

The WV INDEPENDENT Observer

JEFFERSON COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA

MAY 2024

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*The beach at the Mountain Lake Club
will be full once warm weather arrives.*

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STAFF

EDITOR IN CHIEF

STEVE PEARSON

Editor@WeAreTheObserver.com

MANAGING EDITOR

CATHERINE PEZZARO

BUSINESS MANAGER

LESLIE DAVISSON

FOR ADVERTISING

Email: SALES@

WeAreTheObserver.com

Phone: 304-741-0033

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131 West German Street

PO Box 3088

Shepherdstown WV 25443

Printed by FNP Printing,

Frederick, MD.

THIS PAPER WANTS TO BE RECYCLED.



Agriculture is an important part of Jefferson County's economy and there are many horses, cattle, and other livestock around the county. Most residents rank the bucolic nature of the county high on what they like about this place, but the new trend of building high-density housing next to working farms without transition spaces can put two very different land uses in uncomfortable proximity.

TO OUR READERS — It definitely feels like summer, even though we have another month or so of spring. It feels like everything runs a bit faster these days, which is why places like the Mountain Lake Club (story, page 4) are such treasures — places where you can kick back and relax with neighbors, people you may or may not know well, but who share a common enjoyment of the place they call home.

You don't need to get sand between your toes or even leave home to experience a grand adventure. As our local librarians will tell you, a good book can transport kids around the world. We've included a sampling of what will be on tap at the Shepherdstown Public Library this summer (page 16) and we'll have listings of activities planned at the other Jefferson County libraries at ObserverWV.com. If you do want to get up close to nature, you can stop by the NCTC open house on May 11 (page 11) or take a tour of gardens in Shepherdstown on May 18 and 19 (page 12).

Our local county government is having its own adventure. In November 2023, the county's Prosecuting Attorney filed a petition to remove Jennifer Krouse and Tricia Jackson as commissioners, citing official misconduct and neglect of duty in reference to their refusal to attend Commission meetings for more than three months last year. The special judicial panel issued a ruling on May 1, removing them from office. It could be a bumpy road to fill both seats (story, page 6).

Steve Pearson
EDITOR IN CHIEF

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// COMMUNITY

IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME

The Rebirth of the Mountain Lake Club



The Mountain Lake Club property includes all of Lake Shannondale. The developer of the Shannondale subdivision completed the 90-foot tall earthen dam to impound Furnace Run in the mid 1960s and later sold the entire property. The current owners plan to expand the sandy beach area and add additional recreational amenities.

By Ellen Weeren

IMAGINE GOING FOR A BIKE RIDE on a Colorado mountain path, only to find the love of your life, and then 25 years later co-owning a restaurant and lake in Shannondale, a mostly quiet neighborhood in the outskirts of Harpers Ferry. That's exactly what happened to Jeff Shores, one of the owners of the Mountain Lake Club (MLC). "I first saw Matt on a Colorado Springs' bike path," he said. His eyes lit up and his lips curled into a grin. "I just had to turn around and meet him."

Their backgrounds vary widely. Jeff served as an Alabama police officer, before joining the Air Force. He retired as a Colonel after 27 years of service. Matt Barager worked

for a while as a regional trainer for California Pizza Kitchen and is now CFO/Treasurer for a non-profit and still works nearly full-time outside of his MLC responsibilities.

While living in DC in 2010, Shores and Barager bought the former cabin home of Jamie Firestone and Elizabeth Houghton. Initially, they were just looking for a place to relax and enjoy the bucolic scenery. Then Covid hit and Matt and Jeff moved to "the mountain" permanently. Shortly after, they purchased the Mountain Lake Club property, also previously owned by Houghton, which consists of 25 acres of land and the entire 55-acre lake. There was a lot of controversy and drama during Houghton's prior attempt to develop the property as an upscale resort, including a fire that destroyed the mansion that

had at one point served as the clubhouse. Shores and Barager view that as ancient history and have a very different vision for the property.

Dreams and Vision

They were sold on buying the club when someone quoted to them the famous *Field of Dreams* line: "If you build it, they will come." They repeatedly heard mountain residents were desperate to get back a local watering hole where they could gather with friends and neighbors after a long day of work. "People will flock back to this place the minute the doors open," they were assured when they committed to a sizable bank loan and the even bigger time commitment associated with running such a large facility.

But Covid and the 20 years that had passed since the clubhouse burned had seemingly changed things. Shannondale residents had gotten used to driving further away to eat out or learned they didn't miss it so much after all. The early months were a slow crawl of navigating renovations, satisfying inspection requirements, and getting people in the door. They have yet to have a profitable year but hope that will turn around soon enough.

