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### EDITOR IN CHIEF

STEVE PEARSON

### MANAGING EDITOR

CATHERINE PEZZARO

### PUBLISHER

HARRIET PEARSON

### BUSINESS MANAGER

LESLIE DAVISSON

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THIS PAPER WANTS TO BE RECYCLED.



Carnival ride at the 2022 Jefferson County Fair.

**TO OUR READERS** — Some carnival rides don't look too scary when they're not moving. The one above is just a bunch of swings that go around in a circle like a merry-go-round, right? But wait till it picks up speed — then it's time to hold on tight! The 2023 Jefferson County Fair runs from Aug 20 to 26. The website has all the details ([JeffersonCountyFairWV.org](http://JeffersonCountyFairWV.org)). Besides the livestock and tractor pulls, there's lots of fun activities and if you're creative or crafty, you can enter to win a ribbon — browse through the fair book that's on the fair website (around page 70) and you'll find lots of categories that you can enter even if you've never set foot on a farm.

While you're at the fair, stop by the Planning Commission booth — they're looking for people to give them comments on future growth and land use in the county (see page 16). It's a pressing question, judging by the numbers we're continuing to see for new home construction (see page 6). At the beginning of the year the pace of new construction was up 2X from the previous decade. Now it's running about 3X. Hold on tight!

Speaking of construction, the library in Shepherdstown is celebrating its first year in the new building on the outskirts of town. Library Director Hali Taylor, who really did turn a trash heap into something spectacular, is retiring after seeing this project through to completion and talks a little bit about what's happened at the new library this past year (see page 4). You should check it out (along with a book or two).

Steve Pearson  
EDITOR IN CHIEF

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// COMMUNITY

# YEAR 1 AT THE NEW SHEPHERDSTOWN LIBRARY

## New Facility Allows Dramatic Expansion Of Services For Community

A YEAR AGO, THE OBSERVER STOPPED BY to take some photos of the new Shepherdstown Public Library. There were rows and rows of empty shelves, stacks of new chairs, the crisp smell of new construction — and an energetic sense that something big was about to blossom there. As the library celebrates one year in the new facility, that energy is more than just a sense, it's all-encompassing.

With the successful launch of the new library now firmly established, the library has also initiated a leadership transition. Director Hali Taylor, who has served in the role for 33 years, and development director Lee Ann Warner have both announced their retirements. *The Observer* posed a few questions to Taylor, asking her to reflect on how the new library has transformed over the past year and what lies ahead:

**Observer:** *There seem to be a lot more people in this building whenever I visit. How does the utilization compare to the old building? Have you seen new patrons over the past year?*

**Taylor:** As word gets out about the numerous and enriching programs and opportunities afforded by the new facility, more and more people are discovering the new library. In the Market House we could not have programs upstairs in the children's area for two reasons: 1) we didn't have enough space, and 2) it was not accessible to children with mobility issues. We didn't even bother to consider onsite adult programs, and our teen space consisted of one chair in a 5 by 8 foot alcove. Since we opened the new library, we have welcomed about 2,000 people every month. We have issued over 1,100 new borrower cards since we opened barely a year ago, and people are especially impressed by the parking availability.



The teen section of the library was a bit bare on move-in day (above), but it's quite the welcoming place now (cover image).



Outgoing Director Hali Taylor in front of the new Shepherdstown Public Library.

**Observer:** *Obviously you have lots of books here, but can you talk about other services offered by the library that you've been able to expand or introduce?*

**Taylor:** Our mission is to provide the resources and the space to fulfill not only the informational needs of the community, but also to enable the enrichment of the lives of our patrons. We provide many services including answering reference questions, inter/intra-library loans, notary services, photocopying, faxing, document scanning; we also offer wi-fi, computer usage, and hotspots for loan — all free to patrons.

Our free digital resources include access to Ancestry.com, Libby (a downloadable eBook, eAudio, and eMagazine database), Artist Works (a database offering free lessons in all kinds of musical instruments and art classes), and Learning Express Library (a wonderful resource for practice tests for many disciplines, writing resumes, and conducting job searches). Patrons can use our media lab to create their own videos and podcasts. Our local history and genealogy room offers a quiet space for research and the community room hosts free craft get-togethers, meditation, book

clubs, author presentations, and space for non-profit board meetings. The community room can also be rented out for special occasions such as baby showers, birthdays, art shows, etc.

**Observer:** *The new facility is more than just a building. Tell us about what happens outside the walls as well and how that relates to the public library mission.*

**Taylor:** The story of the land upon which the library sits is the ultimate environmental success story. The library was built on the site of the former municipal dump of the Corporation of Shepherdstown, opened in 1954. It was a burn dump and operated for 15 years until the state required regulated landfills for trash disposal. The site sat unused and overgrown until it was offered to the library to use for a new building. The cleanup process was facilitated by the Northern West Virginia Brownfields Assistance Center, and the land received its Certificate of Completion in December 2014.

Fast forward to July 2022 and Peggy Bowers burst upon the scene. She arrived with a vision of a native forest, pollinator plants, and community involvement during the entire planting process. Since then, she and

grant-writer Carolyn Thomas have received multiple grants for free trees, pollinator plants, and for establishing a beautiful native environment surrounding the library. There will be educational walks and signs to educate visitors about the plants themselves. There is also a donor-funded contemplative garden with comfortable benches, and the black walnut benches were all made by Al Thomas, crafted from the trees harvested off the property before the site development began.

