 Hertz offering
85 Actress Keanan of “Step by Step”
87 Transmitted
88 This plus that
89 George C. Scott’s “Taps” co-star

92 Certain stream of particles
95 N, S, E or W
96 — de mer
97 Utility bill info
99 Walfish supermodel
104 Creator and star of FX’s “Atlanta”
110 Wall St. hedger
111 Remove a collar from, e.g.
113 Musk of SpaceX
114 Co. transfer
115 Luminaries like the eight featured in this puzzle? (hint: look at their first few letters)
118 Took off on
121 Pacific island nation
122 Dubbed
123 Greatness
124 Some female singers
125 Refuges
126 Goes along with humbly

DOWN

1 Strength
2 Battery pole
3 Small shoot

4 George who played Sulu
5 Singer Rita
6 Get decayed
7 Touches down
8 Leave alone
9 Second half of a single
10 “— Beso”
11 City about 50 miles west of Athens
12 Arab leader
13 Casino chips, e.g.
14 J.R. Ewing’s mother
15 California city near San Jose
16 Meditation syllables
17 Japanese cartoon art
18 Ultimate
19 Drooping
25 Invested (with)
28 Funny Tracey
32 Timid
33 “— favor”
34 Old Andean
36 Eatery bill
39 Chopping with an ax
41 Peeve
42 Brazilian berry
43 Cloudburst
44 Blasting aid

46 Passports, e.g.
47 Rent
48 The, in Paris
49 Area south of the Black Sea
50 Karl with a manifesto
51 Zenith
53 Manipulation of matter on a tiny scale
57 Satan’s home
58 God of love
59 Liveliness
60 Satchel, e.g.
61 “Eww, no more!,” in texts
64 Lazy type
65 Ellington’s “Take — Train”
66 Yoda is one
68 Klutzy type
69 Medication for acid reflux
70 Part of LGBT
71 “Fresh Air” ailer
72 Postwar deal
73 Morales of the screen
77 Prefix with analysis
78 Pallid
80 Put in words
81 Feline sign
82 Occurring every year

83 Clippers’ org.
85 Provocation
86 Ruler’s seat
87 WWII battle city in France
90 Pindar poem
91 Frog-to-be
92 Sullied reputation
93 Yolk’s place
94 Business card no.
98 Slanted
99 Iota-lambda link
100 “That’s — shame”
101 Fastening rod with a crosspiece
102 Lazy type
103 Bulgarian capital
105 Essentials
106 Arrangement
107 Leaf features
108 Vote in
109 Roping event
112 Being seen via the small screen
116 Kung — shrimp
117 Wallet bill
119 Discharge from service, informally
120 Wallet bill

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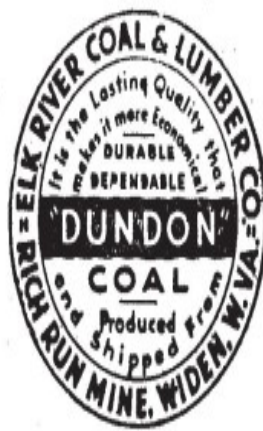


THE WIDEN NEWS

The people who think alike
should vote alike.

"DUNDON"
RED ASH COAL

Where all think alike, no one
thinks very much.



July 1958

Widen Notes

Dear Jerry,

Everything is settling back to normal after the Fourth of July Celebration and the big Clay County Centennial Celebration. We had a wonderful sunshiny day on the Fourth and the parade was bigger and better than ever. Some of our floats were kept until the following week-end when they were taken to Clay for the Centennial parade on Saturday, July 12, which was the 100th birthday of Clay County. Everyone had a good time in Clay and we have never seen so many people there before! All the store windows in Clay were beautifully decorated with antiques and it certainly was interesting to hear the history of all those priceless items. Please pass along our thanks to the town of Clay for their wonderful hospitality.

These reunions are so much fun! It's so nice to get to see and chat with people whom you haven't seen for years. Yet you stop and wonder if the years have been as kind to you as they have to everyone else.

