

The WV INDEPENDENT Observer

JEFFERSON COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA

SEPTEMBER 2022

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THIS PAPER WANTS TO BE RECYCLED. 



Cadets of the Jefferson HS Air Force Junior ROTC program paint the fence at the Middleway kiosk in April 2022.

TO OUR READERS — The short section of fence in Middleway (above) is more the idea of a fence than anything functional. Still, getting young kids to paint a fence for free is an American tradition, as the J-ROTC cadets above experienced during their service project. It will certainly look good for the upcoming Middleway Day, a village festival featuring music, crafts, kids’ activities, and history tours (Oct 8, 10 am - 3 pm, event details at MiddlewayConservancy.org).

Major Phil Suydam, commander of the program at Jefferson High School described the purpose of J-ROTC as developing “citizens of character, dedicated to serving their nation and community.” J-ROTC is an extracurricular activity at Jefferson High School, one of many that help the youthful participants learn outside of the classroom and understand the connections of community.

Jefferson County youth had a similar opportunity to demonstrate their hard work and perseverance at the recently concluded Jefferson County Fair. Browsing through the fair program, you realize that there are literally hundreds of categories to enter — lots of divisions, but all united under a common tradition of friendly competition to achieve and grow.

Opportunities to learn and grow are plentiful this time of year, and not just for kids. Later this month, the Center for Appalachian Studies and Communities will showcase the traditions and heritage of the wider Appalachian community with a week of events (see page 12). The events are free and you might even feel encouraged to join in and sing.

 **Steve Pearson**
EDITOR IN CHIEF



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// COMMUNITY

COUNTY FAIR MARKS END OF SUMMER

THE JEFFERSON COUNTY FAIR is a week-long celebration of local agriculture, with arts & crafts and competitions in all sorts of categories for all ages. The main focus is on youth and encouraging the traditions of animal husbandry and farming that run deep in the local community.

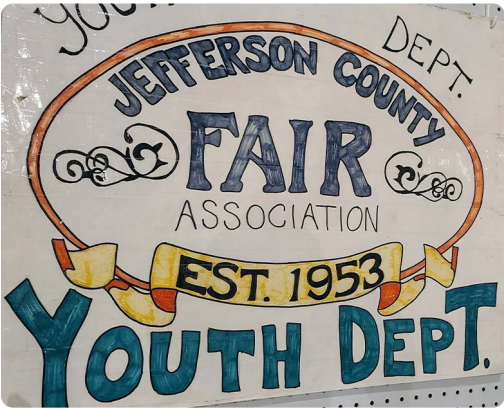
Mark your calendar for the last week in August 2023 and start working on your garden early if you want to try for a ribbon at next year's Fair. You can find more pictures and also download this year's program for a list of all of the events and judging categories at WeAreTheObserver.com.



The carnival lights up at night



4-H Saddle Club puts on a show



Lots of beautiful vegetables in the exhibit halls



Washington High School Marching Band



The 2022 Fiber Open Champ has a fine fleece



The youth tractor pull lets kids participate, not just watch

// EDUCATION

GETTING TEACHERS BACK TO SCHOOL

Retention & Recruitment Efforts Continue

By Rich Goodman



WITH A HISTORY OF BEING UNDERPAID and under-resourced, teachers and other school staff in West Virginia are all too familiar with the need for perseverance. The statewide strike in 2018 that lasted nearly two weeks spotlighted their frustrations. But while that action resulted in a five percent pay increase for teacher salaries, teacher pay in the West Virginia public schools is still ranked 49th among K-12 public education systems in the country.

Pandemic Pressures Drain Talent

In 2020, schools encountered a new challenge — an unplanned need to reorganize all operations, with confusing guidance from multiple sources, to address an unsettling and uncertain pandemic. Many teachers (not to mention students and families) faced the challenge of a large-scale transition to online and hybrid instruction. Then there were the public health concerns raised by the transition back to an in-person setting.

Pandemic-driven factors contributed to an increase in early retirements and resignations among public school employees, with many shifting to other states or to completely different career fields. Enrollment in West Virginia teacher-preparation programs had already been declining over the past decade, and the statewide exodus in 2021 and 2022 only added to the shortfall of qualified teachers in the classroom. In 2021, the West Virginia Department of Education listed 1,196 teacher vacancies and it projects that this number may exceed 1,500 by the end of 2022.

The Eastern Panhandle is no exception to these challenges. And with nearby counties in bordering states sometimes offering six-figure salaries for veteran teachers, local public school

officials have a unique challenge in their efforts to attract, support, and retain teachers and staff.

The Local Gap

Over the summer, Jefferson County Schools (JCS) had 320 open positions to fill for the 2022-23 school year — approximately one quarter of the full-time employee count across the entire school system, according to a chart reviewed by the Board of Education at their August 23 meeting. The chart did not provide a precise breakdown for vacancies in all categories, but the numbers indicate that the school system had needed to recruit for 20 percent of its staff roles (bus drivers, cooks, custodians, aides, etc.) and between 30 and 40 percent of its teacher positions.

Making Up The Difference

With compensation changes dependent on state legislation, some counties have explored other ways to improve recruitment and retention. For example, JCS approved a new Recruitment and Retention Plan in October 2021. Samantha Viands, Certification and Recruitment Coordinator for JCS, offered perspective about how the county has implemented parts of this plan. “Our top priority is having teachers in classrooms,” said Viands. “Our Superintendent, Dr. Gibson-Learn and other advocates continue to speak with the state Board of Education about pay. It’s not something that we’re shying away from. This recruitment and retention plan is focused on finding other ways that we can support teachers and classrooms.”

“We are on target to reach all of these items listed,” added Viands. “The plan has three tiers, and the first one is now fully in motion.” These first steps include financial support for employment qualification, such as certifications for long-term substitutes and college tuition reimbursement. This tier also includes incentives for leadership, such as annual stipends for credential-based training, staff bonuses for attendance, a referral bonus, extra pay for mentor teachers, and two paid planning days before the school year. Future tiers for JCS’ recruitment and retention plan focus on salary increases, recruitment resources, and personal and family support such as childcare stipends and funding for social emotional support.

As of the first week of the school year, Viands reported that 24 teaching and staff positions and 33 service positions remained open throughout the system. The next couple of months will be a balancing act as enrollment numbers are finalized and recruitment continues.



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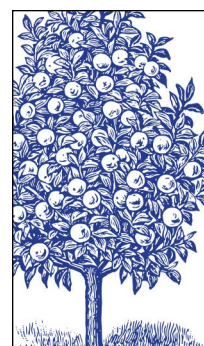
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// ELECTIONS



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ASSESSMENT INFORMATION
as of JULY 1, 2022

DATES TO FILE:

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FARM STATISTICS
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SOLAR PROJECTS ON THE WAY

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WHY STATE ELECTIONS MATTER

Controlling Purse and Policy From Charleston

WHAT HAPPENS IN STATE LEGISLATURES is important. For example, much of the funding for federal programs is managed by state agencies that operate under state law. For WV, approximately 45 percent of the funding that runs through the state budget comes from the federal government, according to a current study by SmartAsset.com. Even more important than the money, several of the U.S. Supreme Court's recent decisions have returned jurisdiction for major policy decisions

to state legislatures. The headline politics in Washington DC get a lot of attention, but the debate and votes in Charleston, West Virginia's state capital, also have a large effect on our local economies and personal freedoms.

This month's issue of *The Observer* focuses on the candidates for State Senate and Delegate District 99 (*more coverage of the state races and voting information resources online at WeAreTheObserver.com/2022-elections*).²

MEET THE 2022 CANDIDATES - STATE SENATE DISTRICT 16

WEST VIRGINIA'S SENATE DISTRICT 16 covers all of Jefferson County and roughly half of Berkeley County. There are two senators representing this district, each elected in alternating even-

numbered years. In this year's election, Hannah Geffert (currently serving as Senator) and Jason Barrett (currently serving as a state Delegate) are running.