Membership fees once ran as high as \$800 (with a \$300 initiation fee), but they've worked hard to keep those fees much lower (and minus initiation charges). Their goal is to freeze fees for original members under their ownership and offer discounts for residents of Jefferson County. Members get benefits like free and/or discounted tickets to some events, discounted lake entry fees, reduced pontoon rental charges, free beach access, and early reservation opportunities for special events. Matt and Jeff want members to know they are also making an investment in their neighborhood club so that it can grow and expand.

“ The serious problems of life are never fully solved. The meaning and purpose of a problem seem to lie not in its solution but in our working at it incessantly!
 — C.G. Jung
 (The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, 394)

Cathryn Polonchak, L.C.S.W.
 Psychotherapist & Jungian Analyst

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More Than Just a Lake

In a short time, Matt and Jeff have already taken the potential of the property way beyond its initial scope by hosting weddings, music festivals, movies on the lake, Halloween and Easter events, and a Fourth of July fireworks display that is attended by nearly 2,000 people. Lights on the Lake, a festive holiday experience near and about the clubhouse ruins, has been one of their most popular events with as many as 1,000 attendees in a single night.

My personal favorite is their celebrations for the Air Force and Marine Corps birthdays (no interest has yet been expressed in the other services). Last year, my father got to cut the cake at the Air Force celebration as the oldest Air Force veteran in attendance at 82 years old. He'd never before been invited to perform that honor and he still talks about it.

On Trivia Nights, you'll find regulars and newcomers competing for coveted Lakeside Bar & Grill gift certificates. Other nights are filled with BINGO, karaoke, live music, painting classes, or (coming soon) line dancing lessons. In addition to the usual fare of fishing, swimming, food truck and restaurant items, a full-service bar, yoga, and dog swims, new offerings this summer will include pickleball, ax throwing, and a farmers-style market.

Building a Community

Matt and Jeff see community service as critical. They work closely with their members and the Blue Ridge Food Pantry to offer one-pan meals for pantry customers and often use canned food donations as the cost of event admissions. Equally important, Lake Shannondale has a dry hydrant used by firefighters to access water from the lake to fight fires on the mountain since there isn't a single fire hydrant for the nearly



The restaurant at the Mountain Lake club is open to the public and serves dinner Wednesday through Saturday. The ax throwing cages are open during the weekends.

3,000 homes. Also, near the spillway, there is a designated landing zone for medical transport helicopters.

Always foremost in Matt and Jeff's minds is creating and maintaining a space where everyone feels welcome. They don't allow campaign signs on the property or political rallies or celebrations. They don't offer political endorsements. For the benefit of the community, candidate meet and greets, Q&A sessions and informational events with elected officials, and events that advance voter registration are allowed.

They are a long way from that fateful bike ride in Colorado 25 years ago but have made Shannondale their home and are thankful for their wonderful customers, neighbors, and new friends.

The Lakeside Bar & Grill is open to the public (no membership required), see website for current hours of operation. Club memberships required for access to boating, swimming, and other recreation activities (see website for activity information, current rates and application). Mountain Lake Club on Lake Shannondale, 1329 Lakeside Dr, Harpers Ferry, WV 25425. Tel: 304-963-5253. Web: MountainLakeClub.com.

CONFLICT OVER THE VIEW

Controversy is often the close companion of change, and Jeff and Matt have seen plenty of both with the club property. Cell phone service and internet access has been an issue in the area for years and in 2023 Verizon contracted with them to erect a communication tower on the club property. While most of the local residents seem to be in favor of improved connectivity — especially those who are taking advantage of remote work opportunities and those who are concerned about access to emergency services — a small group of neighbors is strongly opposed to the construction of the cell tower.

The Jefferson County Board Planning Commission initially voted against the request to build the cell tower. Then, a federal judge in Martinsburg set aside the Planning Commission's decision and ruled in favor of Verizon's efforts to build the tower. Verizon ultimately negotiated several changes to the siting of the tower with the Planning Commission, which approved the project in December 2023. Following that approval, the group of neighbors opposed to the tower project filed their own lawsuit to block the tower construction. This lawsuit remains pending.

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 18th, 2024
 Register today: www.HarpersFerryHalf.org

// GOVERNMENT

COMMISSION HIRES STAFF

Many Open Items Still On Agenda



The Jefferson County Commission heard public comment at its April 18 meeting from local farmers concerned about the expansion of a high-voltage transmission line.

By Steve Pearson

THE JEFFERSON COUNTY COMMISSION voted on April 22 to hire Edwina “Eddie” Benites-LM as the new County Administrator. Benites-LM has been filling in as County Administrator on an interim basis since January 2024 and will now transition to occupying the position in a permanent capacity. Benites-LM joined the county in April 2023 as the Executive Director of the Jefferson County Development Authority and she will also continue to staff that position on a part-time basis until the JCDA hires a new director.

