

The WV INDEPENDENT Observer

JEFFERSON COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA

MAY 2023

ARTS

CATF's Peggy McKowen
Steps Into Lead Role

4

SCHOOLS

Construction Starts At
New Ranson School

6

COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Ambulance Board
Asks For Changes

7

COMMUNITY

Interfaith Community
Shares Connections

8

COMMUNITY

Growing Businesses
In Charles Town

9

STATE GOVERNMENT

Highlights From The
Legislative Session

10

EXPLORE & ENGAGE

12 Tourism

13 Event Calendar

14-15 Activities

16 Solar & Roads



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THIS PAPER WANTS TO BE RECYCLED.



Former students, colleagues, and community members gathered in front of Jefferson High School on April 21 to celebrate the life of Sara Lueck, longtime librarian and community volunteer.

TO OUR READERS — The word angel was used more than once. Even if you had never met Sara Lueck, you could feel her kindness and positivity in the tributes offered during a recent vigil (above). She made a career as a librarian at Jefferson County Schools and a vocation of serving the community. And those connections live on. There will be a memorial service at 1 pm on April 29, to be held in the Jefferson High School gymnasium. Ms. Lueck’s family will receive friends and community members starting at 10 am before the service.

Connecting communities is a passion for Peggy McKowen of the Contemporary American Theater Festival. 2023 will be her first season as the Artistic Director of the Festival and she shares some of her thoughts on the upcoming season with local author Lee Doty (page 4). Susan Mills shares her experience with people making connections (or reconnections) through the Ministerial Association in Shepherdstown (page 8). On a more secular plane, Erin Mooney writes about the connections fostered by Missy Glascock’s expanding Needful Things Emporium in downtown Charles Town (page 9).

To stretch the theme a bit further, the County Commission will be taking a look at how the county is connected (or not) at an upcoming transportation summit — and they’d like to hear from residents (page 16). We’re working on making more changes ourselves, to add more frequent online content — if you’d like to stay plugged in, visit WeAreTheObserver.com and sign up for our email list.



Steve Pearson
EDITOR IN CHIEF

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- MJ’s on German DeliCafe
- Sweet Shop Bakery
- Shepherdstown Public Library

BOLIVAR - HARPERS FERRY

- Bolivar Bread Bakery
- Bolivar-Harpers Ferry Public Library
- Bakerton Market

SOUTH JEFFERSON COUNTY

- Middleway Market
- Depot Market (Summit Point)
- South Jefferson Public Library

DOWNTOWN CHARLES TOWN

- Bushel & Peck
- Siblings Coffee Roasters
- Charles Town Library

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// ARTS

FOR PEGGY MCKOWEN, THEATER MEANS COMMUNITY

New Artistic Director Debuts At Contemporary American Theater Festival

By Lee Doty

Lee W. Doty is a retired lawyer and Shepherdstown resident who writes the Norma Bergen mystery series.

NEW MARTINSVILLE, WEST VIRGINIA — a river town in the state’s northern panhandle known for chemicals, glass, and aluminum — seems a surprising place to cultivate the talent and temperament of the new Artistic Director of the Contemporary American Theater Festival (CATF), Peggy McKowen. Early experiences in her hometown, however, fostered McKowen’s view of theater as a means to build community within the production process, with the audience, and beyond.

July 2023 marks McKowen’s debut in her new role in which she’ll select and shape five plays to premier at CATF, considered one of the country’s top festivals for new plays. Starting in 2006, McKowen worked with Ed Herendeen, CATF’s now retired founder, as costume designer and later Associate Producing Director, to present first-class theater productions and related programs. Now, she intends to uphold CATF’s traditions and pursue new ones.

The Backstory

McKowen credits her family, in particular her mother, an artist, art historian, and teacher, for igniting her artistic passion. “My mother wanted to be a good citizen, and saw art as the way to do that.” But her whole family engaged in the arts. “My family believed art was a necessary part of life. We breathed art.”



Training began early, when she learned to sew and designed costumes for junior high productions. Next came scenery and lighting. “I wanted to do it all, the whole production.” Still a student, she used art to reach a group of disabled students and learned the value of education through art, a component of CATF’s programs she intends to grow.

She pursued theater at West Virginia University and moved directly into an MFA-theater program at the University of Texas. From there, McKowen taught part-time at Dickinson College and worked for many years at New York’s Jean Cocteau Rep, a highly regarded small theater with a permanent core of actors. It’s where McKowen met founder and Artistic Director Eve Adamson, a key influence in developing her own artistic sensibility. “Eve believed that theater was a sacred art. She infused her productions with the values of passion, drive, and commitment to the theater. She drew to her company talented people who shared her values.” Like Adamson, McKowen selects plays on the basis of whether they explore values important to CATF and her.

A Platform Different Voices

McKowen traces her strong commitment to confront racism and oppression, both in the act of producing theater and through the plays themselves, to a former colleague at WVU, Theresa M. Davis. “Davis’s powerful engagement in giving voice to other communities is genuine and gracious.” McKowen continues to work with Davis, who is now the Associate Artistic Director at CATF, and strives to select playwrights who traditionally may have gone unnoticed. Race and oppression are explored in this season’s *Redeemed* by Chisa Hutchinson, a play in which a woman argues with an inmate guilty of a hate crime, the murder of that woman’s brother. A star of the debate team in high school, McKowen appreciates the debating tactics in this play.

Looking Forward, Asking Questions

This season also presents daring plays that expose new challenges and threats to humanity. In *Your Name Means Dream* by José Rivera, a lonely, feisty, elderly woman is placed in the care of an almost human AI entity. Their “relationship” lets the audience imagine a future that perhaps has already arrived. McKowen acknowledges the fact her 89-year-old mother, who lives with her family and still attends the CATF season along with McKowen’s son, might have influenced the choice of this play a little. Also daring, *The Overview Effect* by Lynn Rosen invites us to consider what happens when the race to Mars, a planet offering solutions to problems caused by the human race, is undertaken by that same flawed human race.

All five plays ask a question, McKowen says, that interests most everyone “because the



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right to justice is in doubt for so many. That question is “How am I living my life?” *Fever Dreams* (of Animals on the Verge of Extinction) by Jeffrey Lieber shows how we fare when our love relationships are knotted with lies and loss. With the Covid pandemic barely in the rear-view, *Spiritus/ Virgil’s Dance* by Dael Orlandersmith examines not only how we live but how we die.