The Observer invited both candidates running in West Virginia Senate District 16 to introduce themselves in their own words.

JASON BARRETT SENATE DISTRICT 16

CAMPAIGN CONTACTS

Web: BarrettForWV.com

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Email: Jason@BarrettForWV.com

Tel: 304.886.9907



Candidate Snapshot

40 years old; lifelong resident of Berkeley County; Republican candidate

Community service — Past President of Eastern Panhandle Empowerment Center Board; former member of Eastern West Virginia Regional Airport Authority; current member of Berkeley County Development Authority

Experience & Education — Owner of Anthony's Pizza-Inwood, Tudor's Biscuit World-Inwood, Goin' Postal-Martinsburg; Martinsburg High School, Shepherd University

What made you decide to run for the state Senate?

I've served eight years in the House of Delegates. During those eight years I have developed an in-depth knowledge of the state's budget and I've fought tirelessly to address Eastern Panhandle-specific issues. I feel that I can and should do even more for our state and for our community and I think serving in the WV Senate will allow me to do just that.

What should local residents expect from a state Senator?

I have a record of being accessible and responsive to constituents. When someone calls me, I answer and I immediately go to work on their behalf. Residents can expect me to always work to control state spending and government overreach. It's important that we have a tax policy that allows our citizens to keep more of their hard-earned wages. I have always fought for tax reductions and will continue to do this as a state senator, particularly with the upcoming property tax discussions. I believe we must work to improve public education while also giving parents and children options to choose the style of learning that best fits their needs. I will continue to push for improvements on both fronts.

What priorities would you advocate for in the legislature?

One of my biggest priorities in the upcoming session will be to find the best possible method to eliminate the car tax for our residents, as well as the business equipment and inventory tax. I also plan to continue to work hard to bring locality pay to our state's public employees.

Is there specific recent WV legislation (enacted) that you disagree with and would look to modify?

In 2017, the legislature voted to increase the gasoline tax and to raise the registration fees on automobiles

– hybrid and electric vehicles saw an even greater increase. I voted against all of these measures and would love to work to modify each of these things in the future.

Is there specific recent WV legislation (not enacted) that you would like to re-introduce?

In the last legislative session, there was a bill to split DHHR (WV Department of Health & Human Resources) into two separate state agencies. Ultimately the bill did not complete the legislative process, but I believe it should. DHHR is currently too big of a government agency, with too many moving parts, to serve our residents efficiently and effectively. I believe breaking this massive government agency into two smaller agencies will ensure we are providing the best possible services to the people who need us the most while also ensuring we are being efficient with the tax dollars that are funding these programs.

The legislature is likely to take up debate on several issues affected by recent court decisions or left unresolved from prior sessions. What thoughts can you share with voters?

I absolutely support tax cuts for West Virginians. The state has done a good job of holding flat line budgets in recent years, allowing for record surpluses. It's now time to return some of that money to the taxpayers. Eliminating the car tax to ease the burden on our residents, as well as the business equipment and inventory taxes to help our small businesses is of the utmost importance to me. I've heard overwhelming support to eliminate the car tax from local citizens, and I plan to work on their behalf to see that this is accomplished. The monetary aspect of removing the tax is important but also, removing the hassle of filing annual forms with the county assessor is important. We have many new WV residents with out-of-state tags. Removing the car tax and filing requirements would help ensure our new residents tag their cars in WV. Currently counties must offer PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) agreements to attract large business

to our region and state. Small businesses don't receive such benefits. The business equipment and inventory taxes are the last large impediment to business development and growth in WV. It is important that when these taxes are removed we develop a formula based plan to keep counties whole. Under no circumstance would I support a plan that negativity impacts Jefferson and Berkeley Counties. I also believe we should have a long-term goal of significantly reducing our state's income tax.

I am pro-life. I believe we should trust the science of human fetal development and protect and support the life of both the mother and the baby.

The amount of federal money that comes into our school system is not dependent on enrollment numbers, therefore these school choice measures do not impact those funds. Only the state portion of funding is modified by any change in enrollment. Because of this, when a student leaves the traditional public school and goes into a charter school, private school, or homeschool the public schools continue to receive the same level of federal funding to serve fewer students. I believe we should put the needs of our state's students first and if that means that some students thrive in a different environment, then we should support that. I also believe the access to these funds should always be fair and accessible by all students.

In the recent legislative sessions, I have led the charge for locality pay. Last session we made great progress in these debates. Our teachers, state troopers, correction workers and all state employees deserve locality pay. Other states and the federal government structure their pay with locality bumps and I believe the state of West Virginia should too.

I have fought tirelessly to ensure we are providing financial and support services to our state's foster children and families. In 2019, I led the charge on a bill that added additional resources for foster care services. I believe the DHHR split I mentioned above would lead to more efficiencies, attention, and effectiveness in the programs that protect our children's health and welfare.

HANNAH GEFFERT SENATE DISTRICT 16

CAMPAIGN CONTACTS

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Candidate Snapshot

72 years old; Resident of Martinsburg since 1980; Democratic candidate

Community service — My prior community service includes work with Back Pack Berkeley County, Read Aloud in Berkeley County, the Apollo Theater (both as a board member and producing musicals performed by children as part of the Apollo Summer Youth program), the Martin Luther King, Jr. Scholarship Fund (board member), United Way of the Eastern Panhandle, Shenandoah Community Health Center (board member). I have taught Sunday School at the Congregation B'Nai Abraham, served as liaison for that Congregation



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// ELECTIONS — CONTINUED

with the Veterans Administration hospital near Martinsburg, and helped with Sister ACTS projects. As a member of the Gateway Garden Club, I helped establish the Children's Garden in Martinsburg.

Experience & Education — Shepherd College/University (1986-2017) as a member of the political science faculty. My roles at the University included serving as Director of the Shepherd College Oral History Project, Dean of Instruction of the Community and Technical College (now Blue Ridge Community College), Assistant to the Provost for Academic Administration, and Chair of the International Business and Economic Training Seminar. I also started the School-to-Career Academy (a program to familiarize 8th graders with college options, requirements, and scholarships) and was a guest lecturer for social work classes on poverty in America with a special emphasis on the working poor and migrant farmworkers.

What made you decide to run for the state Senate?

The Governor appointed me to complete the term of former Senator John Unger. During that one year, I learned much about how the Senate, its committees, and its caucuses function. Having spent that year gaining experience and knowledge of the Senate, I thought it was my responsibility to offer to continue my service for a full term.

I want West Virginia to be a place where our children can find good jobs with good wages so they can stay here and raise a family. This will not be accomplished by just lowering taxes, putting more money in the hands of the wealthy, and giving handouts to big corporations. Building communities through good education and policies which help all working people will do that. I will be a voice, and a vote, for policies that move us toward that goal, and so decided to run.

What should local residents expect from a state Senator?

I would be guided by answers to questions which I think local residents should expect from their State Senator, as well as from their Delegates. First, is

the proposed legislation good for West Virginia? Second, is the proposed legislation good for the Eastern Panhandle? Most of the time, the answer to the two questions will be the same. But because the Eastern Panhandle is so different from many other parts of the State, a one-size-fits-all approach will not work. That is when members of the Eastern Panhandle delegation must work together to assure our citizens are treated fairly.

What priorities would you advocate for in the legislature?

We are losing many of our young people to jobs in other states. My overriding priority is to make West Virginia a place where our young people can get career type jobs which pay good wages so they can stay here and raise a family.