Mr. and Mrs. Pat Butler were here for the Fourth and they visited briefly with friends during the day. "Pat" is our Land Agent and has been working for Elk River Coal and Lumber Company for over 50 years.

Mr. and Mrs. French Snow and children Melinda, Dinah and Eddie came over from Summersville to spend the 4th with us. The Snows are former residents of Widen and Mr. Snow is employed here as a Machinist.

Mrs. Beattie's mother, Mrs. Walter Muir was visiting in Widen over the Fourth and also her brother and his family. Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Muir and children, all from Beckley. We talked briefly to the Muirs during the day and they were very much impressed with all the festivities.

Gene George's parents were at Widen over the Fourth and spent about two weeks in town, most of it at the house with their three grandchildren.

Mr. George is a retired mining engineer, having called it quits the first of this year after nearly 45 years in the industry. They were very much impressed with the Independence Day celebration and apparently thoroughly enjoyed their stay. They left town July 14 to return to their home in St. Louis via Grove City, Pa., their old home town, and Cleveland, Ohio, where Mrs. George has a brother. Walter George went with his grandparents and will remain in St. Louis until sometime in August.

Austin, Hudson and Buddy Craft have been released from the Charleston General Hospital where they have been patients since June 28, when they were in an automobile accident on Dull's Creek Mountain. Their very good friend Jimmie Salisbury, was killed in the accident.

Dr. and Mrs. Harry P. Phillips and three young sons are visiting Mr. and Mrs. Harold L. Beattie of Rich Run Road. Mrs. Phillips is Mr. Beattie's sister. The Phillips's are residents of St. Louis, Missouri, where Dr. Phillips is pastor of The West Presbyterian Church.

Mr. and Mrs. Hub Stephenson (Maude Hamrick's parents) were visiting in Widen July 13th. Mr. Stephenson is a former employee of the Elk River Coal and Lumber Company. They are now residents of Charleston.

Dr. E. D. Moyers condition continues to improve and he hopes to be back at work in the very near future.

Mrs. Mildred Gibson who is a patient in the Charleston General is getting along nicely and will probably be at home within the next few days. Mrs. Gibson is the widow of the late Early Gibson, Elk River Employee.

Mrs. Edna Belle Dalton and daughter, Rita Jo, and Miss Betty Jo Shingler and Miss Phern McGuire spent the week-end of July 19, in Morgantown, W. Va. visiting Mrs. Dalton's sisters-in-law, Mrs. Verna Harris and Mrs. Bertha Watson.

Mr. and Mrs. Rufus Muncy were "Fourth of July" visitors in Widen—visiting Mr. and Mrs. Branty Hickman, Mrs. Muncy's parents.

Mr. Joseph Potasnik of Detroit, Michigan made a surprise visit to his brother, John Potasnik of Rone Street recently. Mr. Potasnik had not been in Widen for 37 years, and they had not seen each other for 10 years. He was accompanied by his wife, his son Walter and his daughter, Emalie, and his grandson.

Mrs. Anna Mae Leeson, R. N., who has been employed by the Elk River Coal and Lumber Company for the past nine months has been chosen as one of the recipients of the Title I Traineeships in Public Health Nursing through the School of Public Health, University of North Carolina, and is leaving Widen to take advantage of this wonderful opportunity, to further her education.

Our best wishes to Mrs. Leeson!

Mrs. Dorothy Neal and Miss Pearl Frame are spending two weeks in Florida visiting with Mrs. Neal's daughter, Mrs. Noralee Fair.

Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Samples of Hartland, W. Va. announce the arrival of a new daughter, Patricia Jill — 6 pounds, 15 ounces, born June 21, 1958 at the Charleston General Hospital. Mrs. Samples is the former Miss Shirley Sutton who is employed at the Dundon Office.

Miss Patsy Gibson has been employed in the Widen Medical Department for the remainder of the Summer. Patsy is entering Nurses training this fall at the Charleston General Hospital. She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Jenner Gibson, of Wilson Ridge.