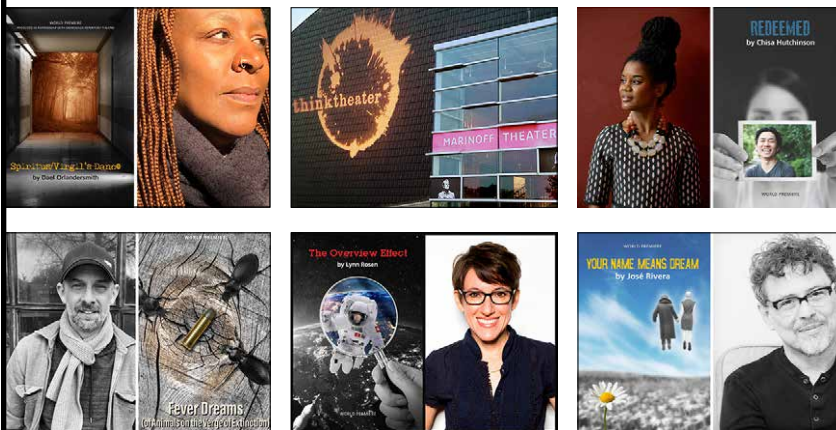
McKowen says that while practical considerations, such as budget constraints, must play a role in the selection process, her most important requirement is that the play be “powerful, impactful, and accessible. It must touch the heart.”

McKowen has her own dreams for CATF’s direction. She hopes for the latitude, especially from audiences, to innovate, make mistakes, and see what works even better. She wants audiences to engage with strangers and share a sense of belonging in a creative, adventurous endeavor. Finally, she wants the choice to go out to the theater to become second nature.

“What d’ya want to do tonight?” — “I know, let’s go to the theater.”

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FIVE PLAYS IN JULY OF 2023**



This year’s Contemporary American Film Festival will kick off on July 7 and run through July 30, with daily performances each week Tuesday through Sunday. The festival will present five plays along with CATF’s talktheater series and other events.

*This year’s plays, all premiering for the first time at CATF, are **Redeemed** by Chisa Hutchinson, directed by Marcus D. Harvey; **Fever Dreams** (of Animals on the Verge of Extinction) by Jeffrey Lieber, directed by Susan V. Booth; **Spiritus/ Virgil’s Dance** written and performed by Dael Orlandersmith, directed by Neel Keller, a co-production with Merrimack Repertory Theatre; **Your Name Means Dream** written and directed by José Rivera; and **The Overview Effect** by Lynn Rosen, directed by Courtney Sale.*

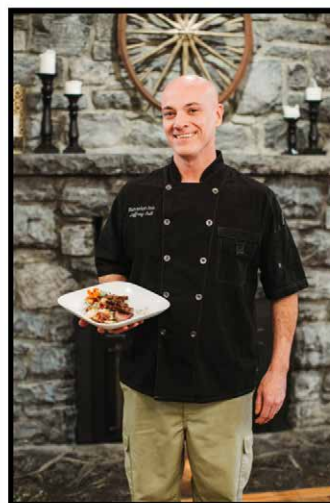
*The festival will use three venues on the Shepherd University campus — the **Marinoff Theater**, **Studio 112**, and the **Frank Arts Center** — along with the newly renovated **Shepherdstown Opera House** in downtown Shepherdstown.*

Schedule, program details, and tickets at CATF.org.



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// SCHOOLS

NO MORE STATE FUNDS FOR RANSON CONSTRUCTION

JOYCE WHITE, DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT of Operations for Jefferson County Schools (JCS), spoke to the Board of Education at its regular meeting on April 24 to give a brief update on the new Ranson Elementary School project. “The contractor has equipment on site” was the report, pointing out the visible confirmation that the construction phase of the project is finally underway. The update on the school system’s request for additional state funding was equally to the point — “no additional funding.”

At an earlier Board of Education meeting on February 27, White had presented the low bid for the Ranson construction project — \$31 million, which put the entire project roughly \$11.5 million over budget. Following a discussion of several funding options, the Board accepted the construction bid and directed White to negotiate with the state’s School Building Authority for a supplemental grant. After reducing the project costs by \$2 million — a combination of exterior design changes and other minor changes suggested by the contractor — the hoped-for target was an additional \$9.5 million from the SBA to cover the entire funding gap.

Seeing the escalating costs of school projects around the state, the SBA had deferred funding any new projects in 2023 to maintain a reserve to backfill funding for previously-

approved projects. At its March meetings, the SBA approved supplemental grants to cover increased construction costs for school projects in Hampshire, Kanawha, McDowell, Mercer, and Wood counties. The SBA has very detailed guidelines for school construction projects, including standards for hundreds of specific features. Requests for additional funding need to meet the Authority’s temporary administrative guidelines for supplemental funding, which include a strict adherence to these standards, including a maximum square-foot per student calculation.



(Above) The bus canopy shown in this rendering of the new Ranson Elementary School will be eliminated from the project to save costs.

Sticking With The Approved Design

According to the SBA, Jefferson County Schools elected not to alter the project specifications that had been developed in consultation with the local community input, which includes two STEAM labs — one intended to serve the Ranson school population and the other to be available to students from other elementary schools around the county. While removing specific features might have resolved some of the differences from the SBA guidelines, the overall size of the building exceeds the SBA guideline requirements — and adjusting the design to meet that guideline would have necessitated a redesign (and rebid) of the project.

According to the options presented by Ms. White at the February 27 Board meeting, the additional \$9.5 million to fund the Ranson construction project will come from various JCS reserve funds as follows: \$1.25 million from the bond interest reserve fund, \$3 million from capital projects funds, \$3 million from the FY22 operating budget carryover, and \$2.2 million from the FY23 operating budget carryover. 🗣️