To do that, we must attract new businesses which provide those jobs. A key to attracting new businesses is a strong public school system which produces the educated people the businesses will need. To have a strong public school system, we must have and keep good teachers and service personnel. The recent pay raises are a good start, but they are not enough. We must equip our schools with up to date technology, including high speed internet and modern facilities. We should also work to align vocational school programs with apprenticeship programs, so those who want to enter the trades can get the skills and experience needed for successful careers.

To support our growing communities, we must provide more water and sewer systems, more schools, and more police and fire protection. Local governments should have the ability to control their income to meet their expenses. The Legislature could help by providing a source of funds to support our volunteer fire departments. We must act to get West Virginia's foster care system out of crisis. The Legislature has to stop ignoring the vulnerable children trapped in that system. West Virginia has a long and proud history of military service. We must support our veterans by helping them get good jobs and affordable housing.

Is there specific recent WV legislation (enacted) that you disagree with and would look to modify?

I opposed SB650, because it made it easier for private business interests to force landowners to allow oil and gas production on their land. I opposed HB4408 because I fear that it gives private businesses the much ability to turn our beautiful state parks into tourist traps. I opposed SB268, which creates "learning pods" and "microschools" because I think it weakens our public school system while not assuring quality teaching in the new entities.

In addition, there were three bills which did not become law solely because the legislature ran out of time, but which I fear will be introduced next January. SB2 would have undercut the safety net provided to workers who are unemployed through no fault of their own. SB498, would have subjected teachers in public schools and state universities to disciplinary actions if they taught about racial discrimination in a way that any person connected with the student or the school deemed it improper. HB 4553, would have deprived Jefferson County of the ability to determine how county land is used.

Is there specific recent WV legislation (not enacted) that you would like to re-introduce?

HB4252 would have placed caps on insulin prices. The bill had overwhelming support in both the Senate and the House, but final details could not be agreed upon before the legislature adjourned. The Governor vetoed a bill which would have put to use the nearly one billion dollars in covid relief funds the State received to expand high-speed internet. Enacting that bill should be a high priority. Last session I introduced bills to increase the state minimum wage, and to restore the right of workers to collect their wages. I also proposed a constitutional amendment to put women on an equal footing with men in that document.

The legislature is likely to take up debate on several issues affected by recent court decisions or left unresolved from prior sessions. What thoughts can you share with voters?



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I oppose the proposed amendment giving the Legislature the ability to eliminate personal property taxes because it deprives localities of the ability to control their budgets to meet their needs. I oppose the proposed income tax reduction because it would be meaningless for all but the most wealthy in the state.

I think the decision of whether to give birth is one which belongs to the woman, in consultation with her doctor, her partner and her Creator. I recognize it is likely the Legislature will restrict the

woman’s decision. So, there must be exceptions for rape and incest, and for the physical and mental health of the woman. I do not think one can claim to be pro-life without providing support for foster children, who are the most vulnerable of our young people. We must address the crisis in our foster care system. I oppose using money paid by all taxpayers for the public school system for use in private schools. Locality pay is absolutely needed. We have to stop losing experienced teachers to higher paying border states.

More election coverage at [WeAreTheObserver.com/2022-elections](https://www.WeAreTheObserver.com/2022-elections)

MEET THE 2022 CANDIDATES
- DELEGATE DISTRICT 99

THE 99TH DISTRICT INCLUDES the City of Charles Town, the subdivisions around Huntfield, Tuscowilla, Locust Hill, and Mechanicstown, as well as the subdivisions off of Flowings Springs Road and Old Country Club Road (in green, on map to the right). Democrat Debra Cornwell is challenging incumbent Republican Wayne Clark in this district.

WAYNE CLARK
DELEGATE DISTRICT 99

CAMPAIGN CONTACTS

Web: [ClarkforWV.com](https://www.ClarkforWV.com)
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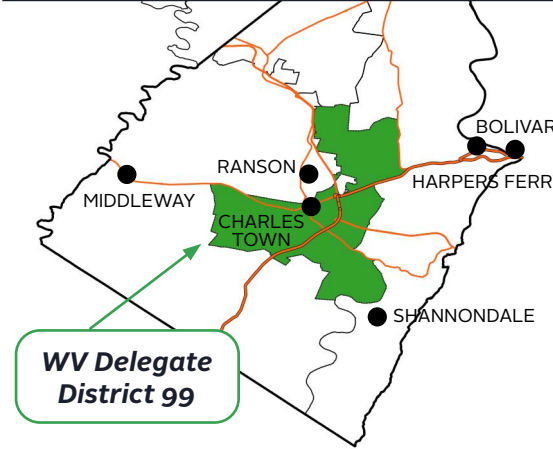


Candidate Snapshot
50 years old; Resident of Jefferson County (Charles Town) since 2003; Republican candidate

Community service — Leader of our local First Tee program, a youth development organization that enables kids to build the strength of character that empowers them through a lifetime of new challenges.

Experience & Education — Owner / General Manager of Locust Hill Golf Course. Previously

The Observer invited both candidates running in West Virginia Delegate District 99 to introduce themselves in their own words.



served on Charles Town City Council. AA Degree from Baltimore Community College.

What made you decide to run for Delegate?

I wanted to improve the quality and options of education to our students in West Virginia, and I feel we have done some of that and are continuously working on more options. I want to improve the business climate of the state and help grow our overall population. Finally I wanted to see drastic changes in our ABC (alcoholic beverage control) laws.

What should local residents expect from a state Delegate?

Residents of Jefferson County should expect their Delegate to be available and willing to listen to their concerns. Their Delegate should be in public and open to be approached at any time to listen or offer solutions to the citizens. Residents should expect their Delegate to vote on items that directly improve their way of life.

What priorities would you advocate for in the legislature?

We need to look for solutions to help our kids, to protect our kids and to give our kids a better future. We need to look at things that are negatively

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AMBULANCE UPDATES
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// ELECTIONS — CONTINUED

influencing kids today, such as the internet, drugs, and social agendas that are confusing our children. The social impacts of things such as CRT and Transgenderism are confusing the children in schools to thinking they are no good or inadequate. We need to stop these things from happening and go back to basics.

I will be re-introducing my COPPA bill from last year. COPPA (Child Online Privacy Protection Act) is a federal law that states that children under the age of 13 must have parent permission to have their data on the web, or be members of social media platforms. My bill raises this age minimum to 18 in our state. This will help parents to know what their kids are doing online and on their phones.

What legislation enacted during the previous term would you consider the most important?

The legislature passed both the HOPE scholarship and public charter schools for the state. Both of these programs provide parents and students a choice in their education and to seek out the educational program that best suits the student's learning needs. I also supported the legislation that will now appear on the November ballot. If voters approved this constitutional amendment in November, it would provide greater oversight of the state's public education system by the legislature which in turn will provide greater oversight and transparency to taxpayers. I also supported pay increases for teachers.

COVID-19 forced all of us to rethink how we do things. We got to try new ways of living our lives, conducting our businesses, educating our children – not because we necessarily wanted to, but because we had to. Among many things, HB2025 lowered the barrier to entry for craft beer and distilleries to open in our state and to allow restaurants to sell their craft cocktails “to go.” It allows restaurant ABC permit holders to extend their license to sidewalk or outdoor dining – beyond their four walls and allows restaurant owners to provide alcohol service when catering events away from their brick-and-

mortar location. These are just a few of the elements contained in this modernization of our state's ABC laws. I sponsored and passed Meghan's Law - a law that requires teachers and other education professionals to receive training that better helps them identify students who may suffer from eating disorders and other self-harm practices and to assist them in getting the necessary treatment.

I supported the pay increases for teachers, all state employees and the additional monies for our law enforcement officers.

The legislature is likely to take up debate on several issues affected by recent court decisions or left unresolved from prior sessions. What thoughts can you share with voters?