Mrs. Virginia Backus and daughter, Dawne Carol, are vacationing in Washington, D. C. They are visiting with Mrs. Backus' sister, Mrs. Frances Coluzzi, and doing some sight seeing.

Mr. Gerald Simmons, band director, spent two weeks vacationing with his father in North Carolina. He returned home August 27th. He is making plans to take the Widen Band to Bradley Field for two weeks training in August.

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Strickland have returned home after visiting their son and daughter-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Johnny Strickland, in Akron, Ohio.

Sorry you were unable to attend the Centennial. Chances are none of us will be around for the next one. Lets hope they have nicer weather for it. Bye for now
Co-eds.

DILLE CHURCH DINNER

A Dinner will be sponsored by the Big Union Baptist Church on August 2, 1958 at the Church from 6 o'clock until 8 o'clock P. M. Proceeds from the dinner will be used to help in building a new basement for the church.

Times Tickles

If George Washington were living today he would have no chance of being elected President of the United States, asserts The Living Church, published in Milwaukee.

Washington would be opposed by the following elements: by the American Legion, the Daughters of the American Revolution, and the Liberty League, because he was a known radical of Revolutionary tendencies;

—by William Randolph Hearst, for the above reasons, and also because he was born an Englishman;

—by President Roosevelt and the New Dealers, because he believed in the Constitution and rugged individualism;

—by Bishop Cannon and the Methodist Board of Prohibition, Temperance, and Public Morals, because he believed in life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and kept the best cellars in Virginia;

—by the Roman Catholics and Missouri Synod Lutherans, because he was a Mason;

—by the Negroes and Civil Liberties Union because he kept slaves;

—by the Communists and other radicals, because he was an aristocrat and a capitalist;

—by the League of Nations Association and the Internationalists, because he warned of entangling foreign alliances;

—by the isolationists and the hundred-per-centers, because he entered into a treaty of alliance with France, and welcomed Lafayette, Von Steuben and Kosciuszko and his allies;

—by the conservationists and the Amalgamated Fruit Growers of America, because he cut down the cherry tree.

Whenever Conductor Toscanini was displeased at rehearsal by the performance of the orchestra, he would lose his temper, and break anything in sight. One day, when he was particularly displeased because of the obstinacy of one of his leading players, he pulled an expensive watch from his pocket and smashed it to bits. The penitent musician, feeling somewhat responsible for the loss, presented Toscanini the next day with an exquisite timepiece to take the place of the one that had been destroyed. In addition, the other members of the orchestra gave him another watch of the drugstore variety, which was inscribed, "For rehearsals."

LEGAL

IN THE JUVENILE COURT OF CLAY COUNTY,
WEST VIRGINIA
THAT BEING THE JUVENILE COURT OF SAID COUNTY
IN RE: State v J.D. and B.D. Case Nos. 25-JA-16-17
In the matter of J.D. and B.D., and the unknown whereabouts of
Joshua Dancy, Adult Respondent Father.
ORDER OF PUBLICATION
And
NOTICE OF ANSWER
To: **Joshua Dancy.**

(The object of this action is to notify the Adult Respondent of an abuse and neglect petition herein filed so that said Adult Respondent may answer the same to protect their interest).
You are hereby notified that an abuse and neglect and/or abandonment petition has been filed with the Circuit Court of Clay County, West Virginia, on the 5th day of February 2025, and assigned Case Numbers 25-JA-16-17, wherein it is alleged that the Adult Respondent Mother of Infant Respondents J.D. (DOB: 8/29/14), and B.D. (DOB: 12/27/17), is Catherine Dancy, and that said Infant Respondents be placed in the custody of the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, with said Infant Respondents remaining in the care, custody and control of the said Department since that time in accordance with WV Code §49-6-3. You are hereby notified that you have the right to answer said petition and you have the right to have counsel present at all stages of these proceedings and ALL PROCEEDINGS CAN RESULT IN THE PERMANENT TERMINATION OF CUSTODIAL AND PARENTAL RIGHTS TO SAID INFANT CHILD.
Accordingly, it is **ORDERED** that the Adult Respondent, Joshua Dancy shall appear before the Honorable Judge Asbury on the **13th day of August 2025, at 9:15 a.m.**, at the Clay County Courthouse, 246 Main Street, Clay, West Virginia, otherwise judgment by default will be taken against them at any time thereafter, and termination of your custodial and parental rights may be ordered by the Court.
A copy of said Petition can be obtained from the Office of the Circuit Clerk of Clay County, West Virginia, at the Clay County Courthouse, Clay, West Virginia.
STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA AND WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES, CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES DIVISION.
BY: Wayne King, Prosecuting Attorney, Clay County, West Virginia.
Entered by the Clerk of said Court on the 8th day of July 2025.