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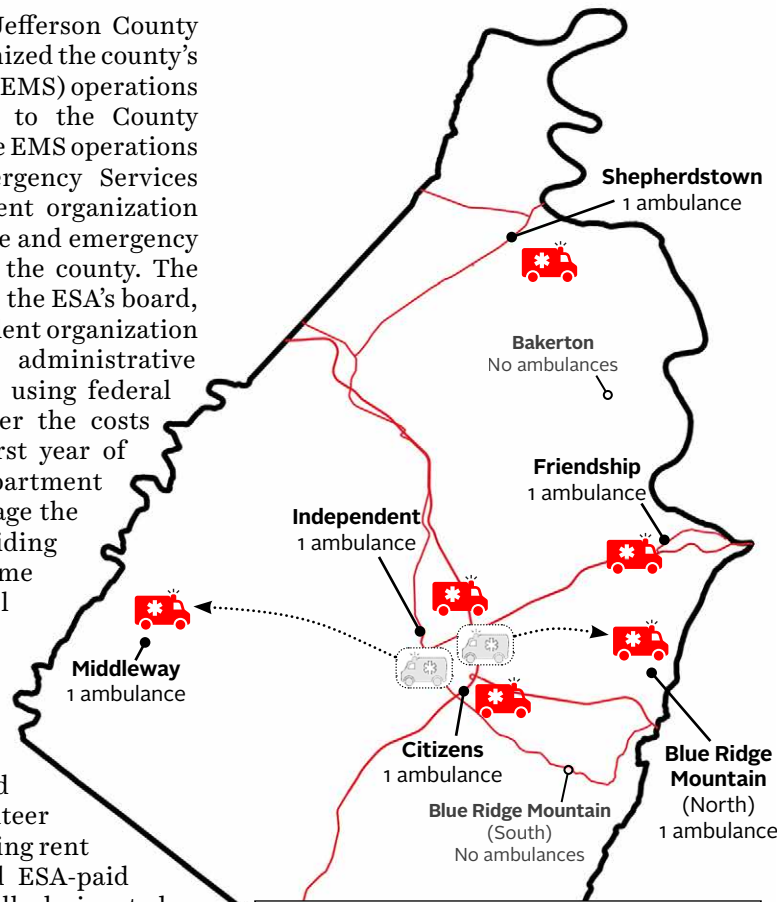
ON MARCH 1 OF THIS YEAR, the Jefferson County Commission officially reorganized the county's Emergency Medical Services (EMS) operations as a department reporting to the County Administrator. Previously, the EMS operations were managed by the Emergency Services Agency (ESA), an independent organization created to coordinate both fire and emergency medical services throughout the county. The County Commission appoints the ESA's board, but it operates as an independent organization with its own finance and administrative systems. The Commission is using federal ARPA grant funding to cover the costs of the transition and the first year of operations. Although the department launched on March 1 to manage the front line operations of providing ambulance services, some support functions are still being processed through the ESA, including service billing and payroll.

As part of the department transition, Jefferson County purchased ambulances from the volunteer fire companies and began paying rent to house the equipment and ESA-paid staff in the four stations initially designated for ambulances (see map) — 2 ambulances each at Citizens and Independent, 1 at Harpers Ferry, and 1 at Shepherdstown.

Residents of the areas served by the Blue Ridge Mountain and Middleway volunteer fire companies have voiced concern that the initial ambulance deployment model would result in longer response times in their areas. The ESA Board had a lengthy discussion about these concerns at its monthly meeting on April 18 and voted to relocate an ambulance to each of these two companies (arrows on map).

During the ESA meeting, there were many questions from both board members and staff about whether the call data since March 1 justified this change, and even whether the ESA board has any authority on this action. The ambulances and the lease agreements with the volunteer companies are now the responsibility of the County Commission, not the ESA board, so it would be up to the Commission to take up the question posed by the ESA Board's action. The ESA board's vote was mentioned at the April 20 Commission meeting, but it will be up to the Commissioners to put it on the agenda of a future meeting for any action.

Mike Sine, interim Director of the ESA, noted that changing the ambulance deployment would reduce the ability to balance



Note: Red icons indicate proposed ambulance locations per ESA board discussion (gray icons indicate ambulances that would move from current locations). Shift assignments (24 vs. 12-hour) not indicated.

Graphic: WV Independent Observer

calls dispatched from the centrally-located Independent and Citizens stations, likely resulting in higher workloads on the crews at those stations. During the ESA discussion, the participants kept coming back to the unresolved question of funding, with several board members acknowledging that the budgeted number of EMS staff positions are not enough to provide the coverage that the residents are asking for. And the department's budget is more optimistic than the reality — Sine noted that the county has been able to fill only 1 of the 12 new positions authorized by the Commission to support the current deployment, which he attributed to the significantly higher pay scales of the surrounding jurisdictions. As ESA board member Tony Troxel described it during the meeting: "we're being asked to do more than we can with what we have."

More coverage at WeAreTheObserver.com

“Life is born only of the spark of opposites.”

—C.G. Jung
(Collected Works, Volume 7, Par. 78)



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PERSPECTIVE // RELIGION

INTERFAITH GROUP BELIEVES IN UNITY & CONNECTION

By Susan Mills

Susan Mills is an awarding-winning broadcast journalist who traveled around the world and across America during her career at CBS News and the MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour. She now calls Shepherdstown her home.

IT WAS A COLD, WINTRY, WEDNESDAY night but inside, at the Trinity Episcopal church in Shepherdstown, the atmosphere was anything but chilly. Friends greeted each other; shy newcomers were introduced all around. The Reverend GT Schramm took the lead to welcome everyone with opening prayers and hymns, but the main speaker of the night was Pastor Pam Boomer from the Asbury United Methodist Church. And she lived up to her name! She had the congregation laughing and clapping amid shouts of “Amen” and “Hallelujah” as she preached about the need for all of us to be good neighbors. “Who is our neighbor?” she asked, “not just the folks who live next door but our townsfolk, our county, our state, our country and our world.”

Reaching Out To Connect

Pastor Boomer suggested we exchange contact information with someone we didn’t know, perhaps the person sitting next to us in the pew. She ended her sermon by reciting the lyrics from the Diana Ross song, “Reach out and touch somebody’s hand; Make this world a better place, if you can.” By this time, the whole congregation was reaching across the pews grabbing hands or arms with each other. It was a rousing, inspiring service.

Each Wednesday for six weeks leading up to Easter, a different church played host to a Lenten prayer service. but there was a catch —

a preacher from yet a different church led the service, which is why Pastor Boomer was before the altar at Trinity, not Reverend Schramm. These services were organized through the Shepherdstown Ministerial Association, which has been active in Shepherdstown for more than 40 years to forge connections between the many churches in the community.

The interfaith association has gone through periods where it has been more active than others but the Covid pandemic was a real downer for the group. The Reverend Gusti Newquist arrived at her post at Shepherdstown Presbyterian about five months before the pandemic shutdowns and Father Andy Switzer from St. Agnes Catholic church arrived a couple of months into it. They had few opportunities to get to know their parishioners or their neighbors in person. But these ministers and their parishioners, judging by these packed Wednesday services, came out of Covid isolation seeking connection. They are all united in their commitment to this ecumenical movement. Reverend GT Schramm calls this Interfaith group of ministers “The Church of Shepherdstown.”

A Rebirth After The Trial Of Covid

I became aware of the Interfaith ministries when they held a prayer service for Ukraine soon after the war broke out. It was a highly moving service and it seemed to revitalize the interfaith movement. “The gift of Covid,” the Reverend Dee-Ann Dixon of New Street United Methodist church noted, “has been a fresh kind of spirit going on. People wanted more of these kinds of gatherings.”