**Observer:** *Have the programming and services for children changed in the new facility?*

**Taylor:** The children’s programs have exploded in the new facility, due largely to the energy and vision of Rachel Heller, our Youth Director. She has been particularly successful in bringing teenagers (the “Bigfoot” of librarianship!) into the library by allowing them to make it their own — with Anime and Manga book clubs, self-directed art sessions, and implementing and encouraging broad acceptance attitudes. Jessie Ward, the new Children’s Librarian, has brought her boundless creativity to the programs, and we have seen a wonderful increase in attendance at all of our programs.

**Observer:** *You are in the process of passing the director’s baton to Christy Hagerty. Tell us why you’re excited to see her take on the role.*

**Taylor:** Christy is perfect to take on the role of director. With 20 years of library experience, some of it at the Shepherdstown Public Library itself, and having been a member of the community for many years, she is perfectly suited to the position. We have worked together in the past, and she is familiar with many of the operational systems and also the general library culture. There will be a fun training period over the next week, during which she will learn everything about the running of the library. But the reason that I am most excited is that Christy herself is so excited to take on this role!

**Observer:** *What do you foresee as the library’s biggest challenges over the next few years? Are there specific projects still on the wish list?*

**Taylor:** Funding is always at the top of the list. While we have some dedicated funding from the state and local tax-based revenues, there is a shortfall. We have incredible support from the Nourishing Literacy Giving Circle [members donate an amount equivalent cost of a restaurant meal each month], and the Friends of Shepherdstown Library who have at least four fundraisers per year. The Shepherdstown Public Library Foundation is being revitalized, and we hope that people will consider donating and/or



*Christy Hagerty is the director of the Shepherdstown Public Library, as of July 24.*

bequeathing funds so that the library will have a predictable, sustainable, and adequate funding source going forward.

The next biggest challenge, I believe, will be changing the hearts and minds of people who think they can dictate what other people have informational access to. They do not have the right to choose for other people, but that has to be conveyed in a non-threatening, fact-based manner — hoping that they will realize that someone else may want to ban what they consider appropriate.

**Observer:** *What do you say to someone who asks “why are public libraries important?”*

**Taylor:** The fundamental role of the free public library is to be the guardian of our first amendment right to freedom of speech. That freedom, however, is meaningless unless the freedom to hear and read that speech is also protected. The core service of a public library is free access to all that information. That information can exist in many formats and it is the duty of the librarian to connect patrons to the information they need or desire in whatever format is available. Our new library has increased many-fold our ability to provide that information to our community. It is critical to our democracy – we are a cornerstone of that democracy and will defend it passionately.

*The Shepherdstown Library is at 145 Higbee Lane (off the Route 45 bypass, between Morgans Grove Park and Potomac Farms Nursery). Online at ShepLibrary.org. The Friends of Shepherdstown Library (FOSL) invites the community for an Ice Cream Social to celebrate the one year anniversary of the new Shepherdstown Public Library on Saturday August 19, 1 to 3 pm, with plenty of ice cream, cake, local musicians, and childrens activities. Details at FOSLwv.org.*

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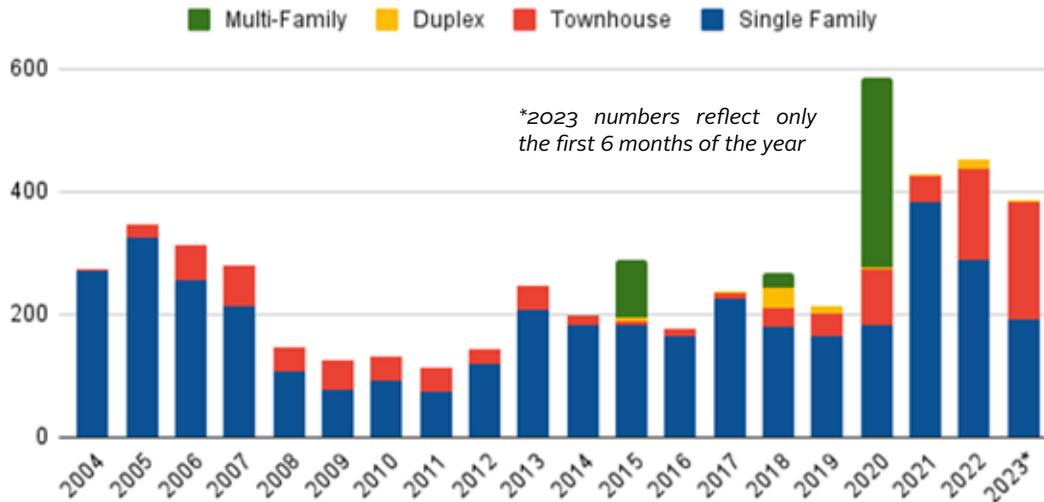
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// HOUSING

# MANY MORE NEW HOMES IN JEFFERSON COUNTY

## Current Pace of Construction Up 3X from Previous Decade

### NEW HOUSING PERMITS IN JEFFERSON COUNTY



**By Steve Pearson**

**WE'RE HALFWAY THROUGH 2023** and the pace of new home construction across Jefferson County is moving right along too. For the first six months, the county's Office of Impact Fees reports that 386 residential construction permits were issued (each permit equates to one single family house, one townhouse unit, or a single apartment in a multi-family building). For comparison, there were 452 residential permits issued county-wide in all of 2022. At the current rate, by the beginning of August (that is, right now), the number of new homes being built in 2023 will have already exceeded the total for all of 2022 — with five more months to go in the current year.