Chavisa Henshaw
Circuit Clerk

LEGAL

NOTICE OF TRUSTEE'S SALE

NOTICE OF TRUSTEE'S SALE is hereby given pursuant to and by virtue of the authority vested in the Substitute Trustee, WV Trustee Services, LLC, by that certain Deed of Trust dated November 10, 2010, executed by Borrower(s), Barbara R Welch and John W Welch, to Richard A. Pill, the Trustee of record in the office of the Clerk of the County Commission of Clay County, West Virginia, in Book 125, at Page 738. At the time of the execution of the Deed of Trust, this property was reported to have a mailing address of 240 UPPER TWO RUN RD, CLAY, WV 25043. WV Trustee Services, LLC were appointed as Substitute Trustees by APPOINTMENT OF SUCCESSOR TRUSTEE dated April 21, 2025, of record in the Clerk's Office in Book 37, Page 356. The borrower(s) defaulted under the Note and Deed of Trust and the Substitute Trustees have been instructed to foreclose under the Deed of Trust. Accordingly, the Substitute Trustees will sell the following described property to the highest bidder at the front door of the Courthouse of Clay County, in Clay, West Virginia, on the following date:

1st day of August, 2025 at 11:30 a.m.

All that certain tract or parcel of real estate, together with any buildings or improvements thereon, rights or rights of way incidental thereto, and appurtenances thereunto belonging, situate in the Stephenson Addition to the town of Clay, in Henry District, Clay County, West Virginia, and as more particularly bounded and described as follows:

BEGINNING at a 1/2" iron rod set, being a common corner with property of Frank Kerr, Jr., at a 35' street, thence running with said 35' street N, 70 degrees 24' W., 158.00 feet to an axle found at another 35' street N. 19 degrees 36' E., 109 feet to a 1/2" iron rod set at the old county road; thence running with the old county road S. 81 degrees 30' E., 161.01 feet to a 1/2" iron rod set, being a common corner with property of Frank Kerr, Jr.; thence running with the property line of Frank Kerr, Jr., S. 19 degrees 36' W., 140.00 feet to the place of beginning, containing 0.45 acres, more or less, being designated as Lot 1, 2, and 3 of Block "G" of the Stephenson Addition as surveyed May 17, 2000, by William A. Robert, N. 714. Being the same real estate conveyed to John W. Welch and Barbara R. Welch, husband and wife, by Linda A. Given, (formerly known as Linda A. Jarvis), et al, by deed dated October 28, 2010, and recorded in the Office of the Clerk of the County Commission of Nicholas County, West Virginia, in Deed Book 207, at Page 622.

This deed of trust is made subject to the same exceptions, reservations, conditions, restrictions and easements contained in prior deeds of conveyance of record for the above described real estate, insofar as same are presently applicable and have not been released, abandoned or discharged by law or otherwise.