“Churches are done with division,” according to the Reverend Karen Erskine-Valentine of the Shepherdstown Lutheran Parish, “people are longing for connection and



Pictured (back row): Rev. Andy Switzer, St Agnes Catholic Church; Rev. Dr. Rudy Bropleh, Lead Pastor Asbury United Methodist Church; (front row): Pastor Pam Boomer, Asbury United Methodist Church; Reverend Dr. GT Schramm, Trinity Episcopal; Pastor Karen-Erskine-Valentine, Shepherdstown Lutheran Parish; Reverend Dee-Ann Dixon, New Street United Methodist Church.

unity; this is speaking to that.” The pastors say they love working together and have become good friends. “One of the joys was when I, a Lutheran woman, preached at an Ash Wednesday service at a Catholic Church. That’s a big deal. It’s a vision of hope” for the Reverend Erskine-Valentine.

All these efforts are about making us better neighbors and better ministers, too, according to Father Andy Switzer of St. Agnes Catholic Church. “As I went from church to church, seeing the diversity of music, preaching and worship styles, we were learning from each other, it helped us grow as pastors,” He said. “We are called to work on unity.”

The Reverend Gusti Newquist, pastor of Shepherdstown Presbyterian, was honored to preach at Asbury United Methodist Church, “It filled something in my soul that had been missing.” She added, “We are on the cusp of something really exciting for the next generation.” Going forward, a vacation Bible school is being planned which would be for all ages, including adults and a choir festival is also in the works.

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PERSPECTIVE // LOCAL BUSINESS

DOWNTOWN EMPORIUM NURTURES SMALL BUSINESSES IN CHARLES TOWN

By Erin Atticus Mooney

Erin Atticus Mooney is the former owner of a creative events and leadership development company based in Washington, D.C., a creative business coach and consultant, and a lover of nature.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE NEEDFUL Things Emporium is a tale of savvy merchants with a penchant for regeneration and grit. Melissa Glascock (or Missy as she’s locally known) is the current owner of this longtime family enterprise. From the warm greetings from literally every customer who passed by during our interview, it’s obvious she’s an integral part of downtown Charles Town. I arrived at Needful Things promptly at opening on a Tuesday and it didn’t take long before the store was filled with shoppers eager to socialize and explore the 11,000-square-foot store, which recently expanded into the old Needful Things II space next door.

Missy took me back to 1968 to explain how it all began — with her talented and sharp-witted granny who reupholstered second-hand furniture to sell in her thrift store. She taught her son, Missy’s father, how to buy storage units and the family then spent 30 years salvaging storage lots on auction to resell with Missy taking over the management in 2007 and continuing in the footsteps of her parents and granny. The retail shop had been in the current storefront location since 1991, and all was well in the enterprise until the pandemic interrupted their ability to participate in auctions with integrity. “Everything went online, even auctions, and you can’t buy delinquent storage without being there to see it — and smell it,” Missy explains.

Tenacious as her granny, Missy transformed the interruption into an opportunity to pivot the business model. The idea, she described, is that the store serves as an incubator and platform for creators who can rent a booth and reap the benefits of a brick-and-mortar with decades of local success. “You just have to see if your side hustle, your craft, your passion, the thing that you do late at night and share with your friends for the holidays is worth [it]” she laughs. Shoppers can find everything from vintage wares and artwork, to hand-crafted leather goods, herbal remedies and lego figurines, to nourishing food at a plant-based café.

Missy is thrilled and honored to support her vendors, “It’s great to see all these [new] businesses that do have great ideas and do have things to offer, but where do [they] do it and how do [they] do it?” It’s daunting to launch any small



The storefront windows at Needful Things reflect the enjoyment you’ll find inside.

business or to scale from hobby to enterprise. Needful Things aims to alleviate some of that risk for new and seasoned sellers alike.

“I have 64 small businesses that are trying their hand at a brick-and-mortar without having to take the plunge into a long-term lease and the overhead costs.” One such seller began at Needful Things with the smallest 4 x 7-foot booth and soon expanded to the largest 9 x 14-foot booth, which then led to leasing an 850 square foot storefront — “and they’re thriving,” Missy beams proudly. It’s clear that she feels a personal investment in the success of her vendors, or “baby birds” as she sweetly refers to them. “I know what it’s like as a small business to want to take that next step,” she empathizes.

We discussed how this is just the sort of collaborative and supportive environment that differentiates a physical, multi-vendor space from an online one, such as Etsy. Shoppers peruse the store and stumble upon great finds in a way that they wouldn’t online. Visiting Needful Things is a social and curiosity-inducing experience that bolsters an entire local economy as entrepreneurs can enjoy the benefits of shoppers consistently rotating through the doors.

Another benefit is embodied in one of the more recent additions to the Needful Things roster during their pandemic-era evolution: a café (repurposing the old lunch counter that has been in the space since it was Newberry’s Department store). “We had [the] food and I would have never known it was plant-based unless someone told me,” Missy says, “her flavors are amazing.” Cocina Plantosaurus has been operating under the Needful Things roof since 2021. “It just enhances [the space] and shows that another small business can thrive,” Missy declares.

The Needful Things Emporium is far more than a store—it’s a family, and it’s growing in a way that’d make Missy’s granny proud.

Located at 218 West Washington St, Charles Town (tel: 304 725-6315). Open Tue-Sat 10-6, Sun 11-3, closed Mondays.

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SOME BILLS THAT FAILED IN THE LEGISLATURE THIS YEAR

By Susan Benzinger

Susan Benzinger is a retired tax attorney and active volunteer in Jefferson County. During her 2022 campaign for WV State Delegate campaign she became very familiar with the issues facing West Virginia and offered to share updates on the state legislature during the 2023 session with The Observer.

THERE HAVE BEEN MANY reviews of bills that passed and became law in West Virginia this year. However, there were far more bills that were introduced but not passed by the legislature. This month's column points out some bills that did not pass but were sponsored by Delegates Clark, Espinosa, and Ridenour. Next month I'll continue with a review of bills sponsored by Delegate Hardy and Senators Barrett and Rucker.