The County Commission interviewed several candidates for the Administrator position, meeting in executive session and then returning to open session after the interviews were completed. During the open discussion, Commissioner Krouse remarked that there were several good candidates but also suggested that the Commission hold off on voting until its May 2 meeting; Tricia Jackson said she also wanted to delay action, citing concerns about “hiring in haste.” The other three commissioners indicated that they were ready to move forward and the commissioners then voted 3-2 for Benites-LM, with Steve Stolipher, Jane Tabb, and Pasha Majdi in support and Tricia Jackson and Jennifer Krouse voting no.

Following the vote, Commissioner Krouse questioned how the Commission could hire Benites-LM without confirming she would accept the job at the salary offered, to which Commissioner Stolipher responded, “Then she won’t accept the job. Pretty simple, it’s not rocket science.” Krouse retorted to Stolipher with “none

of this is rocket science or you wouldn’t be here,” adding to the record of indecorous comments that has become a regular pattern at the Commission meetings over the past two years (see analysis).

Action Needed On Many Issues

The Commission has a long list of issues that need attention. The hiring of Benites-LM fills a critical staff role, but the Finance Director and human resources roles remain unfilled, so the staff will be short-handed for at least a few more months.

During the recent discussions and voting on next year’s county budget, the Commission acknowledged that it would need to revisit both the budget for fiscal year 2025 (which begins on July 1) and the current year (FY2024) budget. The issue with the FY2024 budget was confusion about whether funds earmarked for the “rainy day” and the capital outlay funds were properly transferred in prior year budgets, along with the normal changes between budgeted and actual spending that happen during the course of the year. The Commission also has yet to take action on cost of living adjustments (COLA) or merit pay increases in FY2025 for county employees.

Other issues that the Commission will need to address are an update to the zoning ordinance for industrial solar facilities, a request for a special taxation district agreement from the developers of the Hill Top House in Harpers Ferry, an update to the impact fees paid by new developments, and a proposal to set a referendum for a fire levy that was proposed earlier in the year but deferred by the Commission. The Commission also needs to approve the updated Comprehensive Plan by the end of 2024.

// ANALYSIS

REPUBLICAN PARTY DIVISION STALLS LOCAL GOVERNMENT

“EVERY POLITICAL PARTY has fissures,” noted Steve Roberts, chair of the Jefferson County Republican Executive Committee (JCREC) when I spoke with him on April 30 about the recent back and forth among Republican party members on social media. But he indicated that in his party the “demagoguery of politics is getting more extreme, with people using ideology as cover to discredit others and coalitions willing to do anything in the name of success.” He also questioned what success means, when the intent is to “not get anything done.”

My conversation with Roberts was a follow-up to questions posed about County Commissioner Jennifer Krouse switching her voter registration from the Republican party to the Mountain party in late April. In response to Krouse’s action, Roberts issued a statement on behalf of the JCREC which calls Krouse a “communist” and her action a “power grab” encouraged by a “small group of radical social media hounds.” Roberts said the statement wording was his and it reflected the consensus of the committee members, but at least one member of the JCREC posted on social media to object strenuously to Roberts’ statement.

The West Virginia Mountain Party’s platform would suggest that it’s an odd fit for a self-described conservative — with detailed sections supporting “reproductive rights,” “equality for persons of all sexual genders,” and support for a “green new deal.” It’s also a small party. The WV Secretary of State reports that of 1,127,769 registered voters statewide at the end of 2023, there were only 2,470 registered with the Mountain Party, and only 145 registered in Jefferson County.

The special judicial panel appointed by the WV Supreme Court issued a ruling on May 1 finding the “allegations of the Removal Petition of either official misconduct and/or neglect of duty have been proven by clear and convincing evidence” and ordered Krouse (along with Tricia Jackson) to be removed immediately from the County Commission. Krouse’s party switch will complicate the task of filling the vacancy, as any person selected to fill the seat vacated by Krouse would need to be registered with the Mountain Party (per WV Code 3-10-7) — and it’s unlikely that the remaining commissioners would find the politics of any of those individuals acceptable.

By: Steve Pearson

More on the County Commission at
ObserverWV.com/JCC-news

// PLANNING

CONCERNED ABOUT GROWTH?

Meetings Allow For Public Comment



THE OBSERVER HOSTED A PANEL discussion in April that focused on growth around Shepherdstown. The panelists were Luke Seigfried of the Jefferson County Planning & Zoning Office, who has been overseeing the update of the Jefferson County Comprehensive Plan; Phil Baker-Shenk, who chaired the committee that spent the last year reviewing the Shepherdstown Comprehensive Plan; and Dr. Christine Wimer, the president of the Jefferson County Foundation, a non-profit organization that has spent the last several years educating and advocating for sustainable development, protection of the environment, and government transparency.