West Virginians deserve to keep more of their hard-earned dollars in their pockets. I support tax reform that will help us do just that. I supported the gradual phase-out of the state's personal income tax – a plan that I believed to be a responsible approach to reforming the state's tax system. Reducing or eliminating personal property taxes – whether on businesses or individuals – is also important, especially in these inflationary times. The people getting hit hardest by this economy are the ones who are showing up to work every day – they are paying more for gas, more for their daily life's essentials like groceries – they shouldn't have to pay more for the very things they need to make a living.

The third question on this year's ballot will ask voters to approve a constitutional amendment that will authorize state lawmakers to exempt personal property taxes on things like machinery, equipment and inventory used by businesses (small and large). It will also give lawmakers the authority to reduce or eliminate the taxes we as individuals pay on our cars.

I am pro-life and supported the most recent WV House bill that allowed for exceptions in the case of rape or incest.

More election coverage at
[WeAreTheObserver.com/2022-elections](https://www.WeAreTheObserver.com/2022-elections)

DEBRA CORNWELL DELEGATE DISTRICT 99

CAMPAIGN CONTACTS

Facebook: Cornwell for Delegate

Instagram: cornwell_for_delegate

Twitter: @DebraLHCornwell

Email: CornwellForDelegate@gmail.com

Tel (cell): 703-599-9525



Candidate Snapshot

57 years old; 7th generation West Virginian, grew up in Martinsburg, Charles Town resident since 2000; Democratic Party candidate

Community service — Juvenile Drug Court, Criminal Justice Board of Berkeley and Jefferson Counties, Charles Town Now (previously the Charles Town Initiative), Shenandoah-Potomac Garden Council of Berkeley & Jefferson Counties (president)

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Experience & Education — Co-owner, co-founder of Full Circle Healing Center, a licensed behavioral health center that treats mental health and addictions. BS degree from Shepherd College (political science/communications)

What made you decide to run for Delegate?

I'm running for Delegate to give voters a choice. The residents of the 99th District are diverse and deserve to be fully represented.

What should local residents expect from a state Delegate?

Being an effective and well-rounded Delegate requires listening to the concerns of all constituents. The issues I hear about most from folks in my district are alarmingly basic; access to healthcare, good-paying jobs, high-speed internet, and quality public education. The citizens of the 99th deserve a representative who will invest in their success and fight for the resources our communities need.

What priorities would you advocate for in the legislature?

The gap between the priorities of the Eastern Panhandle and Charleston is often wide. In recent legislative sessions, local control has been under attack. Many bills introduced have attempted to hamstring our municipalities, county commissions, health departments, and schools. This causes the citizens of Jefferson County to suffer while the current state leadership consolidates power. Local decisions should be made by the elected officials of that locality; I will fight for the unique needs of my district. Jefferson County has a large agricultural industry which makes it attractive to residents and visitors alike. Our development should reflect that.

As an individual, I am accessible to constituents and willing to work with anyone who wants to advance the interests of the 99th District – no matter their party affiliation. My life and family have always been anchored in West Virginia, and it would be an honor to be your voice in Charleston. From the policy details to the values I represent, I will conduct myself with the utmost respect for the office and my duty to represent my constituents.

Is there specific recent WV legislation (enacted) that you disagree with and would look to modify?

I disagree with the recent approval of micro-schools. There are no regulations regarding student safety, size of the student body, or educational benchmarks. Across the nation, micro-schools and learning pods were mostly born out of parental frustration with education during the pandemic. Private micro-schools and learning pods can be expensive to operate and sometimes charge pricey tuition. Therefore, businesses that operate nationwide micro-schools have developed. There are also attempts to siphon public education money to fund micro-schools and learning pods. These models are sometimes associated with attempts to privatize public education.

Charter schools are publicly-funded schools that operate with a degree of autonomy. To me, charter schools challenge the 14th Amendment's

Equal Protection Clause by attempting to return to "separate but equal." Importantly, there is no definitive research proving that charter, micro, or private schools have substantially better outcomes on average than public schools.

I support locality pay for teachers. It is so obvious to us in border counties, especially Jefferson, that teachers can make a short drive to earn an additional \$20,000 a year or even more.

Legislative attempts to fix our foster care system have not been effective, further neglecting the safety of children in our state. I will make our state's most vulnerable children our top priority. West Virginia does not have enough foster families nor does West Virginia have enough treatment options for youth suffering from mental illness. Sending these children to out of state facilities is not a safe alternative, and yet West Virginia does not have the resources to vet these out of state facilities.

I disagree with any legislation that reduces water quality standards or puts public drinking water at risk of contamination.

Is there specific recent WV legislation (not enacted) that you would like to re-introduce?

I would like to reintroduce capping insulin prices and reducing the sales tax to provide direct relief to families struggling with inflation on the rise.

The legislature is likely to take up debate on several issues affected by recent court decisions or left unresolved from prior sessions. What thoughts can you share with voters?

I support the Bill of Rights, including the right to marital privacy and HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) protections. Healthcare is between a patient and medical provider.

This summer the state legislature came to an impasse over competing bills to lower taxes. HB301 supports the Governor's plan to reduce income tax by 10 percent. SB303 eliminates the tangible personal property taxes, but voters need to approve this under Amendment 2 in November. I believe that HB301 was the best solution because it put money into people's pockets. SB303 eliminates or reduces taxes in six categories of tangible personal property. However, this is at the expense of local authority because SB303 gives control of this process to state lawmakers. As the Governor pointed out, it turns control of a significant chunk of county budgets over to the legislature with no guarantees that they will continue to replace the local tax revenue losses. I agree with the Governor on this one, that it's a big risk.

The Observer will be inviting other candidates to introduce themselves in the coming months.

Read our election coverage online at WeAreTheObserver.com/2022-elections

“By understanding the unconscious, we free ourselves from its domination.”

—C.G. Jung
(from *Commentary to The Secret of the Golden Flower*, 1929)



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STAFFING OUR SCHOOLS

>>> PAGE 5 <<<



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// CULTURE

SEPTEMBER FESTIVAL AT SHEPHERD UNIVERSITY Celebrating Appalachian Heritage



“Celebrating Women’s Voices in Appalachia” is the theme of the 2022 Appalachian Heritage Festival that will take place on the Shepherd University campus in September.

RACHAEL MEADS, WHO OVERSEES a variety of student activities and leadership programs on campus in addition to her classroom teaching that focuses on Appalachia, recalls organizing the first festival in 1995. “There were students in my class who really didn’t know much about Appalachia, or knew just the typical stereotypes. There were other students who were from Appalachia and were hiding it – afraid that they would be judged negatively. We organized a one day music and culture event to help both groups better understand the culture of the region. There was no grand plan, but afterward everyone asked – what do we do next year?”

Now in its 26th year (skipping 2020 for the pandemic), the festival presents a music-centric event highlighting the rich multicultural traditions found in Appalachia. This year’s performers are **Lady D** (known as West Virginia’s First Lady of Soul), **The State Birds** string band



led by award-winning fiddler **Tessa Dillon**, and **Olivia Ellen Lloyd**, a contemporary country artist who is also a Shepherdstown native. More than just performance, the festival also includes workshops and participatory events in the spirit of the community-based culture. 🎵

The festival takes place on September 24 (Sat) and runs from 11 am until 4pm with events at Reynolds Hall (109 N King St., Shepherdstown). The evening concert, featuring all of the artists, begins at 7 pm, outdoors at the Frank Arts Center Plaza on the campus (next to the wellness center at 164 University Drive). All events are free and open to the public (donations appreciated).

APPALACHIAN HERITAGE WRITER IN RESIDENCE

IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE HERITAGE FESTIVAL, the Center for Appalachian Studies and Communities hosts a week of public events featuring the current Appalachian Heritage Writer-in-Residence, along with exhibits, film screenings, discussions, and other performances.