Earlier this year, when *The Observer*

looked at the 2022 construction numbers, we noted that twice as many homes were being built compared to the decade following the 2008 recession. Based on the 2023 numbers so far, the current pace looks to be closer to triple the post-recession pace.

One significant shift jumps out from this year's data — the number of townhouse permits (191) is almost equal to the number of single family home permits (193). According to conversations with local builders, the current market conditions are driving buyers, especially first-time buyers, to look for affordable options. The pricing available for new townhouse units (starting at under \$300,000) compares favorably to the pricing on new single-family (\$400,000 and up). With rates on 30 year mortgages hovering around 7 percent, that pricing differential makes a big difference in the monthly payment.



The first house takes shape at the Toll House Woods subdivision south of Shepherdstown.

### The Ground Is Moving

If you drive around the county, housing construction is increasingly apparent. Several projects that have been working their way through the site planning and permitting process are moving past the infrastructure phase (construction of sewers, water system, and street) and into building actual structures. Some of these projects are recent — and some have been sitting for years and are just now moving forward. The Tollhouse Woods subdivision, a project of 69 single family homes south of Shepherdstown (across from Morgan's Grove Park) is an example of an older project that is now speeding up. This subdivision was approved in 2005 but construction on the site — to clear-cut and level the eponymous woods which no longer exist — began in earnest only in 2021. Several other projects in and around Charles Town and Ranson are at a similar stage, finishing up the site work and ready to start construction of the individual units. These housing starts will start to show up in the permit numbers over the next 6 to 18 months.

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// HOUSING

# DEVELOPER REQUESTS INCREASED HOUSING DENSITY

## Revised Concept Plan Submitted for Shenandoah Junction Development

THE HARVEST HILLS SUBDIVISION is an example of a long-planned project that is looking to respond to the current market demand and move forward with changes. The original plan for this subdivision to the east of Shenandoah Junction completed the planning process in the mid-2000s, just in time to be stalled by the recession. The developer is now seeking to modify the zoning to allow for denser development. The project is located off Flowing Springs Road, approximately one-half mile south of the Duffields train station (served weekdays by MARC commuter service) and one mile north of Jefferson High School. The developer, Arcadia

Development Co., is requesting a zoning change from rural to residential growth. The concept plan submitted with the current request shows a proposal for 1,004 housing units on 352 acres (the previously-approved concept plan called for 392 housing units).

*The Jefferson County Commission will hold a public hearing on August 17 at 6 pm to review the request from Arcadia Development Co. The meeting will be held in the Commission meeting room in the basement of the Charles Town Library (200 East Washington St – the meeting room entrance is on Samuel Street).*



(Above) A view across part of the 352 acres of the Harvest Hills subdivision still to be developed. (Below) The agricultural heritage of Jefferson County is still visible from the entrance to the existing Harvest Hills subdivision off Flowing Springs Road.



◀◀◀ The site plan (left) submitted with the rezoning application shows the proposed cluster-type development plan for Phase II of the Harvest Hills subdivision, with a mix of housing types on the site, including medium-lot single family, small-lot single family, villa-style homes, and townhomes (the yellow, blue and red rectangles). Areas in light green indicate open space buffers and the dark green areas indicate park/recreation areas. The white area in the lower left shows 27 single family homes already constructed and occupied as part of the first phase of the development that was completed in 2022 under the original concept plan. That first phase also includes a 21 acre parcel that the developer decided to Jefferson County Parks & Recreation for a future park (the larger white area along Flowing Springs Road at the left side of the site plan).





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// MUSIC

# MUSIC FEST NOTES PLACES THAT INSPIRE

## Appalachian Chamber Music Festival Returns August 17 – 27



ACMF musicians in front of St. Peter's Chapel in Harpers Ferry (courtesy photo)

“WE’RE REGULAR PEOPLE — YOU CAN COME UP AND TALK TO US,” remarked Katie Tertell as she was introducing a quartet about to play a preview of the music you can hear at the Appalachian Chamber Music Festival (ACMF) this month. Tertell’s comment was in the context of describing her approach to chamber music and her vision for the festival. “Chamber music is simply music that’s intended to be performed in a small space — and that can include a backyard. It’s not meant to be pretentious or even necessarily formal.” As Tertell describes it, her vision of the festival is to open up the chamber music experience and connect with audiences that might not be familiar with the genre. This year’s festival, the third season, will feature sixteen musicians in twelve performances taking place between August 17 and 27 (details below).

### Places that Inspire

The theme of this year’s festival is “Places That Inspire” and features works inspired by places of natural and historic beauty. Highlights of the festival will include performances of Igor Stravinsky’s “Dumbarton Oaks” inspired by the historic Washington DC home of the same name, Schubert’s “Trout Quintet” inspired allegorically by rivers and waterways, and other works.