During the Q&A session, the audience of 65 local residents posed many questions that apply to growth throughout Jefferson County, particularly the county's ability to provide services to a rapidly increasing residential population, how local roads will handle the increased traffic, and how development will affect the underground water supply that serves both residential and agricultural uses.

There are two meetings in early May that offer opportunities for residents to voice their concerns about future growth directly to the Jefferson County Planning Commission:

May 7 (Tue): Kearneysville Birdhill Subdivision

The Jefferson County Planning Commission has scheduled a public workshop (with a public comment period) to be held during its regular meeting on May 7 at 7:00 pm (Charles Town Library basement meeting room) to review the proposed concept plan for Birdhill subdivision north of Kearneysville. The meeting agenda also lists several waivers that are being requested for this subdivision to allow for higher density (i.e. more housing units).

The Birdhill subdivision concept plan proposes 720 housing units (a mix of detached houses and townhouses) on 196 acres. There are three other housing developments already approved just to the west on Charles Town Road

(Route 115) that are approved to add over 900 housing units in this vicinity. The density of all of these developments is similar to the concept that accompanied a recently rejected rezoning request for the Harvest Hills subdivision near Jefferson High School.

Since this is a workshop session, the Planning Commission has the option to defer action on this request until a later meeting, especially if citizens make it known during the public comment period at the meeting that they would like to provide additional input to the commissioners.

The Planning Commission previously approved a zoning change for this parcel, from rural to residential growth, in 2021. At that time, the staff reported that the rezoning request was not consistent with the county's comprehensive plan, but the Planning Commission approved the request, noting that the installation of public water and sewer to service the nearby Rockwool factory constituted a significant change to the area that justified the rezoning request.

May 13 (Mon): Future Land Use Map

Jefferson County's Planning Commission will hold its final public input meeting to take public comment on the proposed Future Land Use Map and the comprehensive plan action items on May 13 at 7:00 pm at Jefferson High School (4141 Flowing Springs Rd, Shenandoah Junction). The May 13 meeting is the final input session for the land use map and the Planning Commission will be moving forward quickly after that to finalize the Comprehensive Plan by the end of the year.

The Comprehensive Plan will guide development in the county for the next decade, with the map providing specific recommendations for each parcel in the county. While the Comprehensive Plan ultimately relies on appropriate zoning that matches the housing density proposed for specific areas, it is also the key foundation for creating that zoning plan. 📍

CHILD CARE TOWN HALL

The Numbers Don't Add Up

The mismatch between the demand and availability of child care in West Virginia continues to grow. Across West Virginia, there are more than 26,000 children under 6 whose parents or guardians are seeking care but can't find a placement, according to data reported in 2023 by *Mountain State Spotlight*. Last year, the West Virginia state legislature debated more than a dozen bills related to child care. Many of those bills addressed affordability, focusing on tax credits, employer credits, and subsidies. In 2024, there were another dozen bills introduced, but no legislation was passed.

West Virginia's funding formula for reimbursement to child care providers is scheduled to change this August, reverting to an attendance-based model that will have payments reduced each day a child is absent. While this may seem reasonable for the state's budget, child care providers don't have the flexibility to adjust their staffing costs day to day — if they budget a care-giver for 5 children and 2 are out sick for a day, they still pay the same amount for staffing.

The West Virginia Association for Young Children (WVAYC.net) will be sponsoring a Child Care Town Hall on May 8, from 6:30 to 8:00 pm at the Jefferson County Community Center (Sam Michael's Park, 235 Sam Michael's Lane, Shenandoah Junction). All are welcome for an informal discussion on the state of child care in West Virginia and options for advocacy and education to address these issues. 📍

Read more at ObserverWV.com/Jefferson-Comp-Plan-2024

// ELECTIONS

SPRING ELECTION FOR LOCAL OFFICES

Everyone Can Vote For School Board & Judicial Candidates

IT'S TIME TO VOTE for Jefferson County Board of Education candidates, along with Family Court and Magistrate Court judges, all of which are non-partisan races. Voters also get to select Democratic and Republican candidates in primary elections to decide who will be on the general election ballot in November (the May election is the final vote for school board and judicial races this year). Early voting begins on May 1 and Election Day is May 14.

Independent Voters Get A Choice
Voters registered as Democrats or Republicans will be given a party-specific ballot. All ballots include the school board and judicial races. Voters with no party affiliation (“independents”) can tell the poll worker which ballot they want, a choice of either the non-partisan ballot — or a Democratic or Republican ballot if they want to participate in the primary that determines that party’s candidates for the November election.