(left to right) Delegates Clark, Espinosa, and Ridenour

Increasing Pay For Teachers & School Staff

In areas like Berkeley and Jefferson counties, which border Maryland and Virginia, it has been suggested that a boost in salary levels to be competitive with these neighboring jurisdictions (aka "locality pay") would go a long way towards keeping and recruiting teachers and other school staff. Locality pay was somewhat addressed in HB 2828 which would have raised base pay for teachers statewide, which in turn would make our school systems more competitive with abutting jurisdictions. *Delegate Clark along with eight other delegates sponsored this bill, but it stalled in the House Finance Committee.*

Guns In Schools

HB 2549 would have allowed teachers, school administrators, and others to carry concealed firearms in schools (grades K-12). *This bill stalled in the House Judiciary Committee. It was sponsored by eleven delegates including Delegate Clark.*

Surveillance Cameras In Schools

HB 2560 would have required that cameras be placed in all public places in schools with the exception of bathroom stalls, showers, and locker rooms. *This bill stalled in the House Education Committee. It was sponsored by ten delegates including Delegate Ridenour.*

Requiring English Skills For Students

HB 2622 would have required that children be able to speak English before being admitted to school. *This bill stalled in the House Education Committee. It had three sponsors including Delegate Ridenour.*

Weight Of Final Semester Examinations

HB 3447 would have required that high school final examinations carry a weight of at least 12 percent of the final grade. *This bill stalled in the House Education Committee. Delegate Ridenour was the sole sponsor.* [Note: the Jefferson County School Board, in its role as the local school authority, is currently reviewing the weight of final exams and has set up a Semester Exam Advisory Committee (consisting of citizens and teachers) to assist with the review and determination of the weight of final exams in Jefferson County schools.]

Zoning Exemption For Electrical Generation

HB 2459 would have allowed an exempt wholesale generator (any person or entity that is not an electric utility but who intends to purchase, construct, or operate an electric generating facility) to be permitted to operate in any zoning local district. *This bill stalled in the Judiciary Committee and*

was sponsored solely by Delegate Clark. [Jefferson County amended its zoning ordinance in 2022 to permit wholesale solar generation as conditional use in its rural zoning district.]

Removing License Requirements For Radon Contractors

HB 2769 would have removed the licensure requirements for radon specialists, including contractors and testers. *This bill stalled in the Committee on Government Organizations. Delegate Espinosa along with ten other delegates sponsored this bill.*

Removing Childhood Vaccine Requirements

HB 3144 would have removed any vaccinations or immunization requirements for a child to enter public school. *Delegate Ridenour was one of four sponsors of this bill which stalled in the House Education Committee.*

Inspection Of Motor Vehicles

HB 3217 would have repealed state inspection requirements for motor vehicles. *This bill stalled in the House Technology and Infrastructure Committee. Delegate Ridenour was one of ten sponsors of this bill.*

Political Prisoners

HB 3535 would have provided that certain persons ("citizens of the United States of America who have been arrested, charged or convicted of any crime, other than a felony, relating to the US Capitol building on January 6, 2021") arrested by the United States Government may not be transported through or imprisoned in West Virginia. *Delegate Ridenour was the sole sponsor of this bill. It stalled in the House Judiciary Committee.*

More coverage at [WeAreTheObserver.com](https://www.wvobserver.com)



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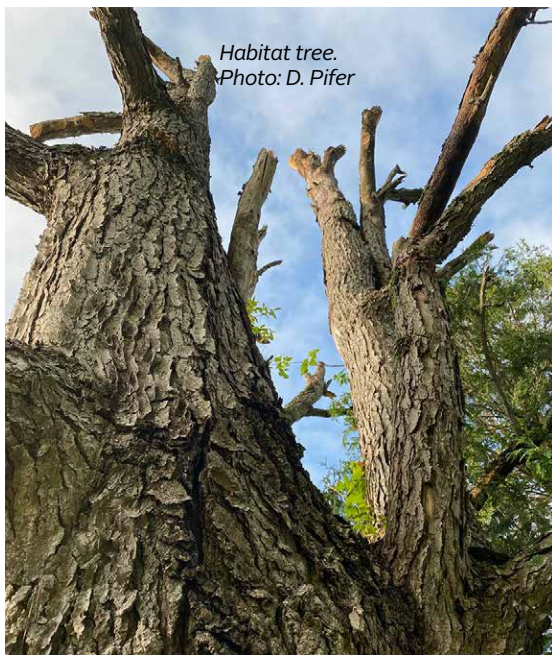
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SALUTING A HABITAT TREE

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.



Habitat tree.
Photo: D. Pifer

IT'S GOOD FOR A TREE'S OVERALL HEALTH to remove dead branches. And falling limbs can be a true hazard. But there is great value in keeping a dead tree standing in a safe spot in your yard or property. My wife and I were thrilled to discover a big Kentucky Coffee tree growing next to our driveway when we moved here. As it began to leaf out, we sadly learned it was near the end of its life. Several large limbs had already fallen, and one of them had damaged the roof of the garden shed. We were concerned that, during a storm, more falling limbs would damage our newly built fence or our car.

Lots of Life in a Hard Snag

We wanted our tree to remain standing as a wildlife habitat so we had arborists from Viking Tree Service carefully trim and sculpt it so the limbs couldn't fall and cause damage. Now the old Kentucky coffee tree stands majestically like a dead tree in the woods. This old tree was a wildlife habitat long before we moved here. For trees, death can be very gradual. A dying tree, which foresters call a "hard snag" attracts wood-boring insects, lichens, moss and fungi. Weather and wind work to soften the outer bark and it starts to slough away, leaving open spaces where bats roost during the

day. Woodpeckers chisel into the tree to get the ants, beetles and other insects hidden in chambers and networks of tunnels in the dead wood.

Home for New Neighbors


After several years, fibers in the dead wood gradually soften and continue to break down and the dead tree becomes a "soft snag" in forestry-speak. Woodpeckers that used to hunt the hard snag for insects now chop away deep cavities for nesting. After the woodpeckers raise a brood, they abandon the nest hole, preferring to dig out a new one next season. The empty woodpecker cavities shelter rodents, snakes and lizards. These "secondary" tree cavities are prime real estate for nesting birds in the spring. Chickadees, titmice, flycatchers, barred and screech owls, bluebirds, and wood ducks all nest in abandoned woodpecker holes. Certain cavity nesters, like owls, add no further nest material. Others, like wrens and chickadees, fill the chamber with sticks, grass or moss. Some cavity nesters add plastic or paper wrappers, shed snake skins, or feathers.

Bluebirds and purple martins are native birds that used to nest in old woodpecker holes. But since the 19th century European starlings aggressively took over nesting sites to the extent that the native birds' populations began to suffer. Nowadays bluebirds and purple martins are on the rebound, largely because they have come to prefer nesting in man-made bird boxes instead of using "traditional" sites.

A Place to Hang Out

Dead trees also make wonderful loafing sites. Birds like to hang out where they can see approaching enemies. They rest, preen, and socialize without leaves and branches getting in the way. They can quickly dry after a rain and warm themselves in the sunshine. Here at our place, a great blue heron often perches atop a big dead hackberry tree next to the stream at the corner of our property. Vultures sometimes roost there, lingering on into the morning until the sun warms and dries their feathers. Our colony of purple martins used to loaf in our old Kentucky coffee tree top during the day. Their newly fledged young assembled there and were fed insects by their parents. For several years, the very first male martin to arrive perched on this same treetop. Now the upper branches have disappeared. Our martins hang out elsewhere.