During the festival, audiences will experience intimate

performances by world-class musicians — a mix of music written for small ensembles including string quartets, trios with piano and strings, and larger works with strings, brass and winds. Programs will range from classical favorites to arrangements based on traditional music, folk tunes, and fiddle music. The festival will also present two world premiere performances this summer: a piece featuring classical banjoist John Bullard written by Steven Snowden and a commissioned work by composer Mark Boden.

### Festival Finale — Free & Outside

The festival will conclude with a free concert event, hosted in partnership with the National Park Service and Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. Along with the festival’s musicians, this event will feature the old-time fiddler Earl White and his String Band, a reflection on Harpers Ferry as a “Place That Inspires” by Nancy Cook who was a recent participant in the National Park Service’s Artist in Residence program at Harpers Ferry.

### Community Support

Festival tickets are affordable through the generous support from the community and grants from the Eastern West Virginia Community Foundation and the West Virginia Department of Arts, Culture, and History. ACMF is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization and welcomes individuals to sponsor the festival at various levels (see “donate” link on the website).

### Festival Highlights

Opening night is Thursday Aug 17 at 7:30 pm in Charles Town. The Friday Aug 18 concert is “Behind Every Great Woman...” (7:30 pm) in Harpers Ferry. There are 2 concerts on Saturday Aug 19, “Duo Delights (11:00 am) in Shepherdstown and “Elevation” (7:30 pm) in Winchester. Sunday Aug 20 also has 2 concerts, “Travel the World Through Music” (11:00 am) in Purcellville and an encore of festival favorites at the Shepherdstown Opera House (7:00 pm). Wednesday Aug 23 is “Cassado and his lost Iberian Legacy” (7:30 pm) and Friday Aug 25 is “Water and Beauty” (7:30 pm) – both performances are in Shepherdstown. There are 2 concerts on Saturday Aug 26, “Duo Delights” (11:00 am) in Shepherdstown and “Regions of the World” (7:30 pm) in Charles Town. The finale is “Appalachia in America” on Aug 27 at 3:00 pm, outside at the Mather Training Center (51 Mather Place) in Harpers Ferry. 📍

For more info and online ticket purchase, visit [AppalachianChamber.org](http://AppalachianChamber.org).

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—C.G. Jung  
*(Mysterium Coniunctionis, par. 603)*

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// CULTURE

# FESTIVAL BRINGS AUTHORS TO SHEPHERDSTOWN

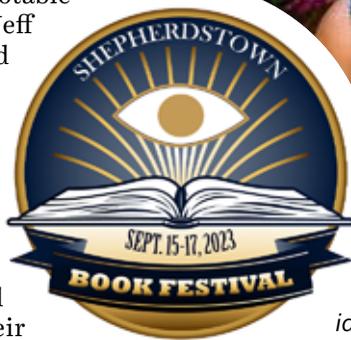
## New Book Festival Hosts Events September 15 – 17

AFTER DECADES AS A THRIVING literary haven, Shepherdstown is slated to host its own book festival this September. Running from September 15 through 17, the festival will boast three days of events, all revolving around the love of books and writing.

Seven nationally known authors will headline the festival. Affrilachian poet and journalist Crystal Good (top image), memoirist and Lambda Literary Award finalist Neema Avashia, dark academia fiction writer M.L. Rio, *New York Times* Notable Books young adult author Jeff Zener, and cookbook writer and YumUniverse creator Heather Crosby will participate in various festival events. *New York Times* bestselling agricultural writer Forrest Pritchard (bottom image) will arrive on September 15 and participate in a ticketed panel discussion that evening about their work and publishing process. See website for additional author bios.

On Saturday, September 16 the headliners, joined by meteorologist and memoirist Matthew Cappucci, will officially open the Regional Author Fair, to be held at the Shepherdstown Community Club. This event will feature two floors of authors from West Virginia, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. The regional authors will discuss their books with attendees, as well as sign and sell copies. Book related vendors will also be present. Throughout the day the seven featured authors will each take part in a reading and book signing. All of these events will be free and open to the public.

September 17 will feature a mixture of free and ticketed events around Shepherdstown, including a teen literary trivia contest, a retro story hour for children, a book cover designing class for middle schoolers, and a lecture about literary figures who visited or lived in Jefferson County, including F. Scott Fitzgerald, Dr. Martin Delany, Danske Dandridge, and John Peale Bishop. 📖



**Crystal Good** is a member of the *Affrilachian (African American Appalachian) Poets*, a group of writers and artists whose creations and existence combat the erasure of African American identity in the Appalachian region, an *Irene McKinney Scholar*, and the author of *Valley Girl*. She is also the founder and publisher of *Black by God*, a monthly newspaper covering West Virginia.



**Forrest Pritchard** is a seventh generation farmer and *New York Times* bestselling author, who earned an A.B. degree in English and a B.S. degree in Geology from the College of William & Mary. He grew up in the Shenandoah Valley on his grandparent's diversified farm, which he took on as a full-time job after returning from college in the mid 1990s. After his first harvest of GMO corn and soybeans, which netted a whopping \$18.16, he shifted to organic and sustainable production, raising free-range cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, and chickens on pasture.