Early & Absentee Voting
Early voting is available every day from May 1 through May 11 (except Sundays), 9 am - 5 pm at Charles Washington Hall, 100 West Washington St in Charles Town (across from the courthouse). Look for signs to the side door on North George Street. Any voter registered in Jefferson County can use this early voting location. Absentee voting is available only if you cannot make it to the early voting or Election Day voting. 🗳️

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The non-partisan ballot includes the school board and judicial candidates only. Both the Democratic and Republican ballots include these non-partisan races plus a full slate of primary candidates. More info at ObserverWV.com/elections-2024.

// ELECTIONS

WHAT'S ON THE BALLOT



THE MAY ELECTION BALLOT is long. If you are voting on a Republican or Democratic ballot, you'll find primary choices for President, US Senator, US House, Governor, and several state offices, along with State Senator, State Delegate and County Commission (2 seats). The incumbent County Prosecutor, Sheriff, and Assessor are unopposed. There is no candidate from either party running for Surveyor.

Two Seats Contested On The County Commission

The Middleway seat on the Jefferson County Commission is open this year for a full 6 year term. The Charles Town seat is on the ballot to fill the remaining 4 years of the term (Clare Ath resigned this seat in June 2023 and the current appointee, Pasha Majdi is not eligible to run). On the Republican ballot there are 2 candidates for both seats: Michael Mood vs. Matt McKinney in Middleway and Jack Hefestay vs. Jacob Harris in Charles Town. The Democratic candidates, Natalie Grantham Friend (Middleway) and James Walch (Charles Town), are unopposed in the primary.

Local Non-Partisan Races At The End Of The Ballot

If you are voting in either the Republican or Democratic primary, you'll find the non-partisan judicial and board of education races at the end of the ballot. If you request a non-partisan ballot (see previous page), you'll see various judicial races, followed by the board of education choices.

Contested Judicial Elections

The 2 supreme court seats and the 2 local circuit court seats on the ballot have a single choice. There are 3 candidates running for intermediate court: Ryan White, Mychal Schultz, and Elgine Hecteta McArdle. For Family Court Judge, there are 4 seats on the ballot, 2 of which are contested: David Camilletti vs. Chris Gover in Division 1 and Laura Sutton vs. Carmela Cesare in Division 4. The other 2 Family Court seats have only 1 candidate. There are also 4 Magistrate Court seats on the ballot, 3 of which are contested: Roy Campbell vs. Lisa Shirley-Fraley in Division 1, Wendy Torelli vs. Vicky D'Angelo in Division 2, and Mark Renner vs. Ralph Lorenzetti in Division 4. Arthena Roper is running unopposed in Division 3.

School Board Members Serve 4 Year Terms

There are 2 seats up for election on the Jefferson County Board of Education, with 3 candidates running (the top 2 vote winners will each serve a 4 year term beginning July 1. Shown above: James Southern, Rikki Twyford, and Donna Joy (currently serving on the BOE).

More election and candidate information at ObserverWV/Elections-2024

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PERSPECTIVE // NATURE

THE WILD RAMP IS A LOCAL TREAT

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.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS sometimes stink. A boy sitting across from me in eighth grade art class exhaled an aroma that made my eyes water. Somebody else asked him about it and he said he'd been eating leeks. He said they tasted good, but none of us were convinced. His breath fogged the air with the combined odors of onion and garlic, but much, much stronger.

Decades passed and when we first moved to the Shenandoah Valley, my wife and I encountered clumps of wild leeks, known locally as ramps, growing in the woods. We heard about spring ramp festivals but never attended one. Then we found fresh harvested ramps for sale at a farm market in Charles Town. We decided since ramps were an important part of our home state's culture, we wanted to taste what we'd been missing.

We chopped them up, sauteed them in butter and had them with toast and scrambled eggs. Far from being strong and pungent, their flavor was delicate and mild. The kitchen was full of their wonderful aroma. We were hooked.

Wild leeks appear in April and May and form big patches, chiefly in woodlands with a limestone base. The leaves die back by the end

of May and in June or July a stalk appears that turns into a white globe-like cluster of flowers. Each individual flower forms three shiny, blue-black seeds that drop off in late summer, hence the scientific name, *Allium tricoccum*, meaning "three-seeded onion."