Witnessing our old tree's decline offers me a new perspective on life, death, and change. Even a healthy tree left to its own devices continues to drop dead limbs and branches throughout its life. Such fallen limbs teem with wood lice, ground beetles, centipedes, and slugs. Salamanders burrow underneath. The rotting wood becomes entangled by white, thread-like mycelia from mushrooms and other fungi as the remains gradually molder into the forest floor.



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EXPLORE // TOURISM

TOURISM GROWTH CONTINUES FOR WEST VIRGINIA

State Programs Available To Help Businesses Attract Visitors

THERE'S A LOT OF HARD WORK going on in West Virginia. But there's also a lot of fun and play too. According to the West Virginia Department of Tourism, travel-related spending totaled \$4.9 billion in 2021. That works out to just under 7 percent of the state's "gross domestic product" (GDP) — slightly lower than the economic impact of manufacturing (10.2% of GDP) and coal production (10%), but higher than retail sales (6.6%) and oil production (6%) according to statistics published by the West Virginia Department of Tourism and IBISWorld.

travel-related businesses or just local businesses with products and services that travelers seek out for that "unique" experience that makes vacationing exciting. There's no charge to sign up at WVtourism.com/portal-registration and explore the resources.



(Right) In Jefferson County, the Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) is the designated marketing organization, working with the West Virginia Department of Tourism to promote the county as a tourist destination. The CVB recently hosted a "tourism summit" at the Bavarian Inn, to introduce local businesses to the resources available to assist them in attracting tourists as customers.



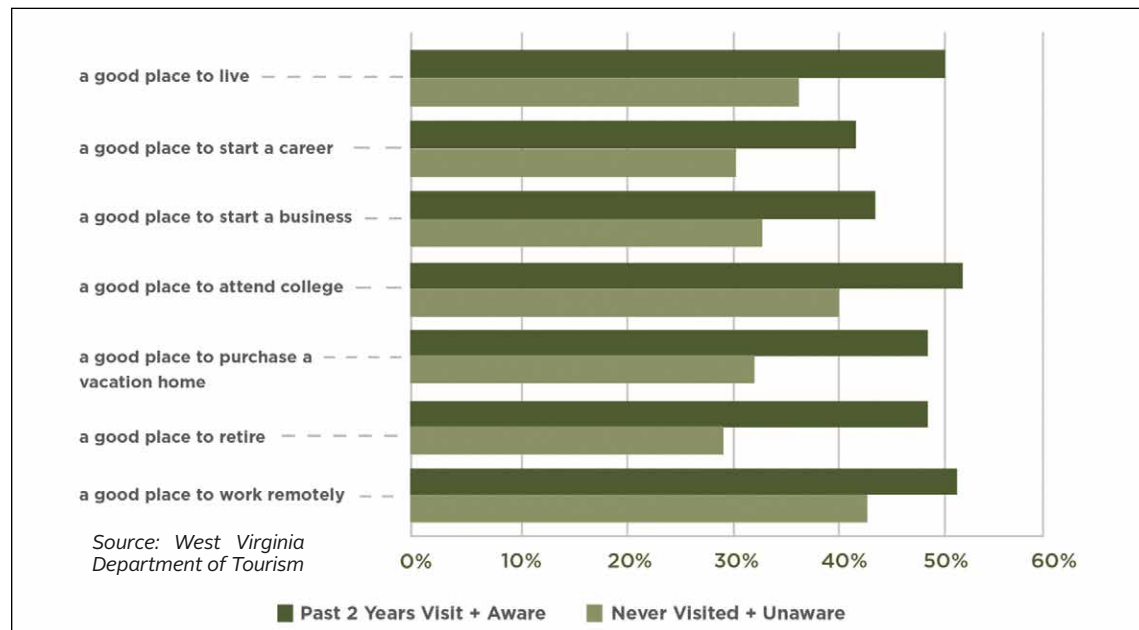
Source: WV Travel Impacts, Dean Runyon Association (2022)

Tourism Promotion Make A Positive Impression

All that play introduces people to the Mountaineer state in a positive way. What the Department of Tourism describes as a "halo effect," the advertising that promotes tourism has a beneficial effect on people considering West Virginia a place to put down deeper roots (see chart to the right).

All Businesses Can Benefit

Tourists represent opportunities for local businesses to grow and prosper as well. The West Virginia Department of Tourism has a variety of programs and tools available to businesses — whether they consider themselves typical



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Our goal is to keep residents informed about what's happening in Jefferson County — to provide an independent perspective and help residents explore and engage with the community and local government. We intend to keep the newspaper free to readers and, as the population of Jefferson County continues to grow, we're changing how we mail the paper to local residents. Depending on each month's story topics, we'll be mailing to different neighborhoods around the county. If you don't see an issue in your mailbox at the beginning of each month, **you can still find us in our red & white newspaper boxes.**

DOWNTOWN SHEPHERDSTOWN

- Post Office (street box)
- Community Garden Market
- Four Seasons Books
- MJ's on German DeliCafe
- Sweet Shop Bakery
- Shepherdstown Public Library

BOLIVAR - HARPERS FERRY

- Bolivar Bread Bakery
- Bolivar-Harpers Ferry Public Library
- Bakerton Market

SOUTH JEFFERSON COUNTY

- Middleway Market
- Depot Market (Summit Point)
- South Jefferson Public Library

DOWNTOWN CHARLES TOWN

- Bushel & Peck
- Siblings Coffee Roasters
- Charles Town Library

KEARNEYSVILLE - SHENANDOAH JUNCTION - Black Dog Coffee Company

EXPLORE // ACTIVITIES & ENTERTAINMENT

APR 29 (SAT) – MAY DAY CELEBRATION – Maypole and Morris Dancers on the McMurrin Hall · noon - 1 pm · Downtown Shepherdstown · FREE · FB: ShepMusicAndDance

MAY 6 (SAT) – 50TH ANNIVERSARY GALA – Fundraising event for The Old Opera House Theater Company · Doors open at 6 pm · Ballroom at the Hollywood Casino 750 Hollywood Dr, Charles Town · \$125, pre-registration required · Web: OldOperaHouse.org

MAY 9 & 10 (TUE & WED) – SPEAK STORY SERIES – Andrew Ali Aghapour - The performer was born and raised in Charleston, South Carolina by a Muslim, Iranian father and a Christian, British mother. His stories look back at those humorous, mundane moments in life that are actually endowed with cosmic significance · 7:30 pm · Frank Center Auditorium · \$15 · Web: SpeakStorySeries.com