For festival details & schedule, tickets for limited space events, and volunteer opportunities, visit:

**ShepherdstownBookFestival.com**



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# VOLUNTEERS LAUNCH FOOD PANTRY ON BLUE RIDGE

By Susan Benzinger

*Susan Benzinger is a retired tax attorney and active volunteer in Jefferson County. Most recently, she has been instrumental in setting up the new Blue Ridge Food Pantry to provide food assistance to residents of the easternmost portion of Jefferson County (FB: BRFoodPantry).*

**THE BLUE RIDGE FOOD PANTRY** opened on June 17. As one of the founders of the pantry, I have been asked several questions about the pantry's mission and operation, so here goes.

**What is the purpose of the Pantry?** To provide free food assistance to anyone living on the Blue Ridge or in the Harpers Ferry area with a Zip Code of 25425. The pantry is here to help individuals struggling to pay their bills and buy food, disabled veterans, seniors on fixed incomes, recently unemployed or underemployed individuals, those suffering from illness or injury, families with children, or anyone else in need of food.

**Where is the Pantry?** St. Andrew's Mountain Chapel at 65 Mission Rd., Harpers Ferry, WV 25425 (the small white building across the road from the community center building).

**When is the Pantry open?** Every Tuesday from 3:30 pm to 5:30 pm and every Saturday 11:00 am to 1:00 pm. If a holiday falls on one of these days, please check our Facebook page to see when we will be open.

**Who formed the pantry and why did they do it?** The pantry was formed in response to a question — what one thing can we do to help our



*Pantry organizer Susan Benzinger works through a client request list to select and retrieve food products for a client.*

community? The answer — feed people. Food is the one thing that everyone needs to thrive. It is hard to concentrate, challenging to master multiplication tables, and difficult to work if you are hungry. The initial organizers [Susan Benzinger (author of this article), her husband Ray, and friend Katherine Austin] decided to open a pantry. We all live on the Blue Ridge and all wanted to do something positive for our friends and neighbors.

**How does the pantry operate?** On a basic level we obtain food through donations and hand it out to individuals and families who request it. But it's 2023, so it's a bit more complicated than the simple description. It takes many hands to run a pantry. We are following the example of Shepherdstown Shares and CCAP/Fishes

and Loaves and have set up a system where volunteers (everyone is a volunteer, including the founders) work together — processing food donations, tracking inventory, signing up clients, preparing boxes of food, and cleaning. We have been blessed with tremendous volunteers. We all come from different walks of life but we are united in our desire to help our friends and neighbors.

**Who helped you start the pantry?** We received help from many. The Episcopal Diocese of West Virginia gave us permission to use the Chapel. Other pantries helped us — CCAP/Fishes & Loaves in Martinsburg and Shepherdstown Shares generously shared their experiences and answered our many questions. Shepherdstown Shares provided gift cards to procure supplies.

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The food pantry is housed in the St. Andrews Chapel on Mission Road.

Caring Cupboard donated much needed funds to purchase food. And then there are the many, many individuals in our community who have stepped forward in a big way. Our volunteers (20+ strong so far) helped us clean and transform the chapel into a pantry, donated shelving, have brought and continue to bring food donations, and have made monetary donations which have enabled us to purchase additional food and supplies. The pantry is truly a community effort.

**Have we served many people and who are they?** The first two weeks we were open we served 65 people. We have been told by others that that is remarkable for a new pantry. Each week, additional individuals and families are coming to the pantry. We keep all information confidential but we can say that we have served disabled veterans, seniors, families with children, and individuals who have never before been in need.

### HOW CAN I HELP THE BLUE RIDGE FOOD PANTRY?

We need three things to maintain the pantry — volunteers, food donations and monetary donations.

#### 1) VOLUNTEERS

We have two shifts of volunteers each day we are open. We are very flexible about scheduling — there are no set-time commitments — you choose when you can help. Please email us if you would like to sign-up to volunteer.

#### 2) FOOD DONATIONS

We always need food. We purchase food on a monthly basis from the Mountaineer Food Bank and we receive free food from a US Department of Agriculture (USDA) program. But, the need for food is great so we need food donations from the community. We post our weekly food needs on our Facebook page. Food donations may be delivered anytime the pantry is open.

#### 3) MONETARY DONATIONS

Dollars are very important. We need funds to buy food from the Mountaineer Food Bank and local grocery stores. We pinch pennies but we need pennies to pinch. Monetary donations may be made by mailing a check to our post office box or through PayPal.

*The Blue Ridge Food Pantry is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, Tax ID # 92-2556889, and a West Virginia registered non-profit corporation organized to provide free food to those in need. Donations are tax deductible.*

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PERSPECTIVE // NATURE

# CATERPILLARS WITH EYES & HORNS

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.*

LAST SUMMER I WAS LUCKY TO FIND two amazing-looking sphinx moth caterpillars. They were feeding together on a Virginia creeper vine growing up the bricks next to our back door. My wife had been asking me to remove the creeper vine before its tendrils penetrated the recently restored brick and mortar of our historic house. Having procrastinated enough, I went to remove the vine only to discover a large caterpillar had eaten off nearly all the leaves. Fully three inches long, the caterpillar had hairless skin that was a pleasing chocolate brown color. Six white dots surrounded the breathing pore on each of its segments. The spots looked as if they were painted on and got progressively larger toward the rear of the caterpillar. I recognized the caterpillar as a Pandora sphinx by these spots but was surprised by its color. Pandora caterpillars can be bright green, brick red, orange or black, but seldom brown.