This year’s writer-in-residence is **Barbara Kingsolver**, a Kentucky native who has lived and traveled extensively around the world, writing more than a dozen books and other works, many focused on the themes of family, social justice, and the environment, with protagonists at the outskirts of society — all themes that resonate throughout the hills

of Appalachia. Dr. S. Bailey Shurbutt, Director of the Center, described the objective of the Writer-In-Residence project as “telling our story of Appalachia – if you don’t tell your own story, someone else will.”

The Center itself is the focus of several interdisciplinary programs at Shepherd University, including a new undergraduate program offering majors (both B.A. and B.S.) in addition to the minor concentration and graduate programs previously offered. 📖

Information on the Heritage Festival schedule and links to the Writer-In-Residence project and the Appalachian Studies program are at WeAreTheObserver.com/AHFest2022.



Register today!

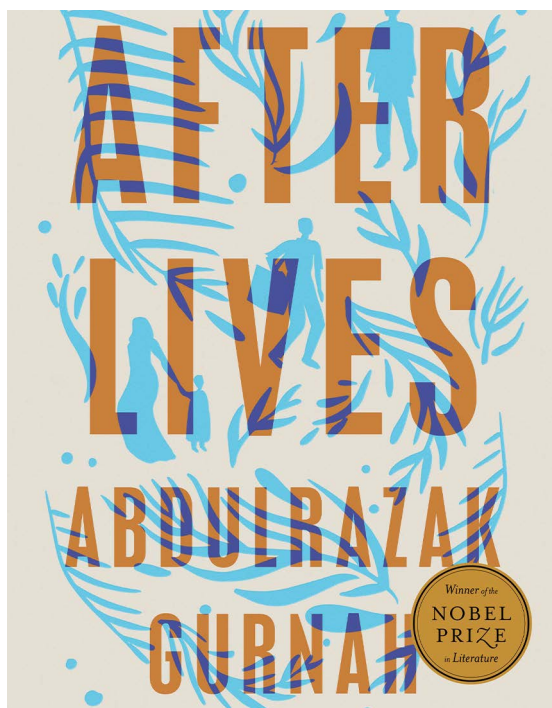
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COMMON HISTORY, DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE



Afterlives, by Abdulrazak Gurnah, Riverhead Books (2022)

Review by: Mark Kohut. Currently working on discovering Shepherdstown since 2014, Mark Kohut has built a career working in bookstores then in sales and marketing for major publishers. An avid amateur learner, he invites you to take classes at the Shepherd University Lifelong Learning Program (Shepherd.edu/LifelongLearning).

ABDULRAZAK GURNAH WAS THE 2021 Nobel Prize winner for Literature. His literary afterlife is just beginning. Born in Zanzibar, although writing in English, and living in England, he was virtually unknown among readers, even among many of the elite intellectuals of the literary world, despite being shortlisted for a Booker Prize with an earlier book and a few lesser prizes. Only one of his nine novels was still in print in the United States when he won.

There are no greater prizes than the Nobel for writers. The major reason: all the countries and languages of the world are The Swedish Academy's beat. If you ever tune in online to watch the Award, at 7 AM [1 PM in Stockholm] that week in October, you will see more reporters with their mics and cameras at tripods than you have seen at any event. Almost every country has a reporter at the announcement (There are 193 countries in the UN) on the chance that their country might win — as Zanzibar did for the first time.

Afterlives is the latest novel Gurnah has published, a year ago in England but just recently

in the United States. I know only a few of them but this one is typical and superb. A Gurnah image: men waiting at train stations, that overwhelming 20th Century person: the refugee.

Afterlives is essentially an historical novel, set in Africa and Germany starting in the first decade of the 20th Century and going (lightly) through WWII. It is, even, a short family saga novel as severed family connections begin this novel; a family separated more than once, connecting over time to bind and save each other. It ends with an historical discovery of identity, a missing family member gets known by the effort of a younger descendant. There is a superb last paragraph and sublime sentence that sticks the landing thematically.

The men are in wars and in business, but we see them off the battlefield, in relationships with other men (mostly). German officers as homoerotic — and turned on by cruelty. Matched by a village uncle who beats his niece “until he was satisfied” as she screams in pain, maimed for life. Gurnah knows the psychodynamics of socialized sadism.

To be able to read and do mathematics, abilities that enable a brother and sister to get away from their traditional village, is a marvelously-handled theme about the world's move to modernity for so many. You have seldom read a Western novel in which business, the slow growth of a merchant's business is seen as a way of human growth into full maturity. “[Every bit of Africa] belonged to Europeans,” someone says in this book. The steady work of helping a business succeed allows self-respect to counter the servile feeling of being colonized.

There is a wonderful portrayal of an officer obviously in repressed love with one of our protagonists whose faith in and love of our hero is contained in the gift of a book in German which resurfaces meaningfully in the last section. Gurnah also knows how love happens as he writes of how the officer slowly wanted our hero around him when he was working for him and later, as the beaten girl, now a young woman, day by day keeps thinking about a young man who, in secret, is thinking about her. Love seeps in and we can identify in a novel set where most of us cannot identify except with imaginative fellow-feeling; with characters whose religion and compass is Muslim; with an unfamiliar bygone world but that we might have heard about, sea-changed, in our family histories. Zanzibar, Africa, Germany a long time ago and situations we haven't lived become ours to feel.

Gurnah delivers. I recommend this novel and others of his. You will see the wider world differently and, as Philip Roth joked when I told him an early novel of his “changed my life” — “For the better, I hope.”

NOVEL ADVICE

There is still space available at the *Manuscript to Marketplace* conference on September 9-10. Open to writers of any genre and any expertise who are interested in publishing their work, the conference is hosting several published authors who will share their tips and insights on various pathways to publishing. In addition to presentation sessions on topics including “Every Book Needs a Killer First Line,” “Revision & Rejection” and “10 Easy Steps to Write a Novel,” attendees will also have opportunities to book one-on-one consultations to receive feedback on their work.

Details and registration can be found online at WritersConferenceSU.com (readers of *The Observer* can use discount code WVO25 for a \$25 discount). Students with ID can register for \$10. The conference will be at Erma Ora Byrd Hall on the Shepherd University campus (301 N King Street, Shepherdstown), starting at 3pm on Friday and ending at 5:30pm on Saturday.

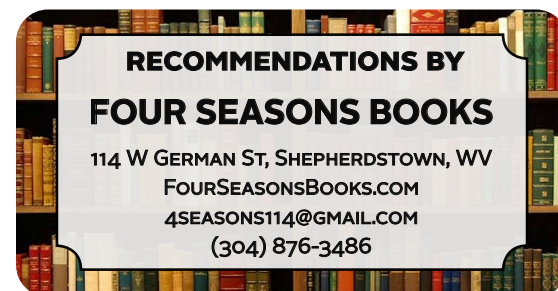
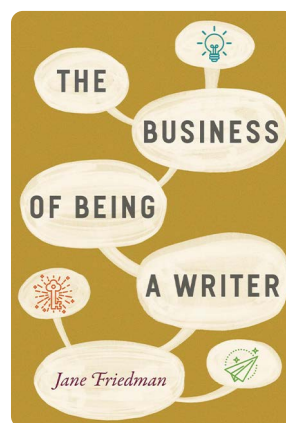
Four Seasons Books will operate a book sale during the entirety of the conference in the Erma Ora Byrd Hall atrium (open to both attendees and the public) that will feature works from many of the conference presenters — even if you not ready to take your writing public, stop by for an opportunity for autographs, conversation and inspiration.

The Business of Being a Writer, by Jane Friedman

University of Chicago Press (2018) \$25.00

The *Business of Being a Writer* offers the business education writers need but so rarely receive. It is meant for early-career writers looking to develop a realistic set of expectations about making money from their work or for working writers who want a better understanding of the industry. Writers

will gain a comprehensive picture of how the publishing world works—from queries and agents to blogging and advertising—and will learn how they can best position themselves for success over the long term.