TERMS OF SALE:

- 1) The property will be conveyed in an "AS IS" physical condition by Deed containing no warranty, express or implied, subject to the Internal Revenue Service right of redemption, all property taxes, prior Deeds, liens, reservations, encumbrances, restrictions, rights-of-ways, easements, covenants, conveyances and conditions of record in the Clerk's office or affecting the subject property.
- 2) The Purchaser shall be responsible for the payment of the transfer taxes imposed by the West Virginia Code § 11-22-1.
- 3) The Beneficiary and/or the Servicer of the Deed of Trust and Note reserve the right to submit a bid for the property at sale.
- 4) The Trustee reserves the right to continue sale of the subject property from time to time by written or oral proclamation, which continuance shall be in the sole discretion of the Trustee.
- 5) The Trustee shall be under no duty to cause any existing tenant or person occupying the property to vacate said property, and any personal property and/or belongings remaining at the property after the foreclosure sale will be deemed to constitute ABANDONED PROPERTY AND WILL BE DISPOSED OF ACCORDINGLY.
- 6) The total purchase price is payable to the Trustee within thirty (30) days of the date of sale, with ten (10%) of the total purchase price payable to the Trustee at sale.

WV Trustee Services, LLC, Substitute Trustee

BY:

Jim Ashley, Limited Signing Officer
WV Trustee Services, LLC
McGuire Office Center
618 Tenth Street, Suite 108
Huntington, WV 25701
(304) 853-3336
jim.ashley@wvtrusteeservices.com

LEGAL

PUBLIC NOTICE

West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Water and Waste Management
601 57th Street SE
Charleston, WV 25304
Telephone: (304) 926-0495
Fax: (304) 926-0463

Public Notice No.: PH-25-03

Public Notice Date: July 14-18, 2025

GENERAL WV/NPDES WATER POLLUTION CONTROL PERMIT WASTEWATER DISCHARGES FROM SEWAGE TREATMENT AND DISPOSAL SYSTEMS OF DOMESTIC SEWAGE ONLY (50,000 GPD or Less, except mine bathhouses) WV/NPDES PERMIT NO. WV0103110

The Division of Water and Waste Management is proposing to issue a General WV/NPDES Water Pollution Control Permit to regulate the discharge of wastewater from Sewage Treatment and Disposal Systems of Domestic Sewage Only (50,000 GPD or Less, except mine bathhouses). The General Permit will authorize the operation and maintenance of establishments engaged in Sewage Treatment and Disposal Systems of Domestic Sewage Only (50,000 GPD or Less, except mine bathhouses) and to cover the discharge of treated sewage to waters of the State. It is proposed that this General Permit be issued for a five (5) year term. The majority of the facilities to be permitted under this General Permit are already in existence, with approximately 3-5 new facilities every year.

In accordance with 60 CSR 5.6.c., Tier 2 antidegradation reviews are not required for these facilities. Coverage under this general permit will require the utilization of minimum treatment technologies that should result in an overall benefit to public health and the welfare of the environment from an improvement in water quality.

All facilities wishing to be covered under this General permit will be required to submit a facility registration application form. Upon receipt of the registration application form, the Division of Water & Waste Management will review it for completeness. The Division of Water & Waste Management then will advise the applicant of its coverage under this permit.

There are approximately 678 treatment facilities currently registered under the present general permit. If those facilities wish to continue discharging, they will be required to register for coverage under the new general permit.

The Director of the Division of Water and Waste Management retains authority to require any owner/operator to apply for and obtain an individual WV/NPDES Permit. This authority will be exercised when the Director determines that such individual permit will better protect the receiving water.

The Draft Permit and Fact Sheet may be inspected by appointment between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday at the Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Water and Waste Management, Public Information Office, 601 57th Street SE, Charleston, WV 25304. Copies of the documents may be obtained from the Division at a nominal cost.

Any interested persons may submit written comments on the Draft Permit. Comments will be accepted until August 18, 2025. They should be addressed to:

Director, WV Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Water and Waste Management
601 57th Street SE
Charleston, WV 25304
Attention: Pamela Houston
Phone: (304) 926-0499, Extension 43864
Fax: (304) 926-0463
E-mail: pamela.s.houston@wv.gov

All comments received within this period will be considered prior to acting on the Draft Permit. Correspondence should include the name, address, and telephone number of the writer and a concise statement of the nature of the issues being raised. The Director shall hold a public hearing whenever a finding is made, based on requests, that there is a significant degree of public interest on issues relevant to the draft General Permit. Interested persons may contact the Public Information Office to obtain further information.