West Virginians have always known wild leeks as ramps, a word with a long history. In the days of Shakespeare and Queen Elizabeth I, leeks were known as "ramsons." Indigenous Americans of the Abenaki nation call them winos, meaning "uncertain ones," because patches of ramps may not come up in the same spot year after year. Natives treasured ramps as a spring tonic, and held ramp festivals as a spiritual practice and to celebrate the arrival of spring. Natives introduced ramps to European settlers and ramp festivals became an essential part of Appalachian culture. Ramp festivals have received even more attention in recent years. Trendy restaurants now feature ramps as a highlight of their spring menus. The resulting "ramp revival" has led to overharvesting and has placed the future of wild ramps in danger.

While urban demand for spring ramps puts pressure on the already thinning wild plant populations, it also provides income for rural Indigenous people who gather them in the woods. In her 2021 interview for Atlas Obscura, Amanda Gokee featured Kim and Les Hook, an indigenous couple who gathered ramps in the Vermont woods to supply New York city restaurants.

Les Hook, a member of the Abenaki tribe, described "thickets of ramps exploding in parts of the woods where they've never grown before. But in order to benefit the plant, you have to take care of what you're harvesting: taking only a few ramps from a patch, covering



Illustration by D. Pifer,

the roots so they stay intact, protecting a patch from grazing animals, educating others about how to harvest ethically. It's a reciprocal relationship that comes with the responsibility to care for the plants."

My wife and I save the bulbs and roots of all the ramps we buy, soak them in wet paper towels and plant them in a shady spot. Last year one of them bloomed and produced seeds. Maybe one day we'll have our own ramp patch.

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EXPLORE // NATURE

CONSERVATION CENTER OPEN HOUSE

NCTC Welcomes Public On May 11



IF YOU LOOK AT THE COMPREHENSIVE Plan maps (story, page 7), you'll see a large green space at the northern end of the county, at the end of Shepherd Grade Road north of Shepherdstown. These 532 acres along the Potomac River, formerly owned by the Hendrix family, are the home of the National Conservation Training Center (also known by its acronym, NCTC). As you drive along the road, you'll spot the official "government property" signs along the fence, but there's nothing secret about what goes on here.

According to Steve Chase, the Director of NCTC, the center is the "home" of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. According to its website, the service is responsible for "conservation and management of fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the American people." Chase describes the day-to-day activities at NCTC as exactly what the name implies — training. He notes that thousands of people from federal agencies, state agencies, non-governmental organizations and private organizations participate in the classroom training program offered year-round at the center.

Inviting The Public

With all those programs and participants in the weekday training programs, Chase and his staff are pretty busy. But they also offer lectures, films, and other programs that are open to the public. He recalled that the center used to have



a regular open house every year, but they took a break after 2010 and it never restarted. Chase and his team decided this year would be the time to relaunch the open house. On May 11, the NCTC will host a day-long series of events, running from 10 am to 3 pm. There will be activities for both kids and adults, including:

- *Get up close to various birds of prey with demonstration by Master falconer Colin Waybright and the Avian Conservation Center of Appalachia.*
- *Experience stepping inside a full-size bald eagle nest replica constructed by NCTC staff and watch real birds in the local nest via livestream camera.*
- *Hear the stories and history of the local indigenous residents of the Shepherdstown area, told by Matthew "Maasaw" Howard.*
- *Watch Judy's Creek and Serengeti, two family-friendly short films from this year's Conservation Film Festival (shows at 10:30, 12:30, 2:00).*
- *Learn about wetlands, waterfowl, and conservation and find out how to participate in the Federal Junior Duck Stamp Program and Art Contest open to all K-12 students.*
- *Take a short "storybook" hike along one of the many trails, organized by the Potomac Valley Audubon Society.*
- *Explore what owls eat, up close and hands-on as you dissect owl pellets and get a detailed look at the food chain.*

About the May 11 event: Location: 698 Conservation Way, Shepherdstown (take Shepherds Grade Road north from Shepherdstown). Doors open at 9:30 am. All programs end at 3 pm. Water and food will be available for purchase from 11 am to 2:30 pm. NCTC encourages you to bring your own water bottle and wear comfortable walking shoes. There is ample parking, carpooling is recommended. Open house is rain or shine — bring a jacket or poncho according to the weather forecast. 🌧️

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EXPLORE // SHEPHERDSTOWN

GARDEN TOUR & TEA FUNDRAISER IN SHEPHERDSTOWN



MARK YOUR CALENDAR for the weekend of May 18 & 19 to explore the back alleys and hidden gardens of Shepherdstown. This popular annual event is a fundraiser for the Shepherdstown Community Club (the club is currently in the middle of a “raise the roof” campaign to fund a much-needed roof replacement and other repairs to the War Memorial Building in downtown Shepherdstown).

More than just pretty gardens, this event includes a formal tea service featuring home-made tea sandwiches, cookies and sweets prepared by local chefs and volunteers. Local girl scouts are serving for this event — to prepare, the girls held a practice event to learn about proper “tea” etiquette. They’ll also be earning a community service badge for this work.