MAY 12-14 (FRI-SAT-SUN) – BOOK SALE – Fundraiser for Shepherdstown Public Library · 1000s of books for all ages · Fri 5-7 pm, Sat 10 am - 5 pm, Sun 10 am - 3 pm · FREE admission · 145 Higbee Ln, Shepherdstown (at the library) · Web: FOSLWV.org

MAY 12 & 13 (FRI & SAT) – MOVIES AT SHEPHERDSTOWN OPERA HOUSE · 131 West German St, Shepherdstown · See website for titles, times & ticket purchase · OperaHouseLive.com

MAY 13 (SAT) – LOVE THY NEIGHBOR GALA – Black tie fundraiser, featuring Landau Murphy Jr, (America's Got Talent Season 6 winner) & LIQUID A, proceeds to support Jefferson County Combined Ministries · 6:00 - 11 pm · Ranson Civic Center, 432 W 2nd Ave, Ranson · Tickets & info at JCCM.us

MAY 13 (SAT) – PEACEFEST – Performance by local musicians to benefit upcoming "Guns to Gardens" event · 7:30 - 9 pm · Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church, 100 West Washington St, Shepherdstown · Donation requested

MAY 20 (SAT) – HARPERS FERRY HALF MARATHON & 5K – Course winds through the historic downtown, up hills, with several overlooks of the town and rivers · Packet pickup Friday evening, race begins 6 am · Pre-registration required, details at website · Web: HarpersFerryHalf.org

MAY 20 & 21 (SAT & SUN) – BACK ALLEY GARDEN TOUR & TEA – Private gardens in Shepherdstown open for tours, plus a tea at the Shepherdstown Community Club · Gardens open at 10 am on Sat · Tickets \$30 (advance) · Web: BackAlleyGarden.org

MAY 20 & 21 (SAT & SUN) – TWO RIVERS CHAMBER ORCHESTRA CONCERT – "Folk 'n Fancy" with works by Béla Bartok, Amanda Harberg, Franz Danzi, and Charles Gounod · 7:30 pm Sat, 3 pm Sun · Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church, 100 West Washington St, Shepherdstown · \$40 · Web: FriendsWV.org

MAY 21 (SUN) – STRONGER WITH EACH STEP 5K RUN – Fundraiser for locally-based non-profit providing suicide prevention programs in local schools · Race starts at noon (registration at 11 am) · Hedgesville High School (cross country field), 109 Ridge Rd, Hedgesville · Preregistration \$25 student, \$30 adult; race day registration \$35 · Web: BrianOneillJrFoundation.org >> see spotlight page 14

MAY 27 (SAT) – ADVANCED BEEKEEPING – Tabler Farm community workshop series - Intended for individuals with prior experience looking to improve beekeeping skills · 10 am - 4 pm · Tabler Farm Center (location details with registration) · \$20, pre-registration required · Web: Shepherd.edu/suaic-2023-workshop-series

JUN 3 (SAT) – BARK IN THE PARK – Fundraising event by Animal Welfare Society of Jefferson County - vendors, rescues, food, entertainment · 10 am - 2 pm · Jefferson Memorial Park, Forrest Ave, Charles Town · FREE · Web: AWSJC.org

JUN 10 (SAT) – SHEPHERDSTOWN DOGFEST – Music, food, beverages, rescue parade, contests, demonstrations, vendors & lots of fun · 11 am - 5 pm · The Midway on the Shepherd University Campus, 300 N King St, Shepherdstown · FREE · FB: ShepherdstownDogFest

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April 28 (Friday) – *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989, PG), 7:30 pm

April 29 (Saturday) – *Everything Everywhere All At Once* (2022, R), 3:00 & 7:30 pm


May 12 (Friday) – *A Man Called Otto* (2022, PG-13), 7:00 pm


May 13 (Saturday) – *The Woman King* (2022, PG-12), 7:00 pm

For more events and tickets, scan QR code above or visit
OperaHouseLive.com/Calendar-of-Events


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CATF RETURNS FOR 2023 >> PAGES 4 & 5





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EXPLORE // ACTIVITIES

HALLTOWN CHAPEL SPRING SALE



The Halltown Memorial Chapel Association is hosting an **open house with a spring fundraising sale** – vintage items, plants & household items will be on sale. Proceeds to fund preservation efforts at the Chapel and the adjacent Halltown African-American Free School. *May 6 (Sat) 10 am - 3 pm (rain or shine). 384 Halltown Road, Harpers Ferry.*

COLLECTING FOOD FOR WITH KIDZ POWER PACS

The Leadership Jefferson class of 2023 has partnered **Kidz Power Pacs (KPP)** to collect food donations for Kidz Power Pacs at the Weis grocery store in Ranson (217 Oak Lee Drive) on May 13 (Sat), 10 am - 4 pm. Additional collection boxes will be available throughout the month of May at the Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce (44 Trifecta Pl, Charles Town), River Riders (408 Alstadts Hill Rd, Harpers Ferry) Jefferson Security Bank (873 East Washington St, Shepherdstown), and Valley Health Urgent Care (100 Oak Lee Dr, Ranson).

Kids Power Pacs provides high-nutrition lunch meals to children in need during school breaks and during the summer when they don't have access to the school lunch program. The particular food items needed are mac & cheese (packets/bowls), ravioli (15 oz cans), chicken noodle soup (16 oz cans), tuna packets, and peanut butter (single-serve).



COUNTY-WIDE EMERGENCY PLANNING



The **Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC)** will hold its next bi-monthly meeting on June 21. The meeting starts at 8:15 am and is open to the public– the LEPC includes many members from first responder and public health organizations, but also includes business owners, educators, community groups, and other residents. (and citizen participants are encouraged). Location: Hospice of the Eastern Panhandle (Admin Building - training room), 330 Hospice Ln, Kearneysville. *For details, contact LEPC@JeffersonCountyWV.org or call 304-728-3290.*

SUICIDE PREVENTION FOUNDATION SEEKING EVENT SPONSORS

The **Brian O'Neill Jr Foundation** is a locally-based nonprofit organization focused on the fight against suicide. The foundation is seeking sponsors for its **annual Stronger With Each Step 5K run** to be held on May 21 at the Hedgesville High School Cross Country field. The mission of the foundation is to empower individuals and their families to prevent youth and young adult suicide.