PERSPECTIVE // NATURE



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BLUEMONT FAIR - SEP 17-18
>>> PAGE 18 <<<



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PREPARE FOR A POLLINATOR PALOOZA!

By Doug Pifer

Doug Pifer is an artist, naturalist, and writer. He has a Master's Degree in Journalism from Penn State and has been an editor and art educator. His illustrations have appeared in various books and magazines and he has been a contributor to The Observer for several years. He lives with his wife and assorted animals on 5.7 acres in a historic farmhouse near Shepherdstown, West Virginia.

THE NEW SHEPHERDSTOWN PUBLIC LIBRARY sits on 4½ acres of land that was formerly the town dump. Soon it will become a showplace where families can come and see gardens of flowers, trees and shrubs native to our area. These gardens will be havens for pollinators — bees, wasps, butterflies, and a host of other animals — that help perpetuate plants and sustain our food supply. To celebrate and offer instruction on creating your own pollinator gardens, several local organizations and businesses have partnered to produce “Pollinator Palooza,” a four-day, family-friendly program scheduled for September 7th to the 10th.

Wednesday, September 7

Things start buzzing at 10 am with a child-friendly bee talk. Artist and beekeeper Mike Austin will describe and illustrate what happens inside a beehive and demonstrate some of the equipment beekeepers use. At 11 am, Sue Mellott will recount some gardening stories and then give children seeds to take home and plant. At noon visitors are invited to bring a bag lunch and find out what garden designer Peggy Bowers has planned for the pollinator garden. Drinks and dessert will be provided.

From 2 until 4 pm, Amy Thomas and Laurel Schwartz of the Potomac Valley Audubon Society (PVAS) will lead a nature scavenger hunt. Adults and children can learn how to identify insects and plants that now live near the library



The Garden Stewards of the Shepherdstown Public Library raised over \$15,000 from many generous donors to fund the creation of the gardens. Peggy Bowers & Diana Oddenino of the garden stewards and Hali Taylor of the library accept a \$1,000 check from Suzanne Bitoni (Erie Insurance) & Michelle Maiden (Insurance Outfitters). Photo: Tabitha Johnston

using the iNaturalist app. Wednesday evening's guided bird walk led by the PVAS will show beginners how to use spotting scopes, binoculars, and the Merlin app to identify birds on the library property.

Thursday, September 8

At 10:15 am children can join Amy Thomas and Laurel Schwartz to hear stories and create craft projects about butterflies and bees, and then go on a butterfly and bee safari on the library property. From 2 to 4 pm kids are invited to play Nature Bingo and enjoy an ice cream treat on the library patio. The evening program begins at 7 pm at the Byrd Center Auditorium on Shepherd University campus. Two short films, “The Power of Pollinators” and “Sym-BEE-osis,” explore the mysteries of pollinators. Beekeeper Mike Austin will be on hand to answer any questions. Drinks and dessert will be provided.

Friday, September 9

A guided bird walk for adults will start at 7:30 am on the library grounds. At 10:15, kids can discover many ways that trees and wildflowers spread their seeds. All day, kids get a chance to draw a picture of a pollinator garden and meet the library's pollinator garden designer, Peggy Bowers. Starting at 1 pm, I will lead an afternoon chalk talk where everyone can join me to create a mural of butterflies, bees and other pollinators. We'll draw with chalk on the library sidewalk. Chalk will be provided by the library.

Saturday, September 10

Starting at 9 am the whole family gets a chance to contribute to a citizen science program. Bring your iPhone or Android phone to the library and learn how to use the iNaturalist app to identify plants and insects that live around the library. You can contribute to the library's data baseline for a study on how the future gardens diversify the insect and wildflower populations.

Between 10 am and 4 pm families will get a chance to plant seeds in the pollinator garden or get seeds and pots to take home. At 10 and 11 am, we will reprise the two short films that explore the mysteries of pollinators. Also at 11 am — come join me in completing the sidewalk chalk mural of butterflies, birds and flowers.

Pollinator Palooza is sponsored by the American Conservation Film Festival and the Garden Stewards of the Shepherdstown Public Library, with support from Tangled Bank Studios (Howard Hughes Memorial Institute), and in partnership with the Potomac Valley Audubon Society as well as Four Seasons Books in Shepherdstown. Peggy Bowers, Diana Oddenino and Carolyn Thomas of the Library Garden Stewards planned and coordinated the event.

// MUSIC

FRIENDS OF MUSIC ANNOUNCES 2022-23 CONCERT SEASON

Five Concerts, School Grants & Scholarships Round Out The Program

THIS WILL BE “A SPECIAL YEAR,” exclaimed Judith Miller Jones, board president of Jefferson County-based Friends of Music. When asked why, Jones eagerly shared three reasons why the 2022-23 season presents an opportunity for all music lovers in the region.

First comes the music — of course. The just-announced, five-concert season kicks off on September 25 (Saturday) with a performance by the Two Rivers Chamber Quartet. The Quartet will play music written by two composers — Franz Schubert and Amy Beach — who may have lived a century apart but whose work has some things in common. The season will also include three performances by the Two Rivers Chamber Orchestra (which is part of the Friends of Music, a non-profit organization). A concert presented by special guest Winchester Musica Viva, a Virginia-based chamber choir, completes the season program.

This season also marks a special milestone for Friends of Music: the 10th anniversary of Jed Gaylin’s musical leadership of the organization. Gaylin, an acclaimed conductor, holds degrees from Oberlin and the Peabody Institute. In addition to being Music Director of the Friends of Music organization, Gaylin holds similar roles with the Hopkins Orchestra of Baltimore (one of the nation’s leading university orchestras) and the Bay-Atlantic Orchestra of New Jersey. Gaylin is passionate about the value of live performance: “In our era of TV,... film, and radio, we should cherish our live performances: theater, music, dance. Unlike mass media, these live art-forms demand interaction with an audience and allow the audience the opportunity to take part in creation, not merely to consume a product.”

In addition to the concert season, the Friends of Music organization supports music education in local schools. In 2021, they awarded more than \$4,000 to help nine teachers across the region pay for musical instruments and related resources. An additional \$4,500 in scholarships was awarded to nine high school seniors to support their music studies. New for this season, a Shepherd University intern will join the Friends of Music team to learn firsthand what it is like to operate an arts organization, thanks to a partnership with Dr. Kurtis Adams, Director of the Shepherd University School of Music.

As their season starts up, Jones noted that Friends of Music will be taking advantage of improvements made during the past few years of pandemic-induced downtime, including a new online ticketing system. In this special year, Jones concluded, the Friends of Music will be particularly eager to welcome new faces and talents to their programs. 🎵

For more information on Friends of Music performances, educational grants, and membership/support opportunities: FriendsWV.org, 304-876-5765, or info@FriendsWV.org



Jed Gaylin returns for a 10th year as Music Director.

The Full Schedule (program details & tickets at FriendsWV.org)

SEP 25 (SUN), 3 pm at Trinity Episcopal Church, Shepherdstown.

NOV 19 (SAT), 7:30 pm & **NOV 20 (SUN)**, 3 pm at Trinity Episcopal Church, Shepherdstown.

MAR 25 (SAT), 7:30 pm at Trinity Episcopal Church, Shepherdstown.