Walt Bartman, a local painter (above), will be organizing his students to paint “plein air” in several of the gardens during the tour. The students’ work will be exhibited at the Bridge Gallery as part of Bartman’s exhibit that runs from May 4 to June 9 (Bridge Gallery 8566 Shepherdstown Pike, Shepherdstown). During the tour weekend, local artists will also be exhibiting on the first floor of the War Memorial Building.

The Community Club is also offering a limited number of tickets to its donor event on Friday May 17. Tickets for this event in the garden of the former Episcopal rectory (now a private home) are \$100 and include access to the weekend garden tour and tea events as well. For information about the donor event, call 304-876-3323.

Event Details:

Date: May 18 & 19 (Sat & Sun). There will be 15 gardens on the tour, open 10 to 4 (both days). This year’s tour will be concentrated on one side of town, so the route will be more compact compared to prior years. The Tea service runs 11 to 3 both days, upstairs at the War Memorial Building (102 East German St). Ticket prices at \$30 (children under 10 are free) and includes access to all gardens and one tea service ticket.

The event is rain or shine – wear comfortable shoes and dress appropriately for the weather forecast. There will be at least one water station along the tour (and the downtown restaurants are open too).

Purchase tickets online at ShepherdstownCC.org; tickets also available in advance at the Sunday Farmer’s market.



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A LOT OF HISTORY PACKED INTO ONE PLACE

Jefferson County Museum Refreshes & Reorganizes



ACCORDING TO JEFFERSON COUNTY MUSEUM director Lori Wysong, the collection focuses on the history of “the place that is now Jefferson County.” If you look back far enough, this area was home to numerous indigenous peoples. After a few explorers from the Virginia colony took a look around in the early 1700s, many immigrants from Germany and elsewhere in continental Europe came into the area via the road from Philadelphia across the Potomac river ford downstream from Shepherdstown. Since then, this place has been part of Orange, Frederick, Berkeley before it became Jefferson County (which was in both Virginia and West Virginia).

The museum collection covers this history and continues into the 20th century (Wysong notes she is still collecting materials from current events, anticipating exhibits for future generations). The exhibit hall has been updated for 2024 with new lighting and features a rotating collection of items. The extensive Civil War presentations feature the wagon used to transport John Brown to the gallows (photo) along with a very detailed collection of the every-day items used by soldiers. The display cases of 20th century items provide windows into everyday life, from children’s toys (photo) to the many businesses that have come and gone. In addition to the items on display, the museum’s website offers access to over 9,000 items in the collection.



Jefferson County Museum, 200 East Washington St, Charles Town (below the Charles Town Library). Open mid-March through mid-December, Tue-Fri 10 am - 4 pm, Sat 9 am - 1 pm, closed Sundays & Mondays. Admission is free to Jefferson County residents, donations always appreciated. Web: JeffCoMuseumWV.org, tel: 304-725-8628.

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FIDDLIN' BOBBY BYRD, MOUNTAIN MUSICIAN

Adam Booth Tells A Tale Of The Senator From WV



ROBERT BYRD REPRESENTED West Virginia in the US Senate from 1959 until his death in 2010. Previously he also served in the US House of Representatives and in both houses of the WV state legislature. According to a 2004 interview with NPR, Byrd came to West Virginia from North Carolina after his mother died in the 1918 influenza pandemic and he was sent to live with his aunt and her husband. Byrd was a man of many contradictions — growing up poor and entering politics with just a high school education, he would later earn a college degree and a law degree while serving in Congress. As a young man, he was a Ku Klux Klan leader and fought against the 1964 Civil Rights Act, yet by the 1980s he was forcefully renouncing his earlier views according to contemporary news reports.

Story Artist Adam Booth, the 2022 West Virginia Folk Artist of the Year, delved into the Byrd Center archives to create a compelling original tale based on Byrd's life. Performance details: May 9, 7:00 pm, Byrd Auditorium, 213 North King St, Shepherdstown (on the Shepherd University campus). FREE (no reservations required). Web: ByrdCenter.org/events

TALES OF APPALACHIA



SPEAK STORY SERIES IS HOSTING story artist Elizabeth Rose at the War Memorial Building (102 East German St, Shepherdstown) on Tuesday, May 11 at 7:30 pm. Elizabeth Rose's stories include a blend of traditional southern folklore, Appalachian tales, mountain ballads, ghost stories, songs and her own personal stories of growing up in a small town in East Tennessee. She has the ability to mesmerize her listeners, transporting them through her image-laden tales of other times and cultures.

Tickets are \$20, available at the door or online at SpeakStorySeries.com. Recommended for age 13 and older.