**To
place
your
legals
Call
us at
(304)-
647-
5724**

Sheetz serving up free hot dogs for National Hot Dog Day

Sheetz, a major Mid-Atlantic restaurant and convenience chain, announced it will celebrate National Hot Dog Day by giving away two free hot dogs to customers. Customers must purchase a minimum of 10 gallons of any fuel grade in a single transaction to redeem this offer.

This special offer will be available on National Hot Dog Day, Wednesday, July 16, and last through Tuesday, July 22. This promotion will be valid for customers at all of Sheetz's 780+ loca-

tions that offer fuel by adding it under the OFFERZ tab on the Sheetz app. The offer excludes extras and add-ons to the hot dogs.

The Sheetz app, available on Apple and Android devices, is built to power customers through their Sheetz run, allowing customers to find their closest Sheetz store, add their My Sheetz Rewardz®, buy a gift card, get mobile offers and more. To download the Sheetz app, customers can visit www.sheetz.com/app.



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HELP WANTED PROGRAM SUPPORT SPECIALIST

Opportunity to work in conservation and agriculture in Elk Conservation District area (Braxton, Clay, Nicholas and Webster counties). Office and field position. AVAILABLE IMMEDIATELY

Full-time temporary thru June 2026 with potential to extend based on grant funding. Benefits include paid holidays.

No health or medical insurance provided. Responsibilities include grant writing (experience preferred), and assisting USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service with program planning. This is an at will position.

Mail resume to Elk CD, 738 Airport Road, Sutton, WV 26601, or drop off in box at office, or submit by email to ecd@wvca.us. Deadline for application is July 28, 2025.

LEGAL

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF CLAY COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA

In the Matter of Petition of Name Change of
Deborah Mullins-Ayscue
Current Name Deborah Mullins-Ayscue Civil Action No. 25-D-27
To Judge Stollings
New Name Deborah Mullins

Legal Notice of Publication Change of Name

**Order of Publication
Circuit Court of Clay County
West Virginia**

Notice is hereby given that on the 31st day of July, 2025 at 1:00 p.m., or as soon thereafter as the matter can be heard, Petitioner Deborah Mullins-Ayscue will apply by Petition to the Family Court of Clay County, West Virginia, for the entry of an order by said court, changing name of Deborah Mullins-Ayscue to Deborah Mullins at which time any interested party may appear and be heard, if they so desire.

A copy of said Petition can be obtained from the undersigned Clerk at his office.

ENTERED by the Clerk of said Court this 2nd day of July 2025.

Chavisa Henshaw
Clerk of the Court

LEGAL

CLAY COUNTY SCHOOLS PROVIDE MEALS TO STUDENTS AT NO COST

Clay, WV - Students in Clay County will have the opportunity to eat a no-cost breakfast and lunch at school through the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) program. The CEP was enacted as a result of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act and provides universal meal service to children in high-poverty areas. The CEP serves as an alternative to collecting, approving and verifying household eligibility applications for free- and reduced-price eligible students in high-poverty Local Education Agencies (LEAs). If at least 40 percent of a school's student population is directly certified for free meal benefits, the entire school qualifies for the option.

"I am proud that Clay County Schools will be participating in the CEP program to help meet a crucial need for many students in our county," said the Superintendent of Clay County Schools. "We know academic achievement increases when our students are well-fed and ready to learn, and we must provide secure and reliable access to nutritious meals, so all students have a chance to achieve at the highest level possible." Clay County expects to have all four schools participate in the CEP. The program allows our school system to feed nearly 1,700 students each day.

The 2017 Feeding America: Map the Meal Gap data reports high levels of food insecurity and hunger across the country. In West Virginia, more than 14 percent of residents, and over 79,000 children, live in food insecure households.

For more information, contact Jared Fitzwater, Director of Student Services, at (304) 587-4266.