Like the tomato “worm” so well known to gardeners, my caterpillar was the immature life stage of a thick bodied, narrow winged hawkmoth. A sphinx caterpillar is a natural shapeshifter. When disturbed or attacked, it tucks its head in while rearing and inflating its front end into a pose that resembles the great Egyptian sphinx. Thin skinned and totally harmless, sphinx caterpillars feed constantly

and voraciously on the leaves of their host plant until they attain full size. Then they burrow into some loose soil, shed their caterpillar skin and spend several months as a pupa or resting stage, with a characteristic “jug handle” where the mouth parts of the adult moth will be.

Most sphinx caterpillars have a curved horn projecting from the rear end, which may look fearsome but is mostly ornamental. But the Pandora caterpillar has a curly tail instead. Resembling a tendril of grapevine, this strange appendage allows the young caterpillar to blend into its surroundings. As it grows larger, the young Pandora caterpillar sheds its skin and finally loses its curly tail. In its place appears a very realistic fake eye. Bright brown with a dark center, surrounded by a thin white ring, and further enhanced by a glassy transparent “lens,” the “eye” is remarkably realistic. Presumably this misplaced staring eye would startle or confuse any would-be predator.

While focusing my cell phone camera lens to take a picture of this strange insect, I spotted a second caterpillar feeding next to it. About half the size of the Pandora, it looked more like a tomato sphinx, except its sides were decorated with blue-green ocean waves with “whitecaps.” A series of pink dots marked the breathing pores on each wave, and larger pink studs formed a line down its back. The rear end of this caterpillar sported a downward curving horn, green tipped with yellow. The entire caterpillar was covered with tiny white tubercles, resembling stars. Despite the bright pastel tints, it was all but invisible among the leaves of the Virginia creeper. This was the larva of the hog sphinx, another night-flying hawkmoth.

An adult Pandora sphinx moth looks as sensational as its caterpillar. Shaped like a fighter jet with a four-and-a-half-inch wingspread, it



Photo credit: D. Pifer

looks like it's wearing jungle camouflage. Broken patterns of strongly contrasting light and dark green are interspersed with dashes of dull black and pink. This wild pattern, coupled with the moth's streamlined shape, looks as if it was created by either a military flight engineer or a fashion designer. But the insect is nearly invisible while resting among the grape and Virginia creeper vines where it typically lives. A hog sphinx moth is similar in shape, but much smaller. Its wings are modestly camouflaged in alternating bands of light and dark gray, tan and reddish brown. Its hind wings are sometimes brighter orange.

Both hog and Pandora moths appear in the late spring and visit night blooming flowers such as petunia, campion, and evening primrose. Moving back and forth in the darkness, they uncurl their long tongues and probe deep into the throats of these flowers for nectar, pollinating the flowers in the process.

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EXPLORE // ACTIVITIES & ENTERTAINMENT

**AUG 3 (THU) – B2Wins** – Pronounced “Be-Twins,” this group will bring you to your feet with a blend of high-energy rock, dance, jam and soul. Doors open at 6 pm, concert starts at 7 pm. Bring your own chairs, blankets, food & drinks (no alcohol please). The AMP is a non-smoking venue. Details at FB (events): The AMP at Sam Michaels.

**AUG 8 (TUE) – Speak Story Series** – Storyteller Dolores Hydock will tell a sampler of stories. 7:30 pm. Reynolds Hall, 109 North King St, Shepherdstown. \$15. Web: SpeakStorySeries.com.

**AUG 9 (WED) – Speak Story Series** – Storyteller Dolores Hydock will tell “Silence: The Adventure of a Medieval Warrior Woman,” a wickedly funny, plot-twisting tale of greed, lust, deceit, revenge, and the rewards and sacrifices that come from finding your true voice. 7:30 pm. War Memorial Building, 102 East German St, Shepherdstown. \$15. Web: SpeakStorySeries.com.

**AUG 12 (SAT) – Stand with Ukraine** – Special screening of “The Guide” a 2014 film by Ukrainian filmmaker Oles Sanin. Proceeds donated to humanitarian relief & education efforts in Ukraine. Special live zoom Q&A with the lead actor following the screening. 3 pm. Info & reservations at OperaHouseLive.com.

**AUG 17 (THU) – Jah Works** – Baltimore-based Jah Works delivers positive vibes with a full spectrum of authentic reggae music. Doors open at 6 pm, concert starts at 7 pm. Bring your own chairs, blankets, food & drinks (no alcohol please). The AMP is a non-smoking venue. Details at FB (events): The AMP at Sam Michaels.

**AUG 19 (SAT) – Jefferson County African American Cultural & Heritage Festival** – Parade starts at noon in downtown Charles Town. Festival open from 2 – 9 pm. 300 block of South Lawrence St, Charles Town. Youth activities, pony rides, vendors, food trucks, jam concert. Details at FB: @JCAACHF.

**AUG 26 (SAT) – Community Days At Tabler Farm** – Learn how to make floral waters (hydrosols). FREE (pre-registration required). 10 am - noon. 482 Billmyer Rd, Shepherdstown. Web: Shepherd.edu/ Community-Days-At-Tabler-Farm.