All funds raised will go to the organization to be used toward providing education such as SafeTALK, supporting evidenced-based programs, and promoting Sources of Strength in our middle schools, high schools, and throughout the community for suicide prevention and awareness in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia. **Sponsorships can be cash or in-kind donations of goods or services.** *For details, contact: Lee O'Neill at BrianOneillJrFoundation@gmail.com or visit BrianOneillJrFoundation.org.*

Harpers Ferry Half Marathon & 5k

Come run through the beautiful Harpers Ferry National Historical Park and see all the beauty our region has to offer on foot!

May 20th, 2023

Register today: www.HarpersFerryHalf.org

EXPLORE // ACTIVITIES

YOUTH MUSIC CAMPS AT SHEPHERD UNIVERSITY

The School of Music has announced camps for string orchestra, jazz, jazz flute, woodwind, to be held on the Shepherd University Campus in June. Details of each camp and registration links at Shepherd.edu/music/summer-music-programs.

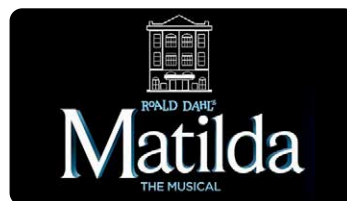


THEATER YOUTH SUMMER PROGRAMS

There are several local programs this summer for children who are curious about acting and theater production. The **Black Box Youth Playhouse** in Shepherdstown (BlackBoxYouth.org) offers week-long acting camps in July for ages 4-6 & 6-9, a two-week-long camp for ages 8-18, plus a separate two week technical camp for ages 12-18 (fees range from \$195 to \$395).

The **Old Opera House Theater Company** in Charles Town (OldOperaHouse.org) offers 3 week-long camps for ages 8-11, 12-18, and 10-18 in June and July (fees are \$110). They are also offering a variety of dance workshops and camps in June and July (fees range from \$35-\$75), plus 4 week-long intensive ballet sessions in August (fees are \$140 & \$220, depending on level).

The **Apollo Civic Theater** in Martinsburg (ApolloCivicTheatre.org) will host a full theatrical production of Roald Dahl's Matilda, with auditions on July 5, rehearsals through July 21, tech week through July 27, and performances July 27-30 (participants are expected to participate in all rehearsals and performances). This workshop is for kids entering 4th grade through just-graduated seniors. The registration fee is \$350 (plus costume fees).



AGING WELL WORKSHOP

Shepherd University is hosting its 14th annual Aging Well Workshop on Tuesday, May 9. This year's theme is "Interoception: Why Listening to Your Body Matters." The workshop runs from 9 am to 4 pm in the Robert C. Byrd Center auditorium. The workshop is presented by the Shepherd University's Department of Psychology, Department of Social Work, the School of Nursing, and the Lifelong Learning Program. Blue Ridge Community and Technical College's food truck will be on campus to provide healthy lunch options for purchase.

Dr. Jennifer MacCormack, assistant professor of social psychology and director of the Interoception Laboratory in the University of Virginia Department of Psychology, will talk about interoception — the lesser-known sense that helps us understand our bodies' internal sensations. Through a panel discussion, breakout sessions, and MacCormack's address, participants will develop a greater appreciation for the importance of listening to their bodies. The workshop will also cover topics such as healthy ways to age in place, the ethics of working with older adults experiencing memory loss and cognitive decline, eating for health and longevity, and alternative approaches to wellness.

Register online before May 3 at AgingWellWorkshop.TotalCamps.com. Cost is \$25 if attending for CEU credit, free for the general public.



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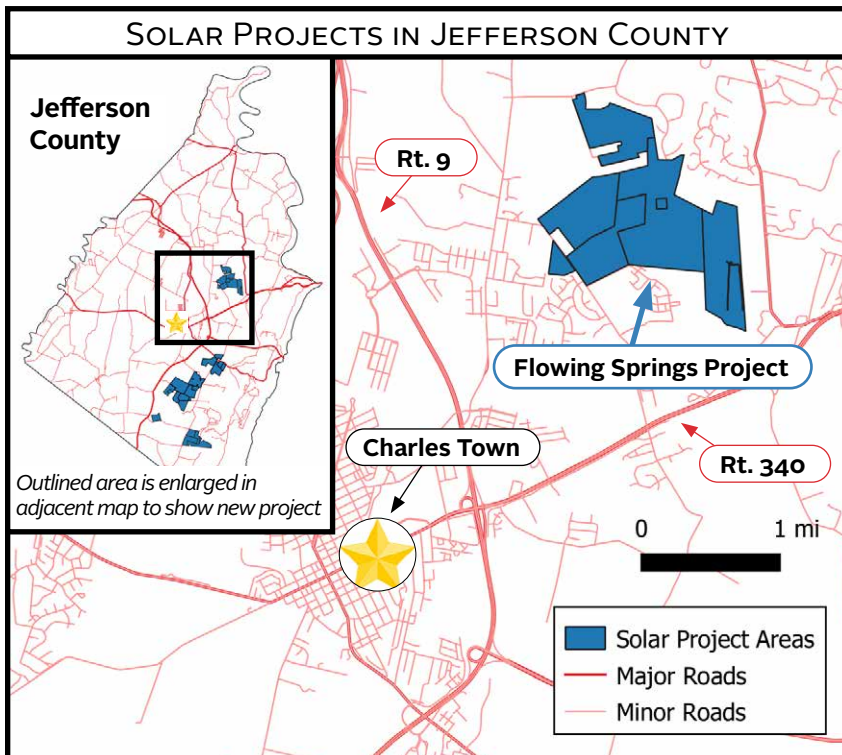
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ENGAGE // SOLAR & ROADS

ANOTHER SOLAR PROJECT COMES TO JEFFERSON COUNTY



THE CONCEPT PLAN for the Flowing Springs Farm project proposes a solar panel installation on 660 acres adjacent to the Aspen Greens and Beallair subdivisions northeast of Charles Town (see map, above).

The Jefferson County Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on the concept plan for this project (23-4-SP) during its regular meeting on May 9 (7:30 pm, county meeting room in the basement of the Charles Town Library). *More information at WeAreTheObserver.com*

COUNTY COMMISSION SEEKS PUBLIC INPUT ON TRANSPORTATION CONCERNS

ON MAY 23, THE JEFFERSON COUNTY COMMISSION will host a Transportation Summit. The Commission's staff has been working on the planning and logistics for this event since early 2022 to bring together a broad group of local and state officials to discuss issues and priorities for transportation funding in Jefferson County. Following presentations and discussions at the Ranson Civic Center, the participants will be shuttled around the county to get a first-hand perspective on areas of concern.

The Commission is encouraging residents to email suggestions for the summit participants to review. Send to info@JeffersonCountyWV.org — topics can be anything related to moving around the county — safety at specific intersections, walking & cycling routes, traffic lights, public transportation, railroad crossings, etc.



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