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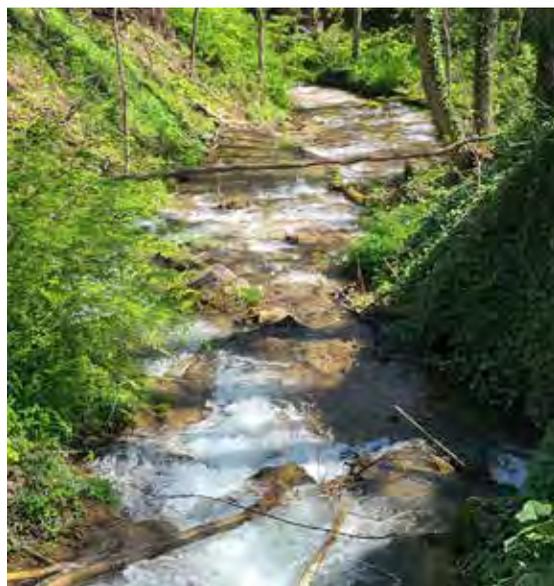
SHEPHERDSTOWN'S HIDDEN WATER

Town Run's Changing Role Over Time



APRIL 6 WAS A BEAUTIFUL spring day in Shepherdstown, so of course there were people wading in the Town Run. It looked as if they were having fun (above), but they were also volunteers helping to remove trash and invasive plants along the Princess Street riverside park, between the stone walls along Jefferson Security Bank, and at Morgan's Grove Park.

If you were to say a river runs through Shepherdstown, that would be the literal truth, as the Town Run meanders under streets and even under several buildings that were built over the waterway. Today you have to peek through fences and walk to the edges of town to glimpse the stream, but well into the twentieth century,



the Town Run was a lot more visible as an open stream with active industry along its banks.

During an April 18 presentation sponsored by Historic Shepherdstown and the Potomac Watershed organization, environmental historian Dr. Keith Alexander talked about the historical, ecological, and cultural significance of Town Run and how it has shaped Shepherdstown's identity and influenced its development. When Thomas Shepherd staked out the land claim that would later become the town, the stream was known as Falling Spring Branch. The name makes literal sense, capturing both the Town Run's origins in the springs near the present-day Morgan's Grove Park, and the cascade down the cliffs along the Potomac (image), an attractive feature for 18th and 19th century water-powered industry.

More recently, the Town Run has been designated as a secondary water source for the public water utility that serves Shepherdstown and the surrounding area. According to Woody Coe, the chief system operator for the Shepherdstown system, the Town Run can be used both as an emergency source during incidents when the Town needs to avoid taking water from the Potomac River and as an occasional blending source to reduce the amount of chemical treatment required whenever the water from the Potomac has a heavy organic load from natural sources.

You can learn more about efforts to protect and improve the Town Run and volunteer opportunities at TownRunWatershed.org.



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LIBRARIES PLAN SUMMER READING

A Full Calendar At Shepherdstown



WHEN A TOWN HAS A CHILDREN'S "STORYBOOK PARADE" (above, organized by Shepherdstown Elementary School), you know the residents like books. The Shepherdstown Library is marching into summer as well, with a full calendar of activities. The party kicks off on June 1 with a festival that runs from 11 am to 2 pm. Appropriate for all ages, the festival will have crafts, games, snacks, and summer reading sign-ups. For the rest of the summer, here's just a few of the fun events (see website for full calendar):

The **family story time** (all ages) with Ms. Jesse will be about travel, nature, imagination, and other adventure themes. **Drew Blue Shoes will bring magic** on June 6 (best for ages 5+) where kids can learn some tricks to perform themselves.. Ms. Rachel will organize **Crafternoon** (ages 5+) to make a variety of fun animals from ordinary materials. Rocks for Kids will have two age-appropriate programs (ages 5-9 and ages 10+) that will provide hands-on experiments.

For slightly older children there will be a **Nature Journaling Club** (ages 7+) that will meet weekly on Fridays from June 6 through August 2. The library will host a **NASA StarLab Portable Planetarium** (ages 7+) for several short programs where participants will learn about the stars, constellations, and planets. Registration is required and there will be an online sign up that opens on June 1st on the library website.

The **Middle Grade Book Club** (ages 9-13) will read the book and meet for a discussion, games, crafts and snacks. Registration is required (email Rachel@ShepLibrary.org) to sign up and for information about obtaining the books (Sisters Grimm by Michael Buckley and Inside Out and Back Again by Thanhha Lai).



For a full calendar of events, visit the library website (ShepLibrary.org). For programs at other Jefferson County libraries, see the online version of this story at ObserverWV.com.

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