APR 15 (SAT), 7:30 pm & **APR 16 (SUN)**, 3 pm (location to be announced)

MAY 20 (SAT), 7:30 pm & **MAY 21 (SUN)**, 3 pm (location to be announced)

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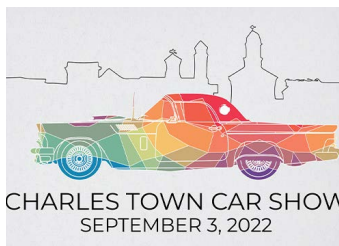
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EXPLORE // EVENT CALENDAR

SEP 3 (SAT) – CHARLES TOWN CAR SHOW

– 400+ cars, hotrods, motorcycles, trucks – all types and years – will line Washington Street in downtown (expect street closures) · 10 am - 4 pm · FREE for spectators, Rain/Shine · FB: @CharlesTownCarShow



CHARLES TOWN CAR SHOW
SEPTEMBER 3, 2022

SEP 3-4 (SAT-SUN) – HOT BUTTON GALLERY

– Craftivist Carol Williams presents thought-provoking and timely textile art · The gallery will be open Saturday 11-5, Sundays Noon-4 (all month) · 129 E German St, Shepherdstown · FREE · Web: AnotherCarolWilliams.com

SEP 3 (SAT) – CONTRA DANCE – Janine Smith calling, music by Joe DeZarn (fiddle) & Paul Oorts (mandolin, guitar, bouzouki, etc.) · 8 pm (workshop at 7:30) · War Memorial Bldg, 102 E German St, Shepherdstown · \$10 per person, masks required on dance floor · FB: @ShepherdstownCommunityClub

SEP 7-10 (WED-SAT) – POLLINATOR PALOOZA – At Shepherdstown Public Library. [See article on page 14.](#)

SEP 8 (THU) – SQUARE DANCE – The Panhandlers Square Dance Club is back · 7:30 - 9:30 pm · Asbury United Methodist Church, 110 W North St., Charles Town · Open to all, 1st class is FREE · FB: Panhandlers Square Dance Club

SEP 10 (SAT) – CRAFT BEER & MUSIC FESTIVAL – Happy Retreat hosts a fun, outdoor fundraiser to support restoration & maintenance of Charles Washington's historic residence · 11 am - 6 pm · Happy Retreat, 600 Mordington Ave, Charles Town WV · Advance tickets on sale now · FB: @HappyRetreat >> See ad page 14

SEP 10 (SAT) – LANDSCAPE ARTISTS AT BRIDGE GALLERY – Painter Annette Gloomis & photographer Mark Muse exhibiting new work · Opening reception Saturday 5-7pm, Gallery open Fri/Sat/Sun Noon-5 (check FB for updates) · 8566

Shepherdstown Pike, Shepherdstown · FREE · FB: @TheBridgeGallery

SEP 13 (TUE) – STORYTELLERS SPARKY & RHONDA RUCKER

– Singing songs and telling stories from the American folk tradition · 7:30 pm · Presented by Speak Stories, Online only · \$15 · Web: SpeakStorySeries.com

SEP 16-18 (FRI-SUN) – PEOPLE THAT INSPIRE ME

– A exhibit/sale of new work by local artist Mason Ellsworth (watercolor prints & cards) · Fri 4 - 7 pm, Sat-Sun 11 am - 4 pm · Evolve, 106 West German St, Shepherdstown · FREE · FB: Evolve Shepherdstown

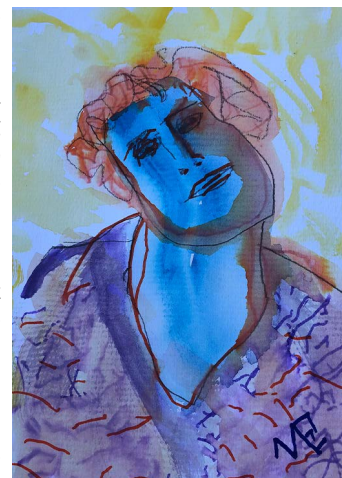
SEP 17 (SAT) – FALL ART FESTIVAL

– Artisan-made functional pottery, jewelry, glassware, baskets, soap, bowls, quilts & more by local artists · 10 am - 4 pm · Blue Goose Pottery, 7278 Hedgesville Rd, Hedgesville WV · FREE · Web: BlueGoosePottery.com

SEP 17-18 (SAT-SUN) – BLUEMONT FAIR – Local fair with old-time, home-town atmosphere · 10 am - 5 pm · 33846 Snickersville Turnpike, Bluemont, VA

SEP 24 (SAT) – APPALACHIAN HERITAGE FESTIVAL – Shepherd University's Center for Appalachian Studies & Communities hosts an annual celebration of artistic and cultural traditions · 11 am - 4 pm at Reynolds Hall, 7 pm concert at Frank Arts Center, Shepherd University campus · Web: Shepherd.edu/Appalachian >>> More details on page 12

UNTIL OCT 23 (WEEKENDS) – MARYLAND RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL · 1821 Crownsville Rd, Annapolis MD 8566 · Web: RennFest.com >>> See ad page 17



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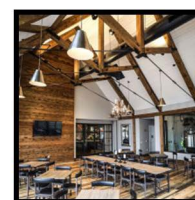


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EXPLORE // SHEPHERDSTOWN

RIVER VIEWS AT RUMSEY PARK



IF YOU STOP BY RUMSEY PARK in Shepherdstown this month, you'll see something new — a cliffside view up the Potomac River that until recently was obscured by a thick overgrowth of weedy trees.

Erik Berndt of Viking Tree Service showed up to the park on August 10 to perform what he described as a “vista pruning” — clearing out the understory of small invasive trees that had overgrown the cliffside and opening up room for the mature specimen trees to thrive. At the end of the day, Berndt and his team had cleared out a strip approximately 10 to 15 feet past the wall, enough to open up a view of the Rumsey bridge from the base of the monument. For Berndt, the project was a chance to try out his new grapple-saw and crane truck which could reach out over the the cliffside to quickly cut and pull the brush up — a flick of the joystick and the push of a button instead of an elaborate rope setup and a precarious climb down for each cut.

The project was funded by local resident Hank Walter who recalled the park from years ago when it was the site of the picnic after the town's Independence Day parade. “The hillside was much more open and there was a spectacular view of the monument from Maryland.”

Many of the weed trees removed were “Tree of Heaven,” the favorite food for the fast-growing population of Spotted Lanternfly that has arrived in Jefferson and Berkeley Counties (for information on reporting and controlling this invasive pest, see the online version of this story at WeAreTheObserver.com).



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JEFFERSON COUNTY SOLAR >>> PAGE 20

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EXPLORE // BLUEMONT FAIR

BLUEMONT FAIR CELEBRATES TRADITIONAL WAYS

IF YOU MISSED AUGUST'S FAIRS – or just want another dose of late-summer fun – the 52nd Annual Bluemont Fair will be held on September 17 & 18, rain or shine. The fair takes place in the historic village of Bluemont in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains in western Loudoun County, Virginia.

The Bluemont Fair features a juried crafts show, local art & authors, craft & farming demonstrations, historical re-enactors, music, a petting zoo, quilt displays, blacksmithing demonstrations, homemade food/baked goods/jams & jellies, a pie-baking/pickle-making contest, antiques & collectables, a Wine & Beer Garden, a slideshow of local history, the pre-Civil War Country Store, a Farmers Market, model trains, and hands-on activities.

In 2021, Bluemont Fair's top prize for juried crafters went to the husband-and-wife team behind Rock Fusion Studio in Harpers Ferry. This year, Tatyana and Evgeny Zidarov's creations will return, on display and for sale courtesy of the fair's organizers.

The fair's 2022 theme is "Bluemont's Draft Horse Farming Era." These gentle giants were used to do the heavy work that characterized the agrarian lifestyle in the region for centuries before mechanized farm equipment. This year's theme ties into the current special exhibit at The Plaster Museum of Bluemont Heritage: "Agriculture in Bluemont: 19th Thru 21st Century Farms."

The annual fair is the primary fundraiser for the Bluemont Civic Association, an all-volunteer group. The BCA meets monthly and works to enhance the quality of life in the Bluemont area (which includes part of Jefferson County).