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INTERVENTION

Continued from Page 1

“Two months is not a lot of time,” said Michael Meit, director of the Center for Rural Health and Research at East Tennessee State University. “You need to make sure that trend continues and, if it does — which we all hope it will — that’s when you’ll know that the systems in place are working in a positive way.”

The data from the CDC represents overdose deaths recorded between January 2024 and January 2025, the most recent data available for analysis by the agency. The numbers are provisional and could increase as more deaths are analyzed.

According to the data, West Virginia so far has confirmed 787 deaths in that 12 month period. Between January 2023 and 2024, per the data, the state saw 1,351 residents die from overdoses.

Meit, who is also an associate professor in ETSU’s Department of Health Services Management and Policy, said there are several factors that could contribute to the state successfully curbing fatal overdose rates. Crucial context for the decline, he said, is how rates of both substance use and fatal overdoses related to that use increased so much during the pandemic.

In 2020, 1,343 West Virginians died from fatal overdoses — setting a new record for the state. In 2021, deaths increased again to 1,537, according to data from the state health department. The trend in the state reflected what was happening nationally; overdoses — fatal and otherwise — increased nearly everywhere while the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded.

In 2022, 2023 and 2024, overdose deaths in West Virginia dropped consecutively each year, per the data.

Now, Meit said, it’s likely conditions are evening out. The record decline could, at least in part, reflect this.

“Two months is not a lot of time. You need to make sure that trend continues and, if it does — which we all hope it will — that’s when you’ll know that the systems in place are working in a positive way.”

– Michael Meit, director of the Center for Rural Health and Research at East Tennessee State University

“I hope we’re turning a curve, but I’m a little bit of a skeptic at heart. West Virginia leading the nation [in the decline] implies that West Virginia is doing better than other places in addressing these issues. So I do think that it’s not just a blip, but there are other things to consider,” Meit said. “I am concerned that a lot of the declining overdose rates that we are seeing now — a partial factor is what we call a return to baseline. So we are essentially getting back to where we were pre-pandemic.”

The fatalities reported between January 2024 and 2025 are the lowest recorded in the state since 2015, when 735 people died from overdoses. At the time, that was the highest number reported by West Virginia in one year since 2001, when the state started tracking and reporting overdose deaths.

Dr. James Berry, who serves as chair for the Department of Behavioral Medicine and Psychiatry at West Virginia University’s Rockefeller Neuroscience Institute, said he was “encouraged” to see declines in the state. But like Meit, he’s cautious about assuming the declines will continue without further work, especially given where West Virginia still stands nationally.

“This decline means so many more lives will continue to exist because of efforts that have been going on in the state. At the same time, in West Virginia, we still lead the nation by far in the rates of overdose deaths,” Berry said. “We’ve had a wonderful decline, but still I don’t think people appreciate how far above we are other states [in the rate of fatal overdoses], above the national average. So we still have a very, very long way to go.”

‘We have to keep our foot on the pedal’

Gov. Patrick Morrisey celebrated the state’s decline in overdose deaths during a news conference in Princeton on Wednesday. In a release after, he said the state is “setting the standard for successfully battling addiction and saving lives.”

“Our nation-leading reduction in overdose deaths is the result of a holistic approach to tackle drug use and abuse,” Morrisey said. “We will continue to work hard together to prevent further senseless death in West Virginia.”

Meit has spent a lot of time researching what factors and policies, specifically, lead communities to decreasing or increasing their overdose rates.

One of his studies honed in on eastern Kentucky, a region both culturally and economically reminiscent of West Virginia’s southern coalfields.

West Virginia’s coalfield counties continuously lead the state — as well as the nation — in the rate of fatal overdoses. Not long ago, the counties in eastern Kentucky did the same.

But something happened in the 2010s that turned the tide in Kentucky.

Between 2012 and 2017, eight of the top 10 counties in the nation with the steepest decrease in overdose mortality were clustered in eastern Kentucky.

“What we found was a big investment in addressing the substance use crisis — in establishing harm reduction programs throughout the state, making sure they had treatment beds available, paying for treatment, engaging their criminal justice system,” Meit said. “These declines were studied over a 10 year period before the pandemic; we know it wasn’t just a blip — it was a direct response to the systems in place.”