**EARLY CHILDHOOD MUSIC CLASSES**

Shepherd University School of Music will offer two early childhood music classes this fall at the Frank Arts Center. Musical Discoveries is for children ages 18 mos - 3 years (accompanied by parent/caregiver) to introduce young student to the rudiments of music. Children will play a large variety of rhythm instruments such as drums, rhythm sticks, wood blocks, and triangles. Music for Preschoolers is for ages 4-6 (accompanied by parent/caregiver). The group will play wood, metal, and shaker instruments, sing songs and echo songs, develop listening skills, and work with creative movement and circle dances. Musical Discoveries will meet Tuesdays, Sep 5 – Oct 3, 5:00 – 5:30 pm. Fee is \$74. Music for Preschoolers will meet Wednesdays, Sep 6 – Oct 4, 5:15 – 6 pm. Fee is \$86. Pre-registration required. Web: Shepherd.edu/Community-Music.

**ADULT PIANO FUN CLASS**

Shepherd University School of Music will offer an adult piano fun class beginning Sep 6 (Wed) in the Frank Arts Center. Led by Susan Petzold-Carpenter, the class offers a social, supportive atmosphere with no grades, deadlines, or recitals. Classes on Wednesday evenings, Sep 6 – Oct 25. Registration deadline is Sep 1. \$155 tuition & registration, \$36 digital textbook. Web: Shepherd.edu/Community-Music.

**HALLOWEEN IN SHEPHERDSTOWN – BIGGER & BETTER IN 2023**

With a reputation as one of the most haunted towns in America, Shepherdstown will be celebrating Halloween throughout October this year. There will be special day-long spooky events on Sunday, Oct 15 and Saturday Oct 28. On Oct 31, German Street in downtown will be closed from 5 to 8:30 pm for trick-or-treating and other street events. Volunteers are needed – send a Facebook message to “Halloween in Shepherdstown” if you want to help or have a Halloween event you want to organize.

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**August 12 — Stand with Ukraine** — A special screening of *The Guide*, directed by Ukrainian film-maker Oles Sanin. Proceeds to be donated to humanitarian relief and education efforts in Ukraine. Info & tickets at [OperaHouseLive.com](http://OperaHouseLive.com)

**August 20 — The Appalachian Chamber Music Festival** presents an encore concert of favorites from the first week of the 2023 festival, featuring Stravinsky’s “Dumbarton Oaks”. Visit [AppalachianChamber.org](http://AppalachianChamber.org) for festival information & tickets.

Movies & Music coming this fall — See website for details.

131 W. German St, Shepherdstown | [OperaHouseLive.com](http://OperaHouseLive.com)

**MORE EVENTS >> PAGES 14 & 15**

EXPLORE // LOCAL HISTORY

# WALKING THROUGH BLACK HISTORY IN CHARLES TOWN

## Self-Guided Audio Tour Reflects on Heritage & Communities Still Present



NEWLY-ELECTED TO THE CHARLES TOWN CITY COUNCIL, Pricilla Rodd has been quick to push the City to take action on an issue she raised during her recent campaign — to focus on projects that support tourism. She pointed to the efforts of George C. Rutherford and the Jefferson County Black History Preservation Society as a prime example of how the city’s rich history can be key to attracting visitors and is excited that the City is supporting the launch of the new Charles Town African American History Audio Tour.

The tour consists of nine locations. Stop 1 is the **County Courthouse**, where the tour highlights the five black abolitionists who accompanied John Brown on his pre-Civil War raid on the Harpers Ferry arsenal. Records from 1860 attest that there were 511 free persons of color and 3,960 enslaved persons — together amounting to nearly a third of the county’s total population. Stop 2 is the **Webb-Blessing house**, which was built prior to 1830 and is one of the earliest stone buildings in the state built and owned by free black persons; in the 1940s and 1950s Ollie Blessing operated a lending library in the building to serve black children who could not use the public library. Stop 3 is **Potter’s Field**, containing the graves of hundreds of

black persons buried between 1833 and 1875. Stop 4 is the **Gibson-Todd house**, built on the site where John Brown and several of his comrades were hanged, including John Copeland Jr. and Shields Green, both free black men. Stop 5 is noted as **“African American Churches”** which discusses the numerous black neighborhoods and communities (including “Potato Hill” that sprung up around the city after the Civil War. Stop 6 is **Locke House (Star Lodge #1)**, a gathering space for black veterans of World War I. Stop 7 marks the **Southwest Business District**, the location of a concentration of black-owned businesses that flourished from the 1900s into the 1970s. Stop 8 is **Evitts Run and Potato Hill**, marking a black community on the west side of the city. Stop 9 is the **Mosaic Wall** on North Charles Street.

The tour is designed to be self-guided and can be experienced on foot or by vehicle.

Materials and a guide to accessing the tour will be found at City Hall and at Bushel & Peck (with additional guide locations to come in the future).

The new tour will officially launch on Wednesday, August 16, to coincide with the Jefferson County African American Heritage Festival, which begins the next day (Aug 17). The first tour will start with a reception at Charles Town City Hall from 6:00 to 6:30 pm. The walking tour will start at 6:30, after the reception. Admission to both events is free and participants can walk the entire 2 mile route or join the tour by vehicle at each stop.