General admission to Bluemont Fair is \$10 (Ages 9 and under free) with free parking. More information at BluemontFair.org or 540-554-2367

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ENGAGE // COUNTY COMMISSION

MORE PROTESTS AT COMMISSION
NAACP Requests Resolution, Is Denied



PROTESTERS WERE OUT IN FORCE for the second time in two months, this time to voice dismay over the Commission’s decision not to include a citizen-requested resolution on the meeting agenda for discussion.

The resolution was submitted by George Rutherford, president of the Jefferson County NAACP – “Resolved that the Jefferson County Commission recognizes the dangers of white supremacy, hate crimes, and discrimination

based upon race/ethnicity, religion, gender, and sexual orientation and officially condemns any and all actions of white supremacy and bias against all.”

While the Commission’s policy allows it to accept or reject any item for the agenda, multiple citizens spoke during public comment urging the commissioners to discuss the resolution at their next meeting in September. *For more info, visit WeAreTheObserver.com.*

AMBULANCE CHANGE MOVES AHEAD
Commission Votes for New Department Plan




THE COUNTY COMMISSION has agreed to buy 10 ambulances from the local volunteer fire companies (at a cost of \$2.56 million) and voted on August 11 to move forward with a plan to shift EMS operations out of the existing Emergency Services Agency (ESA) and into a new county


department reporting to the Commission.

The Commission voted to keep the planning process in-house (and not hire a consultant for that aspect of the project) at the recommendation of the County Manager, John Nissel. ESA Director Bob Burner and his staff have identified 22 key deliverables to complete the transition project and have set a target date of March 1, 2023 to complete the integration.

Emergency medical services are highly regulated, so many of the deliverables are related to updating professional licences. Two significant items will require a lot of local discussion - renting space from the fire companies and the role of volunteers in the new system. *Visit WeAreTheObserver.com/EMS-2022 for further information.*



Annette M. Gloomis



Mark Muse

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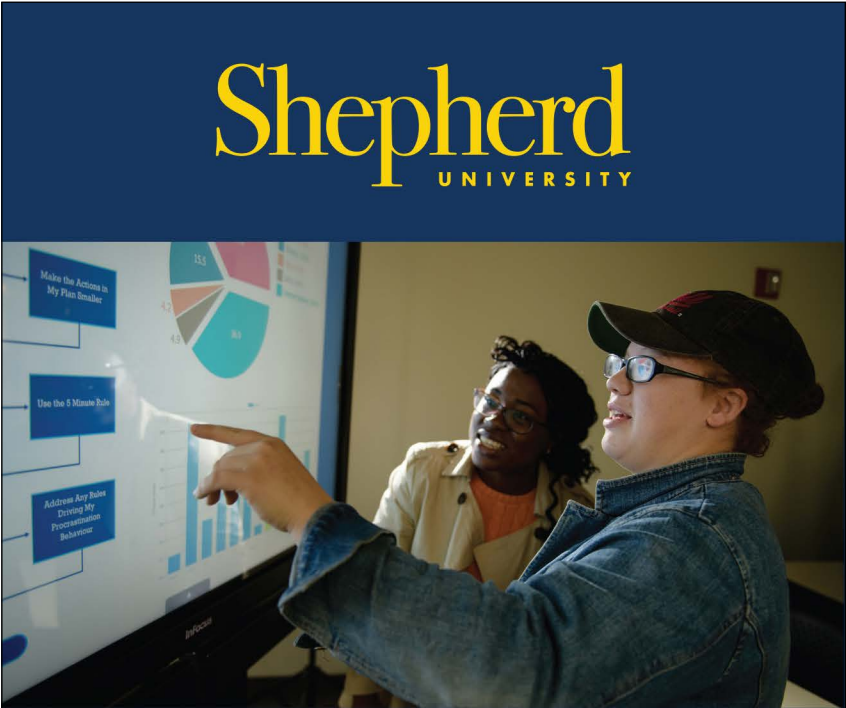
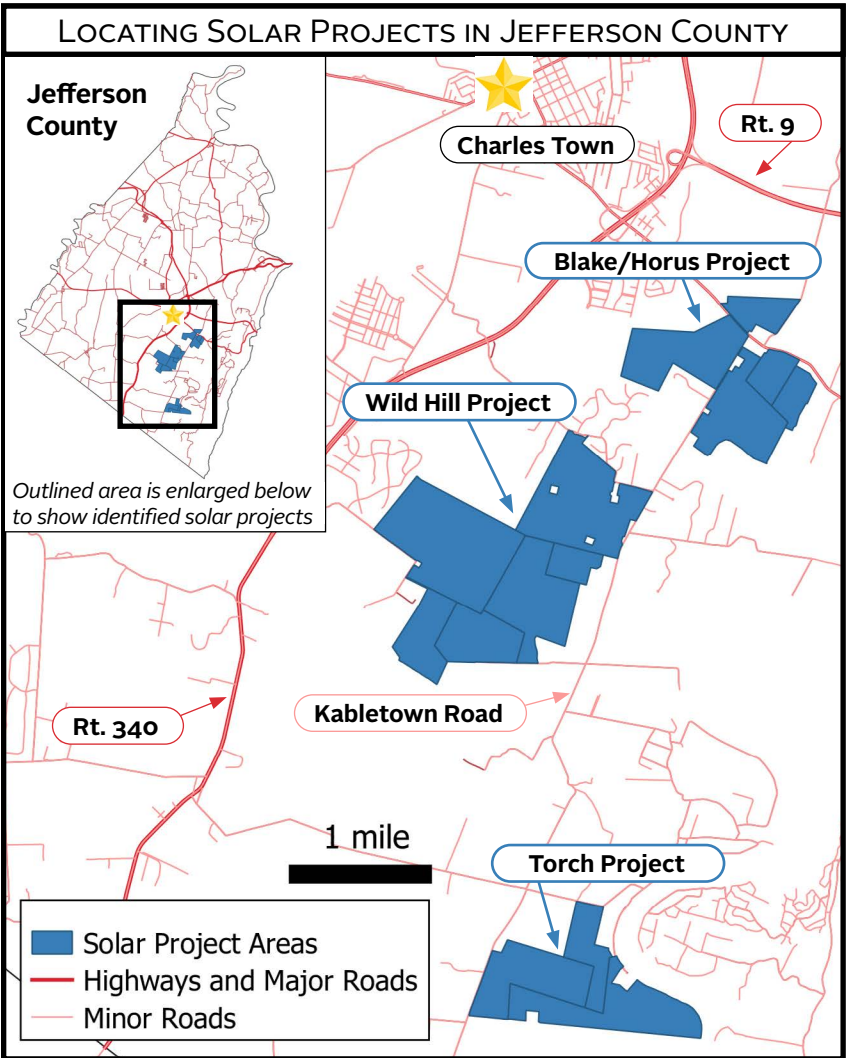
ENGAGE // SOLAR DEVELOPMENT

SOLAR PROJECTS START REVIEWS

THERE ARE CURRENTLY 8 PROJECTS that have applied to connect to the electricity grid in Jefferson County (there is 1 other project proposed nearby in Clarke County, VA). Of the 8 in Jefferson County, only 1 project (Wild Hill) has completed an agreement to connect with PJM, the grid operator; 3 are working on the final engineering review with PJM; 4 are still in the first (of 3) phases of engineering review.

At the county level, only the **Wild Hill** and **Blake** projects have submitted concept plans for review (a plan for the Torch project is expected soon). Both the concept plan and conditional use permit for the Blake plan have been approved. The Board of Zoning Appeals was generally favorable to Blake’s application, requesting only that they continue to work with neighbors to address concerns. The BZA also approved the use permit for Wild Hill without noting any objections. The Wild Hill project has a concept plan review scheduled at the Planning Commission on Sep 13 at 7pm.

Additional information online at WeAreTheObserver.com/solar-in-jefferson



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