Kentucky today, Meit said, has the most harm reduction sites of any state in the country. Most offer syringe service programs. The state also has the highest number of residential treatment beds and its Medicaid program includes a dedicated benefit for receiving substance use disorder treatment.

The environment in West Virginia, however, is much

different.

Harm reduction programs are few and far between. Needs-based syringe service programs — which are the most effective at preventing disease among people who use drugs as well as transitioning people into recovery — are banned at the state level. There’s a shortage of treatment beds, especially in the regions hardest hit by the drug epidemic. There’s been a moratorium on establishing new methadone clinics in the state for years, meaning the medication — proven to be incredibly effective at helping people overcome opioid use disorder — isn’t available to most.

The current recovery and rehabilitation environment in West Virginia can largely be attributed to policies adopted by the state Legislature over the last decade. In the last several years, very few laws have been enacted by the body that reflect “best practices” for addiction and recovery; instead lawmakers have mostly focused on the criminalization of substance use disorder and the people who live with it.

Berry has worked in West Virginia studying and treating substance use disorder since 2002. He’s watched firsthand as the nature of the epidemic has shifted from prescription drug use to heroin use to, most recently, fentanyl. Each time, as new drugs have come into communities, overdoses have increased alongside increased use.

Berry has also watched how policies have evolved — or, in several ways, devolved — in response to the changes in the nature of the epidemic.

It’s likely, Berry said, that the decreases being celebrated this month in West Virginia reflect “the bearing of fruit that were the labors put in place, five to 10 years ago.”

Those “labors” include expanded access to naloxone, efforts to destigmatize addiction, recruiting health care workers with specific expertise on substance use disorder, increasing access to treatment programs as well as beds and an emphasis on educating both the public and providers about the disease.

Berry is slightly concerned that the successes being celebrated this month could mean a decreased focus by lawmakers on interventions that are working. To step back now, he said, would threaten future success.

“It’s so encouraging that we’ve got some traction. After so many years of going in the wrong direction, we finally have some traction but we have to keep our foot on the pedal and keep going forward,” Berry said. “If we don’t do that, if we don’t keep looking at what more we can do, then I really fear that we’re going to start getting worse again.”

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Bigfoot gets re-armed thanks to CTE Summer Camp wood class

By Allen Hamrick

Since early this year the Elk River Bigfoot above Ivydale has stood armless. At some point, someone decided it would be a good idea to cut off the arm of the wooden monolith and ever since many people have complained about it, but no one has claimed responsibility. However, time goes on, and through the 2025 CTE Summer Camp program at CCHS where Bigfoot was born last year, the students in

this year's woodworking class decided it was time to give Bigfoot a new arm and dress it up a little.

In this class, students have learned wood carving with chainsaws as well as the use of hand carving tools to recreate Bigfoot's arm. The students also traveled to the site on the trail to prepare for the new arm; anyone that decides to cut this arm off had better be ready for a big surprise. Bigfoot's visitors will also have a

new chair on site thanks to the program and the students involved. For the next three weeks, the woodworking class will be working on some other projects that will be reported on as they are set in place.

CTE Summer Camp has been going strong at both CCHS and at CES. The choir and music class at CCHS visited the residents at Big Otter Nursing Home on Monday, July 7. Under the direction of Tracy Wayne, the students entertained

the residents with music and song before enjoying a picnic lunch at Spread Park. Many thanks to Bruce Cunningham and Cunningham Motors for the delicious ice cream donated to the group. It made a good day even better. There are many activities going on from leatherwork, art, music and RC cars to woodwork and making fishing lures. There are only three weeks left, if a student wants to get their hands on fun, it's the place to be.



Dennis Mullins prepares the amputated arm for the transplant.



Michael Jarrett gets the arm to specs with the chain saw.



Sadie Cliver and Acelyn Tanner make some final touches.



Isaiah Deems makes some final touches to the fingers.



The choir pauses for a picture at Spread Park.