*Information about the tour will be available on the City’s website (CharlesTownWV.us). Information about the Jefferson County Black History Preservation Society, including a county-wide heritage tour and other history resources, is available at [JCBlackHistory.org](http://JCBlackHistory.org).*



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EXPLORE // CHARITY EVENT

# FUNDRAISER FOR ANIMAL WELFARE SOCIETY

THE BRIDGE GALLERY IN SHEPHERDSTOWN will host its annual charity bazaar on August 12 & 13 (Sat & Sun). Hours will be 9 am - 4 pm (both days). Proceeds from this year's event will benefit the Animal Welfare Society of Jefferson County. The public is invited to purchase donated art and antique items of all kinds, including original paintings, posters, picture frames, ceramics, books, jewelry, rugs, art supplies, and various eclectic items. Admission is free.

The gallery will accept donations of items for sale up to the day of the event; pick-up services are available. Call 304-876-2300 for details on donating or volunteering to help staff the event.

*Bridge Gallery is located at 8566 Shepherdstown Pike (just outside of Shepherdstown). Web: BridgeGalleryAndFraming.com. For information about the Animal Welfare Society's dog & cat adoption and foster programs, visit AWSJC.org.*



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ENGAGE // COUNTY GOVERNMENT

## HARPERS FERRY PROJECT SEEKS SPECIAL TAX DISTRICT FUNDING



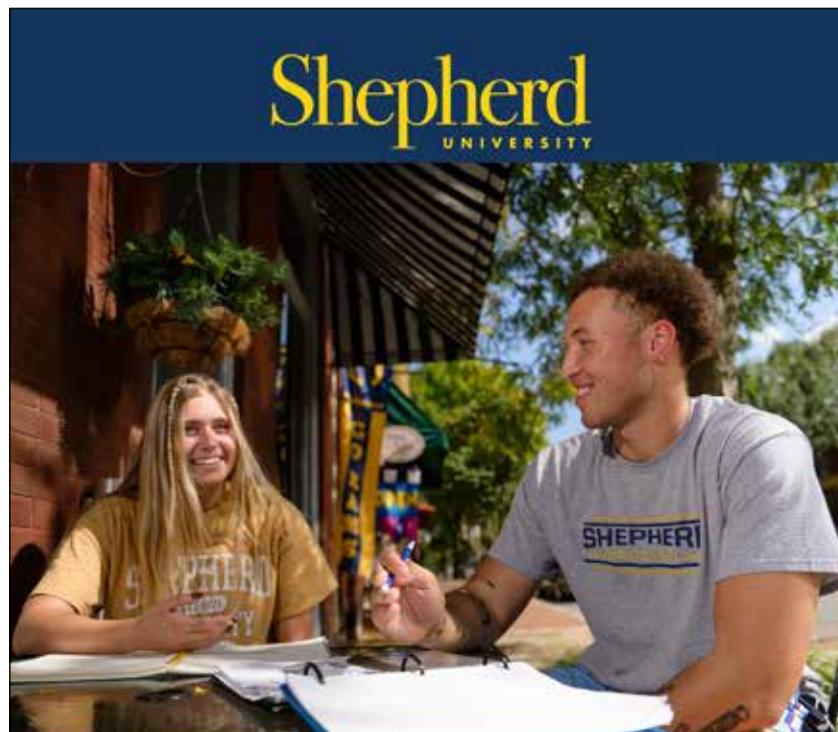
**THE HILLTOP HOUSE HOTEL PROJECT** is seeking a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District for its 9 acre property in Harpers Ferry. The project, now 15+ years in planning and preparation, envisions building a world-class resort, restaurant, and spa facility on the dramatic site overlooking Harpers Ferry (search for “Hilltop House” at WeAreTheObserver.com for details). The proposed TIF would direct the additional property taxes generated as a result of the redevelopment project to service bonds issued by the developer used to fund infrastructure related to the hotel project (including the underground parking garage). Documents provided to the County Commission indicate an estimate of the bond costs around \$22 million (in the context of an estimated \$146 million construction budget).

The TIF revenue to be dedicated to the project would be generated by the property taxes levied on the additional value created as a result of the project (which is currently vacant land), not to exceed a period of 30 years or repayment of the bonds, whichever happens first. The project has already been approved for a similar tax arrangement on the state sales tax generated by the activity that would happen at the hotel (that arrangement affects only the state portion of the sales taxes). *The County Commission will hold a public hearing on August 17 at 6 pm to review the TIF request. The meeting will be held in the Commission meeting room in the basement of the Charles Town Library (200 East Washington St – the meeting room entrance is on Samuel Street).*

## GOT AN OPINION ABOUT GROWTH?

### Planning Commission Will Listen At The Fair

**THE JEFFERSON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSIONERS** and staff will be hosting a booth at the County Fair (Aug 20-26 at the fairgrounds, 2005 Old Leetown Pike, Kearneysville). Residents will be able to engage in several activities designed to help the planning staff guide the in-process updates to the county’s comprehensive land use plan. Activities will include a self-guided question/answer exercise that will help gauge interest in specific amenities (both public and private) that residents want to see in the county. Visitors will also be able to map out the paths they take through the county and identify desired amenities at various locations. Kids can join in the fun too, with coloring sheets identifying county landmarks that can be turned in to receive a prize. *Look for the Planning Commission booth in one of the commercial exhibition buildings.*



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